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Pacific NW

Racism and Pot

Report: Racial disparities in arrests persist with cannabis

By Kristen Wyatt
Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Not surprisingly, the legalization of marijuana in Colorado has reduced pot arrests, but a newly released study says it doesn't solve one of the central goals of drug-policy reformers: ending racial disparities in enforcement.

A report from the pro-legalization Drug Policy Alliance released Wednesday showed that marijuana arrests in Colorado all but stopped after voters made the drug legal in small amounts for adults over 21. The report examined drug-related arrests in all 64 Colorado counties for two years before and two years after legalization in 2012.

The total number of charges for pot possession, distribution and cultivation fell almost 95 percent, from about 39,000 in 2010 to just over 2,000 last year.

But the report noted continuing racial inequalities.

Even after legalization, black people were more than twice as likely as white people to be charged with public consumption of marijuana, which remains a crime. Blacks were also much more likely to be charged with illegal cultivation of pot or possession in excess of the state limit, which is an ounce.

"I don't think young black or brown people are more likely to flout marijuana law than white people," said Art Way, Colorado director for the Drug Policy Alliance. "Legalization is no panacea for the longtime issues that law enforcement had with the black and brown community."

The arrest figures speak to broader racial disparities and do not indicate that police officers are targeting people of color for remaining marijuana crimes, said Tom Gorman of the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program.

"Racial disparities exist in other laws. What does that mean, that homicide law, rape laws, weapon laws are racist? There are other factors going on here that we need to address," Gorman said.

The news wasn't all bad.

After legalization, racial disparities did

See POT on page 2

GRANDMASTER OF FUNK



Music Millennium owner Terry Currier invited Parliament Funkadelic maestro George Clinton to the store last week to sign autographs and talk about his work. One customer brought in to share with Clinton a stack of vintage album and poster art from the iconic band.

Starting a Cannabis Company

Will Black Oregonians have a shot in multi-million dollar industry?

By Donovan M. Smith
Of The Skanner News

Washington may be known as the 'Emerald State' but come July 1, here in the Beaver State things are going to be getting a lot greener too.

That's because, come July 1, Measure 91 — the law legalizing recreational marijuana usage in Oregon for persons 21 and up — goes into effect.

While the date is fast approaching, questions around

how pot will be regulated rest on the shoulders of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.

Another issue is: How will Black Oregonians figure into this new industry, which is expected to generate tens of millions of dollars in revenue?

"We need African Americans in these industries," says Michael Harper, one of three Black members of the OLCC Board of Commissioners.

Navigating new rules

The laws around cannabis

possession and consumption kick in first; for those who would open a business, the licensing process starts later.

In other words, July 1 marks the beginning of legal cannabis possession and usage. The law allows adults 21 and over to possess eight ounces of marijuana and grow no more than four marijuana plants in their households (although for public possession, you are limited to one ounce).

Those with a "green thumb" and an entrepreneurial spirit

will have to wait until Jan. 4, 2016, to apply to get their hand in the industry.

As it stands now there are four different licenses to be obtained for anyone going into the business of marijuana: They are for growers, processors, wholesalers and retailers.

OLCC says the number of licensing opportunities may expand as they smooth out details of regulation over the next year.

See CANNABIS on page 2

INDEX

News.....1,2,12

Calendars3,4

A & E5

Health7-10

Bids/Classifieds11

PAALF Launches 'The People's Plan'

The leadership development group gears up for next campaign

By Arashi Young
Of The Skanner News

The short film "Future: Portland" played in the background as people gathered in the ballroom. It gave voice to a frequently displaced Black community that struggles to create a welcoming home.

The film was a fitting introduction for the

Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF) meeting Thursday, where leaders came together to announce a coordinated effort called The People's Plan.

Edward Hill, PAALF project manager for The People's Plan, spoke about the importance of self-determination.

"The first act of a freed people is to shape its world in its own image and interest," Hill said to the crowd.

The People's Plan seeks to flip the script on grassroots community initiatives and policy. Instead of conforming to the equity goals of current government and non-profit entities, organizers say, the plan will set and push its own equity agenda.

PSU Urban Planning Professor Lisa Bates said the prevailing conversation around

See PAALF on page 2