

## California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana

The fight to keep the sick from suffering

by Alan Smithee

California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana, is a feature length film that updates the continuing war between the federal government and California voters who passed Proposition 215 in 1996 making it legal for medical use.

The film is so current that it includes a comment on the Raich case in which the Supreme Court ruled against a brain cancer patient who had grown her own. The film is obviously for pot, not against it, but it is clearly not propaganda, thoughtfully including two strong criticisms of current dispensaries and questioning the high cost when used as medicine. The owner of a dispensary in San Francisco replies with the statement shown over and over in this film "distribution of medical marijuana is a work in progress."

Recent scientific studies in respected media like the Journal of Neuroscience, indicate that marijuana has valid medicinal use in cases of glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's, plus benefits for depression and other mental illnesses. Large drug companies who sell chemical tranquilizers and mood elevators have combined efforts to sabotage the medical marijuana movement by giving it a Cheech & Chong reputation, which undermines the true ability marijuana has to combat the nausea of cancer chemotherapy and radiation along with the pain relief it brings.

This ground breaking film includes



For .jpg or .tif file of photo of Brownie Mary please email:  
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spokesmen for Americans for Safe Access (ASA), and NORML, (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws) national organizations dedicated to promoting the use of the herb marijuana for its medicinal properties. It features authorities such as Dr. Tod Mikuriya, Terence Hallinan, a fighting district attorney who stated at a NORML meeting before Prop 215 "if they think they are going to criminalize marijuana in San Francisco, they have another think coming."

Opening with an historic speech by the legendary Brownie Mary at People's Park, the film also includes interviews with activist Dennis Peron, civil rights attorneys Matt Kumin and Bill Panzer, Kris Hermes the spokesman for ASA, and Dr. Dale Geiringer, State Coordinator for NORML. Also interviewed are Chris Conrad, activist and co-author with Mikki Norris and Virginia Resner of the book Shattered Lives, which documents draconian prison sentences for possession. Additional interviews are with cancer patients Virginia Resner and Dr. Annie Levy, as well as a trimmer who works in Mendocino County, plus Christopher Trimby activist and Green Panther, a disgruntled patient who is troubled by the cost of pot, and Charles Pappas the owner of a marijuana dispensary in San Francisco.

A random sampling of opinions about the medicinal value of cannabis is also included, along with information on its legal history in the United States and the rea

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sons it became a controlled substance in 1937. The racial implications of demonizing the herb and attaching it to the absurdities of "reefer madness" become very clear. Featured also is music by Country Joe McDonald.

Marijuana has had a long history in the United States, from the little known fact that Mary Todd Lincoln financed Abe Lincoln's presidential campaign with funds from her family hemp plantation, to information about



the huge groups of people having religious and pagan ceremonies in Kentucky after the rivers became psychedelic when plants were thrown into the water after harvest.

The film presents a clear view of the dilemma faced by California voters and indeed the ten other states that have followed suit, since the federal government has its own laws that clearly do not coincide with Prop 215.

As Charles Pappas, owner of The Divinity Tree Dispensary in San Francisco points out, "Distribution of medicinal cannabis is a work in progress. The problems that still exist in fair and proper distribution are solvable; much remains to be done in clarifying how to make it available to patients at an affordable rate, and solving other problems of sensible distribution." The difficulties posed by continued federal opposition to California voters' sponsorship of cannabis affect growers and patients alike. Organizations like ASA and NORML help, but it continues to be up to voters to make sure that the moralistic attitude of the multi-billion dollar

industry that is the DEA does not prevail. Dr. Dale Geiringer points out in his interview, "when government jobs are at stake, and the DEA are government jobs, Congress listens".

The film has been put together by the award winning team of Claire Burch and Christopher Sorrenti of Art and Education Media Inc., found at [www.claireburch.com](http://www.claireburch.com). They have worked together on street documentaries and continue adding B-roll, material which shows both federal and local law enforcement ignoring what California voters and ten other states have turned into law. The film is a new attempt to not only solve the distribution problems of medical marijuana, but also get rid of some of the difficulties faced by activists in the continuing attempt to get good medicine that can be grown by patients in their own backyard if they have one.

Sadly, Dr. Tod Mikuyria passed away, May 20th 2007, after a valiant fight against cancer. He will be remembered as an activist researching the medical value of marijuana. As a result of his long experience with the herb in his practice. Unfortunately, he suffered for his belief in that herb, he was challenged and hounded, for the referrals he gave to patients not helped by previously prescribed pharmaceuticals.

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Images are stills taken from the film  
California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana  
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