

## 420 Cannabis Celebration - Hollow or Inclusive? Is Social Equity All Smoke, No Fire?

News-Press Release

Plymouth, Massachusetts (Newsbox) 26-Feb-2023

<https://prsafe.com/release/15231/>

### Summary

Stoughton, MA, February 26, 2023 -- Does the 420 Celebration include everyone.

### Message

Is it just a lot of smoke? Although the specifics differ from state to state, the goal of social equity laws are intended to ensure that people from communities disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition and discriminatory law enforcement are included in the new legal marijuana industry. "Change is yet to come, according to African American couple Maur Stringer and Cynthia Mompoint, who both have roots in the cannabis industry and are the creators of <http://shaktigreenlit.com>, a new THC infused energy shot. The couple also founded the Danbala Group, a consulting firm providing equity programming and business solutions across sectors to companies, organizations and agencies. "The Minority Cannabis Business Association (MCBA) National Cannabis Equity Report found that the number and efficacy of state social equity programs do not reflect the expressed commitment to achieving equity through cannabis. The report found that there are social equity programs in only 13 of the 21 adult-use states and in two of the 18 medical-only legal cannabis states. Despite having social equity programs, many of the programs lack the necessary structure to bring about meaningful social equity. "Ironically, according to Weedmaps, 57% of cannabis users believe that everyone should have access to cannabis industry opportunities, with just as many people believing that everyone would benefit from those equal opportunities. "We have personally experienced the lack of follow through on the "promise" of social equity," noted Maur Stringer, a cannabis entrepreneur from legacy to legal who was first charged as a cannabis dealer as a teenager. He added, "And, we are not alone." Massachusetts rolled out its social equity program in phases. Phase 1 included 123 economic empowerment certificate holders who sought to become licensed cannabis operators in MA and were granted this status because of their demonstrated ability to empower people from communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs. As of February 9, 2023, after more than 4 years of adult use licensing in MA, only 18 of the 495 operational Cannabis businesses are owned by economic empowerment certificate holders. (\*1) Maur's wife and business partner Cynthia Mompoint added, "There is plenty of lip service about social equity, but when it comes to the deliverables "fast track for licensing, access to capital, technical support and training" states and cannabis commissions have fallen far short." The second phase of the MA equity program has brought in an additional 750 social equity participants. Thirty of the 495 operational Cannabis businesses are owned by this category of equity participants. Combined, the businesses owned by equity program participants is still less than 10% of all operational Cannabis businesses in the MA market, a far cry from the legislative mandate of "equitable participation." In response, Cynthia Mompoint developed a program that leverages Massachusetts legislation and regulatory requirements to foster a more equitable industry. This program was designed to impact the lack of equity owned businesses, particularly those with majority black/brown ownership despite explicit measures to ensure that happens in the state. Cynthia Mompoint, a Georgetown University grad with a degree in Political Science, brings over 25 years of business, policy, and equity experience with her investigative examination of the structural, conscious, and subconscious biases. Cynthia developed the PIES program. The program is made up of four key actions: Pairs, Incubates, Excels, and Seeds. Thus, the program "pairs" existing Marijuana establishments and with economic empowerment business owners. It "incubates" these businesses "including a benchmarked series of activities such as mentoring and training with the goal of obtaining a local Home Community Agreement (HCA) and obtaining a state license. It helps participants "Excel" by providing 3-5 years of support for start-up, ongoing mentorship and technical assistance. And lastly, the "seed" action is also critical and includes capital, grants and loans for nonrecoverable and recoverable costs/expenses. This program can be tweaked and customized by state. For those interested in promoting the spirit, not just the mirage, of social equity, contact Maur Stringer and Cynthia Mompoint, via [admin@danbalagroup.com](mailto:admin@danbalagroup.com) or visit <https://www.danbalagroup.com/> \*1 Data taken from MA Cannabis Control Commission Meeting, February 9th, 2023 or accessed here <https://masscannabiscontrol.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Meeting-Book-February-Monthly-Public-Meeting-Packet.pdf> on February 23, 2023.

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