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A Myth of Progress:

Marijuana, Racial Discrimination & Injustice
In Fayetteville

On Thursday, June 27th, at 1pm, on the steps of Fayetteville City Hall community members will gather for the release of the new report, A Myth of Progress.

The report details the 284% increase in marijuana arrests in the 10 years since the city passed a low prioritization law, allegedly making marijuana the lowest priority for city police and city prosecutors.

The report's analysis takes into account a history of ongoing racially discriminatory policing, and considers how and why Black people and LGBT+ people seem to be particularly criminalized by the city.

Apart from the human rights concerns, however, are the simple economics. It is fiscally irresponsible to pay the Washington County Jail's \$62 booking fee every time the police catch someone with marijuana. It is also a waste of resources when considering how much it takes to pay police and prosecutors to punish people for this nonviolent crime.

Of particular concern are the following facts, gleaned from the Fayetteville Police Department's own records in response to Freedom of Information Act Requests.

- 37% of all felony marijuana charges were of Black people,
- 26% of all misdemeanor marijuana charges, and
- 47% of all marijuana arrests by Fayetteville's officers who are members of the Drug Task Force

Also disturbing is that 51% of the 142 Black people charged with marijuana misdemeanors were charged with possession ONLY, compared to 29% of White people who had only this charge. That is, these people had *no other charge except possession of marijuana*; they had neither pipe nor rolling papers nor any other instrument of a crime, and had committed no other offence.

Immigrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable because Fayetteville has no jail of its own and thus sends its prisoners to the Washington County Jail which then initiates deportation procedures through its xenophobic alliance with ICE known as 287g.

Months of meetings and corresponding with city officials to change these trends have proven that they need public pressure to address this waste of resources and this violence against people who are already vulnerable. The report will be available online at www.arkansaslaw.org/fayetteville on Thursday morning, June 27th.