

“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Pot

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ease somewhat for marijuana distribution charges. Black people accounted for about 22 percent of Colorado distribution arrests in 2010 and about 18 percent of such arrests in 2014.

The arrest data got a mixed response from the regional head of the NAACP.

“The overall decrease in arrests, charges and cases is enormously beneficial to communities of color who bore the brunt of marijuana prohibition prior to (legalization),” Rosemary Harris Lytle said in a statement.

“However, we are concerned with the rise in disparity for the charge of public consumption and challenge law enforcement to ensure this reality is not discriminatory in any manner.”

In 2014, the year Colorado’s recreational marijuana stores opened, black people accounted for 3.9 percent of the population, but they made up 9.2 percent of marijuana possession arrests.

For illegal marijuana cultivation, the disparities didn’t just persist. They got much worse.

In 2010, whites in Colorado were slightly more likely than blacks to be arrested for marijuana cultivation. After legalization, the arrest rate for whites dropped dramatically but ticked up for blacks. In 2014, the arrest rate for blacks was roughly 2.5 times higher.

The Drug Policy Alliance did not conduct a similar arrest analysis in Washington state, which also legalized pot in 2012. Last September, Seattle’s elected prosecutor dropped all

Y-WE Speak

Majuma Abdikadir, 14, and a dozen other young women perform an original theatre piece entitled ‘Y-WE Speak: Our Legacy, Our Leadership,’ March 14 at the Seattle Repertory’s Leo K. Theatre. They created the piece about “honoring your past in order to shape your future,” during an eight-month residency at the Seattle Rep where they worked with mentors from Young Women Empowered (Y-WE) and teaching artists.



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

tickets issued for the public use of marijuana through the first seven months of 2014 because most of them were issued by a single police officer who disagreed with the legal pot law.

About one-third of those tickets were issued

to blacks, who make up about 8 percent of Seattle’s population.

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Cannabis

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(It should be noted that the new laws do not affect the 16-year-old Oregon Medical Marijuana Plan.)

Disappointing public participation

Part of the OLCC’s process of figuring out the rules has involved a series of public listening sessions they held across the state; the public hearings concluded in Portland this month.

Commissioner Harper, who is African American, says the Black community’s lack of turnout was disheartening.

Tom Towslee, spokesperson for

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

the OLCC, says that assuring minorities and women get a fair shake in obtaining licenses is something they will “definitely be looking at.”

“That will be part of the commission’s authority and

responsibility when it gets around to adopting the rules to implement the law,” Towslee says.

Oregon is largely using Colorado as a model for formulating the new rules because the Boulder State also had a medical marijuana

na program, he said, and the diversity of licenses awarded will depend on how diverse the applicant pool is.

Towslee says he’s seen an array of projections on how much sales will generate for the state, ranging from \$5 million to \$44 million.

But he cautions the numbers are only speculation and hard facts on how Oregon’s faring won’t be available probably until sometime in 2017.

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PAALF

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equity is inadequate.

“Mainstream urban policy asks for equity, but that equity isn’t centered around a vision for Black community,” Bates said, adding that the plan would “assert the right of black people to not only be in place, but to shape place.”

The plan outlined a set of objectives including economic development, culture and arts development, personal safety development and urban planning. It proposes the question “what does Portland’s Black community want?” and asks to visualize a Portland that would reflect these values.

Among the leaders present at the reception were former State Senator Avel Gordly; Rev. T. Allen Bethel of the Albina Ministerial Alliance; and Midge Purcell of the Urban League of Portland. The small ballroom was nearly full with late-comers standing in hallway by the door.

Hill gave a call to action to the crowd, asking for their participa-

tion. Large sign-up sheets were distributed to each table asking people to contribute their expertise to the plan. The social media hashtag and twitter handle pdx-peoplesplan was announced.

“We will not allow our community to be betrayed again.”

Despite these reservations, there was hope that this effort would bring meaningful change.

Hill told *The Skanner News* the

[The plan] proposes the question ‘what does Portland’s Black community want?’

Some in the crowd expressed hesitance toward the new plan. There were concerns on how to maintain a Black-centered policy without being excluded from mainstream discussion.

Purcell briefly spoke on past failures where plans like these were co-opted by white city planners. She mentioned the failed Albina Plan, which had heavy involvement from the Black community but never translated into actual policy.

Purcell passionately declared,

time is now for a significant grassroots push. He cited a growing body of scholarly analysis on the failure of urban planning, the displacement of earlier generations, and the heightened awareness of violence against Black people today.

Bates told *The Skanner News* that Portland is more receptive to conversations about racial equity than ever before.

“The city and region are recognizing that the path we are on — in terms of racial disparity and

class disparity and income inequality — is not a good one for the health of the region,” Bates said. She said government bureaus are asking for solutions to equity issues and it is time to give answers from the Black community.

The plan also represents the evolution of PAALF from a grassroots leadership program to an influential but controversial flash-point. The organization made waves last year in protesting the urban planning policy surrounding the Trader Joe’s development deal on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Since then, PAALF has been rethinking their role within the community.

PAALF Executive Director Cory Murphy said they learned from the encounter and have restructured as a stronger organization.

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