

YouTube Star Records Man Hanging For Children To Watch

By Tyler Bizarro

Famous YouTuber and former Vine star Logan Paul made national headlines recently after posting a video exposing an unknown suicide victim in a Japanese forest.

The video has been removed from Paul's channel, but not before reaching YouTube's trending page and amassing more than 6 million views.

In the video, Logan Paul emphasized that the 'documentary' was meant to explore a supernatural side of 'the suicide forest' in Japan. But instead of combing the woods for ghosts and werewolves with his gang of 15 million pre-teens, Paul and his film crew discovered a man hanging from a tree soon after entering the forest. And he chose to vlog the entire thing. Selfie-style.

In the moment, Paul even went as far as to speak towards the camera about mental health awareness and suicide prevention-with the corpse of the man in the background of the shot. The group then recorded their reactions from outside the forest as police arrived, before they edited the footage and video thumbnail (showing the man hanging) to post for millions of people's entertainment.

While this is a national story, maybe your kids are part of the 15 million that make up the 'Logang'. So there are a couple parts that I think we here in New Bedford can take value from.



This is a man who profits off of children watching his internet videos. While some channels provide safe and educational content for kids, or even entertaining and pop-culture videos for pre-teens, YouTube has struggled with a growing number of large channels targeting and manipulating children for financial gain. The twisted reality is that anybody in the world can start making videos for your kids or someone else's and get filthy rich while doing it.

So next time you go to give a child your phone to surf YouTube on, remember that the internet is like no other resource in the world. It is a giant black hole of information, and is overwhelming to even those who have navigated it their entire lives. It is a doubled edged sword for all who use it. And whether you have kids or not, we are all affected by how younger generations of Americans are being influenced by people like Logan Paul. While it may be easier for most of us to overlook nonsense and denounce immoral behavior, the same can't be said for many younger people. Especially on the internet. The very fact that 15 million people have subscribed to be apart of the 'Logang' would suggest there's a serious lack of accountability for what kids watch online.

The second point is that incidences like these are bound to keep happening unless platforms and revenue streams are taken away from these people. After controversy breaks for an internet star, there is usually a hit that person will take in terms of channel growth rate and short term income. But without being held accountable by YouTube or the people subscribed (in this case; children) , these people are free to keep creating and monetizing videos. And so, this isn't the first time a Paul brother has made national headlines, and it won't be the last.

Logan's brother Jake (who has 12 million followers on YouTube) made headlines after a video with KTLA in California went viral. In that video Jake Paul was asked to address neighbors who were angry with the YouTuber for continually filming dangerous stunts (like burning furniture in an empty pool) throughout the neighborhood and having his subscribers (and their parents) fill the streets.

A remorseless Jake Paul responded by physically dabbing in the reporter's face and climbing on top of the news van, chanting the name of his fan club; Team 10. Jake Paul was set to continue filming with Disney for the show 'Bizaardvark,' but the two entities mutually agreed to part ways shortly after this news broke. Paul has since been sued by residents of Los Angeles and has moved into a 7 million dollar mansion just outside of LA. He's even made headlines for revealing the private home of singer Post Malone after acquiring his address through a merchandise company and showing up with cameras unannounced.

These incidents happened just months before this recent incident with Logan, but both brothers have gained millions of followers in the meantime. At a point, a social media influencer becomes so popular as an individual entity that they are almost immune to bad press. If nothing changes and these influencers keep making money creating inappropriate content, millions more will follow in the coming months and

years as more children will grow up to be ignorant, self absorbed, reckless Jake Paulers and Logangers all on their own.

So one way or another, this will be our problem.

Green Means Go: 5 Things That Must Happen Before Massachusetts Recreational Weed Sales Begin

Nearly a year ago, Massachusetts voters chose to make recreational cannabis legal statewide. In December of 2016, Governor Charlie Baker signed legislation that extended the start date of recreational weed sales to July of 2018. And just over a month ago, the Cannabis Control Commission was appointed by Governor Baker, Attorney General Maura Healey and state treasurer Deb Goldberg. The board consists of four opponents of cannabis legalization (Steven Hoffman, Jennifer Flanagan, Britte McBride, and Kay Doyle) and one proponent (Shaleen Title).

In a discussion with Tom Angell of Forbes on the duties of the commission, Shaleen Title said, "This entails setting up regulations for the new industry and a licensing process for cultivation, manufacturing, retail and testing, as well as policy development around things like edibles, packaging and advertising. Our deadline under the law is to begin accepting applications by April 1, 2018." (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomangell/2017/09/18/exclusive-meet-massachusetts-pro-legalization-marijuana->

regulator/#17efeb3c2750)

While some may argue that recreational cannabis sales should have started this past summer, some could also argue that the extra year of preparation will give people in Massachusetts adequate time to maximize their roles in the market from day one. When it comes to cannabis, the state of Massachusetts is at a yellow light. And no matter how often we see someone speed up to make it onto Route 18 thirty seconds faster, yellow means yield and green means go. And so, now is the time for Massachusetts to yield to cannabis; to check mirrors, use signals, and survey the roads. Because come July 2018, green means go.

#1- The Cannabis Control Commission must establish and share regulations by March 15,2018

One of the first and most important steps in the logistical process of establishing recreational cannabis in Massachusetts is implementing law and order. This is the overall mission of the newly appointed Cannabis Control Commission, who are working with the cannabis advisory board and the Commonwealth to build the skeleton of the industry. Areas of discussion within the board will involve policies pertaining to cannabis edibles, packaging, advertising, and licensing of cultivation, retail, testing, and manufacturing facilities.

While it is important for the Cannabis Control Commission to ensure that eventual business owners are able to conduct effective business, it is of vital importance to ensure regulations place the safety and well-being of consumers as a priority. The deadline for the commission to establish these regulations is March 15th, 2018.

#2- The Cannabis Control Commission must make license applications available by April 1,2018

Shortly after posting regulations in March 2018, the Cannabis Control Commission will be required to make licensing

applications available. This will give the commission and investors about three months time to oversee application approvals and begin setting up shops. Citizens will be required to pay a \$3,000 initial application fee in addition to a fee corresponding to the license desired. Retail, manufacturing, and cultivation licenses will cost \$15,000, and testing licenses will cost \$10,000. Initial investment costs could cost upwards of \$20,000 per license. (<http://www.mass.gov/treasury/marijuana/frequently-asked-questions.html>)

#3- More towns must allow recreational cannabis sales

Over the past year, several Massachusetts municipalities have fought hard to keep recreational cannabis businesses from popping up. This past September, Milford Massachusetts voted to ban recreational weed shops, even though 52% of voters agreed to legalize recreational weed in 2016. (<http://www.wbur.org/news/2017/09/20/milford-voters-ban-marijuana-stores>)

This news also came despite Massachusetts cannabis company Sage Naturals having an agricultural facility in the city at the time of the vote. While this is an issue that other states have faced during recreational legalization, the reality for those of us in Massachusetts is that fewer shops means a smaller market. There are about a dozen cannabis shops in Massachusetts currently; many people have to make specific arrangements to even make it to a medical cannabis facility.

Leafly.com contributor Andrew Livingston summed up the importance of access points well, stating “Too few dispensaries and a market simply stagnates. In Massachusetts, despite an inclusive set of qualifying conditions and an embrace of other factors needed to be successful (such as smoke-able flower), the medical market has had trouble attracting patients because there are currently only a dozen dispensaries. That’s about one dispensary per 560,000 state

residents. And until recently, none offered delivery services to more remote regions of the state.”

If people in Massachusetts do not have efficient access to recreational weed shops, then they will likely stick to buying weed on the streets. This will hinder the legal market’s ability to grow, while contributing to the growth of the illegal weed market.

#4-Fair prices and taxes must be established

This one sort of piggy-backs off of my last point. There must be an accurate barometer for street weed prices in Massachusetts, and this information must be taken into account when the Cannabis Control Commission establishes regulations in March. Business owners must have the financial ability and legislative flexibility to offer product at fair market prices, while still allowing for meaningful tax dollars to be accumulated. The alternative is money hungry businesses driving consumers back into the hands of the illegal market that has controlled cannabis in the state for decades.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker proposed a 20% sales tax on recreational cannabis in July of 2017. This rate would be among the lowest in the United States, as Oregon pays a 20% sales tax, Colorado pays 27.9%, and Washington pays 37%.

While a lower sales tax could bring in more consumers from out of state, could the price of cannabis in Massachusetts increase as a result? Would companies charge more purely because people would be willing to pay more given the fact that they aren’t paying an extra 15-20% worth of taxes in another state? Because if so, it will contribute to a growing illegal market.

I believe the majority of cannabis consumers would pay comparable prices and taxes for cannabis (if not slightly higher) if it meant their tax dollars were being used effectively throughout their communities. But if it becomes

evident that the legal recreational businesses are raising prices purely for personal profit, and the state government is using more dollars than necessary to keep the program running, these consumers will continue seeing Mr. WeedMan420 down the street instead. Additionally, cannabis growers must have adequate incentive to produce product for the legal recreational market. If not, growers will sell their product elsewhere and business owners will have to pay more to outsource their cultivation. Essentially, we need a smooth relationship between consumers, growers, and business owners; and this means setting a fair price for all sides.

#5- Cannabis education must be widespread

Lastly, cannabis education must be widespread. A smart market may be considered dangerous to the dastardly few, but it is arguably the most important part of the equation. The dollars made because of a recreational cannabis market in Massachusetts will mean very little if people are putting the health and well-being of the commonwealth at risk in the process. We still lack education on the effect of cannabis on driving, as well as an accurate way of determining this roadside. A majority of people are unfamiliar with how cannabis edibles can negatively impact their bodies depending on dosage and accompanying activities.

Cannabis concentrates are still very much taboo, and most people have no idea what “cannabidiol” even is. The average non-consumer likely is ignorant to the fact that every human being has an endocannabinoid system, and that receptors in our brains are designed to react to ingested THC. And aside from independent research on the internet, there is a lack of widespread media coverage on cannabis education. There are benefits to the consumption of cannabis that many people are continually overlooking, and instead associating weed with the lazy pothead stereotype.

We live in a country where many people suffer from chronic

pain, eating disorders, CTE, prescription drug addictions, heroin addictions, alcoholism; all of which cannabis can provide safer relief for. So in order for recreational cannabis to truly take off in Massachusetts, there must be a heightened inclination to be educated on cannabis as a whole. There must be a heightened inclination on our parts to figure out what our specific medical and recreational needs are and how cannabis can contribute to these needs. And with this knowledge, consume safely. Only then will people begin to take full advantage of weed in this state.

Prior to any recreational weed business opening in Massachusetts, the market must understand cannabis, its impact, and obstacles it creates more clearly. Over the next 6-9 months, while legislation is written and business plans developed, Massachusetts must also collectively address how cannabis will be marketed to consumers and advertised.

While alcohol commercials are a dime a dozen, cannabis themed billboards are about as rare as Big Foot. Cannabis YouTubers are being removed by the company for being non-advertiser friendly, and television networks would rather not shed light on cannabis. Many people view cannabis in a negative light still, and Massachusetts must focus on removing this stigma and replacing it with informed insight. We must ensure that this stigma does not cause the establishment of policies that prohibits the cannabis industry's ability to flourish in Massachusetts.

The time to educate ourselves and each other on cannabis is now. We must yield to cannabis.

Because come July 2018, green means go.

-New Bedford Guide

4 Things Pro Sports Should Embrace About Cannabis

Professional sports is undoubtedly a unique line of work. Games we fell in love with as children are making grown men and women millions of dollars annually. Millions of people watch religiously, and wear the colors of their favorite team proudly for the world (and Jets fans) to see every Sunday. But a harsh reality in the world of professional sports is that our entertainment, at times, comes at the cost of another human being's health and well-being.

Occasionally, I have to look away from the game. Especially when I hear words like those of Kevin Harlan during the Celtics and Cavaliers game on October 17, 2017. The definitive, "Gordon Hayward has broken his leg" call that came twice from commentary was a tough pill to swallow.

Many professional athletes deal with chronic pain their entire playing careers. The wear and tear of playing physical sports such as football, hockey, basketball, and mixed martial arts means tens of thousands of professional athletes must take additional care of their body on a regular basis while they play. Being proactive, however, does not guarantee physical immunity long term. To address the need for healthcare, most professional sports organizations have continually provided athletes with the conventional supply of painkillers and prescription opioids to mitigate pain.

As a consequence, many professional athletes deal with pain sustained during their playing career long after they have retired. Even worse is that some athletes end up addicted to pain pills and opioids, and eventually lose their well-being

and life in the process.

If professional sports embraced a non-conventional stance on player safety and wellness, specifically one that allows players to consume cannabis freely, it would be a tremendously beneficial step for the safety of professional athletes.

Here are 4 Things Pro Sports Should Embrace About Weed:

#1- Many athletes consume it!

According to former UFC Heavyweight Champion Bas Rutten, nearly 80% of the UFC consumes cannabis to recover. Interestingly, this did not stop Nick Diaz from being suspended by the UFC for 5 years due to testing positive for cannabis. Additionally, former NFL player Eben Britton says at least 50% of football players use weed, despite the NFL's harsh punishments for cannabis users; such as Josh Gordon's league ban. The NBA has been thought to employ many cannabis users as well, as former player Jay Williams estimated 80% of players self-medicate. (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-thiersch/professional-athletes-call_b_9567716.html)

In fact, this past summer, ESPN's Brian Windhorst reported smelling burning marijuana in the Cleveland Cavaliers' locker room following an NBA finals game against the Golden State Warriors. Other well known cannabis users throughout NBA history include hall of fame coach Phil Jackson and current Sacramento Kings player Zach Randolph; who recently faced charges for possession of marijuana.

With the exception of the NFL, professional sports organizations do not typically suspend players for solely consuming weed. More often than not, athletes are suspended for violating the performance enhancing element of a league's wellness policy. The NHL and MLB are known as being fairly lenient when it comes to cannabis, as they focus the distribution of suspensions on athletes that use substances

like steroids and amphetamines to gain a competitive edge on the field. Rather than crack down on guys using weed to deal with general wear and tear, professional sports organizations care more about influencing how the public perceive their players and product.

Organizations such as the NFL care more about 'protecting the shield'. If a particular story might negatively impact reputation, ratings and earnings, the league will do what it can to bury the lead. This means that stigma attached to cannabis is leading pro sports organizations to either avoid cannabis discussions among players (such as the MLB, NHL, NBA, and UFC) or aggressively prohibit weed altogether (the NFL).

Ironically, the number of athletes that consume cannabis would suggest professional sports organizations could do a lot more work on removing cannabis stigma simply by letting it be up to the players to decide if they consume it or not. Especially since a majority of professional sports already concede cannabis doesn't enhance physical performance. So why not embrace giving the players an informed choice on consuming cannabis, rather than continuing to pump them with pain pills?

#2- Cannabis is a safer, more effective treatment for chronic pain, and many athletes struggle with prescription opioids and pain pills.

Professional sports organizations in America follow the precedent set by the pharmaceutical company in regards to treating athletes. Like millions of other Americans, these athletes must consult with team and personal doctors about specific ailments they deal with on the job, and as a result they are given prescriptions to pharmaceutical drugs. Like millions of other Americans, there are athletes who have legitimate health concerns that must be addressed, and it is far too easy for these people to be given opiate prescriptions for them to grow dependent on. And when the pain is chronic, the dependency levels for these drugs go up with time.

Former NFL player Eben Britton spoke with three other former NFL players who advocate for cannabis during a video for HERB.co. Some of the most striking comments of the 10 minute conversation came when Britton addressed the NFL's culture of players popping pills. Since players are legally prescribed pain medication by doctors, it becomes very easy for players to not only get themselves hooked on opioids, but for teammates to develop addictions as well.

"I mean they were doing little envelopes of vicodin on the plane, after the games, before the games. And you know for me, I realized I would take these pills and I'd just feel insane. You know my rage and my anger was like on a hair-trigger-right at the surface...especially after times when I was put on IR (injury reserve) with my back surgery or my shoulder surgery. I couldn't get dressed on my own. I couldn't tie my shoes. And then you're taking these pills that are exacerbating your state."

-Eben Britton (Herb.co
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=zMFEpkoZo-o @ 1:06)

While it is clear that there is a medical need for opiate prescriptions depending on the athlete's condition (such as Gordon Hayward's surgery), to suggest that preventing professional athletes from safely accessing alternative medicines such as cannabis is a better precedent for sports organizations to set is absurd. There is no fatal dosage of cannabis, and the side effects are far less dangerous than those of opioids. More importantly, if a patient and their doctor deems it is medically worth prescribing cannabis for health benefits that have been scientifically proven, why should a sports organization stop them from prescribing it? Why should sports organizations be allowed to say to their athletes, "its either our way or the high way." No pun intended.

#3-Cannabis offers CTE benefits.

According to Harvard professor Lester Grinspoon, cannabis could make players more resistant to CTE, or chronic traumatic encephalopathy; a degenerative brain disease that affects many professional athletes. From confusion, rage, nausea, to self harm; CTE poses terrifying obstacles to professional athletes, organizations, and families. The Journal of the American Medical Association published a study earlier this year that found CTE in the brains of 110 of 111 deceased NFL players.

Even worse-the study found that CTE was found in nearly 20% of high school players, and in 90% of college players. As athletes play throughout their life, the risk of developing CTE becomes greater to the point where a diagnosis, which can only be made once the brain can be dissected, becomes almost inevitable.

(<https://www.civilized.life/articles/medical-marijuana-could-help-the-nfls-concussion-problem-percent-of-nfl-players-will-develop-degenerative-brain-disease-medical-marijuana-could-help/>)

While there is currently no cure for CTE nor a current method of detecting it in living people, science suggests that CBD (cannabidiol-the non psychoactive ingredient in cannabis) possesses neuroprotective properties that can protect athletes from CTE. Additionally, THC (the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis) stimulates parts of the brain that are involved in healing brain trauma. At this time, there is science that suggests cannabis could not only reduce the effects of CTE, but reverse them as well. During a time where few people understand CTE fully, an embrace of cannabis and cannabis research from sports organizations could potentially save the lives of many current and past professional athletes, and set an entirely new precedent for health and well being across the country.

#4-Cannabis offers financial incentives

A more obvious benefit to an acceptance of cannabis by professional sports would come financially. It is well documented that states that have legalized cannabis have pulled in hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue in short time spans. An embrace of cannabis in pro sports would mean athletes would be able to become spokesmen for cannabis facilities around the country. Pro athletes and organizations already make money via partnerships with breweries, restaurants, and car dealers. So why can't Chong's Choice sponsor the starting left guard for the Los Angeles Rams? Why can't Snoop Dogg run a special line of vaporizers with the kicker for the Pittsburgh Steelers' face on it?

Wouldn't it make sense for the Raiders, upon moving to Las Vegas where recreational cannabis was just made legal, to seek partnerships with cannabis companies? As legalization hits more of the country, advertisers will be desperate to promote their product through popular culture. Companies will be dying to promote their product in the NFL, NBA, and NHL; whether it be through athlete endorsements, product placement, or stadium and event sponsorships. Professional sports could certainly capitalize financially if they were to allow teams and athletes to embrace cannabis.

To an objective audience, it may be clear that if professional sports embraced a stance on player safety and wellness that allowed players to consume cannabis freely, it would be a tremendously beneficial step for the safety of professional athletes. Due to the benefits cannabis offers people suffering from prescribed opioid addictions, chronic pain, and CTE symptoms, and the number of athletes currently self-medicating, professional sports organizations would be more effective with contributing toward the well being of athletes if they were to embrace cannabis as a whole.

Why I Love New Bedford

Russell is one of the nicest and most genuine people I've met in my 22 years in New Bedford. He works long, strenuous hours with his hands from Monday through Friday on Martha's Vineyard. He gets up before the sun rises, and travels home to New Bedford long after dusk falls. He is a young man in his 20's, and his daily grind is as relentless as his love for his friends and family. And whether he realizes it or not, he is an inspiration to me and my loved ones. Because despite the difficulties life continues to throw at Russell, he gets up the next morning and instinctively understands what must be done for the sake of what matters most; work, family, and love.

I love New Bedford because it is home to so many people like Russell. New Bedford is home to so many people who have had to brush off the hardships they've faced in preparation for new challenges ahead. New Bedford is home to so many people whose daily triumphs go unnoticed. New Bedford is home to a vast body of people who amidst the most heartbreaking stories from around the city, state, and country, continue to commit the smallest acts of kindness towards their neighbor. New Bedford is home to so many people who continue to pursue better lives despite negativity's incessant attempts to swallow them whole.



While it may be easy to overlook a stranger's opening of a door or a driver's yielding to a family with groceries in a crosswalk, these small acts of kindness are as prevalent in New Bedford as anywhere else in America. These small acts of kindness are what makes life worth living in New Bedford, because ultimately they are what fuels others to continue to respond to hate with love. In a country where bad things happen regularly, it is more important now than ever for people to continue to inspire positive action amongst others. Even in the most mundane situations. Because while you may not be able to control what happens around you, you do have the power to choose how you respond to what happens around you. And you never know how your actions can affect somebody else's going forward.

I met Russell through a mutual friend of ours a few months ago. Our friend lives in a building that is mostly occupied by elderly folks, and we encountered an older man named Richie who was having a hard time loading his wheelchair into his van. Richie had been fixing a friend's car overseas years ago, when a stranger shot him in the back; putting Richie in a wheelchair for life.

Before I could even approach Richie, I saw Russell thrust himself towards the man's wheelchair to load it into the van. There was no introduction, no exchanging of pleasantries, and no reward; just one man acting out of kindness for another. And that man happened to be my friend Russell, who could not have looked happier on that day to be helping somebody in need. Russell didn't need a thank you, money, a name, or for Richie to remember his.



He just wanted to help.

If you're from New Bedford, you either know somebody who has

faced great pain in their lifetime, or you have fought that pain for yourself. If you're from New Bedford, there is a good chance that struggle runs in your family. There is a good chance that if you are from New Bedford, you've grown up in a family that has constantly been exposed to pain and suffering in some shape or form.

For people living in New Bedford, work is synonymous with life. We must work our tails off everyday because people we care about deeply directly depend on it. And if you're from New Bedford, you can understand just how much harder life could be if you and your loved ones didn't work your tails off. Because people in New Bedford can empathize with just how trying tough times can be for others in the city. All they have to do is look around.

I love New Bedford because it is my home. New Bedford has been where my most fondest memories have taken place. And while I am just 22 years old, I realize that meaningful life experiences can take place anywhere in the world. I have hiked the Flatirons in Colorado, walked the beaches of Washington state, and partied in downtown Las Vegas. And while these moments were life changing in the most positive of ways for me, they also made me realize that there really is no place like home. In time spent away from Massachusetts, I realized that there truly is no place like New Bedford. And so I came back home in a heartbeat.



I believe people in New Bedford are more connected to one another than they realize. I believe most of us want the same thing; work, family, and love. I believe most of us are good intentioned people caught up in a giant web of negativity that gets in the way of what we want most. Problems are inevitable, but problem solving can be difficult. And I believe most people in New Bedford live to solve problems; be it their own or those of another. I believe most people in New Bedford would rather see the next person's problem be solved as opposed to simply watching them fail. I believe Russell is not the only person in New Bedford who just wants to help.

I believe that the people I've seen hold doors open, pay for strangers' coffees, and smile from across the street, are not the only people in New Bedford paying small acts of kindness forward. Because given our similar upbringings and rough-edged east coast roots, we share a life-long bond. We share a bond by having grown up and lived in one of the most polarizing cities in American history. We share a bond by living in a place that at times can be stunningly beautiful and at other times can be shockingly terrifying. And this bond is what propels us to be better people to those around us.

I don't love New Bedford for its history. I don't love New Bedford for its beaches, parks and landmarks. I don't love New Bedford for its food, downtown, or airport. I don't love New Bedford for its sports, music, or art.

I was taught at a young age that the most powerful form of love is unconditional.

And so, I just love New Bedford.

OPINION: Highly Questionable – New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro's Stance on Cannabis

Opinions are like... 'tailpipes'; everybody has got one, and they usually stink. We are all entitled to formulate our own opinions, just as we are also entitled to either adhere to or refute the opinions of others. The important thing is that collectively we continue to work towards a more fruitful existence as a society. Our disagreements are ultimately the beginning of our work towards a better life. And so I believe we owe it to ourselves to constantly be seeking new perspectives to expand our understanding of the world and humankind. We owe it to ourselves to ask questions.

And for those in positions of 'extended influence'-our societal decision makers-there is an added importance to understanding all points of view. For our medical professionals, politicians, legislators, and law enforcement, there is an added importance to not only asking questions-but

to also be seeking new answers to those questions. Our decision makers must understand all points of views to the best of their ability.

And so, it is of vital importance that people such as New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro seek new and more valid perspectives; specifically in regards to his highly questionable stance on cannabis and recreational cannabis regulation.

A couple of months ago, New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro spoke with New Bedford Guide to address various city-wide issues. During the 30 minute interview, Chief Cordeiro was asked to address legal cannabis (medical and recreational) as a potential solution to the city's opioid problem. You can check out the full interview here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbsNeCdRRCI> (cannabis is brought up at the 19:30 mark in the video).

While acknowledging medical cannabis would be more 'frugal' for the city, Chief Cordeiro had a much different opinion when it came to recreational cannabis in New Bedford:

"I think the medicinal piece would probably be more frugal. But the recreational-I believe is going to compound our drug issues as a whole...It seems that the timing is off by throwing more gasoline into the fire when we are already struggling with an addiction issue across the country."

Chief Cordeiro also referenced Colorado as having 4x more "cannabis-driven" ER visits and an uptick in motor vehicle accidents since legalization of recreational marijuana. Additionally, when it comes to cannabis edibles, Cordeiro fears that a lack of being able to detect THC like alcohol in a person's system would make it harder to keep our streets safe. Recreational cannabis in New Bedford would also contribute towards the city's "social problems" according to Cordeiro, as he feels landlords and unsuspecting citizens

would be subjected to being around a smoker's environment unwillingly.

Therefore, as a cannabis advocate, I wanted to take some time to address Chief Cordeiro's seemingly misguided stance on cannabis.

Here are 5 questions for New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro (and citizens) to consider:

Questions 1 and 2:

- How can one realistically compare cannabis and alcohol?*
- How exactly are roads unsafe because of cannabis?*

As far as the consumption of cannabis edibles goes, Chief Cordeiro is concerned that an inability to 'detect THC like alcohol' in a person's blood would potentially mean roadways would become unsafe. The fear is that the perceived simplicity of consuming cannabis edibles such as 'marijuana lolli-pops, candies, cookies, and traditional brownies' would drive people to consume an unsafe amount of THC while they operate motor vehicles- therefore causing more motor vehicle accidents and emergency room visits.

This would also suggest that a considerably large amount of drivers that have THC in their blood would be direct causes for an increase in motor vehicle accidents. Chief Cordeiro also cited Colorado as having 4 times as many state wide emergency room visits that were 'cannabis-driven', and increasing rates of motor vehicle accidents as well. Valid support for Chief Cordeiro's claims are lacking however, as studies show that despite finding more emergency room visits and additional motor vehicle accidents in states that have legalized recreational cannabis, there is no definitive factor linking them to cannabis specifically.

The fact is that many people who were admitted to Colorado

emergency rooms with THC in their system also had traces of other drugs in their system; such as alcohol and opiates. And so, it is a stretch to suggest that these emergency visit increases are “cannabis-driven”.

Earlier this year, researchers from the University of Texas at Austin published a study in the American Journal of Public Health that concluded there is “no evidence to suggest that marijuana has made roads unsafe” (<https://www.civilized.life/articles/car-accidents-legal-marijuana/>). The report claims that there is “no significant association between recreational marijuana legalization in Washington and Colorado and subsequent changes in motor vehicle fatality rates in the first three years after recreational marijuana legalization.” Additionally, the Highway Loss Data Institute recently conducted a study that explored the effect of recreational cannabis legalization on road safety in Colorado, Washington, and Oregon.

While the study concluded there were 4%-16% increases in insurance claims relating to collisions, it has not been scientifically proven that these upticks are associated with people getting high on cannabis (<https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/21/auto-crashes-are-on-the-rise-in-marijuana-states.html?view=story&%24DEVICE%24=android-mobile>). Essentially, the two events are coincidental, not causal. And so, it is unfair to suggest that cannabis alone causes more people to get into accidents on the road.

Those that generally share Chief Cordeiro’s current views on cannabis might suggest that the reason there is no linking factor between these increases in crash risk and recreational cannabis legalization is because there is no reliable field sobriety test for people with THC in their systems. One could also argue that many people who get into accidents are not only on cannabis, but alcohol and or other drugs that inhibit one’s ability to drive safely.

While I concede that we should establish field tests for cannabis users, I also note that to suggest that we should be working towards methods of detecting THC like we do alcohol (or other drugs for that matter) in the bloodstream at roadside is simply ludicrous. This is the equivalent to suggesting the effects of THC on driving ability are even in the same stratosphere as the effects of alcohol on driving ability. Alcohol causes people to drive with much more risk and ignorance-and that is why science shows a correlation with blood alcohol levels and motor vehicle incidents.

The same can not be definitively said about cannabis (<https://www.livescience.com/51450-driving-on-marijuana-alcohol-dangerous.html>). It is clear that the effects of alcohol on driving ability should be much more concerning than those of cannabis-especially since anybody over the age of 21 can purchase alcohol at practically any corner in New Bedford.

Additionally, to suggest that the legalization of consuming recreational cannabis edibles would lead to more careless use by Massachusetts's drivers is ignorant. Do we prohibit people from unwrapping a McDonald's cheeseburger while they drive 65mph(+?) north on route 24 back to work? No. It is up to people to be educated enough to be aware of not only what they are putting in their body, but how much and what its effect will be on their anatomy and what they are engaging in. It is up to people to be educated on how their specific decisions impact the safety of those around them.

Cannabis is certainly more deserving of the legislation that alcohol has received for more than half a century, because the pure effects of THC alone on the average consumer's ability to drive has been scientifically proven to have no significant effect on crash and accident risk for the average consumer. Alternatively, the effects of alcohol on driving are undoubtedly detrimental to all-yet society makes it so there is at least some tolerance for those that can't help but being buzzed while they drive. I feel this 'double standard' is

something we need to consider a great deal.

Questions 3 and 4:

-In what ways would legal recreational cannabis 'compound our drug issue as a whole'?

-What is the science behind the relationship between cannabis and opiates?

Chief Cordeiro made one point in particular that I would like to wholeheartedly disagree with here. He claimed that in terms of recreational cannabis legalization in the city of New Bedford, "the timing is off by throwing more gasoline into the fire when we are already struggling with an addiction issue across the country." He went on to say, "...the recreational-I believe is going to compound our drug issues as a whole." Chief Cordeiro...you could not be more wrong about this.

Our drug issues are similar to those of our entire country. There is an ongoing national opiate epidemic; prescription and illegal. America comprises 5% of the world's population while consuming 80% of the world's opium. The American Academy of Pain Medicine notes that more than 100 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, while simultaneously, the number of opiate prescriptions has nearly doubled in the past decade (<http://drugabuse.com/legalizing-marijuana-decreases-fatal-opiate-overdoses/>).

Many people are either unknowingly becoming opium addicts over months and years of increasing prescribed use, or they are taking the fast track by using street heroin at alarming rates. Regardless, it is clear to us as Americans that we have an opioid addiction problem, not to mention how many Americans are avid alcohol consumers.

Marijuana contains chemicals such as Delta 9-THC, CBD, CBN, and THCV. These chemicals all offer pain relieving effects, while offering a potential solution for those who suffer from

chronic pain. A study in the JAMA International Medicine Journal found that cannabis laws “are associated with significantly lower state-level opioid overdose mortality rates”

(<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1898878>).

While the study is specifically related to medical cannabis, the ultimate point is that the science behind cannabis as a plant supports the notion that regulation would positively influence our current drug issues. Therefore, cannabis would certainly not “compound our drug issue as a whole” as Chief Cordeiro suggests. And so I ask Chief Cordeiro; how exactly would legal recreational cannabis compound our drug issues as a whole?

It is evident that this country has a chronic pain issue. My argument is that cannabis offers much safer alternatives to dealing with these issues, to both those who are currently on opiates and those who are not. To quote a report from Integr8 Health founder and director Dr. Dustin Sulak,

“Can cannabis be used to replace opioids in chronic pain patients? It can certainly be used to enhance the effects of the opioids. A 2016 study surveyed 244 medical cannabis patients in Michigan, where medical cannabis use was associated with an overall 64 percent decrease in opioid use, a decrease in the number and side effects of other medications, and a 45 percent improvement in quality of life.

An Israeli study from the same year found that 44 percent of 176 opioid-using patients were able to discontinue opioid therapy entirely seven months after they began smoking cannabis or eating cannabis-infused cookies. (<https://www.projectcbd.org/about/plant-medicine-vs-big-pharma/americas-opiate-crisis-how-medical-cannabis-can-help>)”

In this report, Dr. Sulak goes on to state that abstaining

from drugs simply does not work for everybody. Many people have legitimate health concerns that require taking something to mitigate the effects. The key is to focus on a term that Sulak refers to as “harm reduction”; replacing a harmful substance with a safer one. And so, the suggestion is that cannabis users, over time, require the same or less of a dose of prescribed opiates to deal with their pain. In fact, many cannabis users are able to kick opiates altogether with little time, as the health benefits of consuming cannabis as prescribed are numerous.

As if this was not convincing enough, a 2009 study (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19444734>) found that cannabis users were staying in treatment programs for more than twice as long as non cannabis users. Additionally, this study found that intensive behavioral therapy helped those who also used cannabis, but didn't help non cannabis users. Cannabis has been shown to not only provide a more synergistic reduction of pain when taken with opiates, but to also treat symptoms of opiate withdrawal and prevent opiate tolerance building. These are hardly signs that cannabis legalization would make New Bedford's drug problem worse, as Chief Cordeiro suggests. In fact, these are signs that cannabis would help this country's drug problem.

Question 5:

How can the police of New Bedford work to make the city and its roads safe for all while allowing people with THC in their system to safely navigate the public ways?

I would like to acknowledge that recreational cannabis legalization and regulation in Massachusetts would absolutely require a great deal of work on the part of our law enforcement. We as citizens need our police to do the best possible job they can do to protect us and our civil liberties. And so perhaps you are wondering how our police

would be able to do just that if something as unconventional as legal recreational cannabis were to hit the streets of New Bedford; a city with numerous social issues, such as violence, addiction, and corruption.

I believe that this task begins with properly educating the masses on the facts behind the science of cannabis as a whole; not just medicinal or recreational. And from there, people should be given the liberty to decide what they put in their body and for what reason. The hope is that if most people are properly educated, then they should be trusted to make the appropriate decision for not only their own benefit, but for the benefit of those around them.

Cannabis is an astronomically safer alternative to opiates and alcohol, and at best is a more than adequate means to treat chronic pain for hundreds of millions of Americans. In some cases, cannabis could even get people off of opiates altogether. Therefore, making it easier to access by regulating recreational cannabis would help the majority, in my opinion.

If recreational cannabis were regulated in New Bedford so that anybody over the age of 21 were able to purchase cannabis in legal establishments (not on the streets) , there would need to be measures put into place to ensure the safety of all people. I believe the New Bedford Police would have to implement a more valid means to test roadside THC levels and its effect on specific drivers' abilities to operate a motor vehicle.

Perhaps police recordings of 'baseline results' pertaining to motor skills and mental capacity/communicative ability would be a solution; so that police officers would have a more reliable way to test a THC-positive person's ability operate a motor vehicle. It should go without saying that New Bedford Police should not be monitoring and responding to THC levels in bloodstreams the same way they do with alcohol or other

drugs. The key is to find a way to monitor “how much cannabis is too much” for a specific person to be driving a car.

At the same time, this writer is in favor of punishments for people who are found to be “too high” at the time that they are found to have caused a motor vehicle accident. Punishments should also be implemented to discourage people from selling cannabis illegally on the streets; the definition of cannabis regulation, essentially. This is how we would encourage people to be properly educated and to properly consume cannabis. Because the alternative would then be to possess ignorance towards what one would be doing to their own body and unsuspecting citizens, leading to pertinent consequences.

Additionally, if the citizens of New Bedford had public safe places to consume cannabis, then worries such as Chief Cordeiro’s that non cannabis users would have to put up with the effects of cannabis without desire would be put to rest. Alcohol bars and tobacco (or hookah) bars exist, so why not cannabis clubs and/or parks?

Chief Cordeiro mentioned property owners as potentially being at risk of having tenants that would consume cannabis at the dismay of other tenants. I feel that this is an unreasonable concern-as landlords should have the responsibility of ensuring their tenants are aware of the dangers of “second-hand smoke”. It should be up to landlords to either allow or disallow tenants to consume cannabis indoors. And if tenants are not able to consume indoors, then they should be able to consume outdoors in designated areas so that they do not impede on the basic rights of others to not be ingesting foreign chemicals against their will.

Ultimately, people are going to consume cannabis regardless. So why not do all that we can do ensure those people can do so safely while those that do not aren’t subjected to deal with the decisions of their peers?

To the “Fans” Burning Isaiah Thomas Jerseys

Your ignorance is not representative of the majority of New England sports fans. Your burning of Isaiah Thomas’s #4 Celtics jerseys is nothing more than disrespectful. And if you paid your own hard earned money to then burn the jerseys to the ground, so be it. But know this; your hot blooded expression of “fandom” is tremendously misguided.

Nobody was as shocked to hear about the Kyrie Irving trade to Boston more than Isaiah Thomas himself. This is a man who had no intentions of leaving Boston. In fact, Thomas was poised to lead the Celtics through another season as the team’s best player, while rehabbing an injury that knocked him out of the playoff series against his new team. Isaiah was the focal point of team that won the Eastern Conference, in large part because of Thomas’ record high stat lines throughout the season. And who could ever forget Isaiah Thomas’ tremendous 50+ point playoff game just hours after the tragic news of his sister’s death.

This trade, which included Celtics forward Jae Crowder, center Ante Zizic, and a 2018 Brooklyn Nets lottery pick, brought an NBA finals game winner in Kyrie Irving to our hometown team. While many will argue which team “won the trade”, it is clear that both teams received valuable assets in return.

The Cavaliers received two starters (Thomas and Crowder) and two potential future stars (Zizic and the Brooklyn pick). They also unloaded Kyrie Irving, who had made it clear that his intentions of staying in Cleveland were nonexistent. Mainly because LeBron is rumored to leave for the west coast next

season. And so, the Cavaliers can contend this season and still be poised for another rebuild in case LeBron leaves.

The Celtics, meanwhile, received an All Star-finals winning point guard in his physical prime. Irving is only 25, and is under contract for another two seasons. And Kyrie will now get to play with recently acquired all star Gordon Hayward on a Celtics team that surprisingly only has 4 players from last year's team on their current roster. Even with a new look roster, the Celtics should certainly be contending to make the NBA finals this season, as they have a talented group of role players such as Al Horford, Jaylen Brown, and roomie Jayson Tatum. And this time, they just might have to face Isaiah Thomas and the Cavaliers to do so.

Oddly enough, Kyrie Irving and Isaiah Thomas were the first and last respective picks in the same draft 6 years ago(#1 and #60). Irving has played in Cleveland his whole career, while Thomas has played for several teams since. It was Celtics GM Danny Ainge who a few years ago traded Marcus Thornton and a Cleveland 1st round draft pick to the Phoenix Suns to acquire PG Isaiah Thomas. At the time, IT was only a 6th man coming off of the Suns' bench. Today, Isaiah Thomas is coming off his best season in the NBA; averaging about 29 points per game, leading the Celtics to the Eastern Conference finals, and being named to his first ever all NBA 2nd team.

This trade came as a genuine shock to all that follow the sport of basketball. The Cavaliers and Celtics are undoubtedly the two best teams in the Eastern Conference. And they just traded two of their best players to each other!

The point is this; both teams made the tough decision of completing this blockbuster trade to not only compete now, but to be better positioned for success in 2-5 years as well. At the end of this upcoming season, the result may as well be determined with a coin flip given how close these two teams skill levels are.

The NBA is a business first and an entertainment entity second. Decisions such as trading fan favorites like IT and Kyrie are not made easily, for various reasons. But these decisions are not avoided in fear of potential fan backlash. Celtics GM Danny Ainge did not fear fans burning jerseys before completing this trade. With ownership groups that are focused on winning championships, these trades are ultimately made because it is agreed within the organization that the trade is the best for sustained success. The goal should be to compete to win in the present and be poised to win down the road. It's a fine line to walk, but it is one that successful companies tow year in and year out.

And so-to see so many Celtics fan unleash their passion by trying to "erase" the history of IT in Boston by burning their #4 jerseys-is truly saddening. Because through these burnings, there is a deliberate avoidance of the team's goals and ignorance of the difficulty of the decision itself. The goal for the Celtics remains the same; even though the "how" has changed drastically.

What true Celtics fan would want to forget the heroics of IT last season? Thomas was a sixth man in Phoenix, and came to Boston with nobody expecting anything more from him. Two seasons later he is scoring 54 points in a playoff game just hours after finding out his sister had passed away in a car accident. What true fan would want to forget about IT playing through several injuries throughout the playoffs, and ultimately leading the team in scoring throughout the whole season? What true Celtics fan would turn on a player that most fans loved wholeheartedly, just because they were traded against their own will? If it were up to Thomas, he would have stayed in Boston to strive to win banner #18.

I believe IT will undoubtedly carry a chip on his shoulder for as long as he plays in Cleveland. And when he comes to Boston on opening night, it will certainly be must TV. And while I will be cheering for my home town Boston Celtics, I will still

be watching for #4 on Cleveland. Because no matter where he plays, Isaiah Thomas proved to me that his skill and pedigree for the game is ultimately what led him to Cleveland from Boston in the first place. It is what led him from being a “nobody” in Phoenix to an all star in Boston. And I can only hope every burnt jersey is used as fuel for Isaiah to continue to prove his worth on the court. As if he hasn’t proved so much already.

Celtics fans gear up-it’s going to be a feisty season. And here’s to hoping we see IT in the Eastern Conference finals.

Again.

5 Takeaways From the Boston Free Speech Rally

I attended the free speech rally in Boston on August 19th with the sole purpose of capturing what it felt like just being there. What it felt like being around thousands of Americans that were burning so much inside that they decided to show up to be apart of a overcrowded, passionate, and at some points, physical group. And that’s really what it felt like being apart of the 20,000 at the common that day.

And oddly enough-I felt safe.

The things that I heard gave me an odd sense of hope. Because the messages I heard as a mere “neutral” observer were for good. For the good of humankind. And denouncing evil wholeheartedly for all to hear. Especially our enemies.

The Boston Police Force made their presence felt. And I heard

both admiration for the cops and calls to “put down the sticks.” It certainly felt that the majority of people did not want things to get physically violent though, even if they were critical of the police force. And so, most made up for it with their language.

What made the event, to me, were the little things. The little looks into people’s human nature amidst all the chaos. From a Black Lives Matter speaker nearly bursting out into laughter whispering to her group offstage to grab the mic from her because she was running out of chants to call for. To the police officer I saw let out a half smile when making eye contact with my camera lens. To the guy who subtly let me know he smoked weed after a 2 minute heartfelt speech preaching love of your neighbor. It was the smallest of gestures that made me feel hopeful and safe throughout the Free Speech Rally.

Over the past couple of days, I’ve been able to gauge how the average citizen in our community viewed what happened Saturday. In some cases, I was able to see some of the misconceptions as well.

And so, I wanted to share the 5 things that I personally took away from the Free Speech Rally in Boston.

#1- The Police Force were the first and last group I encountered in Boston.

I mentioned earlier that I felt safe during my time at the rally. I parked at a garage a few blocks away from Tremont street, and recall walking past police officers on every sidewalk leading up to the common. There were times where I was shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of people while men with batons and face guards firmly walked us back to clear room for police cruisers to escort people out of the park. In the faces of people yelling for them to “drop the sticks”, the officers that I filmed remained focused on maintaining order,

not on arguing with citizens. Truthfully, it came as a surprise to me that some officers were unfortunately spat on and struck with bodily fluids. I did not witness this, however, as I feel the majority of the event was a legitimately peaceful protest. I greatly value and appreciate the work that the Boston Police did to keep the average citizen safe on that day.

#2- Trump supporters were a minority at the event, and people were vehemently vocal about their disagreements.

I managed to record a young white man with a pro Trump shirt in a sea of angry citizens just outside the common on Tremont street. Shortly after I noticed the man, I saw him get escorted out of the crowd by two officers in bright green vests. He had been doused in water(?) but was visibly being consoled by officers, and his escorting into the park was met with even more intensity from the crowd.

I'm not entirely sure what words were exchanged leading up to his escort, but the point is that it felt like most of the people in attendance were anti-Trump and not afraid to show it. I don't condone throwing anything at someone because we disagree, but I also can't speak on what this particular Trump supporter had heard and said prior to this incident. Fortunately though, it did not escalate further.

Physical violence was not the intent of the majority of common-goers, but when it did get physical the police stepped in immediately and effectively.

#3-The Black Lives Matter speakers were genuinely positive and supported by the majority of common goers.

From about 1:30 to 3pm on Saturday afternoon, the north side of the common was packed with pro Black Lives Matter people. The speakers I heard were preaching messages of embrace,

acceptance, and activism. Speaking out to express one's power and voice for the bettering of the whole community; not for just one part. There were messages of anti-white supremacy, and even signs (which I'll get to) saying "white people don't matter as much" being held by white people.

As someone who has viewed people as naturally equal to one another regardless of race, these signs did not change my own opinions. The speeches of the Black Lives Matter groups, and all of their intricacies, did not change my own opinions. Rather, they brought to light new perspectives that have further solidified occupancy in my own heart, through my own activism in showing up to record. I looked around me and saw people of every color and creed chanting in unison messages of love, throughout the park. And that is a fact.

#4- The signs were ridiculously entertaining.

"Those boys ain't right"-Hank Hill. The now oversaturated Donald Trump clown meme galleries would suggest it might be hard to find quality fresh content. But the rally added a few more novel ones to the bunch. Anti-Nazi and Anti-KKK signs lit up the common neo-green and yellow that day. People took time to creatively construct their messages by hand, and it definitely kept my eyes open and will years from now when I look back on the pictures I was able to take.

And last but not least...

#5-People like hugs.

This one might be a curveball.

I attended the rally with a friend of mine named Dallas. Dallas is physically disabled and therefore was attending the rally in a wheelchair. I was there taking pictures and video, but in between I would walk with Dallas to new locations throughout the common to get more of a scope of the action.

And during the event, Dallas recorded 64 hugs from different individuals, as he was wearing a “free hugs sign.” This isn’t counting the handshakes he received either. We even managed to get good video of a guy at the common who had a powerful message in response to the free hugs.

The few that I saw decline his invitation to hug used polite “curves” that we laughed at; like a Trump supporter who claimed it was too hot for it. Oddly enough, an older Trump supporter was one of the 64 people.

And so it’s confirmed, one of my takeaways is that despite perceived “animosity”, people still like hugs.

Just as much as free speech perhaps.

OPINION: The Problem With Prostitution

This is not an article bashing prostitutes. This is merely a personal concern I have with the practice of prostitution given my personal experiences living in New Bedford for 22 years. We are all entitled to our own opinions, and I certainly welcome differing points of view. After all, that is how we are able to learn and grow as a productive society.

Perhaps it isn’t popular opinion, but I believe prostitution should be legalized and regulated to remove it from public view. Not because of personal taste; I’ve never seriously considered paying for sex myself. Instead, I believe it should be legal because people will partake regardless, and regulating it will help solve other nuisances caused by it.

Public nuisances, specifically.

I've been solicited by a prostitute within a few car lengths from my driveway several times in the past couple of months. One time I recall stopping to turn onto County street, just seconds away from my home, to head to work on a Saturday morning. A familiar face approached my car, with my windows rolled up, the second she saw my head turn in her direction to check for oncoming traffic.

Some would tell me to just ignore them, but in that moment I chose to engage for the sake of treating her like a human being. I've ignored them so many times and they still show up again, so why not try something else? My thought was to look her in the eyes and say "no" to simply save her time and mine, because I knew the shtick was coming. And as soon as I roll down my window to reject her sales pitch, she leans on the glass window of my driver's side door and proceeds to give me..."the eyes". She didn't even give me a chance to speak. She was right to the point, "wanna go on a date?"

And that really pissed me off even more.

I begrudgingly let out a cold "no" and turned onto County, but not before she walked in front of my car to get to the sidewalk. I didn't want to get into a shouting contest with some random prostitute outside of my house, especially since I knew she'd be at the next block in a minute or two anyway.

My point is this: I don't care that others make money having sex with people. It's hard to get ahead (no pun intended) in 2017, and if consenting adults wish to do this (without harming anybody) then they will find a way whether or not others want them to. The part that is concerning is that these types of disrespectful, uncomfortable encounters happen on our streets DAILY.

The same woman that I mentioned had asked me on a date did the same thing a few years ago. But this time it was on a Friday

night and I had my girlfriend with me. It was funnier then-one of the first times it had happened to me. But now? It's a frustrating, regular occurrence.

I know I am not the only person in New Bedford who deals with these kind of encounters. And that is why in a way I feel that the problem is not being addressed. Because we are desensitized to them happening. Prostitution as a whole is one of the oldest practices in human history. New Bedford has undoubtedly had an issue with prostitutes polluting the streets, but prosecuting these people has proved ineffective.

I don't believe it should be the city's responsibility to fund sites for prostitution to take place, but I do believe people should be able to engage in intercourse for money.

I believe our police force should not have to spend time busting prostitutes on Purchase Street every night, and that our citizens don't deserve to be solicited in such a way.

So the question remains; what should New Bedford do about prostitution? How does the city get it off the streets while knowing that odds are it will still exist regardless?

WeedTube: The Future of Cannabis

WeedTubers from Hawaii, Washington, Canada, California, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts pose together after meeting each other for the first time in Las Vegas for Hempfest 2016. Left to right: Dr. Puff, me, Jesse from Lift Innovations, CC, Josh from StrainCentral, Sasha aka SilencedHippie, and Nessie of Nessie's Kitchen.

We live in a world where information spreads to the masses forever within a single click of a button. A single tap of an index finger. Our deepest concerns, opinions, and questions in the palm of our hands, on 3% battery.

Some of us grab chargers and delve into the double digit pages of google for answers, while some grab a stool and are handed a bottle. Hell, some even light up a joint and grab a burger instead.

And then there are *WeedTubers*; Weed-YouTubers.

If you were already a part of the millions of people that comprise this community, then you would already be familiar with this internet niche known as “WeedTube”. But if not, it might seem surprising that people actually smoke weed on the internet. Especially given various issues related to state and federal legislature on cannabis as a whole.

And on YouTube’s side of things, as a massively successful company, it doesn’t get any easier for WeedTubers. Ongoing changes with YouTube’s content policies have made it harder on WeedTubers to earn revenue via video advertisements. Cannabis themed content for any reason (entertainment, education, or cultivation) on YouTube is automatically deemed non advertiser friendly, which greatly lowers the rate as which creators can make money per number of views.

As a result, WeedTubers must rely on either contributions from their viewers for income (via sites like Patreon and Twitch), or by sponsorship with specific online shops and brands. Meaning that very few people who smoke weed on YouTube are able to earn a living just posting to their channel.

But what’s the appeal? Why would anyone watch somebody else take a bong hit?

Well, for one, it’s one of the few ways people who don’t smoke weed can see what it’s like to smoke weed from the comfort of

their own home or privacy. Without actually having to be anywhere near weed. WeedTube videos provide anyone the ability to learn about the plant, the industry, and the community as a whole. You don't need to know a thing about weed to access the knowledge WeedTube content provides. Just wifi.

And for those of us that wouldn't mind a morning bowl with a mug of coffee, WeedTube provides an appropriately engaging experience. There's Josh from "StrainCentral", for example. Josh creates for his WeedTube channel of more than 420,000 subscribers multiple times each week, and has for about 3 years, accumulating more than 50 million views. His content primarily consists of cannabis education, offering a more intellectual point of view to WeedTube. Specifically, his "WeedTube Wake and Bake" series shares local (Washington state) and national news relating to cannabis and the cannabis industry. Naturally, this series was how I discovered StrainCentral, as I am definitely a morning news with a coffee and a bowl kind of guy.

And of course, who could ever forget about entertainment? Sure we could watch a Cheech and Chong flick every now and again, but what if we could see real time progression with true characters every day? From CustomGrow420, to GroovyMac, to TwoGirlsOneBong, SilencedHippie, and SlowerFuture, WeedTube is home to a lot of original, innovative, and consistent content. These five channels combine for over 200 million views across nearly 3,000 videos over just the past 3 years.

And unlike Cheech and Chong, you are much more likely to see these people in real life. Not to disrespect the legends, it's just I'm sure after much longer careers and still working on their own creative endeavors, it's harder for them to make it to every public gathering and festival. WeedTubers, however, usually attend weed festivals at every opportunity they get. This not only speaks to the strength of the community, but to how much fun it actually is for these content creators to meet their viewers. And the collaborations are always special.

And perhaps the biggest appeal would be the fact that these creators; WeedTubers prove the negative stigma attached to cannabis wrong. The lack of productivity stigma. The antisocial stigma.

This is seen through the amount of work it takes to record, edit, publish, read feedback, promote others, write new ideas, research, build social medias, network, and overall maintain something bigger then the individual. The work load can be staggering at times. I have experienced this first hand, as within a year I was able to build a community of 60,000 people on YouTube to follow 200 cannabis themed entertainment videos. Every single day was dedicated to the entire process of being an aspiring YouTube personality, and it lead me to meet incredible people in real life thousands of miles away from home, as well as learn so much about the plant itself. But it required hundreds, if not thousands of hours of tedious, fruitful work. And the payoff was seeing thousands of people express their appreciation and enjoyment for the little things that added up to make each and every piece of content.

Interestingly enough, however, the WeedTube community is still seemingly so young, as legalization still has not reached most states, with it still being federally illegal as well. It would seem that WeedTube's best days are still ahead. But one thing is certain; more and more people are watching people smoke weed on the internet. But as crazy as it might sound, is it really that odd? Perhaps people in general are just now taking a puff or two more than they once did? If one thing is certain, the WeedTubers sure are.

And of course we know *that* because at any given moment we can log on to YouTube and watch. With the simple click of a button, or the tap of an index finger. WeedTube continues to solidify its role as the future of cannabis, as its content and creators provide people with an efficient way to access more and more knowledge about the plant, the industry, and the community as a whole.