



Planting a Seed

A cannabis shop drops knowledge with its own social justice museum

BY DEBBIE WAY | PHOTOS BY BEN WIGHT



Interactive exhibits at the Core Social Justice Cannabis Museum

Attorney April Arrasate started the original Curaleaf—the dispensary chain that now has outlets all over the Northeast—after her mother died of breast cancer. “I really feel that the reason that business was successful is because it had this really durable mission,” she says. “I was a daughter on a mission to provide more resources for people who are dying.”

Arrasate left Curaleaf in 2017, but she recently founded another mission-led cannabis venture: Seed dispensary and the Core Social Justice Cannabis Museum, colocated in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

“As an attorney, I was really interested in highlighting this hypocrisy that exists in drug policy in America,” she says. “This plant was used to leverage both economic and representative power over certain communities, particularly low-income communities.”

The museum’s current exhibition, *American Warden*, includes a replica jail cell in which visitors can watch a documentary featuring Massachusetts local Niambe McIntosh, the youngest daughter of reggae icon Peter Tosh. She tells the story of her brother, who lost his life as a result of the war on drugs. McIntosh is also a member of the museum’s curating council.

“We want people to understand incarceration in America against the backdrop of cannabis prohibition,” says Arrasate. “Hopefully, we will have planted a seed of thought that may grow into something more equitable in future generations when they’re drafting legislation.”

Seed, the curated cannabis market that shares space with the museum, includes social justice in its mission as well. “We wanted to be sure we weren’t just speaking outwardly; we wanted this same mission to go into the organization,” Arrasate says. “We are 82% women-owned and 82% local, 81% of our investors are people of color, and we have spent over a decade, collectively, incarcerated by the war on drugs.”

Back at the museum, an additional exhibition is currently being installed. Called *The Cannfessional*, it’s a place where visitors can share their thoughts about and experiences with cannabis. “We really want to get the regular people of the world who utilize cannabis in their daily or weekly lives to be able to talk about that freely without any stigma,” she says. “We just want to capture as many perspectives as we can. Good and bad! We want everything on the table.”