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urge a different approach moving forward, that was a success even if the outcome document was not.

(Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon also signed the letter.)

E.G.: Were the presidents of Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia asking for an end to the drug war at the assembly?

E.F.: They were challenging it, and asking for an acknowledgement of the human toll their countries have suffered, and that, potentially, we follow in the steps of countries like Portugal that have decriminalized all drugs.

There was an informal coalition that came together from countries, mostly in Central America, Europe and the Caribbean, before UNGASS, trying to build enough momentum for reform, but unfortunately there are actors like Russia, in particular, and also countries that still have the death penalty for drug offenses, who were able to resist that push and keep reform from moving forward.

(According to Amnesty International, drug offenses are punishable by death in more than 30 countries, including Iran, China, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.)

E.G.: Switching to marijuana laws in Oregon: Is marijuana truly legal, and is this what you envisioned when you were working with the Measure 91 campaign?

E.F.: I had no idea of the complexities of the debate that would emerge, particularly in the Legislature, around the way that the marijuana producers and retailers are regulated, and all the intricacies of that. Although Measure 91 reduced criminal penalties for marijuana, I didn't think it went far enough. It was not retroactive. In the 2015 legislative session, the Legislature reduced criminal penalties even further, making most marijuana felonies now misdemeanors, and making that retroactive, which means there were 78,000 Oregonians who now have the opportunity to have past

convictions either expunged or reduced, and their records could be sealed. That piece was what I was hoping would happen – that there would be some real impacts on people's lives.

In the 2016 legislative session, they decided to treat medical marijuana like prescription drugs for folks on parole, probation or post-prison supervision. (House Bill 4014 became operative on March 1). However, recreational marijuana is not treated like alcohol for all persons over 21 who are on parole or probation, which means that it can still be a violation of someone's parole, and that's a huge problem.

It's really not in line with the intent of voters, who, with Measure 91, indicated that marijuana should be treated like alcohol.

E.G.: While the laws went retroactive, if you're in an Oregon prison for a marijuana-related offense, you're not getting out early.

E.F.: Right. Is marijuana truly legal? Absolutely not. I think that Measure 91 was one small step in the right direction.

In Oregon, marijuana penalties are still much higher than similar penalties for alcohol.

If an individual grows four legal plants in their backyard but they produce – because they're a very skilled gardener – more than the 8 ounces that's allowed, they are then subject to a misdemeanor.

If someone's home falls within the 1,000-foot boundary from a school and they grow beyond the four plants allowed by the measure, and instead grow five plants, then they are subject to a Class C felony.

E.G.: Politicians are coming together across party lines to tackle our nation's mass-incarceration problem. Just how much of the problem is related to drugs?

E.F.: While we only have 5 percent of the world's population, we have 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population, and the drug war has been a big driver of this increase in criminalization of our populace. Back in 1980, just when the drug war was

in its nascent stages, we had 50,000 people behind bars for drug offenses. Today we have half a million behind bars for drug offenses, and it has had no discernible impact on reducing problematic drug use or the spread of drug-related disease and overdoses.

It has disproportionately affected folks of color. Those folks are experiencing much higher arrest and incarceration rates, even though the rates of drug use and drug selling are comparable across all races. For example, African-Americans make up 14 percent of drug users; however, (nationally) they make up 37 percent of people arrested for drugs.

E.G.: I was looking at misdemeanor drug and alcohol charges in Multnomah County in 2014, and exactly 37 percent of those booked into jail on those charges were African-American. It was the category with the greatest disparity.

E.F.: At Drug Policy Alliance, one of our goals is to reveal and expose these disproportionate impacts on communities of color and also to expose the underlying systems that drive the different ways our criminal justice system treats folks.

One of the most staggering examples of this is crack cocaine sentencing laws.

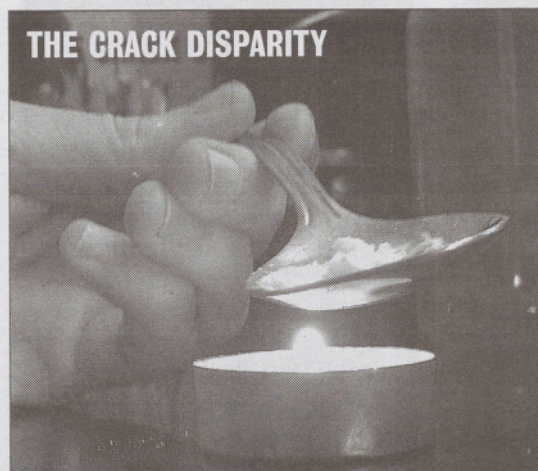
Since the 1980s, the federal penalties for crack cocaine were 100 times harsher than powder cocaine, even though there is no scientifically justifiable reason to treat these two different forms of the same drug so differently.

Back in 2010, Drug Policy Alliance played a key role in changing those federal sentencing disparities, and we got the crack cocaine disparity down to 18 to 1. But that's still on the books. Right now, if you get caught with crack cocaine, your sentence will be 18 times harsher than with powder.

What we found was that African-Americans were the ones being disproportionately arrested for crack cocaine.

That's just one example. We're talking about a \$1 trillion, decades-long war, so

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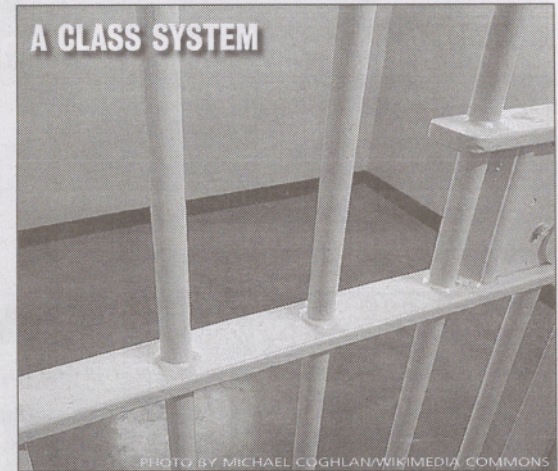
THE CRACK DISPARITY

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NOT TRULY LEGAL

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A CLASS SYSTEM

"Once folks are released from prison, if they have a felony conviction on their record, in many states they can't vote, they can't access public assistance, so it's creating an entire caste system, a second class of citizens, that Michelle Alexander rightly framed as being as harmful to the black community as the Jim Crow laws."