

Speaker 1 ([00:16](#)):

Hello, and welcome to the higher enlightenment podcast brought to you by higher yields cannabis consulting, your seed to sale cannabis business solutions team. My name is Adam part of the creative design team here at higher yields. And today's subject is mass incarceration. Our guest host today is Amelia mal, our in-house writer and content contributor in the higher yields. So let's get started by having everybody introduce themselves.

Speaker 2 ([00:50](#)):

All right. Hi everyone. My name is Kieran Wong. I am the owner of almost consulting. We are a cannabis marketing consultancy working to support women who want to incorporate cannabis into their lives. Um, and definitely in as a part of that, working with women of color specifically, um, and you know, black indigenous and people of color all throughout the industry to support their work, um, through inclusive base, which is a directory that I collaborate with can occlusive, um, to create and maintain and grow. So if you are a black indigenous or a person of color and you own a cannabis related business, definitely check it out. Inclusive base.com.

Speaker 3 ([01:35](#)):

Hi, I'm Courtney and I am the co-founder of amnesia media as well as grass by grass amnesia. Media is an influencer marketing platform that focuses on serving both the cannabis and the CBD industry is by building cannabis culture, through healthy dialogues and education of mainstream consumers and grasped by grass as an organization that explores the Asian-American narratives within the cannabis industry and recognition of that narrative being quite different from both black and Latin X communities, as well as, um, institutional capital or white communities.

Speaker 2 ([02:08](#)):

My name is Chris Tigger and I'm the former mayor of Edgewater Colorado. And, uh, most of my time while I was an elected official was working on integrated healthcare and criminal justice reform on the operational level. Day-to-day working in the trenches. My professional background is mental health. So I'm just here as, uh, just any advising help that may be needed. So

Speaker 3 ([02:34](#)):

My name is Emilia Mau. I am one of the newer hires at higher yields. I am the in-house writer and I'm a content contributor and the podcast host for today. Alrighty. Well, we're really glad to have all of you guys and I know Courtney and Kira and you guys have been, you were on test as podcasts, so she had nothing but incredible things to say about you guys. So I'm really excited to get to meet you. So I guess to start with just because the average listener might not be that well-informed on, uh, you know, mass incarceration and the disproportionate effect it has on, um, people of color in their communities. I figured I would, um, read some statistics and give just a little bit of background, a little bit of historical context for it. So since its prohibition in 1937, marijuana has been used as a means to arrest, detain and incarcerate millions of Americans, uh, to be more precise, roughly 30 million of them of these millions, a large majority are minorities.

Speaker 3 ([03:42](#)):

Nationally black Americans are almost four times as likely to be arrested for minor possession. According to the HCLU in some States, this rises to almost 10 times, despite similar usage rates nationwide in 2017, 27% of the people arrested for drug law violations were black. Despite the fact that African-Americans

comprise only 13.4% of the national population for reference whites make up 73%. So those numbers don't really add up. Um, historically minorities have also often been portrayed in propaganda and media as more likely to use marijuana despite this having no factual basis. So what role do minorities actually play in the burgeoning legal cannabis industry after being made the face of illegal cannabis of the illegal cannabis industry in America. So to provide some historical context for the disproportionate incarceration of minorities, I'm going to provide a brief timeline of marijuana's legal and illegal history in the us.

Speaker 3 ([04:46](#)):

So in the early 19 hundreds, after the Mexican revolution, the Southern States saw a large influx of Mexican immigrants who brought with them medicinal, the medicinal herbs. They called marijuana during this time, Americans were already and had been for a very long time using marijuana in almost every tincture and medication available along with cocaine and heroin and opium. You know, however, they knew it by another name being cannabis. The two were not known to be the same thing at the same time. And marijuana was demonized as a quote unquote Mexican drug in 1931 hearings were held to decide the legality of marijuana and El Paso, Texas, many white people testified that marijuana would cause men of color to quote unquote become violent and solicit sex from white women. El Paso would go on to outlaw marijuana and use it as just a Fe justification to arrest and deport Mexican immigrants in 1937, the marijuana tax act of 1937, essentially made illegal the use and sale of marijuana and all of the U S fast to 1971,

Speaker 4 ([05:58](#)):

The controlled substances act is passed by the Nixon administration beginning. What we know today as the war on drugs, marijuana was listed as a schedule, one substance. This is on the same legal par pars heroin. This was despite the protestations of the Shafer commission, which Nixon commissioned himself, which found that marijuana had no addictive properties and brought into question its category categorization as an illicit substance fast forward, some more to 1996 when California legalized the use of medicinal marijuana. And then in 2013, Washington and Colorado became the first States to legalize marijuana fully. So in summary from its inception, marijuana policy has been the long arm of the oppressor targeting minority populations with propaganda and with disproportionate rates of arrest and incarceration. So I guess that leads to my first question for you guys, which is why do you think people in the U S think that such a high incarceration rate is normal? I mean, if you compare it internationally, we have, I believe per let me pull up the statistic. I want to say per 100,000 people, we have the incarceration rate per 100,000 in the USA. It's 666. And then after that, it falls off into the four hundreds. So, I mean, that's a significant increase. Why, why do you guys think that we think that's normal?

Speaker 2 ([07:36](#)):

I mean, first off, um, because I mean, it has been so normalized by capitalism and the military industrial complex complex, um, and the R sorry, not the military, the prison industrial complex, so many industrial complexes in the United States, but with the prison system, I mean, because it's so, you know, privatized it's, especially in the United States, you know, people literally profit off of incarcerating humans, um, which is wild to me that that is a profession that some people pursue. Um, and with that, you know, I don't know exactly what the numbers are when it comes to parents, but I know that, um, there are like, it's like one in a very small number, um, of, of kids who have a parent in jail, right. Or in prison incarcerated. Um, and obviously that is disproportionate towards black, um, Brown folks versus white folks. Um, so that in and of itself, you know, having a family member or someone, you know, in

your immediate family who is, has been, or is incarcerated, right, like that normalizes it, which is obviously not a pay.

Speaker 2 ([08:46](#)):

And then the fact that people are profiting making money, including ice, right ice, as a part of this equation, um, and like Wayfair, you know, all of those regular brands and companies making furniture and doing all this stuff like are also profiting off of selling their wares to these organizations. And it's just, it's just this whole ecosystem of greed and just like breaking families apart, which is awful. And I know that I visited Sweden. I want to say like five or six years ago when I studied abroad. And, uh, very privileged also, I want to recognize very privileged and being able to study abroad. But when I was in Sweden, we visited open and closed prisons. And just to see kind of what the experience was like, and in open prisons, there's this concept of, you know, we're not going to lock you up. We're not going to, you have autonomy in this space. Um, obviously we're going to, you know, put protections and protocols, but you, you have a lot of autonomy, a lot more than a closed prison. So seeing that contrast and seeing how a different country really handled it in their system, in their processes, in their complexes, um, was really eye-opening and made me realize, like, we don't need to be doing what we're doing in the United States. We're choosing it.

Speaker 5 ([10:10](#)):

I think that's exactly right. And similarly to cure. And I was going to also mention the prison industrial complex, right? I mean, how can we not deny that that's a massive conflict of interest for our government and being in bed with these private organizations that directly profit off of the misery of these whole communities that are completely being disenfranchised and, you know, uh, similarly, so also, um, Karen said about this ecosystem, we can't deny. I think we would love to say that it's really simple and that there's this one word answer as to why like Americans think that this perception is completely normal, but I think it's really about looking at how all of these various facets really interact with one another and similarly to whether or not you have, um, you know, supplies and materials that are created from the prison industrial complex that are actually the items in your everyday home that you don't realize are essentially built on the backs of modern slavery.

Speaker 5 ([11:03](#)):

And that's essentially what it is. I think that it's convenient for people to not think about it. And I think another component that we're really discounting here is the media, there are extensive studies. Um, one that Georgetown university was doing in 2017, looking at, and this is a course of study in tandem. This is, I wouldn't say, or adjacent to this maybe, or in parallel rather than being directly connected to this. But it indicates just general perceptions of, um, in this specific study, young black children, right? Young black girls, and that they're, you know, perceived to be more precocious, independent, not needing as much care, all these sorts of things and that type of media portrayal, essentially, uh, these, these things are fed by the media, right? And there's other studies that also indicate that. And to remember that essentially these things are based on fear, right?

Speaker 5 ([11:55](#)):

You need people to essentially be afraid. And what we saw in the 1980s and the 1990s was so much media attention drumming up this concept, that there was this idea of criminality in these communities, um, that there are these, um, just scaring people, right? I mean, really just tying into what is going to be the thing that pushes people to vote in the way that people want them to vote. And so when you're

talking about this industrial complex is presented estriol complex benefiting and profiting off of these sorts of activities. You're also going to start seeing how the media also fuels this concept of fear. And when you start looking at concepts of fear and this 24 hour news cycle, where, you know, you're constantly having to up the ante, we're looking for clicks a they're going to make, you know, there's all oftentimes low hanging fruit by leaning into stereotypes, leaning into things that are essentially false and driving those things to essentially push the narrative and normalize them. And so I think all of these facets work in tandem with one another to create a general, I guess, if you want to say a cultural awareness or understanding that this is normal. And I say that in brackets, because it's completely not normal as Karen had mentioned.

Speaker 3 ([13:08](#)):

Yeah. I think it also kind of ties in with this American cultural concept of a prison versus the international concept of a prison that you see in like the open prisons in Sweden, in America, it's very rigid and very focused on this should be punitive. You know, whereas in other countries it's focused more on rehabilitation as like, how can we make this person better so that better so that they don't commit the same crime or whatever, again, whereas in America it's, you did something bad, we're punishing you for it. And I was kind of examining my own views of the prison system and like the death penalty and things like that too. That's completely, but like, as an American, whenever I think about people in prison, I had to stop myself from being like, Oh, they did something wrong. They're being punished. That's what happens, you know?

Speaker 3 ([14:15](#)):

And I think that that also ties into the for-profit system because if we were focused on rehabilitating people, as opposed to just simply punishing them, we wouldn't be able to profit off their labor because there's no way that you can skew slave labor as rehabilitation. So I think, I mean, sorry. Oh, no. I was just going to say, I think that might play a part in it as well as this American fixation on punishing people. And it has a lot to do with, you know, like lack of recognition for mental and mental health treatment and things like that. But yeah, and I think you're mentioning something that's really worth like, you know, that, that dif uh, excuse me, sorry. That differentiation right. Which is the American system is based on exclusion, disenfranchisement punishment. And you look at alternative systems and you're talking about rehabilitation, restorative justice inclusion, right.

Speaker 3 ([15:15](#)):

And those are when you set out with that whole theory and strategy in mind, you're going to have laws. You're going to have things that change based on that. And you know, this is not, this is not something that's inadvertently happened. This is definitely something that's been done by design, because if you're talking about, again, looking at the figures around who's incarcerated, right. And at what rates it may, you know, you start to see this picture of understanding why it's about exclusion, why it's about disenfranchisement, but because now you're disenfranchising people to be able to vote, um, to be able to change the policy, these that actually directly affect them because you're not, there's no concept of bringing them back into society about, you know, and whether or not that is a con that conversation doesn't even fully take place. A lot of times when you're talking about where that intersection of essentially the, the profiteering, the inability to vote, and then also the mass incarcerations. Yeah. And then you, you go, no, you go ahead, please go ahead,

Speaker 2 ([16:17](#)):

Courtney, to your point, um, of system that we don't really think about, like media that really do impact, you know, cause I just jumped to like the prison industrial complex, like yes, for sure. Um, but there's a whole system before that, that fails the person, right. That they end up there, the, the judicial system. Right. Um, and that in and of itself, as well as, you know, the P the police component of it, right. The actual arrest, and then, you know, the processing and then the actual, how the whole process that they go through to end up in prison is also flawed. So that's something that we definitely also need to address when we're talking about this.

Speaker 3 ([16:56](#)):

Yeah. And when it comes to media, um, Courtney, you brought up the, um, the way young black girls are systematically stripped of their, basically their ability to have a childhood they're expected to be strong. They're not allowed to be vulnerable. They're expected to be precocious and more independent, like you said. And I think that plus I should have articulated this point better. My point is that not only is the American prison industrial system, essentially a way to punish people of color for being of color, because racism is so ingrained in America, systemically, it's the same thing in the media. It's the enforcement of Western beauty, Western white beauty standards of whitewashing people of color. It's basically punishing them by either incarceration or degradation or feelings of not being enough, because you constantly have this one image of how you should be shoved in your face. The whole thing is basically to me, from my perspective, smacks of punishing people of color for being of color, if that makes sense.

Speaker 2 ([18:24](#)):

Absolutely. And to that, to add onto that, um, the cultural appropriation component of we're going to tell you what beauty is, but then we're going to take your like cultural components and put it on white folks and then called that the standard

Speaker 3 ([18:41](#)):

Yeah. Or that's fashion. But if black women do it, it's ghetto, but now white women are doing it. So it's fashion. Yeah. I think it's really creating the concept of the other, right. Because it's really easy to not care about things or people, or, you know, it's too, that you don't feel are associated with your tribe. Right. And those are things that are almost inherent to human nature, but it's our responsibility with, to know that that is something that people almost inherently do, but you can guard against that. You can fight that. You can question what, where is this media portrayal coming from? There can be questions of like, let's have conversations with these actual people. There's a lot of times where, you know, we take for granted, especially as someone who lives in a city, that's quite multicultural that I'm going to have exposure to a lot of people who are different to me and understand, and welcome and thrive in an environment like that.

Speaker 3 ([19:36](#)):

Whereas there's a lot of large parts of this country that don't necessarily have communities that are going to be exposed in sort of any healthy way with minorities, with BiPAP, anybody, right. Anybody who just doesn't necessarily look like them. And so media plays this especially crucial role in these environments where you don't have access, um, to have those conversations with someone that you genuinely know and truly know, or in a safe place to do that. And so I think there's a responsibility that media really has to take on and understanding and slowing themselves down to check their own biases. Right. Because everyone has them. And again, recognizing the responsibility they play, especially in environments where there is not as much multiculturalism.

Speaker 4 ([20:19](#)):

Yeah. I mean, me personally, growing up in a very white area in Texas, it took a lot of uncomfortable moments in college and beyond college of having to examine myself and think, well, why, why do I think that, why did my brain just say that like, there's no, you know, it just takes discomfort, um, growing pains, if you will lean, lean into the discomfort. Exactly. Because if I didn't, I wouldn't be able to have incredible conversations like this right now. So I'm grateful for it. What more should the government be doing to address the problem of unequal, incarceration, rates and rates of criminalization among BiPAP, especially among black and Latin X communities, despite the similar rates of usage.

Speaker 6 ([21:19](#)):

Wow. That is a very complex question. That is what I'm hearing, uh, from Courtney and Karen, um, they're hitting the nail on the head on a lot of things. You know, you have to go from a, to Z on the criminal justice system where, you know, first and foremost, let's look at the policing models that we are utilizing. Yes, there is change happening and it's happening much too slowly, but, uh, moving more toward our, like relationship based in the community of community policing models and not this, uh, punitive exercise, uh, that we're seeing right on the front lines. And then to, um, you have, when you're talking about bail money, people, uh, officers will use a lot of ancillary charges such as cannabis usage to add on to charges and bail. So it won't allow people to get out on their own or cognizance. We're able to meet those bells.

Speaker 6 ([22:19](#)):

So some of these folks will sit in, in the County jail for months and months and months. And some of those folks in IRR in jail that are on drug charges, they're in there longer than people who actually do violent crimes. So there's some issues there. And so then we start, uh, pairing toward, you know, the actual court system. Um, you know, really in an essence, um, the court system is not very accessible to anybody that doesn't have money, especially folks in marginalized community. Uh, how much does it cost to hire a lawyer? You know, I mean, in my day and age, when I was young, yes, I, I've been through the court system. So I've been on both sides of the fence and, um, it's hard and in a lot of times, and with, you know, just the, the log jam of all of these cases, uh, creates these very unfair, um, dispositions of plea deals and other things, um, instead of going to trial.

Speaker 6 ([23:30](#)):

And then if you go to trial and if you don't have access to resources to defend yourself in a manner to, to protect your own Liberty, you're in trouble and that, that needs to change. So that judicial system unto itself in those courts needs to be highly accessible and in all ways. And then of course the incarceration rate, uh, touching on that earlier is, is having that restorative justice, having, um, rehabilitative services in, in, throughout that incarceration using, uh, community corrections where people, you know, if they need some management or monitoring to get through a Rocky situation, or if something happens, what if they, what if they have a job, but if they're employed, what if, what if things are going on, there needs to be other things that we are not taking people out of and putting them in a system, if there are a lot of things in their life that is not falling apart or, or, you know, if it's not a heinous crime as such for that nature.

Speaker 6 ([24:32](#)):

And then, you know, then post sentence, uh, expungement, especially with, uh, cannabis, uh, my bread and butter in my professional life was helping people get jobs that have severe and persistent mental

health issues. Um, but we would, uh, we would get a lot of people out of our halfway house in Jefferson County, Colorado that, uh, trying to get jobs with felony and or misdemeanor convictions. And it narrows the ability for someone to be employed because that is just like a Scarlet letter, a on everybody's back, you know, I mean, even me coming out and I will be very transparent, you know, um, got in trouble with some alcohol abuse when I was younger, I had to spend a lot of money and, and work extra hours to just get those sealed and expunged if I wanted to, uh, better myself economically. And, you know, I'm, I'm pretty privileged where I was growing up and, and whatnot. And even just me, just from an economic standpoint of being a white male, um, I had trouble too, even accessing some of that, could it, so I can't even understand how it would be for other folks of color and marginalized community. So that's my 2 cents on that one

Speaker 3 ([25:49](#)):

Super comprehensive and definitely touched on some of the points that I was going to make. Um, and even more, I learned a lot from your response, Chris, so thank you for that. Uh, great. I think, um, you know, just even also hearing your anecdote is really moving because I think have those resources and anchoring that for even people with privilege, um, that it's difficult to navigate those court systems and, and the criminal justice system as a whole. So thank you for sharing

Speaker 4 ([26:19](#)):

That leads into my next question. This one is for anyone. Um, have you guys heard of any current up-and-coming legislation proposed or otherwise addressing people currently incarcerated or formerly convicted of marijuana offenses, such as minor possession, things like that? There is the more act,

Speaker 5 ([26:44](#)):

And I think that's actually something that's really important for people to be paying attention to right now. And, um, it's been delayed already. It's been delayed multiple times and it was supposed to be voted on by the end of this month, um, by the us house of representatives. And so definitely suggest that anyone who is passionate about this, uh, about passionate about marginalized communities, or think that there wants to participate in writing the wrong really pay attention to that more act, because it will have significant impacts and a ripple effect across the whole of the criminal justice system, as much as it's addressing cannabis specifically.

Speaker 2 ([27:17](#)):

Yeah. And to piggyback off that, I, um, have kind of been focusing on New Jersey weirdly because they're, you know, about to vote and again, timely conversation because we are, you know, uh, right around election corner. Um, and with all that I know governor Murphy, you know, he has come out and talked about and recognize, like there is a racial disparity, especially in New Jersey, especially as one of the top three States that, um, is wildly disproportionate in their incarceration rates and, um, arrest rates, especially around cannabis with civically. Um, and with that, you know, I, I appreciate that he recognizes the racial disparity. Um, but I'm not seeing a lot of, you know, like what is actually going to be done about the currently incarcerated folks and, you know, what's going to be done action step wise in the future. Like, there's a lot of conversation again, to the media point around, um, this is going to help stimulate the economy. It's going to help pull us out of this, you know, whole, well, whatever that, um, pit that, you know, coronavirus has left us in. And I hear a lot about this, like economics and that's w yes, good point. But the conversation around, you know, the, the people that are still locked up is, is not really happening as prominently.

Speaker 6 ([28:46](#)):

Absolutely great points. There needs to be a strong reparative narrative. Um, I'm in a prohibition state right now in Wisconsin. And, um, we're just trying to even get some kind of slim medical, but we are at least starting to force the governor to talk more about at least decriminalization. Um, obviously my, my policy just personal as this just go with, uh, legalization and expungement all across the board, but, um, we know that government works slow so that, that reparative narrative needs to need to be front and center. Are you with both? Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([29:25](#)):

Absolutely. Um, and including expungement, as well as re-entry, I think, especially in the cannabis industry, we, you know, last prisoner project, national bailout, like wonderful organizations, but I, we keep talking about expungement and we don't talk enough about re-entry, um, which I think definitely also needs to be a focus within the industry and in the government

Speaker 5 ([29:51](#)):

Very much so. And it's actually one of the reasons I think the more act is particularly interesting. I mean, what, how it would actually be, you know, especially, you know, how it's going to be rolled out and implemented, should it pass is going to make a big difference, but at least the way it's been drafted, I think the fact that they, you know, there's a recognition of re-entry programs of creating funds that actually fuel programs for skill creation, job creation, and really creating, uh, wealth opportunities and generation opportunities for, uh, minority and marginalized communities. And I that's key, right? Because one of the facts of the cannabis industry is that it is a wealth generation opportunity that rarely happens in a generation. And so with that, you it's, you have to go beyond just expungement. It really does have to include how do you allow for people that have been punished for these things historically to actually participate in the legal system and actually have an opportunity for wealth generation through it? Because we see this across the board to where so many of these folks are actually, um, recruited by other, um, more institutional capital or institutional, um, institutionally powered entities, bringing these folks onto their teams and learning from them, but then ultimately not necessarily keeping them on their teams or giving them the opportunity to actually be the ones that profit off of their, their skillset and their knowledge base.

Speaker 4 ([31:15](#)):

I think that those are all great points. And I think that that actually ties in really well to the next point that I was going to bring up. Um, do you guys feel that the cannabis industry specifically is evolving to become more inclusive and what more can and should be done to become more inclusive? Not only in terms of representation, but also to, I guess, become more inclusive of those formerly incarcerated on marijuana charges?

Speaker 2 ([31:58](#)):

Yeah, I mean, do I think the cannabis industry is getting more inclusive? I think, like Chris said it's as slow and incremental as governmental change, which makes absolutely no sense because there are way less bureaucracy, you know, bureaucratic red lines and, you know, I'll just all these like different things. I'm like, why is it so hard for the cannabis industry to just be more inclusive, especially when it was built off the backs of black and Brown people like that, that side is basically my response, but, um, we did see a push in June, um, obviously for, you know, more inclusivity, more diversity. Um, but I think like the rest of the country, um, the cannabis industry has kind of reverted back to the pre June 10 and conversation.

I think it has died down significantly. Um, I had, I had not high hopes for that conversation, continuing at the intensity and velocity that it was back in June. Um, and I just, I wish just the country in general, but especially the cannabis industry. I wish people wouldn't wait for a black person to die to do something. And that's, that's what I have to say about that.

Speaker 5 ([33:26](#)):

Uh, a second that Karen, I second that a hundred percent, I think one of the things that, uh, similarly to Karen Karen's answer, I would say, I think there's more conversations taking place, but I don't think that there's more inclusivity. I think there's less, um, which is why sometimes those conversations have to, I think that's why we are seeing an uplift in some of those conversations, because in the beginning, uh, you know, there were equity, at least in California, of course, was a core part of that conversation of legalization, especially for adult use. And because some of those programs didn't work out in the way that people anticipated that they would, it doesn't mean that they're not valid. They're still a hundred percent valid. They are, you know, to throw off those programs because, you know, parts of them didn't work is just absolutely ridiculous.

Speaker 5 ([34:18](#)):

If we were to do that across the board, we throw all of our regulations. Right. Pretty much because we can see that, you know, as long as they're, you know, if they're hurting private entities and those types of businesses, then you're going to see those changes. But when we talk about things like equity programs, when they're not necessarily performing at a hundred, and I say again, I mean, brackets a hundred or air air quotes, a hundred percent, what ends up happening is that you're not paying it. We're not paying attention to who are these regulations actually benefiting. Right. And who's what money is actually behind those regulations. So as much as I would say that the conversations are increasing, it's actually born of a need because there is actually less inclusivity.

Speaker 6 ([35:00](#)):

I would. Bingo. Absolutely. What does, who and who is behind those regulations, you know, while we're seeing in Illinois as well, they have out of social equity belt, those applications. And, um, I don't know a lot of the details that's going on in that state, but it doesn't look good. Um, but, uh, speaking with Eric, um, and a few others and knowing some of these, uh, regulations across the state is whereas the real capital access to capital access to the training access to implement operations. So folks not only can own, uh, businesses throughout the cannabis supply chain, but also employ folks in marginalized communities and create their own wealth. Instead of always having to be tied to either somebody who has deep pockets that is just putting a social equity on paper, but it's not really going to the folks of color. Um, so that just needs to change it. That has that real capital. Um, obviously there's so much more complexity of this, but that's one thing I see off the top of my, my head that, uh, that needs to happen in carving off a lot of money for that.

Speaker 4 ([36:26](#)):

Yeah. And to contextualize statistically, just some of the things that we've been saying, um, according to Leafly, his 2020 job report, the cannabis industry provided 243,700 full-time equivalent jobs. And of these less than a fifth of the people involved at a stakeholder or owner level are people of color. And of those only 4.3% are African-American. Additionally, some state licensing boards also have good moral character clauses, which allows licensing authorities to redirect applicants for past criminal convictions, further discriminating against those that have been formerly incarcerated. Um, and there are some

States that require license applicants to produce a diversity plan, but there's no actual enforcement of those plans. Just, just wanted to add some, uh, numerical context to how disgusting the lack of representation is and how exclusive the cannabis industry is in nature.

Speaker 5 ([37:43](#)):

I think one of the things too, is that those conversations and these conversations about inclusivity and the participation of formerly incarcerated or marginalized communities in this industry seem to be had pretty much predominantly in our industry, but we don't see a lot of this conversation taking place in, you know, as opposed to, let's say, we're trade media, let's talk about like mainstream media, right? And we need mainstream media to pay attention to this, because guess who's buying these products, right. And the people who are buying these products are essentially voting with their money. And so, you know, to create again, no, it's not about charity. It's about real wealth generation, as you were saying also earlier, Chris, about making sure that there's real capital behind these organizations so that they can actually create their capital right. And create their business and sustainable business infrastructure in their communities, especially because the war on drugs has completely disenfranchised these communities.

Speaker 5 ([38:37](#)):

When you start pulling out a majority of the working force in a community, you are guaranteeing that it's going to be impoverished. You are guaranteeing that there's going to be quote unquote, increased criminality, right? Because people don't have access to the resources that they're supposed to have access to that other communities do have access to. And again, it's, this is not something that's inadvertently happened. This is all things that have been done by design partially to fuel this industrial prison complex. So equally on the other side to address the fact that you have that, you know, society and former regulations have been so punitive to these communities and making it so that there's no voting ability there or reduced voting ability, there's reduced ability to create capital looking at even just old Paul housing policies. What does that mean in terms of people's access, right?

Speaker 5 ([39:27](#)):

Or wealth generation through the ability to get subsidies in terms of buying your own property and what have you like policies that are rooted in the seventies? All of these things do impact essentially where we are now. Um, as far as, um, you know, the war on drugs and its impact on these communities in turn, uh, it's about looking at how do you create these wealth centers? How do we make up for the fact that wealth has been pulled out of these communities and put into other people's pockets? And again, putting that wealth back into these communities for sustainability, for pride, for ownership, for, uh, you know, just again, human nature at people, this is what people want. People want their communities to thrive. It doesn't matter what the color of your skin, that's what people want. Um, but again, recognizing that with different levels of privilege or ability to realize those in your own communities are very different, depending on how you engage with the government on a regular basis, or it engages with you really,

Speaker 4 ([40:28](#)):

I think a lot of the lack of inclusivity, there's also, there's so many barriers to entry of the industry. Like the policies that you mentioned. Like, I'm not sure if you guys are familiar with the practice of redlining and how that influences loan denial. Um, I'll explain that a little bit. Just in case the listeners are not aware so decades after the civil war government agencies began drawing lines around districts that

were deemed undesirable for public and private financial investment blinds of the districts and circled the majority BiPAP populated neighborhoods. Those maps were then used well into the eighties to deny inhabitants of the districts loans for anything, from housing to business, as well as education. This process of loan denial based upon quote unquote poor financial risk is known as red lining. And while it's not legal today, the repercussions are still felt in many cities.

Speaker 4 ([41:34](#)):

Lining has severely handicapped people of color's ability to build the foundation of generational wealth. Given that college education and owning a home are historically the easiest ways for an American family to build wealth due to this areas that were red line are extremely prone to cycles of generational poverty and investigation into the Atlanta housing market showed that even the day, banks are more willing to grant a loan to a low income white family than to a medium to high income African-American family, lack of investment in neighborhood resources and inability to secure housing loans leads to low property value, which in turn lends itself to low funding for public schools as public schools are more often than not funded by property taxes. So a whole bunch of horrendous policies are that aren't even legal today are still affecting communities of color in ways that have ramifications well before us and well beyond us. So that's, um, uh, further historical context for that. It all feeds in turns on each other, you know, and it just like turns into this like gigantic snowball of disaster. Absolutely. And it leads to higher rates of unemployment among African-Americans. I mean, I have the statistics right here. Um, job applicants are twice as likely to get a call back when they have a white sounding name, even if their qualifications are exactly the same or less than those of their nonwhite sounding competitors. So basically if you have a name like John Smith, even if your less educated, under-qualified, you're more likely to get a call back just based on the way your name sounds

Speaker 5 ([43:33](#)):

Also, thanks for sharing the statistics. Um, I mean, cause I think that's one of the key things too, is that we see the impact of these policies, you know, 30, 20, 40 years later. Right. Because, and they're really, actually not very long ago, we're talking about our parents, we're talking about, you know, some of us, you know, we grew up during those times and maybe dating myself a little bit there, but you know, that's just very real though. And so I think we, you know, on a daily basis can easily be lulled into a false sense of security, of like, Oh, especially as someone, you know, just to be really Frank, you know, who ha who comes from a certain place of privilege, right? Asian American experiences are different to black and Latin X experiences, right. They're not the same. And it's, you know, again, it's recognizing that, first of all, number one, recognizing that we all have different experiences.

Speaker 5 ([44:24](#)):

Um, but especially in these cases that those experiences are well-documented and we have an opportunity to learn from it for this industry. You know, that's the sad part I think, is that we can see the impacts and that what is good about is that again, these conversations are happening, that equity programs are being put forward. There is a recognition of them, but again, I think redlining, as you had mentioned earlier, all of these conversations need to take place more so in the mainstream media, because again, it's about putting economies of scale back into these communities for the communities. So

Speaker 2 ([44:57](#)):

That's great. Um, and I think Emily, you did ask in the previous question or the question that we're still on is, um, you know, what can the cannabis industry do to be more inclusive, especially for, you know, formerly incarcerated folks it's like hire them. It's it's as simple as that, um, I had an organization that asked like, it's, it's so hard to hide. Like we don't do it cause it's so it's so hard to find and I'm like, it's really not. You're just, you're just choosing not to take the time, um, you know, to find those folks and, and to help and support them because it's really not that hard. And there are plenty of them out there that, that are looking for roles within your organization. So get out there and do it because excuses, we don't do excuses.

Speaker 5 ([45:48](#)):

I think one thing that is nice that we're starting to see a little bit more of on websites is actually education of the shopper at the point that they're making a sale. And I think it's one of those situations where, um, you know, a lot of conversations actually right now are talking about the role of tech and society, right. Especially with things like the social dilemma being on Netflix. Uh, but it's also important to remember that those tools, you know, can definitely be used for very negative consequences, but they can also be used for positive consequences. And it's really about taking a step back and understand the, how the bias impacts the development of these tools and then which in turn impact how people use these tools. So one positive thing that I do see that's coming out of tech and I'm seeing some of this in the cannabis space, as well as mechanisms within web products that are designed to slow people down against their own bias.

Speaker 5 ([46:37](#)):

And that's a really, really key thing. Right? And so, you know, tech is often obsessed, you know, just even for ourselves in our own platform, we're obsessed about how do we get people to where they need to go as quickly as possible to do the things that they want to do or need to do. Right. But the reality is by doing things through, um, wrote or just something that you're so used to, oftentimes you don't have an opportunity for, even as an average person who may not necessarily be someone who is, you know, you're quote unquote quote, you know, gun toting racist, right? Like, but people have these biases. So, um, I think the neighborly app and the tech industry actually put employment, um, tools in place that actually slowed people down in terms of them reporting people in those local areas as quote unquote criminals, when the reality is they were just present and they were people of color and that's why they were being reported.

Speaker 5 ([47:28](#)):

And so that, you know, they took the responsibility of slowing people down before they actually submitted a report saying like, are you sure that this person's actually doing something wrong? And similarly on a positive side, you're starting to see a lot of, um, companies start identifying at least the fact that there are minor minority cannabis owners, right. Or businesses that are available and shoppable as, so by increasing the amount of filters or by increasing the amount of highlighting these businesses within their platforms that in its own right, is a way in which these larger organizations can support, um, also larger equity organizations. And so it's really important that you give the shopper the opportunity to even know that this is something that they should consider and that they can consider when they're making a purchase,

Speaker 2 ([48:18](#)):

All the snaps for Courtney. That was so eloquent.

Speaker 5 ([48:24](#)):

Well, I'm like, ah, okay, well, yeah.

Speaker 2 ([48:26](#)):

I love when you make us think about things that we're not already thinking about. You're like, Hey, think like technology, I'm like, Oh technology.

Speaker 5 ([48:37](#)):

I like when you make us remember that, we have to remember these things all the time. It's so important. And that's one of the things that it is, you know, that is nice about the cannabis space. I have to say, there's a lot of folks who are passionate and having conversations and Karen, you are definitely leading the charge on a lot of that. So I always love it. When you share the knowledge, knowledge bombs,

Speaker 2 ([48:57](#)):

I feel like I bring the emotion and you bring the logic.

Speaker 5 ([49:09](#)):

Um, so

Speaker 4 ([49:11](#)):

It's really all of the like concrete questions that I had, but I just wanted to give, um, some time if you guys had any other topics that you wanted to broach in regards to mass incarceration and the cannabis industry, um, any personal anecdote, um, or another possible thing that we could talk about is, um, allyship within the cannabis community and how can people in the cannabis industry be better allies. So it's really up to you guys, whatever I figured I would let you guys have sort of a free reign in case there was anything that you felt needed to be covered or wanted to cover.

Speaker 2 ([50:00](#)):

I think for me, um, no, no personal anecdotes or anything, um, or else I'm gonna start burning bridges. But, uh, um, I do think there just what had happened in June and what is happening now, there's such a stark difference and I wish the momentum had maintained. And I hope that, you know, we can get that, that progress back again. Cause I know specifically Seattle where I am, um, you know, the mayor, mayor Durkan had promised all these, um, we were going to defund the, you know, police department. We were going to reroute the funds, you know, towards other things. We were going to really rework the budget. Um, and at the very last minute there was this big chance that all that was going to go down the drain and all the work that had been done was going to be lost. Um, it kind of met in the middle. Um, we didn't get everything we wanted, but we did get something which is apparently, you know, the best we can hope for these days. Um, but yeah, I mean, again, to Chris's point, like it's, it's just so incremental and I'm ready for the grassroots movement to really like continue to maintain momentum and gain momentum because we, we can't depend on the government alone for things to change. Like we need to organize as a community together.

Speaker 5 ([51:27](#)):

Sorry, I'm not, I'm not cool guys. I'm just going to put that out there. I'm not cool at all. So, but I think as an anecdote, one that really stuck out in my mind as we were launching amnesia as a business, which was about, you know, maybe the second quarter of last year. So the first year in California, when we transitioned into the adult use market and reaching out to an influencer that we wanted to collaborate with on a, on a campaign. And, um, this is a black American influencer and reaching out one of the worst things I heard, which was so unfortunate was, you know, everyone at that point was celebrating California, becoming a recreational market, right. Everyone's talking about how it was going to be a cash cow. This was so exciting. Um, the overall cultural zeitgeist of it was very positive for the most part.

Speaker 5 ([52:13](#)):

But in that one conversation I had with this gentleman, essentially, he told me that he had just recently been arrested for cannabis consumption because he was hanging out with his friends and let's be honest. The reality is his crime was being black in America. And so he was on the street, um, hanging out with friends. That's something that, you know, I myself do all the time. And as a person with privilege, I recognize that that is not my experience. And you know, here we here, I was reaching out to him, excited about, Hey, let's represent a product together. Let's sell, let's work together to build this community, educate your community on product. And like which products might be best for them. But ultimately what ended up happening is that, you know, it, it created this awful, you know, recognition of the realities of what this looks like.

Speaker 5 ([53:04](#)):

Right. We have one side of the equation that was super excited about adult use and recreational legalization. Uh, but then on the other side, even after that, even in a state, as quote unquote, progressive as California, you're still having people who are black Americans being arrested for cannabis use, not selling nothing, right. We're talking about personal consumption. And this is after the laws had passed in California. And this is not in some middle of nowhere. We're talking about this happening in LA County. So it's really important to recognize that as we have these conversations and as we get to be as excited as we are about legalization, no matter, even in States where things are legal, even in States where things are, you know, deemed to be progressive, the ultimate reality is that it's not necessarily safe for black and Latin X communities to be consuming cannabis, which is something so many of us get to enjoy with no issue.

Speaker 2 ([53:58](#)):

Yeah. I remember the time here in Seattle where me and a couple other Asian white women were walking down the street and we were all smoking a joint, um, when, back when we could share joints, um, and there was a cop across the street, he was like, what do you ladies have? And we were like, Oh, we'll put it out. Sorry, like such a different experience truly. Um, and recognizing in that moment that like, Oh my, if I did not look like this, it would not be that situation at all.

Speaker 4 ([54:32](#)):

I dunno if there's anything anyone else wanted to add or discuss, hold your friends accountable, white people hold your friends accountable. That's it. That's all I had to ask.

Speaker 2 ([54:47](#)):

Not just white people, anyone. Right? Like, especially like all my, all my Asian folks I'm addressing the worst. Like it's, it's time, Asian folks, white friends, like whatever it is we need to speak up too. You know, it's not just, it's a community effort truly.

Speaker 5 ([55:06](#)):

That is so true. Karen, especially, I mean, you're right. I mean, Asian-Americans, we definitely need to get out and vote and recognize that, you know, again, we may not have the black and Latin X experience, but we're also still people of color, especially in terms of how, um, culturally we're perceived and you know, we're, we're the perpetual foreigner. So just remember that we need to be voting alongside other marginalized groups, because as much as sometimes we don't feel marginalized as marginalized. We are also marginalized when we really kind of get down to it again, not to the same extent and not wanting to try and draw a false equivalency. But the reality is that's just true. And we have, you know, we're just, we need to come out and vote. And Karen you'd be proud of. I finally got my mom's side of the family to vote, which is good. They're all registered, which last month my mom and I were like, Oh no, I feel really bad. I don't think the rest of our family vote. So not this time.

Speaker 2 ([56:04](#)):

Yes. Progress. I love it.

Speaker 4 ([56:07](#)):

My, my grandparents for the first time. Well, I don't know about my grandma. She might not be voting, but for the first time, my grandpa is not voting Republican. So progress, progress can happen in generation.

Speaker 3 ([56:24](#)):

It's true. It's true. Two-party thing. I'm like, you guys just do your research, pay attention to what people like this two party thing, loyalty to the party. Like what is this? No unnecessary. Exactly. And also like identified as a problem from legitimately day. One of this country's like, come off, first of all down, she's looking a little raggedy. Let's start over. Yeah. We're in a dumb one, one bull at a time. You know what I mean? Is it time for that yet? I can contribute. I'm ready for that. Well, thank you guys for being here. It was really great talking with you guys. Um, I really enjoyed learning from y'all and hearing those perspectives and I can't wait for the listeners to hear it. Thank you. Thanks for having us and hosting this conversation. [inaudible]

Speaker 1 ([57:39](#)):

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Speaker 3 ([58:48](#)):

[inaudible].

