Whipping Boys and Legal Weed

For those of you who are unaware of my story, my name is Jonathan Wall. I am twenty-seven years of age and the former CEO of Green Resource, a cannabis company based in California. Presently, I am being held at the Chesapeake Detention Center, a maximum-security lockup located in Baltimore, Maryland where I’ve been awaiting trial in federal court on charges pertaining to the conspiracy to distribute cannabis. If convicted, I face anywhere from the mandatory minimum sentence of ten years, all the way up to life imprisonment.

Of course, it is without a doubt that learning of my current plight came as shocking, revelatory news to all who know me personally. Especially for those who discovered it via broadcasting in the media. But, unfortunately in the grand scheme of things, it cannot be considered news at all, not in the slightest. For we as Americans have idly sat by thinking, “Better them than us…” for the last hundred years as the federal government has taken away our neighbors and thrown the into cages over the alleged involvement in growing, sharing, and even using a holistic herb. Sure, the idea of it appalls quite a bit more of us today than it did back during the inception of this medieval practice. However, that doesn’t diminish from the sadistic reality that imprisoning men and women in this country for a plant is about as American of a thing as drone strikes and baseball.

Granted, it would be one thing if that’s where the story ended: cannabis being flat outlawed. A firm and concrete, unwavering stance of which all individuals would be equally held. There would be no grey area exclusivity with sanctioned avenues to develop state of the art multi-million-dollar cultivation facilities. Also, perhaps heads of state would be less inclined to publicly admit of their personal experimentation with the plant. But, then again, he did say that he never inhaled…. Nevertheless, absolute cannabis prohibition, however unjust and unfashionable, would be nothing more than just another sanctimonious sacrilege to the collective intelligence and integrity of our participatory democracy. Committed by the very people of who we elect to represent our beliefs and best interest.

However no, regrettably, that’s not where the story ends. For in order to embody the true American spirit of systemic nepotism we allow the opulent and elite in this country to monopolize a fledgling multi-billion-dollar industry. All simultaneously on the backs of the layman and proletarian who languish in prison for partaking in the exact same enterprise. The entire matter is ludicrous in such egregious proportion that it would almost be comical if the consequences weren’t so abysmal and disturbing. Those being the literal decimation of thousands of lives in this country, all becoming lost within the bowels of America’s vast network of penitentiaries and animal factories.

Yet all of it for no valid meaning or cause, since other Americans are given carte blanche to make colossal fortunes from growing and selling the very same plant. Although notwithstanding, this is America and tucked indiscreetly behind the whole life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness façade. There is a political system so locked into step with corporate greed that what is good and beneficial for the American people has to forever play second-fiddle to the wants and desires of pharmaceutical companies and multi-national conglomerates. The sad truth is that as long as our elected representatives in Congress aren’t subjected to term limits and we allow them to be bribed and bought via the practice of lobbying, then institutional integrity in our government will forever be out of grasp.

Even so, I still can’t help but hold strong conviction that we as a people can transcend the rot and corruption that’s seeped its way into the heart of our political system because things don’t have to be this way. Truthfully, maybe that’s what I love about this experiment we call the United States of America. There’s an unshakeable, inherent optimism for a better self, even in the bleakest of circumstances. Since at the end of the day, much of the malfeasance and wrongdoings in this country have the potential to be temporary. All it takes is the galvanizing of the public, vindicated in the truth, to abolish the most magnanimous of social iniquities. Our democracy is a young, growing, ever-living and evolving entity that’s comprised of all of us and made up of our decisions. As well as the decisions of those who came before us. However, that doesn’t mean that we aren’t free to emancipate ourselves from the erroneous mistakes of the past that serve no beneficent purpose in our future. For it’s one thing to have to pay for the sins of our fathers, so to speak. The inevitable mistakes that come as by-products of humanity’s progress and development. But it’s an entirely different matter for us to lay down defeated and resigned, jaded and indifferent, aspiring only to tune out and desensitize ourselves to what feels like the unseen hand of fate. Because when all is said and done, we are the ones who decide what we accept and adapt to, or decisively abolish, in this brave new world bestowed upon us by our forebearers. By tolerating and assenting to injustice, we only make ourselves its accomplice.

It's hardly a question that right now we are at potentially the most pivotal point in the evolution and development of the human race; in both our relationships with one another and our connection to the planet of which we live. But in order to achieve our potential and earn the sustainable and salubrious future that we desire, it’s essential that we undergo a comprehensive social reckoning. To not only shed light on our society’s many antiquated customs but to shed the dead weight of the archaic and malignant conventions in themselves. After all, there’s no room for the dark shadows from our past to loom over the auspicious Eden of our pending dreams. Ending the war on the American people by ruse of the cannabis plant, just like the profit-driven annihilation of our planet’s environment, as well as our out-of-control police in this country who gun down our brothers, sisters, and neighbors with impunity, in addition to the entire farcical war on drugs in its totality, these are all blots, blemishes, and strains on the collective ethos of our society. Long overdue of not necessarily atonement, but of our transcendental rise from them into a better world that’s free from their weight and consequence. The liberation from these anathemas to our prosperous existence that we have placed like a millstone around our collective necks should be more than a civic covenant. It should be seen and respected for what it is: our karmic duty to the continuity of the species.

Although in a way, doing time in prison for this plant that I love is a bit of a rite of passage. An entrance and acceptance amongst a select group of human beings who have sacrificed everything at the hands of the federal government’s fallacious with hunt. However, I can’t help but feel as though human sacrifice should no longer be necessary in the fight to free the cannabis plant. After all, last time I checked the cannabis plant was pretty free these days. Free enough that it is legally accessible in one form or another in the majority of the country. That includes both the seat of the federal government, Washington, DC, as well as the state that the federal government is prosecuting me in. There’s legal commercial cannabis grows with tens of millions of dollars invested into them right down the street from the detention center I am imprisoned in. In fact, the city of Baltimore considers the possession of 50 lbs. of cannabis at one time to not be a cause worthy of any criminal charges. There’s even a plethora of cannabis companies in this country that are so large that they are publicly-traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The profits to be make in legal cannabis are so enticing that they managed to lure the former Speaker of the House John Boehner into getting involved. Seeing as he is now a corporate board member of the single-largest cannabis company of them all, Acreage Holdings.

How the world of cannabis big business can exist concurrently in the world I live where ordinary Americans rot in prison and face potential life sentences or the cultivation and distribution of the same plant is beyond my comprehension. Quite frankly, it’s hard for me to ignore the existential dread that I feel when thinking about the utter waste of the gift of life that my existence has become. I can’t avoid the dismal truth that what my life has been reduced down to is little more than living in vain. I’m forced to spend 21 hours a day inside of an 8 x 12-foot concrete bathroom, attempting to maintain a semblance of friendly cohabitation with another man. I haven’t even seen a single blade of grass, felt the warmth of direct sunlight, or smelled the sweet scent of rain in two years, with no determinate end in sight. And all of it for what? Because I essentially didn’t pay a government bribe to operate? Has the day not arrived where we hold our collective heads in shame for consenting to and allowing our government to participate in such a wicked and cynical practice? For the days of tearing apart families and ruining lives over an organic, God-given plant medicine need to be put behind us. The entire business is a mistaken, twentieth century invention with no place in our modern world today. How many more lives have to be lost and sacrificed due to what’s abundantly clear as a mistake?