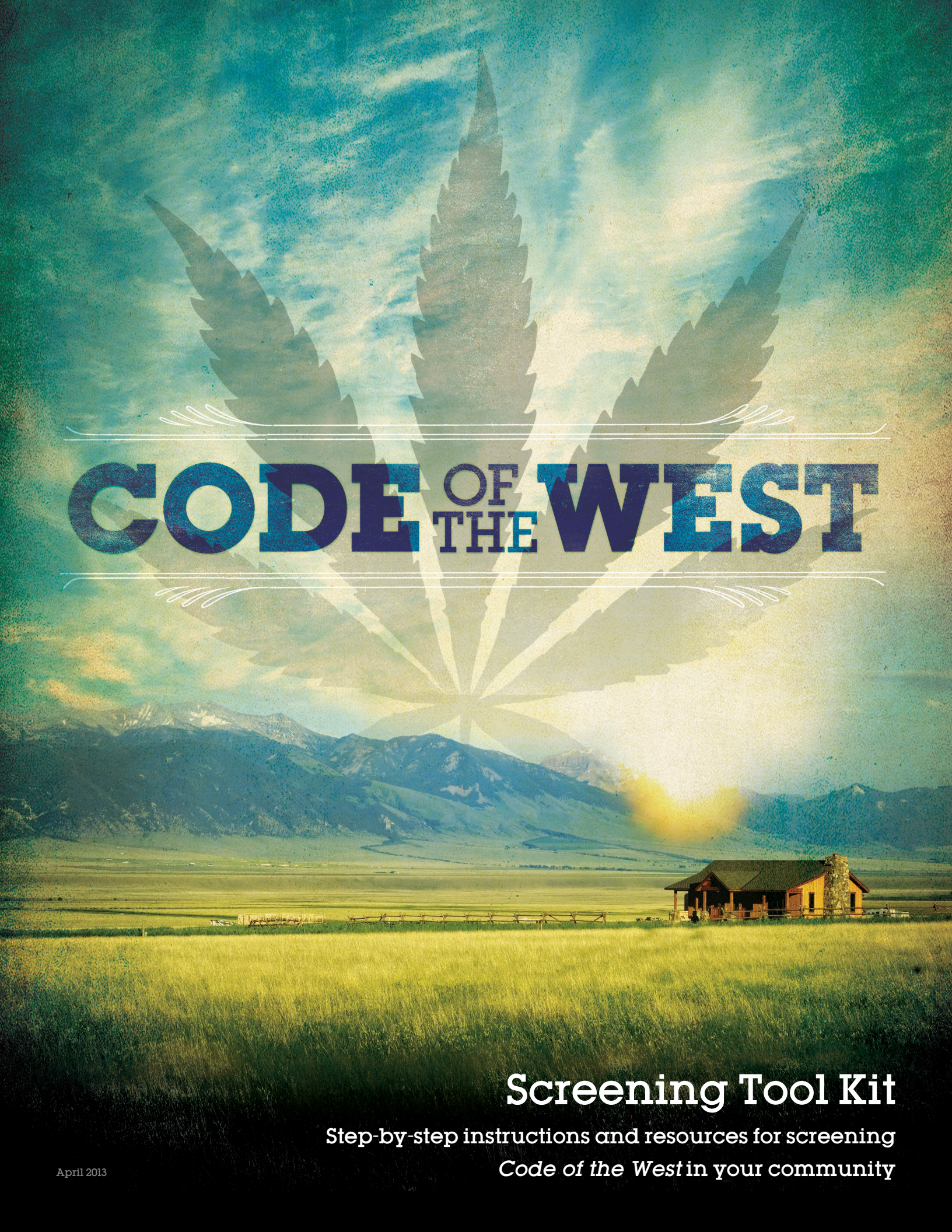
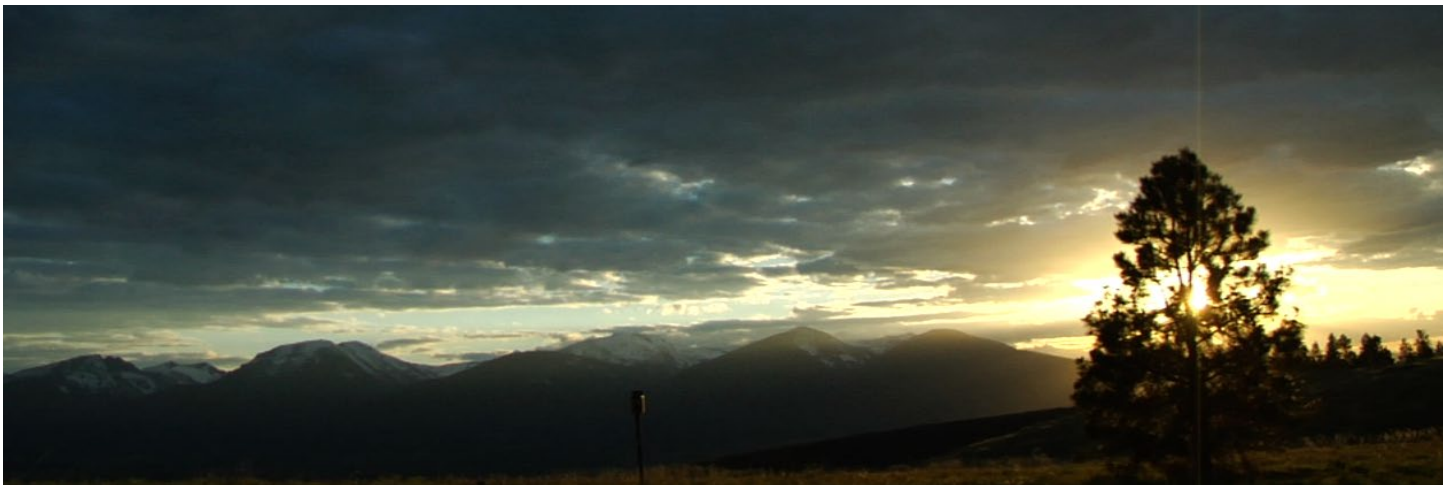


Screening Tool Kit

Step-by-step instructions and resources for screening *Code of the West* in your community

April 2013



About the Film

At a time when the world is rethinking its drug policies large and small, one state rises to the forefront of national attention. Once a pioneer in legalizing medical marijuana, the state of Montana may now become the first to repeal its medical marijuana law. Set against the sweeping vistas of the Rockies, the steamy lamplight of marijuana grow houses, and the bustling halls of the State Capitol, *CODE OF THE WEST* follows the political process of marijuana policy reform—and the recent federal crackdown on medical marijuana growers across the country. This is the story of what happens when politics fail, emotions run high and communities pay the price.

Director's Statement

Rebecca Richman Cohen

This is a film about the legislative process, but it is also the story of how different communities struggle to construct a universe of shared values. Nomos is an ancient Greek word meaning "human law." The term is never uttered in our film, but its meaning underlies much of what our crew documented in Montana. Nomos refers not only to the formal laws that legislators draft as legal code, but also the social norms and unwritten codes of conduct that govern our daily life. *CODE OF THE WEST* is a film about what happens when there are conflicting codes: when our formal laws conflict with each other, when our social norms conflict with our laws, and when different segments of our society embrace divergent norms.

My team and I have tried to capture the human story behind the legislative process of state-level marijuana policy reform—a messy, tangled affair that has implications for policy reform in other states and for the democratic process in the nation at large. Though the federal government considers marijuana a Schedule I Narcotic (with no accepted medical use), an increasing number of states disagree. Today eighteen states and Washington DC have legalized medical marijuana use for people suffering from debilitating medical conditions including cancer, epilepsy, severe nausea, multiple sclerosis and chronic pain. But the way in which we regulate a drug that is also widely used by adults and teenagers who don't suffer from these conditions—and that has become a powerful symbol in a much wider debate about cultural values—raises the hard questions that drove me to make this film.

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As we followed the trajectory of three medical marijuana bills in Montana, we couldn't help but notice another debate taking place in the Montana Capitol. Halfway through the legislative session, the President of the Senate proposed a bill that would memorialize an archetypal, cowboy-era "Code of the West" as the official Montana state code of ethics. But despite the pleasing nostalgia of the idea, the marijuana debate we chronicled revealed to us that a single code of ethics can't begin to reflect the deep divisions at work in Montana's society. And it forced us to wonder, "Who is more true to Montana's pioneering spirit?" Is it those seeking to guard their communities against marijuana billboards that mar the view of the Rockies? Or is it the drug policy reformers seeking to keep medical marijuana legal?

The question, of course, is not *whether* Montanans—or any of us—should live by a common code, but rather *which* code, or *whose* code, we should adopt. The code of the pious? The libertarian? The entrepreneur? The local government? The regional tradition? The national law?

If Montana's medical marijuana debate tells us anything, it is this: There are many codes of the West. And the way in which they are reconciled—or not—has profound implications for the way we live.

Thanks for your commitment to thoughtful marijuana policy reform. And good luck with your screening! Stay in touch and let us know how it goes.

Sincerely Yours,

Screening Objectives

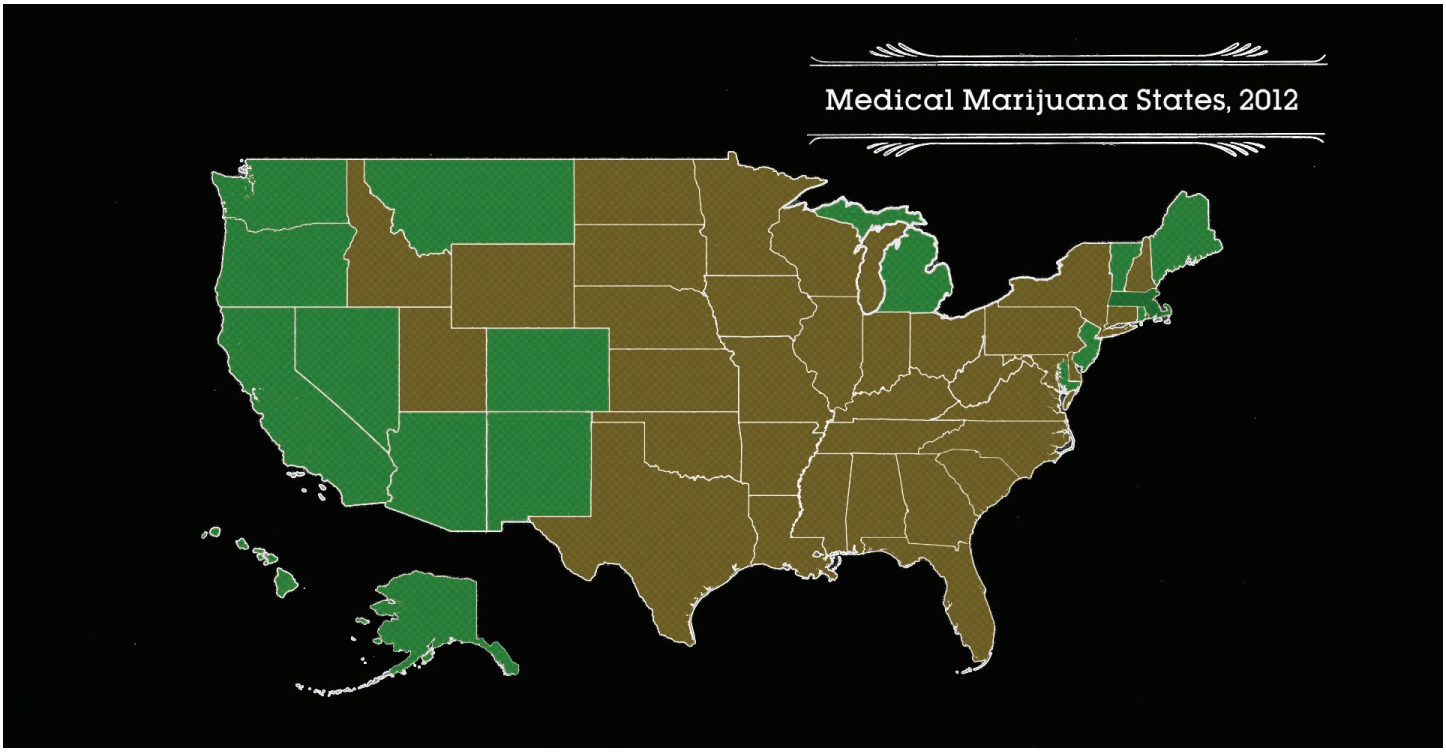
What are your goals?

A screening event can be used to ignite interest in drug policy reform issues; it can inspire both individual and collective action; and it can be used as a news peg on which journalists can hang stories about local or national issues.

When we launched our outreach campaign in the spring of 2012, we had some clear goals in mind. We wanted to work with communities to:

- Foster cross-partisan, transparent and productive debate on sensible marijuana policy in the US
- Gain access to unbiased and research-backed information about marijuana policy
- Share and spread information about state-based marijuana policy reform to build action-minded coalitions of organizers, advocates and informed citizens nationwide

We strongly recommend a pre-screening brainstorming session to set realistic goals. Clearly articulating your objectives will make it much easier to plan the event, strategize for useful outcomes, target publicity and evaluate your results.



The Event

Preparing for Your Screening

BEFORE YOUR EVENT

Make sure that you've secured *CODE OF THE WEST's* public performance rights. In order to screen the film publicly, you need to purchase a license by visiting the New Day Films website (newday.com/films/codeofthewest.html), our educational distributor. If you have questions, please contact us directly at outreach@racinghorsepro.com or codeofthewestfilm.com/hostscreenings

Once you've nailed down your screening's date, time, and venue, it's time to start preparing for your event. Use this checklist to get started:

THE VISION

- Consider if you want to approach other organizations and/or stakeholders to co-sponsor and co-plan your event.
- Brainstorm who will lead the post-screening discussion and what topics will be covered. Will there be a panel discussion? Will you invite experts? Activists? Community leaders? State legislators? Medical professionals? Other stakeholders? Will you steer the conversation with a strong hand, or will you let the audience decide the course of the discussion?
- Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on all topics related to marijuana policy, but knowing the basics can help guide the discussion and gently correct misstatements of fact. Before the screening, take time to review the film and research the marijuana policy reform debate in your community. For a national overview, check out Marijuana Policy Project's library on medical marijuana at mpp.org/issues/medical-marijuana
- Check out the news section of the *CODE OF THE WEST* website to see if there are any major developments worth addressing in the post-screening discussion. codeofthewestfilm.com/news

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- Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who will attend a screening, but if you know the groups that make up your community, you have a better chance of predicting who may come to your event. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.
- Create a list of immediate actions your audience can participate in after your screening. For examples, see sample action steps under the Moving Ahead section of this guide.

PUBLICITY AND INVITATIONS

- Use *CODE OF THE WEST's* Press Materials at codeofthewestfilm.com/press to create your own customized event flyer or use any of the free still images from our website.
- Issue a press release to let local newspapers, bloggers, and radio stations know about your event. You can find a template for a press release at codeofthewestfilm.com/press
- Embed our trailer in your blog or website by visiting vimeo.com/racinghorse/codeofthewest-trailer
- Invite guests via email, Evite, listserve, Facebook, and phone.
- Spread the word to the wider community by creating a Facebook event, sending updates via your Twitter feed, and including links to the *CODE OF THE WEST* website on your own site or blog. Please tag *CODE OF THE WEST* on any Facebook postings.
- Consider purchasing a *CODE OF THE WEST* t-shirt and wear it proudly! codeofthewestfilm.com/shop
- Remind guests the day of the screening.

PROVIDING A GOOD AUDIO-VISUAL EXPERIENCE

- At least one week before your event, test-run your DVD. You'll want to be sure that your projector, audio, and DVD player cables fit, that your sound is audible (even in the back of the room), and that the picture that gets projected on your screen or wall is the right shape and size. Good sound is probably the single most important factor for a successful screening.
- Make sure your venue space gets very dark, too, and that the screen can be seen from all chairs in the room.

continued

ON THE DAY OF YOUR EVENT

- Bring a sign-in sheet to collect email addresses from the audience if you want to follow up or add them to your mailing list
- Provide literature about your organization.
- Introduce the film and tell your audience why you were inspired to host *CODE OF THE WEST.*
- After the film ends, allow approximately 30 minutes for discussion. Use the sample discussion questions below to engage your guests. You may also want to update your guests about important developments, such as Chris Williams conviction that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 80+ years. Consider printing the character updates on page 10 and reading them outloud to your audience.
- Encourage your guests to act on what they've learned by sending them home with simple ideas for taking action in your community.
- Take photos to post on social media sites. Make sure to tag *CODE OF THE WEST.*

AFTER THE SCREENING

- Email us at outreach@racinghorsepro.com and let us know how the screening went.
- Post photos and feedback from your event on Facebook.
- Follow up with your guests to thank them for coming and to encourage them to take action after the film.

Update on Montana Cannabis Partners

Tom Daubert was indicted on the charge of Conspiracy to Maintain a Drug Involved Premise—and pled guilty. As a matter of federal law, Tom was prevented from submitting a defense, which argued that his company had complied with Montana's medical marijuana law. In early September, our crew returned to Montana to film Tom's sentencing. As the judge read Tom's sentence, we had some reason to celebrate: Tom is not going to federal prison. On September 6, 2012, he was sentenced to five-years' probation and $50,000 in federal forfeiture fines for his role as an owner of Montana Cannabis. "I'm grateful for the judge's leniency but I will never stop believing that patients deserve to live under a law that recognizes true science," he said. Tom's defense team submitted *CODE OF THE WEST* to the federal judge and highlighted the scenes of Tom's growhouse tours. The judge watched the film in its entirety.

Chris Williams Chris Williams decided to take his case to a jury. Like Tom, he was prevented from presenting his compliance with state law as a defense against the federal charges. On September 27, 2012 he was convicted on marijuana and related gun charges and faced a minimum mandatory sentence of more than 80 years in prison. Two months after his conviction and ten of thousands of petition signatures later—in an incredibly rare, some say unprecedented move—federal prosecutors dropped six of the eight charges. Many supporters attributed the US Attorney's decision to public pressure. Chris is currently behind bars serving a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years in prison.

Richard Flor died in federal custody in August 2012. Unlike Tom, Richard was not given probation. He was sentenced to five years in prison despite a long history of serious health problems. He was held in a private prison in Montana for months, and authorities delayed his transfer to a federal prison where he could have received appropriate medical care. U.S. District Judge Charles Lovell wrote in his August 7 order that it was "unfortunate" that Flor's transfer to a Bureau of Prisons medical facility was delayed, but "it is not factually or legally significant." Richard's family is working to file a wrongful death claim.

Discussion

1. Did anything you learned in *CODE OF THE WEST* surprise you?

2. What do you think sensible medical marijuana policy looks like? Are you aware of the existing medical marijuana regulatory systems that have not incited voter backlash? To inform your discussion, you might want to reference this article, which describes the regulatory system in Colorado. Do you think this system can be a model for other states?

3. Medical marijuana was legalized in Montana in 2004—and it wasn't until 2010 that the opposition starting organizing a movement to repeal the medical marijuana law. In the film, Cherrie Brady says, "For years we had medical marijuana, and nobody cared because it was being used quietly and for those people who needed it... It was when they jumped out there and started growing at a rapid pace [that] we decided we had to do something." Discuss Cherrie's statement. What hurdles do you see in your own communities that might cause discontent?

4. What types of community-based reform policies (at the county or city level) does it make sense to support? For example, consider lowest-priority enforcement initiatives or decriminalization initiatives. What effects do these initiatives have in other states and communities? What might work (and what might not work) in your community?

5. Do you think cannabis policy is discussed enough in state and national election campaigns? What could be done to encourage useful debate in these electoral contexts?

Resources

The *CODE OF THE WEST* team has come across many remarkable resources and organizations in our quest to understand as much as we can about marijuana policy reform. Here's a quick list.

Ken Burn's PROHIBITION Series on PBS. It's not about marijuana, but the lessons learned from alcohol probation are still deeply relevant today. pbs.org/kenburns/prohibition

ACLU Marijuana Law Reform. aclu.org/criminal-law-reform/marijuana-law-reform

Americans for Safe Access (ASA). safeaccessnow.org

Drug Policy Alliance (DPA). drugpolicy.org/facts/drug-facts/10-facts-about-marijuana

Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), leap.cc

Marijuana Policy Project (MPP). mpp.org

National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). norml.org

Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). ssdp.org

continued

6. Many activists focus their efforts on state-based reform. What efforts might influence marijuana policy at the federal level? Is state-based reform necessary before federal-level reform can be tackled? Or vice-versa? What would you say to those people who would use federal drug laws as an excuse for inaction?

7. What are the similarities and difference between the movement to end alcohol prohibition in the 1930s and the movement to end marijuana prohibition? How do you think Americans' ideas about alcohol are influenced by local or federal regulation? Do you think the way marijuana is regulated similarly influences Americans' attitudes about the drug?

8. What groups and organizations in your community might—or should—be interested in crafting medical marijuana policies on a local level? Are there other organizations that might be interested in learning more about drug policy issues more broadly? What strategies could be considered to get them more involved?

Get Involved

What can I do to promote thoughtful marijuana policy reform?

After *CODE OF THE WEST* ends, your guests will probably want to know how they can create positive change in their communities. We have some ideas. You may have others. Stay in touch and let us know what's been effective for your organization.

ACTION 1: LETTER AND OP-ED WRITING

Consider the actions that are most important to your community. Is there a piece of legislation or a regulation on the table that is important to your organization? Provide samples for your audience, but remind them that they will need to write their letters or op-eds in their own words if they want newspapers to run them.

In addition to specific legislation, it can also be useful to write opinion pieces about general topics related to the national debate on the war on drugs. Even personal stories can raise awareness and create a powerful message about change.

ACTION 2: BUILD A COALITION

Determine who wants to continue participating in work on this issue and how often you will meet or communicate. Create a mission statement and a list of goals. Discuss the possibility of working together to introduce a specific initiative. This could include reaching out to allied organizations, too, both locally for endorsements and collaboration and nationally for information/support/guidance. It could also include connecting people who are personally impacted by the issue to the media.

ACTION 3: RESEARCH THE VOTING RECORDS OF YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Research the voting records of your elected officials on drug reform policy and write letters to express your opinion. You might thank local leaders for their support or engage them in a response to your questions about their position on specific initiatives. Or you might share a testimonial or personal experience. Leaders can represent you best when they know your story and what you care about.

continued

ACTION 4: LEARN MORE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

Research the impact of the war on drugs in your local community. Get the facts about how marijuana regulation affects your state and city. Search on government websites or in news outlets to collect information about arrest rates, costs and outcomes. Consider comparative perspectives that discuss the treatment of drugs as a medical and social problem, not a criminal issue.

ACTION 5: STAY INFORMED—AND HELP TO EDUCATE OTHERS

Visit websites with up-to-date news and information about current policy initiatives. Share links with your peer networks through social networking tools and/or email alerts.

ACTION 6: JOIN A NATIONAL OR LOCAL ORGANIZATION

Get involved with a national or local organization working to address marijuana and drug policy reform—see p. 10 for a recommended list of resources.