

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Nelson And Marijuana Advocates Hold First Ever 4:20 Event On St. Croix

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Positive Nelson, above left, along with marijuana advocates held the first official 4:20 marijuana event on St. Croix, gathering near the Budhoe Park in Frederiksted, and marching all the way to Rainbow Beach, where, at exactly 4:20 p.m., some were to smoke marijuana during a party, and continue to highlight its benefits. Events were to continue into Saturday at the King's Alley Hotel, where a "Heal the World" Earth Day festival is set to take place.

You may ask what's the fuss about 4:20, and what does it mean. Well, it's a code that refers to the consumption of marijuana, and by extension as a way to identify oneself with cannabis subculture or simply cannabis itself. Observances based on 4:20 include

smoking marijuana around the time 4:20 p.m. and a.m. everyday, as well as smoking and celebrating marijuana on the date April 20, embraced by marijuana smokers around the world as “weed day”, according to the [Huffington Post](#).

Mr. Nelson once envisioned the Carambola Resort as a 4:20 zone, but that hasn't worked out. “I would like to see us consider Carambola as a 4:20 Zone,” Mr. Nelson said in May 2015. “We turn it into a 4:20-friendly hotel and even do the cultivating there and incorporate that into the whole maroon village thing. We’re talking big industry here,” he added. “I have ideas for you.”

His medical marijuana bill has more than once stalled in the Senate, but the relentless senator hasn't given up on his goal of seeing the Cannabis plant be legally used for medical purposes in the territory. At yesterday's event, Mr. Nelson was bold in his words, bluntly stating that it was no secret that he'd like to see the recreational use of marijuana legalized in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As they marched, proponents of marijuana, chief among them Mr. Nelson, spoke of the positive sides of the drug. “There are many normal people who are highly functional people, who utilize Cannabis,” he said, speaking through a mic as they were guided by police escort to Rainbow Beach. “Just like some people have to work, go get a glass of wine, some people might watch cartoons -- shocks, some people might even go molest little children -- some people decide to roll a joint,” Mr. Nelson went on, referring to smoking marijuana wrapped in paper. “And we're saying that freedom of choice should be allowed.”

A rally participant gave a testimony detailing her struggle with cancer, and how marijuana has served as a remedy for the illness. Such testimonials have long existed, and a 2015 [systematic review](#) published in Journal of American Medical Association, found some pretty impressive improvements in complete resolution of nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy (47 percent of those using marijuana versus 20 percent of controls). Marijuana also increased the number of people who had resolution of pain (37 percent up from 31 percent). And it was shown to reduce pain ratings by about half a point on a 10-point scale, and to reduce spasticity in multiple sclerosis or paraplegia in a similar manner.

There are also side effects of marijuana to consider. They include dizziness, dry mouth, nausea, fatigue, drowsiness, vomiting, disorientation, confusion, loss of balance and hallucination. There's also the potential for abuse.

Yet, for the advocates marching to Rainbow Beach on Thursday, the positive stats outweigh the bad. “There are many reasons to use Cannabis, it's not just to get high or feel good. There are people who have diabetes, or heart disease or those that have high blood pressure, and they feel perfectly fine about it,” said Jude Ramirez. “After a day of stress, you need it.”

Anthony Stewart, 67, who said he's been long advocating for the legalization of marijuana with Mr. Nelson for years, pointed to states such as Colorado and Los Angeles as examples of how financially beneficial the drug can be (2016 sales of marijuana topped \$1 billion in Colorado). He said if done well, medical marijuana in the U.S. Virgin Islands could be a boon for the government.

"You need it for education; the education system needs money badly. The health, the roads -- so it's a way where, done in the proper way, I have no problem with, and we can get the violence away from it," Mr. Stewart said.

The 4:20 events were organized by Mr. Nelson along with V.I. Cannabis, Inc., a local non-profit advocacy group and some St. Croix hotel and restaurant owners.

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