

Great Moments in Weed History

S2 E4 - WAMM

ABDULLAH: This podcast is for adults 21 years of age or older. We talk about cannabis history and advertise cannabis products. If you're not 21 come back when you are.

[Spoke Media]

ABDULLAH: Howdy-do, folks, it's Abdullah.

BEAN: And Bean.

ABDULLAH: And welcome back for yet another episode of Great Moments in Weed History. On this show, Bean and I who are both cannabis journalists in media makers go over one of the more fascinating points in the very, very long history of cannabis. I have no prior knowledge of the story that Bean's about to tell us. You and I are going to hear it for the first time, except I get to sit here and smoke weed with Bean as he tells us this incredible story. I can't wait to hear what today's story is. Bean, what the F do you got for us.

BEAN: Today's story, I honestly would say is one of the greatest moments and weed history. It's about people that we both know, we've spent time with. And it's a story that to me, encapsulates everything that's amazing about cannabis culture, weed culture, this community, and how this community has pushed back against the forces of authoritarian bullshit and change the world in the process.

ABDULLAH: Well, it sounds like it has all my favorite favorite elements for a weed story to have. Sticking it to the man, blowing weed smoke into the face of authority. I don't know what it is, man. I like, you know, my mind is racing, going through all these incredible moments. I'm super curious to find out, man. Holy shit. I got like a half a joint here that doesn't seem worthy of this story. So I'm gonna roll a fresh one.

BEAN: Okay. And if you're listening to the podcast at home or wherever you are and you're not quite with us yet, now's a great time to hit pause. Roll something up. Pack a bowl, do what you do. We'll be here waiting for you. But otherwise I think you and I are..

ABDULLAH: Ready

BEAN: For another

[Great Moments In Weed History Theme]

[Spoke Media]

ABDULLAH: All right. So I got this fatty going, my fucking curiosity's running wild. What do you got?

BEAN: So in 1973, 20 year old, Valerie Leveroni Corral was riding in a Volkswagen bug through the Nevada desert when a small airplane swooped down low enough that its torque caused the vehicle to Corinne end over end off the road.

ABDULLAH: Oh my God. So we're talking about Valerie, we're talking about Val from WAMM. They are an amazing organization that provides cannabis, medical cannabis for people who can't afford it, in the Santa Cruz area. Is that right, Bean?

BEAN: Yeah, absolutely. And this story of how that came to be is really emblematic of the whole medical cannabis movement.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. If you're unfamiliar with WAMM, Valerie is the daughter of a very famous figure in cannabis, one of our favorites. And a friend of ours, Nonna marijuana.

NONNA: I'm Aurora Leveroni. I'm also known as Nonna Marijuana. Being italian, my favorite type of food is naturally italian. I like to cook with medical marijuana because I feel that it helps those who have been ill and have to endure pain and I will use it if it helps anyone.

ABDULLAH: She's a cannabis chef and she is a spitfire. She's really, really cool.

BEAN: And she's like 98 now.

ABDULLAH: Wow.

BEAN: When we made the first video for Bong Appetit, I think she was 94 and you know, that video went around the world and yeah, the world didn't know it needed a weed grandma, but we all most certainly did. and you know, this is all part of supporting her daughter through this journey that we're about to take. Nonna Marijuana doesn't, as she say, get high off her own supply. her interest in medical cannabis came when she saw what it did for Valerie and she went from somebody who really had no connection to weed culture to becoming, like you said, an icon of it just out of maternal love and, and understanding that this is great medicine and seeing it firsthand. So Valerie was riding in his Volkswagen bug. This plane swoops over the car and essentially like blows it off the road as the bug skidded and bounced over brush and rocks. Valerie was flung against the roof and doors, and this causes brain damage and epilepsy. And she started having debilitating migraines.

ABDULLAH: Terrible.

BEAN: She's still dealing with the aftermath of this. And, and in the immediate aftermath, she's prescribed all these pharmaceuticals: Percodan, something called mycelium. And they were giving her these huge prescriptions for them, but none of them were stopping her convulsions. They weren't stopping her from having grand mal seizures. And meanwhile, the side effects of these drugs leave her totally lethargic and she can't concentrate. So she's in this period of time where she's, you know, zombified by these pills, you know, and they're not helping the underlying conditions. And then her husband, Mike Corral reads about a government funded research study that was published in the prestigious journal of the National Cancer Institute that claimed unique compounds found in cannabis can actually reverse the growth of cancers, tumors, and help control laboratory induced seizures. So Mike Corral reads about this study. They get excited, and despite having no medical training whatsoever, the couple decided to conduct their own experiment at home and discovered to their astonishment, that ingesting copious amounts of cannabis did indeed control Valerie's previously debilitating epilepsy.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. Oh my God. So she's discovering with so many parents of kids with seizures discovered in reason years that cannabis is a really effective treatment for seizures.

BEAN: There's your anecdotal evidence. Why isn't there more studies? Well, this is what happens. Naturally, Mike and Valerie expected that the scientists behind this amazing study would like win a Nobel prize and that their teams of researchers are going to follow up on this groundbreaking, life-changing work that they're doing. But instead, you know, this is the Nixon administration...

NIXON: public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new all out offensive.

BEAN: This is the beginning of the modern war on drugs and the U S government responds by cutting off all funding for this study by burying their findings -

ABDULLAH: Oh my God.

BEAN: And moving the shutdown all future research into cannabis unless it is specifically designed to demonstrate the plant's potential for abuse. But it's not true that they cut off research into cannabis. They just choose to fund studies like, let's make monkeys smoke the equivalent of a hundred pounds of weed in five minutes and Hey, guess what, it's not really good for your brain. And that's not the exact amount of weed or how much time but studies were done. They were totally skewed on purpose and then by the time it gets to Reagan, he's saying things like, you know, one smoking, one joint will give you permanent brain damage forever

NIXON: Leading medical researchers are coming to the conclusion that marijuana, pot, grass, whatever you want to call it, is probably the most dangerous drug in the United States. And we haven't begun to find out all of the ill effects,

BEAN: Just ridiculous bullshit and all part of this a propaganda.

ABDULLAH: Definitely a shitty time to discover that the medicine you need is completely embattled by the politics.

BEAN: And they're like shocked by this. They, they, I've talked to Valerie about this. She genuinely thought, once the study came out, and she saw it worked, this was all gonna happen quickly, but we're, you know, talking about the 1970s, but Mike and Valerie decide to keep experimenting on their own, including learning how to grow their own supply of medical cannabis in their backyard and starting to figure out what strains work best for her and what delivery methods work best for her. and really dialing in a treatment for themselves.

ABDULLAH: Right. So this is the beginning of the WAMM farm of the actual, cultivation that ends up helping not only Valerie in her situation, but many, many other medical patients around them.

BEAN: Yeah, I mean, in the beginning they're, they're focused was just done helping Valerie, but I think that first crop of cannabis, they, they grew for her, like you said, is in a direct line that leads to everything else. That decision that we're going to take our health and our wellbeing into our own hands. And it doesn't fucking matter what the government says, that decision has big reverberations moving forward. So this is in the 70s. Nothing really changes that much until 1992 when the Corralls were arrested for the first time for cultivating a small garden of weed plants, but local prosecutors dismissed the case after the corralls raised of then novel defense of medical necessity. So the idea that medical necessity is a defense in a criminal case is very, very old law. It is like going back to like common law, like the precursors of our criminal justice system. And it wasn't an acknowledged, thing, but it's basically the idea that if you can walk into court and say, I had to do this, out of medical necessity, that can exempt you from criminal prosecution. And it's important to know a lot of other people who had real medical ailments were still prosecuted and jailed and fucked with for essentially medical cannabis use, but they had a very good documentation of her medical history. They had kept notes about what they were doing and they're in Santa Cruz, California in the 1970s, which is a place and a time where cannabis was far more accepted than many, many other places. It's like a counterculture town. It's a college town. It's a home to one half of the Great Moments in History Team.

ABDULLAH: Even the judges are cool. Come to a place where even the judges are like, no, it's all good bro.

BEAN: Yeah. We have the grateful dead archives. You know, Santa Cruz is a surfing town, so when they go to court, it was the prosecutor who dismissed the case. So that's even cooler than a cool judge is a cool prosecutor who says, listen, I'm here to represent the values of my community and this doesn't match up. Fucking with this woman with brain trauma cause she's growing weed in her yard is not our idea of justice.

ABDULLAH: Of justice. Yeah.

BEAN: Guess who disagrees?

ABDULLAH: The police.

BEAN: So the next year, you know, I mean, they grow weed again. Why wouldn't you? And the sheriff shows up again, has them charged but this time they not only dropped the charges, but the district attorney publicly says, I'm not going to prosecute them. and told the police -

ABDULLAH: Stop arresting these people. Fucking idiots.

BEAN: Yes.

ABDULLAH: Wasting your time and people's tax dollars by harassing a sick woman, you know what I mean, for growing some plants.

BEAN: What happens though is when the district, and you have to understand it's a small town and this isn't the state and the federal government haven't gotten involved in this. This is just one little thing that's happening in one little town that not that many people know about, but when he comes out and gives a press conference and says, I live in the United States in America of America, I'm a district attorney and I'm not going to arrest that woman for growing weed ever again or prosecuted. That gets into the press.

ABDULLAH: And this is just a few years before 215.

BEAN: Yeah, prop 215 in California was in 1996 that's the first statewide medical cannabis law and so now as I said, they're part of this movement that is many people are coming to the same realization that Valerie has come to and Mike have have come to that. This is not just medicinal. This is a life changing medicine. This is the difference between me being zonked out on pills. For the rest of my life, that will probably kill me over time. And once you realize that those are your two choices in life, it becomes imperative to push back. It is, it is different than just wanting to get high, which is also perfectly fine and nobody's business and the government shouldn't do anything.

ABDULLAH: And also sometimes just getting high is the medicine that you need from cannabis and it's a better medicine for that than alcohol is, or you know, that pills are, that any other number of drugs are because it won't kill you in the process.

BEAN: It's really a good medicine and I'll take a little when you're, when you've had your fail. Thanks. So what happens is all these seriously ill people from the community start reaching out to Valerie and Mike and they're telling them their experiences with medical cannabis and they're asking for help finding a supply cause there's still no medical cannabis anywhere to be found.

ABDULLAH: Yeah.

BEAN: The other thing that happens is growers from the underground, people who society look on as criminals and are literally hiding what they're doing. They also start reaching out to Valerie and they say, Hey, I heard you lost all your plants. I read about this, take this, this is from my garden. I hope this helps you. And they started giving them so much and all these people at the same time or asking them if they know where they can get any and instead of staying safe and saying, well, Hey, we got our little thing that makes it okay for us. They started taking all this weed that these growers were giving them and driving around in their old Subaru and delivering it to people who needed it.

ABDULLAH: This is what I'm talking about with this story in particular and what makes it truly great is that at its heart, you know, it's people helping other people despite the risks. The world doesn't even recognize that this is a medicine. You know, despite all these people saying that this is what they need and that it's treating what they have. And here there's somebody who is putting themselves in harms way to set them free. It's at the heart of, of all the work that we do, like, you know, at its core, this is what inspires it.

BEAN: And so standing at the crossroads of need and generosity, the need being the patients, reaching out to them, the generosity being these growers, giving up part of their harvest. And these were not insignificant donations as, as WAMM grew, Mike and Valerie reacted by discretely supplying as many legitimate patients as possible. And as you said, this was years before there were any laws in place to protect them. As Valerie later told mother Jones magazine, you have a car accident and you think you get a brain trauma out of it and instead it becomes this wonderful opportunity to meet people at the most crucial moment in their lives.

ABDULLAH: Yeah, that's a great example of like the kind of optimism that I think Val just carries around with her so effortlessly. She's been through a lot and she's accomplished a lot too. She really has this kind of like amazing perseverance in her, you know what I mean?

BEAN: They're their family to me since, you know, moved to Santa Cruz almost 10 years ago. really got involved with volunteering with WAMM, going up to the garden, just leafing and trimming and hanging out with people. Some of the best times of my life, and definitely when I felt most to the plant and to, you know, the shared mission of ours, it's just so inspiring. and so,

as more and more of their time was devoted to driving around in a Subaru full of donated weed and they're making these deliveries, Valerie and Mike start to make plans to form a collective that they call WAMM. And even a lot of the original WAMM members, the people who reached out to them while it was still in the shadows, were people with HIV and AIDS, which was, you know, in the epidemic phase. And so there you have an another level of outsider to them and defiance that is bringing together these group of people to, as I said, really change society, really bring a valuable gift to not just themselves and their little scene and community, but really to the world.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. And, and, and I think this really illustrates a, you know, an important point about, these early days of medical cannabis, laws, you know, you're in California, is that it really was a lot of different types of marginalized people, marginalized for their race or for their sexual orientation or for diseases that they have insanely. It really, you know, paints different parts of this one picture that it was all these different marginalized people coming together for a cause and like it, like in so many other things throughout history specifically in this era, cannabis is emblematic of that cause. Right? It's like the, the through line.

BEAN: I think that's definitely true. And something I've seen firsthand at WAMM and gets to your point about being marginalized, illness marginalizes you. And especially in this country where it's not just a health crisis, but it's very often a financial crisis to get seriously ill. and I think one of the things that affected me, it has affected me the most in volunteering at WAMM and spending time with people there is WAMM is the place where I've spent the most time with people really on the raw end of the stick of our economy. and like I said, some of them got there before they got sick and some of them got there because they got sick. But it's another world. And to see weed bring healing and joy but also community is profound. And like, I, I just, we'd have a weekly WAMM meeting where you could come and pick up your medicine and every meeting somebody would get up and say, does anybody have a place where I can just park my truck for a while and I'll sleep in the back and maybe use your bathroom or can somebody give me a ride to the doctor, cause I, I, I don't have a car and, and more hands went up and could do it. You know, it's that kind of community, and that comes from the human heart. But it's like you said, weed was the through line. It was the one thing that connected everybody and it was more than enough. You know how they say like never meet your heroes. Mike and Valerie and WAMM were like heroes to me before I met them before I moved to Santa Cruz. And it was so much more than I could have thought it was or had experienced in my life. Like I said, it's just to, as Valerie said, you know, meeting people at the most crucial time in their life. You can do a small kindness for somebody who is in a desperate moment and it's a big thing. And a lot of the people who trimmed, they were fighting illnesses, but they were able to sit there and a beautiful garden and we'd just talk and laugh and you know, and the scissors are going and like a lot of those people would be alone without WAMM.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. It really is a great organization and they are an indispensable part of, of the cannabis movement.

BEAN: So now they've got their WAMM, they're an organization. It's medical marijuana doesn't exist. So they're just kind of like sub rosa, just under the surface you can find them, but you know, there's no real law protecting them. But they start to collectively grow their own instead of relying on donations from growers. and they want to make sure they have different strains and that it's all organic and just to not have to rely on donations and there's more and more people. So they, they start to grow. And this is how Mike Corral explains this to the author of a book called *Dying to Get High*, which really tells the WAMM story and -

ABDULLAH: Great title.

BEAN: It's a great book. Yeah. So Mike said "The garden isn't just a place where volunteers show up and grow marijuana. Really what it is is a healing space. People are ill when they come to the garden. They are watering the plants, leafing the plants, touching the plants that are going to be their medicine and in taking care of the plants, they are taking care of themselves. That line dissolves because the plants become part of their bodies over the following year after we've harvested." And that was something, you know, going up to the garden over the course of a year and to be there and, and be breaking ground to put the little tiny plants in the ground and see it through to this. And I mean we're talking about 10 foot tall, outdoor, sticky, icky, beautifully cared for organic monster plants. You know, that just grew. And I just think those plants knew they had a good purpose. And to this day those were the happiest plants very ever was around. And it's like you can call me a hippie, whatever, but it's fucking real.

ABDULLAH: Naw, there's something to it. It's no surprise that at a place like WAMM where literally there's good vibes and love bind every rock, you know, and literally the purpose of that weed is an expression of compassion. Of course the plants are happy.

BEAN: Yeah. And like, as you say, under every rock, it just makes me think like there are literally dozens of WAMM members who chose to have their ashes spread on that land. Oh wow. Cause a lot of people in WAMM passed away. You know, people, they showed up terminally ill. and then I also think of it as a place where I saw terminally ill people laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing. And it's like, I love to make you laugh. And that's like a big part of the show for me.

ABDULLAH: Same.

BEAN: And like I felt like that was an energy that I could bring up there and like to make somebody, you know, it was just, yeah, under every rock, every nook, every cranny, every bud. And it was as beautiful.

ABDULLAH: Yeah man.

BEAN: So then in in 1996, Valerie was actually a coauthor along with Dennis Peron and others of prop 215.

DENNIS: My name is Dennis Peron. I'm the author of Proposition 215. You could say that that is the beginning of the end of the war on drugs. I began prop 215 in 1990 when the AIDS epidemic hit me, myself and, and my members of my community. There are some things worth going to jail for. And this I thought was worth it.

BEAN: It's like the declaration of independence of medical cannabis of, and WAMM was really used as an example to show like, look, this works for people. And now prop 215 happens. It passes, it's called the Compassionate Use Act. It allows for collectives like WAMM. It's really kind of supposed to be just collectives like a WAMM. And it becomes of course dispensary's and many other things, but people start flooding to WAMM now because it's totally legal. They've read about medical cannabis and so they are still dedicated to providing it to people for free or on a sliding scale. And this idea of helping people, not just to get weed but to see them through this illness, wherever it leads, that becomes the central mission. And what Valerie says is, "I can't tell you how many of our members had to crash on couches or stay with their families throwing up in other people's toilets through chemotherapy only because they were poor. That realization changed me forever. I know I could make a lot of money off cannabis, but I don't really work with pot. I work with people and people don't have to be suffering. If they are in pain, we should help excavate that pain instead of adding to her, which is what the marketplace does. Personally, I don't think my needs are greater than somebody who's sick."

ABDULLAH:Wow. So you know, I think that really illustrates kind of a how selfless and determined she is really.

BEAN: And we're going to take our break in a little minute, but I'll just say, you know, the other thing that WAMM starts to do in this time period is provide end of life like hospice care for people and WAMM members who will come to your house in the final weeks or days of your life and take care of you in every sense. And I will just say like I'm not strong in that way, but I knew the people in WAMM who did this and they did it joyfully because they did it in service and it was almost always people who had shown up at WAMM really ill themselves and come through it and felt that need to give back.

ABDULLAH: Incredible man. Well, I can't wait to hear the second half of this story, especially because I know that Nonna Marijuana is probably gonna pop up more than once and she has a really fun character. Seriously. One of the most fun characters in cannabis ever. Good shit.

NONNA: You got a grandmother fetish, huh?

ABDULLAH: I do now after that crack. Definitely. So I think this one is just about done.

[Smoke Weedia]

ABDULLAH: And we're back. I'm really excited to hear the rest of this story. Let's get into it.

BEAN: So we'll pick it up in the year 2000 and that brings us the election of George W. Bush as president. And the city of Santa Cruz looks at this and gets a little worried and says, all right, we're going to actually go.

ABDULLAH: To be fair, I think everybody looks at this and gets a little worried.

BEAN: Nobody more so than George W. Bush. True that. but the city of Santa Cruz thinks, okay, well this administration could be very hostile to medical cannabis. We've kind of become this home of medical cannabis in a lot of ways. Santa Cruz is not a big town. So WAMM is, you know, and WAMM. So many of the people that they serve are local. So those stories spread and you know, WAMM really has the respect of the local government. They see that these people are being helped and they also see that it's going to really, really poor people. And it's a pretty good sign that you're out to profiteer and become a drug kingpin if your point of your organization is giving weed away for free. And also, you know, they're providing vital healthcare services to really poor people in a not that big community. It gets noticed as the good work that it is, and then either people were already amenable to cannabis and they learn even more through WAMMs example, or a lot of people who might've thought, well, medical marijuana is bullshit, come to realize it's very much the opposite.

ABDULLAH: Right.

BEAN: So what the city of Santa Cruz decides to do is they deputize Mike and Valerie and they designate them as official medical cannabis suppliers for the city, and they're just trying to give them another layer of protection from the authorities. They're saying they're doing work in conjunction with the local government now.

ABDULLAH: That's great. So at least at a local level, the powers that be are recognizing what Mike and Valerie are up to and lending their support.

BEAN: Yes. And of course that should have said everything, you know what I mean?

ABDULLAH: So I'm hearing that tone in your voice. And I've noticed that up until this point, you know, things were getting better and going well and we were talking about community and compassion and all these nice things. But there's often a turn in these great moments in weed history stories where things get bad. And I sensed that that's what's about to happen.

BEAN: It is the story that it is and it's a rough one, but I will remind you, like I said, it has not just a happy ending, but an inspiring ending and an ending that was really the beginning of the pendulum switching and yeah. So this, it's no coincidence this new administration comes in and you know, Bill Clinton didn't legalize weed. He, he, you know, they have a really spotty at best, really shitty, criminal justice record of that administration.

ABDULLAH: Oh, yep. I'm looking at you 25 million people in jail in the United States.

BEAN: Yeah. So it's not to say it's about what political party is in office, but this move to a Republican administration and seeing the people that are starting to staff the justice department and having an attorney general John Ashcroft changes things and there is a consequence to who's in power locally and here federally. And so, what happens is that on September 5th, 2002, 30 heavily armed DEA agents raided WAMMs garden.

REPORTER: Today, members of WAMM women's Alliance for medical marijuana were stunned when federal agents raided WAMMs greenhouse and garden shortly before noon and hauled away the entire pot crop of about 150 plants.

BEAN: And they held Valerie, Mike and a paraplegic woman at gunpoint. They were up in the garden and just working thinking it was any other day in this like Eden like environment that they had put everything into and of course, you know, September is close to harvest, like inflict maximum damage. Sit back and watch while this group of people who are just-

ABDULLAH: Yeah.

BEAN: So ill build their dream together and then come in and snatch it at the last moment.

ABDULLAH: There is a picture of this next, a draconian enforcement of prohibition in the dictionary. This is absolutely the ugliest, I mean imagine the contrast here. You know, we're talking about this idyllic place that's founded on this real, you know, human integrity and you're seeing it be marginalized, you know, in a, in what amounts do a show of force.

BEAN: Yeah. And they went after them because they were the best example of truly compassionate, collective nonprofit providing for patients. And so the message they're trying to send is there is no way to do this that we won't come down on. You know, the people of California have just voted, they've just said we want medical cannabis to be available to people who are sick. And in the wake of that, all kinds of things happen. And some people did make a lot of money, but the reason they targeted WAMM was to show everybody else in this movement, in this community will get you, no matter what you think, we're fucking around? We'll come with guns drawn on a paraplegic woman and hold her and gunpoint.

ABDULLAH: The ideology that George W. Bush is upholding would these types of actions has been bought over decades, lobbied for by massive corporate interests. It's the reason that we're in this place is not even because it's some sort of moral battle form, which is what you know. He told everybody, right, that this is like not the Christian thing or not the American thing because it's all drugs are bad, but literally it's because his pockets are lined with money from the

pharmaceutical industry in the petroleum industry and the plastics industry. This is an act of complete malevolence in disguise as morality.

BEAN: It reminds me of that great Monte Python line where he just says, now you see the violence inherent the system. WAMM pushed it to the point where they were making it an accepted part of society and they were doing it in a way where they couldn't make an argument against WAMM, they couldn't make a reasonable response and say to people, well, here's why these people should be stopped and knock, knock, knock, here's a letter saying please don't do this anymore. That's what you would do if you really thought this was wrong. but what they're trying to show is that there's violence behind these laws. If you continue to break them, we'll put a fucking gun to your head and we'll put you in jail. And so here is where we get to our great moment. And so what happens is the paraplegic woman named Susan -

SUSAN: I was starting to have chest pain and lightheadedness.

ASSOCIATE: took her blood pressure and it was off the charges. She was in danger.

SUSAN: Eventually they let me leave the minute I got in cell phone range, took a bunch of blood pressure medication and then I started getting our emergency response team going.

BEAN: And that made everybody else know that the raid was happening. Cause there were only three people at the garden. And so while the cops are there, the DEA agents are there. There's hundreds of plants that they're chopping down. They're there for a long time. They take everybody into custody, but they're still up in the garden and you've been to the garden.

ABDULLAH: Yeah, you drive up this really, really windy mountain road, and as your approaching the top where you would turn into the driveway, you can see all the cannabis plants and if it's harvest time, you can see them all in their full glory.

BEAN: Yeah. And you look the other way and you see the ocean and it's this beautiful place, but it's also, it's a narrow country road. And so the word goes out on the phone tree, WAMM garden is being rated. and the plan that was in place was that everybody who was able, first of all, they contacted the local media and they had friendly reporters who knew about WAMM and knew that this could happen and knew, Hey, you're going to be the people we call and we need you to show up as soon as this happens, and the members, and the plan and what people did was they came in walkers, people in wheel chairs and old people. And young people and they went to the gate and they barricaded themselves against the gate.

VALERIE: They got a phone call while we were there saying that there were 200 people at the gate blocking the agents in. They asked us, will you ask your members to leave? And I said, I'm sorry I can't do that. And then they said, well, will you ask them to let the agents by? They've locked the gate and the agents can't get through.

BEAN: And, they said, you have two options. You can release Valerie and Mike from custody or you can physically pull us off of our walkers and throw us in the back and take us to jail with them.

ABDULLAH: Wow.

BEAN: And yeah, ultimately they backed down and they let them, they, they were still arrested, but they let them out of custody at that point.

ABDULLAH: Wow. The solidarity there, I mean, that's just incredible. It's a very moving image to see all these people, all these sick people just showing their support for somebody who helped them in their greatest time of need. And I hope that, you know, like that it showed one of those fucking cops, you know what I mean, who is joyfully tearing down their medical weed crop that they were wrong, that they're on the wrong side of this.

BEAN: I know through Valerie that at least one of those DEA agents, his personally apologize to her.

ABDULLAH: Wow. Really? That's incredible. One's better than none.

BEAN: Yeah. And so, you know, they're, they're released from custody, but the garden is destroyed and Mike and Valerie are both facing a very real threat of life in prison.

ABDULLAH: Federal prison.

BEAN: Federal prison for the plant, the number of plants that they were growing, and that it wasn't theoretical, that that's what they were facing. That was a very legitimate thing to have to come to terms with. That that may be what the rest of your existence on the planet is going to be. And Oh, by the way, in prison, Valerie would have no access to cannabis.

ABDULLAH: Right. Of course.

BEAN: So she'd be right back where she started.

ABDULLAH: She would be suffering from seizures.

BEAN: Yeah. Or taking, they'd be glad to give you pharmaceutical drugs in jail if you're prescribed them that are, you know, paid for by the same government that jailing you for growing weed.

ABDULLAH: Yeah.

BEAN: But they're not gonna let you, get a little loud, at least, not from them. I couldn't think of a more awful outcome than two people who did so much to try to help people -

ABDULLAH: Being locked up forever.

BEAN: But you ready for like another great moment on top of the other great moment.

ABDULLAH: Let's do it. Man is a great moment right now.

BEAN: Yeah. Well, I think we got through the, this is the lowest moment. I think the lowest moment is coming to terms with that thought. So they have to make a decision, what are they gonna do and what's WAMM going to do as a collective. And instead of backing down, less than two weeks after the DEA raid, WAMM gathered together with Mike, Valerie and, the whole collective on the steps of city hall in Santa Cruz and alongside the mayor, and they defiantly distributed medical cannabis to patients in WAMM, and they said publicly that they were going to do this in advance and thousands of people came out in the street like carrying little plants.

SUPPORTER: I appreciate that you guys are willing to be here and hear out from those of us who were in pain and this, it helps me to not be throwing up every single day for hours at a time. And it helps me not to be in pain and this works for me.

ABDULLAH: Oh, that's amazing. Yeah. Everyone was coming to contribute.

BEAN: Everyone was saying, if you bust her, bust me.

ABDULLAH: Yeah.

BEAN: I'm here too. Fuck it. Like, there's video. You know, you can see it was on CNN. Like thousands of people walking through the streets of this little town holding plants or holding pictures of their loved ones who, who had been WAMM members.

ABDULLAH: Yeah.

BEAN: And what they were basically saying is, okay, if you're going to come, and do this in our, because they lived at the garden as well. If you're gonna come to our, if you think the government has such an interest in this, that you're going to come to her home with fucking guns, then do it on city, on the steps of city hall. And of course, like bullies, they didn't show up because they were outnumbered and they had no just reason to be there. And they knew it and they knew they couldn't get away with it in front of the whole world. And I really believe as a journalist, as a person, as a WAMM member now, now, and I know I wasn't then, but there was a plan within the George W. Bush administration to take down medical cannabis nationwide, and that this raid on WAMM was meant to be the shot across the bow to everyone to say, this is

happening. We're going to fucking shut you down no matter what. And that if WAMM had backed down, that's what would have happened. And we would be living in a very different world. And because WAMM and Mike and Valerie stood up to these bullies, and guess who was front and center.

ABDULLAH: Nonna Marijuana?

BEAN: Fuck, yeah, Nonna Marijuana.

NONNA: If I were president, what a country this would be. Well, I better not go into that because I don't want the CIA, the DEO, the ABC, FGH coming knocking on my door and they will, but I could care less.

ABDULLAH: The world's weed grandma.

BEAN: But you know, to wrap it up, WAMM. They didn't even stop with the city hall. They went on and with help from the HCLU, they sued the justice department and they ultimately, basically won an injunction from the justice department that said, well, we won't raid you again. Very similar to how it began with the local sheriff.

ABDULLAH: Holy shit. Truly like a David and Goliath type when you know what I'm saying, to have them after such a show of force, to have them, you know, back down and then be like, okay, no, it's cool. Like we'll both, we'll chill out about this. It was a massive win.

BEAN: Yeah. I don't know that they quite use the word cool, but they certainly backed down and the next spring, WAMM, replanted the garden and the garden flourished for many, many years after.

ABDULLAH: The weed will always grow back, people. We'll be long gone and the weed will grow back. You know what I'm saying? You can always bet on that.

BEAN: To bring people a little up to speed. WAMM has not been active since legalization passed. They were basically had problems getting a lease at the place that they'd always been able to do this. I don't want to, I don't want to get into the details of, of that, but it's, you know, taking something very, very special and precious like WAMM and trying to fit it into a bureaucracy. It has proven difficult, but WAMM, as of this recording has a new location and, and WAMM is well on the way to reopening and Santa Cruz and we'll be servicing the community again very soon. And that's super exciting. And you know, if you're moved by this story, you can go to WAMM.org. You can find out what's going on with WAMM and you know, maybe you can kick them a little donation if, if, if your heart moves you to do that.

ABDULLAH: Yes, you should absolutely do that. You should check 'em out. That was an incredible episode. Thank you so much for sharing that, Bean, I know this was a really personal

one for you. These are things that you've experienced yourself. These are people that are very close to your heart and I'm so glad to have gotten to know them and to see what you see in them, man, because these are the people that make me so happy that I made my life a cannabis life, man. Indeed. And that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for hanging out with us. If you want to learn more about WAMM, please check them out WAMM.org and if you like what they're about, please make a donation. It's a really fantastic organization helping a lot of people. Thanks so much for hanging out with us. We'll see you next time on Great Moments in Weed History.

BEAN: Great Moments In Weed History is a Spoke Media production.

ABDULLAH: It's hosted by me Abdullah Saeed and David Bienenstock, a.k.a. Bean. We're produced by Brigham Moseley and Cody Hofmockel, with help from Reyes Mendoza and Kendall Lake.

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BEAN: Our executive producers are Alia Tavakolian, and Keith Reynolds. You can find us on Twitter and Instagram @GMIWHPodcast, or shoot us an email at Gmiwhpodcast@spokemedia.io.

ABDULLAH: And if you're enjoying our show, please tell your friends about it the next time you're smoking weed with them.

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