

Good Medicine *On the Go*

S4. Ep2: From Prejudice to Practice

Kara Ware ([00:00](#)):

Cannabis and cannabis derived products are not legal in all states or countries. The views and opinions expressed by guests and hosts appearing on this podcast are strictly their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Good Medicine On The Go or its sponsors. This podcast is for educational purposes only, it does not establish a doctor patient relationship. This is Good Medicine On The Go. Hello and welcome. I'm Kara Ware, a national board certified health coach and business advisor.

Nathan Morris ([00:47](#)):

And I'm Nathan Morris, a medical doctor who is also certified in functional medicine.

Kara Ware ([00:51](#)):

On our previous episode, we dove into the complicated history of cannabis. If you haven't already go back and listen to see how one plant went from being in 50% of U.S. medicines to being blamed as a source of madness and violence in just a few years.

Nathan Morris ([01:09](#)):

When we left off, Harry Anslinger, the director of the Bureau of Narcotics passed the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which while not criminalizing cannabis heavily restricted the access to cannabis with fines and excessive paperwork. He then prosecuted thousands of doctors who still supported cannabis, forcing the AMA to denounce their support of medical cannabis. By 1942, cannabis was removed from the U.S. [Pharmacopoeia 00:01:37].

Kara Ware ([01:37](#)):

Geez. So in this episode, we'll be covering the history of cannabis in the 20th century and how efforts made by Nixon, Reagan and more furthered the prejudice against the plant in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. We'll also hear about how one doctor researched her way out of her bias to become a leading expert in a medical cannabis space.

Nathan Morris ([02:06](#)):

So yeah, let's kind of talk about, the sixties and seventies. I was born in 1971, but it was kind of on the cusp of that cultural revolution. There was a lot of the devil's lettuce being used in the south, although we were very much against it, man. The research was so lacking really, but there was this thing about how you could be sterilized if you did weed. I was like, "Yeah." I mean, it was a weird time. Man, I grew up, I really did think it was that devil's lettuce. I was so convinced, this was a terrible thing. So, this time period was really important, the sixties and seventies. Talk to us a little bit more about that, Kara.

Kara Ware ([02:49](#)):

Right. So during the early 1960s, recreational marijuana use spread beyond non-white immigrants and people of color. Soon consuming cannabis was very much a part of the upper middle class fabric of

society. We see attorneys lobbying for the legalization of marijuana on The Hill, as upper middle class voters become pro-marijuana.

Nathan Morris ([03:12](#)):

But by the late sixties, cannabis became synonymous with counterculture movements, seen as a drug used by Black Panthers and those in opposition to the Vietnam War. Nixon was elected president in 1969 and became responsible for managing a country at odds with itself. Many were fighting for change. Others wanted to maintain the status quo and none of them like Nixon. Half the country hated Nixon for the Vietnam War and the other half his incompetence in dealing with rebellious counterculture.

Kara Ware ([03:43](#)):

It was time for someone or something else to take the fall. So like Anslinger, Nixon desperately needed to keep his job. So like Anslinger, he was going to use marijuana to do that.

Nathan Morris ([03:58](#)):

In order to sway public opinion, Nixon needed to take the same path as Anslinger. He needed the media on his side and he needed a villain, a poster child that the media could vilify the same way Anslinger's newspapers had done to Mexican immigrants.

Kara Ware ([04:12](#)):

In one of his infamous White House tapes, Nixon, and a colleague discussed their plan. I found the state from one of his advisors in an NPR article. "You know what? To salvage your approval ratings to misdirect attention away from this flagging war in Vietnam, a stagnant economy, your swooning poll numbers. We need to find a villain, a guy in a black hat and why not choose Timothy Leary? He's sort of the godfather of the counter cultural revolution and we can make him public enemy number one."

Nathan Morris ([04:49](#)):

I almost feel like we should have Darth Vader breathing in the back.

Kara Ware ([04:54](#)):

They're [inaudible 00:04:56] on this stuff. Isn't that amazing?

Nathan Morris ([04:58](#)):

Yeah, just amazing how they used people to be their fall guides for politics. So, on a spring day in 1971, Nixon invited Art Linkletter, a well-known TV and radio personality to dine at the White House. Nixon had seen Linkletter impassioned speeches on TV, denouncing drugs, and those who used them, especially one man named Timothy Leary.

Kara Ware ([05:19](#)):

Timothy Leary was a psychedelic advocate and former Harvard professor who had previously publicly mocked Nixon's drug programs. Back in 1966, Leary was arrested for possessing two marijuana cigarettes and LSD and was sentenced to 30 years in prison under the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which was passed by Anslinger. However, Leary hired a team of lawyers to argue that the Marijuana Tax Act was unconstitutional.

Nathan Morris ([05:53](#)):

Yeah. So three years later, the same year Nixon took office 1969, the Supreme court ruled in favor Leary and the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 was overturned. Leary was free in becoming a counter cultural celebrity quickly earning the title as the Godfather of the Counter Culture. He ran against Ronald Reagan for governor of California and loss, but his campaign song, Come Together by John Lennon, would go on to become a huge hit.

Kara Ware ([06:19](#)):

Yeah, it's so cool. Leary needed to be stopped and Linkletter was going to help Nixon do that. So nine days after meeting Linkletter in 1971, Nixon accosted his chief of staff saying, "I want a goddamn strong statement on marijuana. By god we're going to hit the marijuana thing and I want to hit it right square in the"-

Nathan Morris ([06:41](#)):

The following month, the president would officially declare War on Drugs, asking and getting Congress for an unprecedented \$155 million for drug enforcement, nearly \$1 billion in today's dollars to fight Americans public enemy number one. \$350 million in total for both enforcement and treatment. For the rest of his presidency. Nixon would send FBI and CIA agents after Leary always one step behind who they call the most dangerous man alive.

Kara Ware ([07:11](#)):

Nixon refused to let what Leary stood for go unfettered. He passed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 and put cannabis into the most restrictive category of controlled substances.

Nathan Morris ([07:27](#)):

Under the Controlled Substance Acts, drugs were classified into five categories or schedules based on their medical use and the potential for drug abuse or dependence. Schedule one, by definition means drugs with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

Emily Dufton ([07:44](#)):

Well, the most immediate consequence was that he put it into schedule one temporarily. That's how he could convince Congress to support that change. He did it by saying, "All right, well, I will get together this commission, 13 people, Republicans, and Democrats, bipartisan. They're going to have two years and a fairly decent amount of money to conduct research on marijuana use in America, and what its dangers might be, and what they think we should do with it. Should we keep it in schedule one or do something else?"

Kara Ware ([08:15](#)):

That was Emily Dufton, drug historian, who you heard from in the previous episode, she explains Nixon's decision further.

Emily Dufton ([08:24](#)):

He called it the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse, but it was colloquially known as the Shafer Commission because it was led by Raymond Shafer, who is a former Republican governor of

Pennsylvania. Who was kind of like gunning for a federal judgeship. He thought, "Well, if I do a good job on this, Nixon will appointment at this judgeship." Nixon thought, "Well, because he wants this judgeship, he'll write the report that I want." So it was a very kind of unacknowledged pro quo situation.

Nathan Morris ([08:50](#)):

However, things didn't quite go how Nixon predicted.

Emily Dufton ([08:53](#)):

But what happens in 1972, when Shafer turns in his report is that he and his commission over the past two years became convinced that marijuana should be decriminalized. It really didn't pose that much threat to society. People who used it were no more violent, or insane, or dangerous, or lackadaisical than people who didn't.

Kara Ware ([09:14](#)):

Like the LaGuardia Report in the 1940s, the Shafer Report discovered that the prejudice for marijuana was unfounded. In fact, the official title of the report was Marijuana, A Signal of Misunderstanding.

Nathan Morris ([09:31](#)):

Nixon rejects the Shafer report because of course, why not? It didn't agree with his story he wanted to tell. The recommendations of that report for decriminalizing marijuana... And instead he creates the Drug Enforcement Agency or the DEA in 1973. Marijuana remains a schedule one drug where it is still listed today, alongside drugs like LSD, heroin, Ecstasy, mushrooms, bath salts, and more.

Emily Dufton ([10:01](#)):

Drug laws are used to control people, right? Drug laws are used to control people. I think with the passages of certain drug laws, different populations can be controlled more easily than others. So, I think drug laws that are being written to specifically make it easy to arrest people in Black communities, I think as soon as you can see that, it kind of shows you what drug laws are really about. They're very rarely ever just about drugs.

Kara Ware ([10:26](#)):

Emily's point reminds me of something that another guest of ours said, Janice Knox, Dr. Janice Knox, a board certified anesthesiologist, cannabinoid medicine specialist and clinical endocannabinologist. She shares her insights here.

Janice Knox ([10:43](#)):

Two enemies for the administration of Nixon was number one, drug abuse and number two Blacks. They felt the only way they can control at least the Blacks were to do things that let them go into their homes, disrupt of those families so they could control them. So that was a way of controlling Blacks, right? So they disrupted their families, their communities, their mental health, their fiscal health, their economic health, which led to other things, right? But this was a designed plan. You can find it where he is speaking to that effect, how they lied to be able to increase, the law enforcement on these very marginalized communities.

Nathan Morris ([11:31](#)):

What Janet is referring to is a well-known confession from a Nixon, former White House counsel, John Ehrlichman. He later admitted, "You want to know what this was really all about. The Nixon campaign in 1968 and the Nixon White House after that had two enemies, the anti-war left and Black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or Black. But by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and Blacks, with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did." End of quote. Fast forward to the 1980s and the War on Drugs intensifies under Reagan. Reagan reinforces and expands. Many of the War on Drug policies, such as mandatory sentences. The three strikes you're out policy required life sentences for repeat drug offenders.

Kara Ware ([12:39](#)):

The 1986 Anti-drug Abuse Act passes, which increases penalties for violations of the Controlled Substance Act.

Emily Dufton ([12:49](#)):

After the '86 Anti-drug Abuse Act, that's where like the state of mass incarceration were really comes into being because that's where you get anti crack laws and mandatory minimums, no knock warrants, civil forfeiture, like the most punitive, dangerous, and ultimately racist outcomes with the War on Drugs come under [inaudible 00:13:10], Ronald Reagan, yikes.

Nathan Morris ([13:12](#)):

During` the Reagan years, prison penalties were drug crimes skyrocketed. And this trend continued for many years. In fact, the number of people incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses increased from 50,000 in 1980 to more than 400,000-

Kara Ware ([13:29](#)):

Jeez.

Nathan Morris ([13:29](#)):

... by 1997, Kara. Even today, the United States has 2.3 million Americans behind bars, the largest prison population in the world. According, to the ACLU. In 2010, cops made one pot bust every 37 seconds. Arrests continues to disproportionately affect Black communities, nearly four times more likely to be arrested, even though marijuana is used equally by Black and White people.

Janice Knox ([13:57](#)):

To this day, even in states where cannabis has been legalized, you still see a sixfold increase of Black men being incarcerated for having cannabis than White men being incarcerated for the same crime for having the same amount of cannabis. This is very disruptive to the Black communities, to the Black families. We have the high prison rate. Some of these guys don't remember what it's like to have a family or to take care of a family, because what it was forced on them by the War on Drugs.

Nathan Morris ([14:33](#)):

By 2010, more than half of the drug arrest in the U.S. were for marijuana.

Kara Ware ([14:44](#)):

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Nathan Morris ([15:35](#)):

Yes, their message was clear, "Cannabis is dangerous and Americans should fear it in its users."

Kara Ware ([15:41](#)):

Despite their efforts part of the public began to warm up to the idea of marijuana at the end of the century. In 1996, California became the first state to legalize medical marijuana.

Nathan Morris ([15:53](#)):

Medical marijuana initiatives proceeded to pass in every state in which they appeared on the ballot. Alaska, Oregon, and Washington became second, third and four states to legalize medical marijuana.

Kara Ware ([16:05](#)):

This brings us to our final story of the episode, a story of how one medical doctor stepped out of her own and began researching and seeing cannabis for the plant it truly is. That story is of cannabis thought leader, Dr. Janice Knox.

Janice Knox ([16:22](#)):

After 32 years of practicing anesthesia, I retired and I got asked to cover one of the card clinics here in Oregon... I live. I had my reservations. I had my reservations for several reasons. Number one, I had a couple of colleagues that were sent away for months at a time because they got into drug abuse as anesthesiologist and one for marijuana use. So I had the little red flags went up in my brain. But second of all, I didn't know anything about cannabis. Absolutely, means zero. Who is I going to talk to about cannabis? So with those reservations, I decided to go, because I wanted to know who was coming to get my precious signature to buy drugs legally. Right? So I did, I expected to see a hippie or Rastafarian, or the usual counter culture type of people. When I went, that's when I got the first shock, because Kara, they looked nothing like what I thought they would look like.

Kara Ware ([17:20](#)):

The prejudice that Janice carried with her, her whole life, the prejudice I believe most of us were raised with slammed right into the cold, raw truth.

Janice Knox ([17:30](#)):

These were grandmothers and grandfathers and retired business in and bankers, old young, mothers bringing their babies in, their teenage kids in. I went like, "Oh my, oh my, what is this all about?" But more importantly they were looking for someone who would not judge them, but could give them some direction, some using this plant for the first time. They sort of knew I didn't know anything. I looked like,

I didn't know anything. I couldn't tell you a strain name, a cannabinoid, nothing like that. I would send them out to the receptionist at the clinic and say, "Ask her. She knows more than I do." But that was embarrassing for me. That was embarrassing for me as an anesthesiologist who knew physiology and pharmacology, I couldn't answer questions. So that's what galvanized me into wanting to know more. I could not be embarrassed like that, I just could not.

Kara Ware ([18:22](#)):

So our goal is not to say that cannabis is entirely harmless or should be unregulated. More we want to illustrate that many of our prejudice about this plant are rooted in political agenda and not actual science. We hope you can see that the past drug laws have caused more harm than the plant itself.

Nathan Morris ([18:44](#)):

Steps are being made every day to decriminalize and research the plant. The funny thing is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services applied for and received a patent for the therapeutic use of cannabinoids as antioxidants, and neuroprotectants back in the sixties.

Kara Ware ([19:01](#)):

Right, as we were putting it into a schedule one drug.

Nathan Morris ([19:04](#)):

That is correct.

Kara Ware ([19:05](#)):

No medicinal merit. Let's just remember what schedule one [crosstalk 00:19:07] means.

Nathan Morris ([19:07](#)):

There's no irony there Kara. Move on, there's nothing to see. No irony.

Kara Ware ([19:11](#)):

So the abstract says in part cannabinoids have been found to have antioxidant properties. The cannabinoids are found to have particular application as neuroprotectants in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease. So the question must be asked, what can this plant actually do, if we let it? How can this plant help the medical community and those it serves? Find out on next week's episode, as we understand the endocannabinoid system and how to affect the endocannabinoid system with phytocannabinoids, and lifestyle.

Kara Ware ([19:49](#)):

Thank you for listening as Nathan and I are reimagine the functional medicine journey as we explore how to include cannabis and our functional medicine toolbox. I would like to thank our writing team. Kelsey Stafstrom, Paul Larkin, [Isabel Monjeau 00:20:03], and our audio engineer, Isadore Nieves. If you would like to support this podcast, please follow us and visit karawarecoaching.com. That's K-A-R-A-W-A-R-E, coaching.com for cannabis resources and unedited interviews. Plus more podcast seasons minisodes, nutrigenomics case study events, and business coaching.