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## Why New York City needs Legal Medical Marijuana

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Posted by David The Expert on: Thursday, February 19, 2015

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**Marijuana has been shown time and time again to be a safe and effective medicine, and it needs to be made available to those of us who need it in NYC.**



New Yorkers demand legal access to cannabis

I suffer from chronic nerve pain. An intense, agonizing pain in my lower back that never goes away. I'm in pain when I wake up, I'm in pain when I'm walking to the grocery store, I'm in pain while I'm sleeping, and I'm in pain while I'm sitting at my desk writing this. There is no escape from nerve pain like this. Nothing can repair my back, nothing can help me fully heal from my injury, and nothing can make the pain go away... except for marijuana.

The pain started about 5 years ago when a drunk driver plowed into my car, leaving me in a mangled wreck on the side of the highway. They performed some emergency surgery on me at the hospital, and patched me up. They told me that the pain should subside over time. Since then, I've gone through months of arduous physical therapy, I've seen several specialists, and I've been prescribed too many medications. My doctors tell me that my spine and muscle tissue have long since healed so more surgery is not necessary, and that I'm actually in pretty good physical shape, but the neuropathic pain remains most likely due to some undetectable damage to the nerves themselves in my back.

Over the years, I've sought out every relief imaginable for my nerve pain. Doctors have prescribed all sorts of anticonvulsants and narcotic pain killers which have some awful side effects and a nasty likelihood of developing a dependence or addiction. They've also recommended regimens of vitamins and supplements, special exercises, massage therapy, and even acupuncture. But none of it helps. I've also tried just about every over-the-counter pain killer from Tylenol to herbal remedies, all to no avail. I was faced with the revolting choice of living in constant pain for the rest of my life, or allowing myself to become addicted to truly nasty prescription drugs.

In the first 8 months of 2014 under Mayor de Blasio, there were roughly 20,000 arrests for simple marijuana possession throughout the five boroughs. 86% of them were blacks and Latinos.

[Source: [Report based on data provided by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services](#)]

I had heard the rumors that cannabis could be useful in treating nerve pain like mine, but I never thought about trying it because I knew it was illegal. It never even registered as an option in my mind. It wasn't until one day when I was visiting with my friend, Terry, that the topic of medical marijuana came up. I told him that I was practically willing to try anything to kill this pain but I'd never risk breaking the law. I guess he was overwhelmed with sympathy watching me limp as I walked to his kitchen for a glass of water, because by the time I came back Terry had his stash out on the table and he was packing the bowl of his small glass pipe, and insisted that I take a hit.

What I experienced, I can only describe as a miracle. I smoked a tiny bit of my friend's weed, and the pain vanished. It was like I instantly woke up from the worst nightmare of my life. The pain was completely gone. I was ecstatic. I finally felt like myself again for the first time in years. I stood up and walked around the room - no pain. I sat back down, still holding the pipe in my hand, and I stared at it in absolute disbelief that this illegal, vilified little plant could completely cure my incurable pain with just one toke.

My fears about marijuana being illegal instantly disappeared, right along with my pain. All I could think was "this is it, this is the cure I've been looking for". Terry shared my excitement, and we both shed a tear or two because I was finally free of pain. He gave me the rest of his stash to take home and a packet of rolling papers. I walked home nervously that night, but so excited to take another hit before bed knowing I would finally be able to fall asleep without agony and without a headache in the morning from the pain pills.

An overwhelming 88 percent of registered New York voters support medical marijuana, and a 57 percent majority of NY voters also support legalizing small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

[Source: [2014 Quinnipiac University Poll](#)]

Over the next few days, I burned through the rest of Terry's gift to me. Each time the effects started to wear off, I would take another hit, and again the pain would vanish, and I was happy. I learned to embrace the fun aspects of pot too, like the munchies and listening to good music, and I even managed to beat down the mild paranoia about getting caught with it. Half a joint each morning would get me most of the way through the work day with a tolerable level of pain, but without impairing my abilities to do my job, and I could ride out the rest of the day by loading up on coffee. Then when I got home, I would unwind and relieve myself of pain with another toke.

But as my supply started to dwindle, I began to worry. This was instantly the most important medicine to my livelihood, but I had no idea where to get more of it. I asked Terry for help, but he told me he could only get it once in a while when a friend of his came up from another state. I started to ask around with my other friends, dropping hints about medical marijuana and hoping someone would know someone who knows someone else who could help me get my medicine, but I had no luck. My supply ran out, and the pain came back. It was just as bad as it ever was, but this time the pain pills just weren't good enough. I became depressed because I knew the treatment was out there, but I had no way of getting to it. I would have packed up and moved to a medical marijuana state immediately, but I can't; I have too many family and work obligations here in New York.

Legal marijuana in New York City could generate over \$25 million in city taxes in the first year alone. And that's just based on the city's current sales tax rate. Additional taxes for the city would almost certainly be imposed on legal marijuana.

[Source: [The City of New York Independent Budget Office](#)]

This is where the prohibition of marijuana really gets dangerous. After I exhausted any possible leads from my friends, I turned to the internet to find a source of cannabis. I started looking for help on forums and classified sites. I knew that the possibility of running into an undercover officer was high, or even someone dishonest, but I made sure to tread carefully. Soon enough, I found someone willing to meet me at my Manhattan apartment with a baggie of my miracle pain relief. I spoke to him briefly on the phone and asked him subtly about what he could sell me. He gave me one-word answers and agreed to meet me. The whole interaction made me nervous as hell, but my best instincts told me that this guy was probably a legitimate pot dealer. I agreed to meet him, and within an hour he was at my door, wearing an inconspicuous polo shirt and smelling strongly of weed. I bought as much cannabis from him as I could afford with the cash currently in my wallet, and in an instant he was gone. I sat down, my heart still pounding from the nerve-wracking experience, and immediately rolled a new joint. I could already tell that the weed was not as good as Terry's, but it worked anyway. The pain faded away and I slept easily that night.

And that's where I'm at today. I call a man who I met online, who I suspect is essentially a gang member, to come to my home every few weeks to sell me my essential medicine at an extremely high price; and that's only when he bothers to pick up his phone. But every time I call, I have to worry about what could go wrong. What if the police got to him for dealing and he's sitting in jail right now? What if he doesn't have any weed in supply and I'm going to have to go without for however long it takes him to

get more? What if the police started tapping his phone and they're going to show up at my door in an hour instead of him? What if he shows up with a friend or a gun and decides to rob me blind? What if the weed he's selling me is contaminated with pesticides or chemicals?

With a legal marijuana market, New York City could see a whopping net gain of \$431 million every year. This statistic considers the potential taxes collected on marijuana sales, plus the huge savings of the police no longer needing to waste their time and resources enforcing marijuana laws, and the prison and court systems no longer needing to accommodate the countless non-violent marijuana offenders.

[Source: [New York City Office of the Comptroller](#)]

I hate not knowing where my cannabis comes from, or the quality of it, or what's actually in it, or who's selling it to me, or whether I'm even going to have access to it when I need it. I hate fearing that I could go to jail just because I don't want to live in pain.

New Yorkers deserve a legal, regulated market for cannabis. A market that guarantees our medicine is high quality and free of chemicals or pesticides. A market which tells us exactly what kind of strain we're buying and its ratio of THC and cannabinoids. A market where we can buy our medicine reliably in a store designed for selling marijuana instead of from a sketchy man carrying a gun. A market where the high prices are no longer due to the risk of doing illegal business in a city with some of the toughest anti-marijuana laws in the country that wind up funding gangs and cartels, but instead due to the city taxes which could go directly to improving our schools and hospitals.

The four states that have already legalized marijuana in the US haven proven that marijuana is safe for society and that legalization *works*. And the 23 states with medical marijuana have proven that marijuana is an acceptable and truly effective medicine that people really need, even though some of them (including NY) are far too restrictive to be beneficial to most of the people who need it. I fully expect that within the next few years, we will be living in a New York where cannabis is completely legal and accessible to responsible users and people who truly need it. But in the meantime, people like me who are suffering can only hope to find someone who understands that pot is not just a drug for fun that they can sell for some cash on the side - it's our life-saving medicine.

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 Sc00ch • 4 days ago



I feel for you Dave,

I have been suffering from Crohn's Disease since I was a child. Countless of medications including large doses of steroids I took just to maintain my weight. With this disease maintaining one's weight is a constant struggle. When I was 21 I only weighed 90 lbs. I am 5' 8" not tall but I was practically skin and bones none the less. After several stomach surgeries I have been in remission now for several years. I still struggle though with appetite and I never drink Alcohol as it could trigger another flare up. MJ has helped alleviate several of the symptoms related to my disease yet I am looked at as a Criminal for trying to just make myself feel better and actually be social.

The irony in legalization to me is that the people of places like Colorado haven't changed. they got there Weed and went about their lives. It really is not a big deal. Lets just end this silly persecution and go about our lives.

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**Nate Abrams** • 7 days ago

Very touching story , David. I am an upstater who recently was living in SW Florida. I was growing 3 plants in my home for myself and my girlfriend as an alternative to opiates which we were both prescribed. We always ran into problems when it came time to refill our scripts.

Florida was right in the middle of

all the " pill Mills" problems and the D.E.A. was cracking down on legitimate patients who needed their pain meds. We knew going in, that opiates only took you so far before they stopped working unless the dosage was increased, leaving us ever closer to addiction. So, knowing this, I began to grow our own medicine.

I purchased seeds online for strains that proved to be effective for pain and along with the seeds, I purchased everything I needed to grow my own at home in a spare closet. I grew 3 plants to maturity and harvested them and was waiting for them to cure so they were smokeable. At 6 am I heard a loud banging at my door and as I looked through the peek hole, I saw 10 police officers fully dressed in swat gear with guns and dogs and the works. I opened the door and asked what they were here for. The lead cop said they received a tip that I was running a large grow op in my home and that he could smell the strong scent of marijuana even before I opened the door.

He asked me for permission to search the premises for pot and I refused.

He must have asked me at least 5 times and each time I said NO!

Next, he asked if I lived alone and I replied, no. I told them my girlfriend was in the house asleep. He told me to go wake her up and to have her come outside so he could question her. I told him that she had just undergone surgery on her knee just 2 days prior to what was now going on. She and I are both in our early 50's and she had a knee replaced. I told them that she could not stand for long periods with out a walker or that she had to sit down.

The lead cop told me she had to come out of the house or they would have to go in and remove her physically because she might be destroying evidence.

She came to the open door out of fear and they told her to come all the way outside where they told her to stand right there. I told the lead cop she can't stand because she just had surgery but he didn't respond

but he didn't respond.

He told me they would ask a Judge for a search warrant and that it might take as much as 3 hours to get one. In the mean time we would have to wait outside until it arrived.

Knowing how much pain my girl was in and how much more pain standing outside for 3 hours was gonna cause, I relented and told them they could search. I led them right to the room with the grow closet and even though they searched my house they never found the buds I had already harvested which were in my freezer packed inside some food product but they did find my grow lights, fertilizer, growing pots with soil and the stems from the 3 plants and a bunch of dried leaves all in the grow room.

I was arrested on 3 felony counts, Possession, Manufacture and Equipment.

Each felony carried a 5 year prison sentence. I had an earlier felony conviction when I was 17 years old for Grand Theft of an Automobile in another state .

I was facing the 3 strike law in Florida. I was sure I was going away forever but within 2 months after my arrest my first appearance in court was set and when I got to court I was told that the state was dropping all charges against me. They never told me why and I didn't ask. I was so lucky and angry at the same time that as soon as I could afford to, I moved back here to upstate N.Y.

In hindsight, I think they dropped the charges because they coerced me into letting them search by making me choose to let my girlfriend be in pain by standing for 3 hours or letting them search my home.

Anyway, I am not a criminal! I am a person in pain and like you, just trying to control it by whatever means I can. We need to end this war on innocent people.

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**DavidTheExpert** Mod → Nate Abrams • 7 days ago

Wow Nate, this story actually gave me chills. That must have been terrifying. I know that Florida is not exactly the friendliest place for cannabis patients and you were taking a HUGE risk by growing your own plants, but what else were you supposed to do without legitimate access to your medicine? You were so lucky that they dropped the charges.... I'd have to guess that they probably realized that you weren't growing it to sell to anyone - just for personal use - so they figured it wasn't worth pursuing against you. They still could have nailed you to the wall if they had wanted to.

Anyway, thanks for sharing this. Hopefully we will all have better luck in NY. And by the way, you may be interested in this news which just broke the other day:

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/news...> The NYC city council is formally encouraging the NY state legislature to pass two separate marijuana bills, one of which would further decriminalize it to decrease the possible penalties on patients and recreational users, and the other would fully legalize and regulate it. We're making progress bit by bit!

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**DavidTheExpert** Mod • 22 days ago

Thanks to everybody for reading and for your kind words, it means a lot to me. I'm sure I will



make it with your wonderful support, and I know we will see the end of prohibition soon!

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