

*The Cannabis Papers:
A citizen's guide to cannabinoids (2011)
By Publius*

#19

Peeing to pay the mortgage

U R in discrimination-land

Jack Herer, an early hemp-champion, poked fun at our American sense of freedom by noting – “*Land of the free?*” More like “*Land of the pee.*”

The Emperor of Hemp's words were ringing in my ears this day – and so was another word, “urine.” Such a simple word, and it really has its place – in a toilet. So why was I peeing in a cup and not the toilet? There I was cup in hand and peeing-like a woman – because I am one. I'm also a professional and an independent contractor with years of consulting experience. However, this was the first time I ever had to pee like this – with a pass / fail attached to it.

Yes – I was required to surrender my pee in order to get a corporate contract.

I had that “**Really?!**” moment. It's called disbelief. I have decades of experience as both an independent contractor and working for a corporation. Six weeks earlier, I had completed a consulting contract with this same company. Now they needed my pee in order to pay me, as my urine was now mandated for employment. ***I submitted my pee in order to pay the mortgage.***

I also had this thought – taking my piss from me was too much, as if work doesn't take enough. An invasion of privacy is also too kind. They take something from you by making a demand. That's not an invasion of privacy. **Discrimination comes to mind – so does robbery.** You might be familiar with being robbed – I've been there and know how it feels. The robber says “Give me your money and don't make me hurt you.” The boss says “Give me your pee and don't make me hurt you.” *Not much difference* – in fact, that might be how to describe discrimination – *when you are asked to give up something, things like respect and dignity, in a moment of inequity.*

I peed out of economic necessity, though not without wondering what my pee had to do with the quality of my work. Since peeing I've learned that corporations often introduce the practice of testing in sly ways. They say things like “We are tightening up our process for hiring consultants” or “This is now part of our hiring process.” This company also contracted a third-party vendor to implement the new policy. This eliminated the non-compliers – no pee, no job. This is called discrimination by weeding out.

I had the traditional pee-test. I went to the white-coats and used their plastic cup in their certified lab. And in a moment of synchronicity, I submitted what they referred to as “specimen” to the white-coat at the perfect time of 4:20.

Interesting my use of the word “submitted.” It felt like submission. If I didn’t submit my specimen – there would be no job and no way to pay the mortgage. If I didn’t pee and pass, I wouldn’t get the work. I left my pee, was thanked by the white-coat, and then had to wait about a week to hear if I passed. I had studied for the test (it’s also called abstaining), so passing was likely.

The laboratory is paid to run tests on your specimen. The consulting firm that contracted the white-coats receives only a simple “Positive” (with a list of substances in violation) or “Negative” with no further information.

Wait a second – I gave you my urine so that you could analyze it for what? *I wanted to know what was in my pee.*

I phoned the pee-testing center and asked what drugs they tested for? They said this information could not be given to me because I did not pay for the pee-screen. I then asked the consulting firm to please provide me with a copy of the pee-report. After much delay by human-resource-coats, I was finally given the report on my urine. It said I passed. I wasn’t surprised, like I said, I had studied – it was just anticlimactic and not what I wanted to know. They took a personal part of me and gave me back a message of “Negative” and called it good.

That’s weird. I feel like they pissed-on one of my rights. Submitting my urine for a job opportunity in which a content analysis of my lifestyle is for THC-COOH, seems beyond strange to me. What happened to that once cherished right? The one a famed and progressive US Supreme Court Justice said was ***“the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men.”***

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream, and so do I. I dream about adults one day living in a nation where they aren’t judged by the THC-COOH in their urine, but by the content of their character. Like King’s dream, mine too would make a better nation.

The focus of work is quality – not the levels of a metabolite. Depressants like alcohol, antidepressants like Prozac, and stimulants like sugar are commonly practiced and accepted in our workforce, as the “drug-free” workplace is a myth of prohibition. There is also no scientific evidence supporting the idea that THC-COOH is detrimental or causes harm on the job – in fact, a workplace *is* about activating your ECS. No one can work without an ECS, so it makes little sense to police the levels of an inactive metabolite. – Unless you happen to be a prohibitionist.

I also learned this fact about THC-COOH policing: if you are taking a prescription for Marinol, a synthetic cannabinoid that also leaves the metabolite THC-COOH in your urine, you get a pharmaceutical pass. Yes, in drug war logic, one kind of THC-COOH, the one from the plant, is “Positively bad” and the THC-COOH from the pharmaceutical company is “Positively Okay.” I’m pretty sure that’s called hypocrisy.

Speaking of hypocrisy, it is difficult to defend pee-tests on the grounds of public safety. If that was a valid argument, then police and fire personnel across America would face the tests. But most don’t. And, pee-tests would check for alcohol – but that’s a different story.

In the end, who benefits? Drug testing companies seem to be the biggest winner – to the tune of millions. As for the workers, the companies, and basic liberty in America, it’s a losing proposition.

'Land of the free and home of the brave' – just like Jack Herer, Martin Luther King, Jr. and that Supreme Court Justice who saw privacy as a fundamental right – that's where I want to live.

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Search terms

Health and cannabinoids; drug testing industry; Hayek and coercion; Justice Brandeis and the right to be let alone; Jack Herer (1939-2010).

Research and selected readings

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[Cannabis], in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known . . . It would be unreasonable, arbitrary, and capricious for the DEA to continue to stand between those sufferers and the benefits of this substance.

Francis L. Young
DEA Chief Administrative Law Judge
1988
