

MY DEAR FELLOW COMPASSIONATE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY,

I write this letter in a state of deep sorrow, as I have just learned that I am a fugitive from a Drug Enforcement Administration press release while on vacation with my wife Elinor and two sons, Tyler (3) and Lucas (5 months). I am now a wanted man for charges relating to providing medical marijuana to sick and dying patients in the State of California and it pains me that a government agency would attempt to justify their allegations by misinforming the public on so many levels.

There is a grave injustice happening in this country regarding medical cannabis and in the words of the great Dr. King, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." A decade since California voters passed the Compassionate Use Act of 1996, allowing for the use of medical cannabis by qualified patients upon the recommendation of a licensed physician, we have continued to unnecessarily waste taxpayer dollars on the arrest and prosecution of law abiding citizens **due to misguided federal laws that conflict with the laws of California and 12 other states**. How many people's lives will we continue to see ripped apart for the use of cannabis as medicine before we as a society stand up and say ENOUGH?

My awareness of medical cannabis and its benefits began in the early nineties when my father was diagnosed with prostate cancer and I lived in New York City with him painfully watching as the early stages of his cancer began to erode his physical and spiritual being. He was in tremendous pain constantly and always very ill from the number of medications that he was using for his condition. An elder friend of mine that also had cancer told me of the tremendous relief that he found from a small amount of cannabis. I encouraged my father to try cannabis but he blatantly refused due to its legal status under federal law. This hot-button topic created a divide between my father and I that ended with me moving away, as I could not stand to see him suffer any longer. My father lived ten years in horrific pain and discomfort and lost his life to the disease in 2002.

In September of 1995 I moved to the Bay Area and began living in the Berkeley Area. At this time petitions were being circulated to get Proposition 215 on the ballot and I took a part-time job helping gather signatures. I felt as if I was doing God's work, as I had seen firsthand the degradation of my father's life due to the horrible sickness his cancer medication caused, and the withering away of his body, as eating became a difficult chore for him. I would have gathered the signatures for free, as I truly believe that cannabis is a beneficial medicine that has been demonized for political purposes for decades, and a medicine that could have comforted my father in his decade long battle with cancer.

I began studying more about cannabis as a medicine over the years and began to realize that there was an unjust harm being done in this country by jailing and persecuting people who use cannabis for relief. There are countless stories of medical cannabis political prisoners whom have been persecuted for providing relief to the sick and dying. I became politically involved with the progressive movement, attending rallies and protests, working with Americans for Safe Access, and being a vocal member of the community regarding the atrocities that were happening with the Drug Enforcement Administration's violent raids on cannabis providers, and the tearing apart of families occurring as a result of arrests and convictions of cannabis patients and providers.

I learned of the struggles that these people faced in their persecution, as they were unable to present any evidence of the medical benefits of cannabis at their federal trials, and forced to be labeled as drug dealers or traffickers for simply trying to implement the will of the voters of California by providing safe access to cannabis as an alternative and organic form of relief for pain, nausea, and a multitude of other symptoms or conditions. I was outraged by the injustices being perpetrated by the federal government, which I see as a direct assault on the U.S. Constitution and its clear intent to allow each State its due dignity and independence.

To be prohibited from speaking freely about the medical benefits of cannabis in a federal courtroom is an absurd violation of free speech. Furthermore, such a rule evinces disrespect and condescension toward the intelligent citizenry, who should have the right to make decisions based on factual evidence and sound research before voting to convict over unfounded rhetoric. For a state to face forceful and violent intervention from the government over the implementation of laws within its own borders is not what our founding fathers had in mind when writing the Tenth Amendment to the Bill of Rights. The absurdity of this struggle has left me a changed man. Once a naive child who believed in the Government and the freedoms of America, I have come to realize that laws can be bought and funded by big business and that the war on cannabis was simply a result of many other factions and powerful lobbying committees that have demonized this medicine for their own wealth and gain.

I myself use cannabis for medicinal reasons. I spent much of my youth forced to take Ritalin for behavioral issues and when I was old enough I found cannabis to be a much more manageable way of dealing with anxiety and hyperactivity that resulted from what doctors refer to as a “chemical imbalance.”

In 2002 I suffered a serious fall and shattered my left calcaneous bone, which is more commonly referred to as the heel. It was surgically repaired with seven screws and a steel plate that are to remain in my body for the rest of my life. This, combined with degenerative cartilage in my right knee, I was unable to walk without discomfort and consistent pain. I became addicted to Vicodin and painkillers during my recovery and always felt very toxic when using opiate derived pain medication. I found that cannabis relieved the pain and allowed me to function more freely and I began to live a fuller life without the burden of being subjected to the adverse side effects of prescription medication.

Realizing the vast improvements in my own life that cannabis has provided, I have continued to be a vocal member of the community and a proponent of medical cannabis. I have poured my heart and soul into fighting for the rights of medical cannabis users everywhere. Maybe that is the reason that I am being targeted now. Not because I have done anything wrong, but because I have given my lifeblood to advocating the use of medical cannabis and have spoken out strongly against the tyranny of our government surrounding this issue. It never ceases to amaze me. How can we live in a society that chooses to jail its own people over using a natural form of medication that is harmless in many forms and provides relief for so many?

I sit here in mourning with my family as we watch lies and sensationalist rhetoric about us streaming across every media outlet in the Country, just horrified by the possibilities that surround our future. I know I must turn myself in and confront these horrific allegations and I sincerely ask for the support of the community in these matters.

I believe truly in my heart that I have committed no crime. With all of the domestic and global issues our country faces, it is sad that our taxpayer dollars and law enforcement resources are being expended in an entrenched battle over a plant.

It is time for the American people to let Washington, D.C. know that we are sick of the nonsense and charades that are being played with the lives of our citizens. We must learn to show compassion and good sense and begin to understand that we are creating more problems than we are fixing by jailing and prosecuting non-violent users of medical cannabis. I will continue to hold my head high, as I know I have done nothing wrong. I look to great leaders of the past for wisdom in dealing with the injustices of society and once again think about the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King in his letter from Birmingham Jail. He states, "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law." I believe that the federal laws against medical cannabis are way out of harmony with the moral law of a person's right to seek relief from suffering, and that history will show that we, as a society, have made a horrible mistake by unjustly prosecuting and incarcerating many innocent people to support our failed "War on Drugs."

If our society is to evolve, we must begin to shed our past mistakes and begin to use common sense when enforcing laws that shatter lives and leave children without parents. I am deeply saddened that the Drug Enforcement Administration continues to needlessly and violently pursue law-abiding citizens with archaic interpretations of the law. I even find some forgiveness knowing that the men who invaded my home in the name of an immoral law must have families of their own. I only hope that they stop to consider how deeply they have already hurt my family in order to feed theirs.

I sleep well knowing that I do the right thing everyday to the best of my ability, and although I am far from perfect I am a good man with good intentions. I will turn myself in voluntarily and begin to settle this matter in a system, which although flawed, is the one we have. I am obviously frightened, but also confident that the truth will be brought to light and we, as a society, will learn a valuable lesson somewhere in all of this madness. We must put a stop to this travesty and, as a community, speak up and defend a patient's right to use safer alternatives of medication as they and their doctors see fit. We must no longer allow the federal government to viciously intimidate its citizens by misinforming and blatantly lying to the public about the benefits of cannabis as a safe and effective medicine.

I encourage community leaders, government officials, patriotic citizens, and anyone who has the common sense to realize the failed policies of this war on medical cannabis, to rise up and be heard. Let your elected officials know that we demand a stop to these senseless acts of violence and the needless wasting of resources in states where citizens support the use of medical cannabis. The choice to use medical cannabis is a decision that should be made by a patient and a doctor. Bureaucrats should never be allowed to turn decisions about a person's health into a political issue that can be influenced by big business lobbying groups in Washington D.C. It is a fundamental right of the sick and dying to find relief for their pain and suffering through sound research and advice from their personal physician. The issue here is not a matter of whether a law has been broken. The issue is whether those laws are just and moral.

I hope and pray that a solution will emerge and that we, as a nation, can begin to

undo the harm that these laws have already caused. Many families have been destroyed over this senseless conflict between state and federal laws and many good and honest citizens are incarcerated at this very moment for choosing to help ease the suffering of medical cannabis patients. I am aware of the charges that have been brought against me and fear that I will also end up a political prisoner in my own country.

I am extremely proud of the work that has been done in California and across the nation to begin combating the lies and misinformation that has been a part of this culture for too long. Reasonable citizens everywhere are seeing through the falsehoods about medical cannabis –advanced by a deceitful policy that chooses to ignore sound scientific research and the needs of patients everywhere. Please do not allow my family and I to be the next victims of this blatant policy of disrespect for personal freedom and human rights.

We will continue to fight for patients' rights to use cannabis and I ask that citizens everywhere join me in this battle for personal freedom. Contact your law makers, educate your friends and neighbors, question law enforcement practices, and become an active part of taking this country back from errant political influence and failed policy. According to polls, at least 80% of the American public stand behind me on this issue. It is critical that we take the next step in standing up for our personal freedoms before they are all gone.

I thank everyone who has given support to my family and I in these trying times, and look forward to the day when patients abiding by state law no longer have to fear violent persecution and spiteful slander by the federal government for using an all-natural, alternative medicine that is approved by their doctor. One can only hope that this day will come before anyone else is forced to suffer the needless pain I feel today.

Sincerely,  
Michael Martin  
October 2, 2007