

Peter McWilliams was a sweet and gentle man, a writer good enough to have books on the New York Times Best Sellers list. Then he got cancer and AIDS. His body couldn't handle the chemotherapy and radiation and drugs. He could not hold down food or medicine and began to waste away.

A friend brought him cannabis so he could eat. As Peter regained his energy he devoted himself to helping people get the medicine that had saved him. This was AFTER the state of California had legalized medical marijuana. Peter was arrested by the federal government and not allowed to plead a medical defense. He was released on bail as long as he didn't use the cannabis he needed. Many friends wrote letters to try to save him, but he died choking on his vomit. He asked his friends not to hold hatred in their hearts, let's be silent ten seconds to remember Peter McWilliams.

Shirley Dorsey lived in California, she was the longtime companion of a retired federal government worker named Byron Stamate. Shirley suffered from crippling back pain so Byron grew a few cannabis plants that Shirley made into a pain killing food. The federal government raided them and were trying to force Shirley to testify against Byron and then take away their home and 40 acre ranch. Rather than doing this she went out behind the barn and shot herself to death. Her note said "They want to take our property, security, and herbal medicine from us, even though we have not caused harm to anyone. I will never testify against you ... I will not live in the streets ... I am old, tired and ill." Lets take ten seconds to pay respect to their love and loyalty, and contemplate what our government did to them.

Jonathan Magbie was struck by a drunk driver and paralyzed when he was 4 years old. He was in a newspaper photo with President Reagan when he was 12. Johnathan was totally dependent, with 20 hour a day nursing care and a wheelchair he could operate with his chin. Somehow he managed to use medical marijuana, and he was arrested. He was a first offender, and his pre-sentence report recommended parole. Judge Judith Retchin put him in jail anyway, with neither his cannabis nor his respirator, and he soon died. His family marched at the courthouse with signs and protested his death. Magbie had made the mistake of telling the judge that he was going to continue to use marijuana, because it made him feel better. Let's take 10 seconds to say a prayer (however you understand that) that our government will stop this needless killing.

Denise and Dennis Schilling lived in Wisconsin and were medical cannabis patients. Denise needed it to deal with lifelong back pain and mental problems. Federal agents busted their tiny grow room and served a forfeiture notice on their small home. Dennis and Denise checked into a motel, said their goodbyes and hung themselves in that room. A note from Denise said "I had tried every politically correct route, from religion to psychotropic drugs, and nothing had helped me in any way. Perhaps someday people like me will not be so persecuted". At their funeral their children wore shirts with messages like "DARE to know the truth about Medical Marijuana". The federal government took their home and sold it anyway. We will take ten seconds to contemplate the domestic terror that ended the life of this couple.

William Foster had crippling arthritis in his feet, hips, lower back and hands. He used cannabis for medicine because it controlled his pain and swelling. The drugs from the doctor left him tired and moody and were addictive. He was a veteran and a family man with his own computer business. He grew a few plants, was raided with a warrant that said nothing about pot, and ended up being given a 93 year jail term – at the age of 40. He is getting terrible medical treatment for his pain in prison; his three children have no father and his wife has no husband. Think of the Foster family the next time you hear the right wing culture warriors speak of “family values”. Lets spend 10 seconds to send energy to Will Foster and his family, and hope that they may be together again.

Now we switch to the bright side.

Janet Andrews had a young son Josh who got cancer and was given a one percent chance to live. She gave him cannabis for two years so he could eat and take his chemotherapy. She remembered that Josh would feel fine after receiving his chemo and she could hear the children in other rooms fighting for breath and vomiting up bile. Josh survived his cancer because of cannabis, but his mom said that even if he had died cannabis would have been worthwhile because it improved her son’s quality of life so much. She said that marijuana was safer than anything else Josh had been given. Janet Andrews said “This policy is so stupid, so insensitive to human needs and legitimate medical treatment, it is evil”. Personally, this is a story that motivates my work. Let’s take a few seconds to be happy for Josh, and to mourn the needless death of the other children on his ward.

Steve Kubby should have been dead long ago. In 1968 he began having symptoms of a fatal adrenal cancer. He had many surgeries and chemotherapy. All other patients in his original treatment group died, usually within 5 years. His original doctor was astounded to find out in 1998 that he was still alive, controlling his disease solely with cannabis and a healthy diet. His doctor said that “in some amazing fashion, this medication has not only controlled the symptoms of Pheochromocytoma, but in my view, has arrested its growth”. Steve and Michelle Kubby’s home was raided by police and Steve was put in jail. In just a few days in jail with no pot he became seriously ill. When he left jail he also left the USA to live in Canada since he knew his next jail stay could kill him. Let us take ten seconds to hope for a day when our people do not need to leave our country to get the medical care that can save their life.

Keith Vines is an assistant district attorney and a decorated Air Force veteran. He had worked as a federal prosecutor and proudly sent many people to jail for marijuana offences. When he got sick with AIDS he tried every medication available, even Marinol, to be able to eat again and put on weight. After losing more than 40 pounds and facing the reality of his imminent death, he allowed himself to use marijuana – which he credits with saving his life. Keith Vines is now an active speaker in the cause for medical marijuana. Let’s spend 10 seconds in silence – hoping that other mainstream Americans will be able to see the light without having to go through what he did.

Ann Arbor Cancer Patient ... I know lots of local Ann Arbor medical marijuana patients now but they do **not** feel they can come out of hiding. On the day medical cannabis was on the ballot I got an e-mail from a young man thanking us for our work. He said "as a cancer survivor with many complications I know firsthand the good that comes from this herb. I believe that I would not be here without it". When he first had cancer he kept his cannabis a secret and says "I was able to combat the nausea and live an almost normal life while smoking. When the herb was not available it was hellish, and almost unbearable".

Now his cancer has returned, but he does not have to keep his medicine a secret. His parents and his fiancé (who is an intensive care nurse) fully support his cannabis use because "they saw the incredible difference that the herb made not only in my survival, but in staying healthy with an appetite". Let's take 10 seconds to send powerful healing energy to our brother in Ann Arbor.

Matthew Barber is a Gulf war veteran and former department of corrections employee who lives in Traverse City. He is fully disabled from service related problems and now has Multiple Sclerosis as well. He is my husband, and he was able to attend the national NORML convention this weekend. Matthew suffers very painful muscle spasm and had basically lost the ability to walk. Now he can relax and sleep and uses his wheelchair only rarely. I have been inspired by watching my husband get much of his life back, and inspired by the medicine that made it possible. In fact, we are taking the Medical Marijuana struggle to the ballot in Traverse City, where we will work tirelessly and win big. Let's spend our last 10 seconds in silence thinking of how we will win victory for the compassion of medical cannabis, no matter what the Supreme Court rules this week.