

# / 2005 Hash Bash Speech - Chuck Ream Culture War, Religion, Bill of Rights

Hashbash Speech 2005

Hi, my name is Chuck Ream. I am a 33 year kindergarten teacher, a 5 term elected official, a licensed counselor, a lifeguard, and chairman of the Washtenaw Coalition for Compassionate Care.

We have had great Michigan victories in our movement this year. The prohibition of Cannabis is finally beginning to crumble. I will come back to that.

Long before many of you were born I began to study this question - "How can cannabis be illegal when it is a natural herb that makes you feel happy and friendly and has no hangover. Why do they put people in jail and try to totally destroy their lives? Why don't all the scientific facts in all the major studies make any difference whatsoever?" The British medical journal "The Lancet" sums up the science on Cannabis in a dozen words "The smoking of Cannabis, even long term, is **not harmful to health**". The editors say it is **naive** to think that scientific truth will have any effect on public policy. But why?

I finally figured out what is happening.

We are in the middle of a vicious and anti - American cultural civil war. The coercive institutions of the state (police and prisons) have been hijacked by the right wing and used to **prevent cultural evolution** and to **rebuild racism**. By the end of the 60's the conservatives in this country were willing to invest in a plan to **snuff out** the troublesome blacks and the very rapidly growing - pot smoking - "counterculture".

We are now experiencing the nearly complete political triumph of a very radical right wing that threatens every moral principle that the United States of America is based on.

For a blatant anti American fascist like George W. Bush to use the word "freedom" all the time is fake and sick and "Orwellian". Americans have **far less** freedom than people in Europe, for instance. We are actually in the time of "**The American Inquisition**". American cannabis arrests have reached three quarters of a million people per year, the most ever.

Every 43 seconds one of our sisters or brothers is having their lives wrecked - because they are involved with the natural herb we cherish.

We are moving towards theocracy, religious government. "Ayatollah" George W. Bush **doesn't care** about the Constitution, or how many young soldiers he sacrifices for oil.

The far right **needs** the **controversy** and **division** of cultural war to gain power. They have to find a way to get large numbers of middle class voters emotionally charged up enough over some cultural issue that they will vote against their own economic best interests.

The war on drugs is **not about drugs**, it is about **cultural warfare** and **ethnic cleansing**. **That** is why facts mean nothing! The fear of blacks and hippies was **taken care of** with a gigantic drug war and a 500% prison expansion in the U.S. since 1971. **That's** domestic terrorism!

The right wing kept on pushing emotional buttons until they found “wedge issues” – like abortion (which is really about controlling females), or “tax relief” (which is really about killing social programs), or same sex marriage, the flag, school prayer or “creationism”. **The point is to create division** – they seem to want **religious war**.

Our founding fathers were acutely aware of European religious war, where each side slaughtered the other. That’s why they **insisted** on the importance of the **separation** between church and state. Now we see **perverted, immoral** leadership in Washington that **cultivates** religious extremism to hold onto power.

The Supreme Court of Chief Justice Rehnquist has demolished our Bill of Rights, but now our mad dog Justices Scalia and Thomas openly say that **our government** derives its authority from god – and that their god is more important than the Constitution or the law.

They **ignore** the Declaration of Independence, which says “Governments are instituted among men, deriving their **just powers** from the **consent** of the governed” and our constitution, which says that “We the people...do ordain this constitution”, and “No religious test shall ever be required”.

**Real Americans have** Ten Commandments, our Bill of Rights.

Now there is nearly nothing left of them.

The first amendment starts with the freedom to **exercise religion** but if I practiced my religion I would be arrested. My religion is old and simple. It is the religion of Nature, using the magical teaching plants as sacraments to help connect with Nature. Pleasure is good, and sacred, not bad. Right wingers know they could **never compete** with a **culture or a religion** that values **life and joy and freedom** - so they call our natural plants “**drugs**” and try to destroy us.

Freedom? ..... in the USA?? Listen ...

**Everything** you own can be **secretly** searched and photographed by police who can break into your home and don’t have to tell you.

Police may legally enter your home by **smashing down the door with a battering ram** and **throwing a flash bang grenade into your living room**. If you move to protect your family you die instantly.

You can now be put on trial twice for the same crime.

Protection against self incrimination is **GONE** when you are required to give up your **bodily fluids** before you can get a minimum wage job.

**All** of your property can be **instantly seized** by the state without convicting you or even **charging you** with a crime.

You may now be convicted with the use of secret informers who are criminals paid to lie.

The government can keep you from having a good lawyer by taking away the money that you need to pay one.

Almost **no jury trials** happen in the drug war. Mandatory minimum sentences give prosecutors the power to put you in prison for decades unless you **sign the “plea bargain”**.

**Cruel and unusual punishment is standard**. You may be a medical patient in great pain and have your medicine, home and children stolen by the state and be put in jail for 90 years. In a cultural war no punishment is too great for those who want change.

The Federal government has now taken all real power unto itself, in total violation of the constitution.

**We are the real Americans**, the carriers of true American values like **fairness and honesty, integrity and equality, caring and community, and individual freedom with personal responsibility.**

The Drug War is **absolutely un-American** & means we will **always** have a police state here and abroad and **never** get the basic social services that people have in **civilized** countries. Drug war **prevents law and order** because it **creates crime** and **diverts** police resources away from solving **real crimes**. It corrupts law enforcement and creates distrust of police. Drug war damages families and destroys the chance to have a nation at peace that can begin to meet basic human needs. It **degrades our civilization.**

**We are the patriotic Americans who will never give up** until our great country regains freedom.

The herb we love is **good, not bad.** It is **medicine** for the body, mind, and soul. Stand up proudly for ganja!

At the Hash Bash last year I spoke of the Ann Arbor Medical Marijuana city charter amendment. I'm happy to report that medical cannabis won a resounding victory with Ann Arbor voters in November – more than 74% of voters said **yes** to the idea of allowing sick people to get the benefit of our magical, medical herb. This huge victory crossed all political lines. I'd like to thank all the Republicans and old folks and religious conservatives who voted with their conscience for medical cannabis. Any one of us may need it one day.

Ann Arbor voters passed strong language about medical cannabis. It included the **sale and cultivation** of cannabis, with a note from a qualified medical practitioner. Given the current political situation, however, we decided that we would **not** push the city hard – we just wanted them to acknowledge that they had heard the will of the voters.

**Then** the city attorney was quoted as saying that our new charter amendment was **“invalid”** and there would be **no change in policy.** That was **not acceptable.**

We began planning for demonstrations in the spring.

Then on January 7, we had a meeting with the city attorney and the police chief and worked out compromise language. Here it is. The city attorney said (quote) “the police and the attorney’s office do retain a certain amount of prosecutorial discretion”...(and) “the compassionate concerns underlying the charter amendment are concerns that are certainly understood by the police and the city attorneys office as this discretion is exercised.”

My quarrel is over with the city attorney. When the citizens of a town vote for something at a 74% level it is up to the mayor and city council to take the initiative and **do something.** I have ideas if they want them!

At one o'clock, when the sound here goes off, I invite you to walk with us to a **peaceful** demonstration at city hall – to **remind** the city of its responsibility to the voters who voted 74% for medical marijuana. We will meet at the rear of the diag, take these signs and have a disciplined 10 minute political demonstration at city hall, and come straight back to the Monroe street fair. Our theme will be **“74% - Time to Do Something”.** **Join us – and fight back! fist**

# Text for Hashbash <sup>Medical Marijuana</sup> Demo. at City Hall

Hashbash 10 Stories

April 2, 2005

**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.