



L to R: Peter Grinspoon, Allen St. Pierre '89, Joy Wexler, Genester Wilson-King

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Imbued with the generous spirit of Lester Grinspoon, family and friends help the Libraries' drug policy fund hit a high note

Lester Grinspoon brought people together. On June 24, 2022, the day the late Harvard-trained psychiatrist, who became an advocate for reforming marijuana prohibition laws, would have turned 94, more than 100 people gathered at UMass Amherst for a daylong symposium celebrating his legacy as a drug policy pioneer.

Housing the Lester Grinspoon Papers alongside the records of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) and the Marijuana Policy Project, among others, the Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center is becoming known as the repository of choice for drug policy-related materials.

To support these efforts, in 2021 the Libraries launched the Lester Grinspoon Fund for Drug Policy Collections to pay for processing and digitization of Grinspoon's papers, which is part of ongoing preservation and promotion of scholarship in the history of a wide range of drug policy-related work and activism. During the symposium, family members, friends, and admirers paid tribute to the man who fought for recognizing cannabis's potential benefits, both medicinal and recreational.

During the past two years, Grinspoon's friends and family have also paid tribute by donating to the fund. Nearing its goal of \$50,000, Lester's fund will underwrite digitization and related projects.

The daylong symposium was a gift to those working on drug policy. A program of discussions focused on the past, present, and future of drug policy and activism, culminating in a keynote speech by renowned psychologist,

neuroscientist, and author Carl Hart. Author of the award-winning *High Price: A Neuroscientist's Journey of Self-Discovery that Challenges Everything You Know About Drugs and Society* and the acclaimed *Drug Use for Grown-Ups: Chasing Liberty in the Land of Fear*, Hart shared his experiences with drugs and drug policy as researcher, user, and citizen, calling for regulation of drug use by adults that promotes liberty and is grounded in scientific data.

Hart's message proved timely. In October, President Joe Biden granted a pardon to all people convicted of simple marijuana possession under federal law—the most extensive White House action taken to date on U.S. drug policy. The president urged governors to take similar action for state offenses and called on the secretary of health and human services and the attorney general to review how marijuana is scheduled under federal law.

Currently, 37 states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana, and 21 states have legalized adult-use marijuana, with Missouri and Maryland voters recently passing laws during the midterms in November.

The symposium and the presidential pardon would have been inconceivable to Lester Grinspoon when he embarked on his anti-prohibition journey more than 50 years ago.



L to R: Betsy Grinspoon, Lester's wife; Harold Grinspoon, Lester's brother