

precisely this irrationality that gave the superpowers their credibility in the modern world.

That year also saw the publication of *Silent Spring*. Rachel Carson's deeply disturbing exposé of environmental pollution and the peril it posed to animal genetics and the entire biosphere. Hers was literally a prophetic voice crying out from the wilderness, a portent of impending ecological doom. Poisons everywhere, weapons of mass destruction, glaring social inequality, idiotic drug laws—it all seemed like Cuckoo'sville. The early Sixties were pervaded by a sense of daily apocalypse. Those who came of age during these anxious times made their stand not only as a "lost generation" but also as potentially the last generation.

Kesey's antiauthoritarian fable was a harbinger of the youth rebellion that would soon sweep the land—student protest, peace demonstrations, grass and acid, the hippie counterculture, black power, women's liberation, gay rights, and more. Flush with earnings from his book, Kesey bought an old school bus, painted the exterior in bright, swirly, psychedelic colors, and filled it with a passel of like-minded friends, the Merry Pranksters, who dressed in Day-Glo apparel and American flag outfits. They put a hole in the roof so folks could sit atop the bus, which became a funhouse on wheels. In the summer of 1964, the Pranksters set off on a mythic journey across America, smoking lots of marijuana and guzzling LSD-laced orange juice while spreading the gospel of psychic freedom in a country not yet thoroughly homogenized by monotonous chain stores and inane television. They were on a quest to "stop the coming end of the world," said Kesey, the charismatic chief of this rolling medicine show.

The driver of the psychedelic bus was the Beat legend Neal Cassidy. After serving two years in jail for a minor marijuana infraction, Cassidy hooked up with Kesey and resumed his wandering, weed-smoking ways. "With Cassidy at the throttle, the bus perfected an uncanny reverse homage to *On the Road*, traveling east over Eisenhower's interstates," former Prankster Robert Stone observed. Well-muscled and shirtless behind the wheel, Cassidy wore a straw cowboy hat while driving like an utter maniac all the way to New York and back. "He never ate, never slept, and never shut up. He also thought it a merry prank to slip several hundred micrograms of LSD into anything anyone happened to be ingesting. No one dared eat or drink without secure refuge from Neal," Stone recalled in his memoir, *Prime Green*.

Nineteen Sixty-four was an election year—conservative GOP spear-carrier Barry Goldwater versus Democrat Lyndon Johnson, the sitting president. To baffle the clueless as they careened through the heartland, Kesey and Cassidy painted a sign on the side of the bus—"A Vote for Goldwater is a Vote for Fun." An ardent anti-Communist and staunch militarist, Goldwater famously de-

clared: "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice." Ironically, that could have been the Merry Pranksters' motto, as well. The Pranksters were an example of the kinds of characters that a society invents every so often to correct its own imbalance. These holy fools sought to subvert "an entire nation's burning material madness," as Kesey put it. They were like a dose of LSD coursing through the veins of the American body politic.

When they got to the Big Apple, Cassidy fetched Kerouac and brought him to meet Kesey and crew. But Kerouac was withdrawn and taciturn during an anticlimactic encounter with Neal's new pals. Unlike Cassidy and Ginsberg, Kerouac sat out the Sixties and watched from the sidelines while his prophetic vision of a "great rucksack revolution" unfolded—"thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around," as he wrote in *The Dharma Bums*, a horde of "Zen Lunatics" hitchhiking cross-country, "refusing to subscribe to the general demand that [they] work, produce, consume, work, produce, consume . . ."

Next, the Pranksters swung by Millbrook, the sprawling, 2,400-acre psychedelic commune two hours north of New York City where Timothy Leary, the ex-Harvard professor, had taken up residence. But that impromptu meeting didn't go well either. Hankering for the big revelation—that elusive, penultimate zap of White Light—never topped the to-do list of the Pranksters, who were on a different trip than the spiritual strivers at Millbrook. Kesey's posse split after a brief visit and headed back to California.

With outdoor speakers in the redwoods blaring songs by Dylan and the Beatles, Kesey's rural home in La Honda, fifty miles south of San Francisco, became a magnet for an ever-changing cast of beatniks, bikers, college kids, marijuana smokers, and acid eaters, witting and unwitting. They all partied like there was no tomorrow. Gonzo scribe Hunter S. Thompson, a buddy of Kesey's, called the scene at La Honda "the world capital of madness. There were no rules, fear was unknown and sleep was out of the question."

Kesey got busted for pot in April 1965, but instead of lying low he and the Pranksters staged a series of public psychedelic initiations up and down the West Coast. The notorious Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests (as chronicled in Tom Wolfe's famous book) turned on hundreds of people at a time. Kesey's idea was to host a big Dionysian bash where everyone took LSD and experienced a collective cosmic breakthrough not by meditating on mandalas but by courting the unexpected via all-out sensory overload. The acid tests were weird carnivals with flashing strobes, light shows, free-form dancing, and live, improvised rock 'n' roll by the Grateful Dead, the Prankster house band. If the cops crashed an acid test, they wouldn't know where to begin.

LSD was still legal in 1965 when Augustus Owsley Stanley III, a fixture at

the acid rituals and the Dead's patron, began manufacturing millions of tabs for intrepid trippers. The Beatles sampled some of Owsley's finest and were thrust into a world of "tangerine trees and marmalade skies." As the Beatles quickly discovered, LSD was way stronger than smoked cannabis, which doesn't threaten to overwhelm the cognitive mechanism as psychedelic drugs sometimes do. Grass and acid both slow down the passage of time and intensify the present moment. But LSD triggers a departure from normal waking consciousness so preternaturally vivid that a few puffs of pot seem tame by comparison. Dropping acid could engender a bizarre, discomfiting sense of depersonalization to the point where some astronauts of inner space had a hard time reentering the earth's atmosphere.

While Owsley was mixing up the medicine in the mid-1960s, Dr. Harris Isbell, a perennial CIA contract employee, conducted a scientific study to compare the effects of LSD and synthetic THC. After giving both drugs to inmates at the federal narcotics hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, Dr. Isbell concluded that a very high dose of THC could trigger hallucinations similar to lysergic acid. Both drugs were said to produce a state of mind similar to schizophrenia. LSD madness (*Life* magazine called acid "a one-way ticket to an asylum") would occupy the same place in the American imagination in the late 1960s that reefer madness held three decades earlier. Just as marijuana had been demonized, LSD, a once-promising therapeutic adjunct, became the target of scare stories about acidheads cooking their babies in ovens and going blind by staring at the sun. Public officials promoted baseless allegations that LSD causes genetic damage and birth defects. Identical bogus charges would be leveled at marijuana.

Although LSD never achieved the social popularity of marijuana, the two substances were closely linked during the rebel Sixties. Grass and acid were like a one-two punch that wobbled the American psyche. Ever the contrarian, Ken Kesey had his own, unique perspective on pot. He maintained that cannabis was essentially a Christian herb by virtue of its propensity to engender feelings of well-being and benevolence. Marijuana, according to Kesey, makes a person more thoughtful and more tolerant toward others in keeping with Christ's compassionate teachings. "[T]o be peaceful without being stupid, to be interested without being compulsive, to be happy without being hysterical . . . smoke grass," Kesey counseled.

Marijuana was always around Kesey's scene. "We smoked a lot of pot," said Prankster mainstay Carolyn ("Mountain Girl") Garcia. But she and her comrades usually refrained from reefering during an acid test. "LSD and marijuana don't mix," Mountain Girl explained. "If you're high on 250 mics, you can smoke pot all night and you won't notice any effects from it. It's a waste

Plus you'd be making yourself stick out at a time when grass was illegal and acid was not." But a few puffs of primo weed sure could come in handy "if you are rushing too hard from acid," according to MG. "It's good for that. It can bring you back a little bit. Some people used it that way. Coming down from acid is a good time for pot."

Kesey and the Pranksters were trendsetters. Their outrageous antics sparked California's counterculture. They provided the template for much of what transpired during the heyday of the psychedelic era when legions of long-haired youth lay prostrate before the gates of awe. The party that started in La Honda followed the Pranksters "out the door and into the street and filled the world with funny colors," said Stone. The mind-altering ripple effects from grass and acid were felt in music, cinema, fashion, literature, and the visual arts, as well as in the fledgling home-computer industry pioneered by turned-on whiz kids in Palo Alto, not coincidentally the birthplace of Pranksterdom. These taboo substances decisively influenced how popular dissent was expressed during a very turbulent decade. A large-scale, multifarious, grassroots movement for social change was, in Kesey's words, "salted with revelation."

Life seemed to be one grand eruption of youthful enthusiasm in the mid-1960s. It was a period of high-flying optimism, a moment saturated with possibility when cultural and political radicals, each in their own way, endeavored to "break on through to the other side." Nearly everything was being challenged and most things tried in an orgy of experiment that shook the nation at its core.

The notion that all types of personal and social experimentation were somehow wisdom-instilling and therefore positive became both the creed and the pitfall of the cultural insurgency that was cranking up in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. Unbeknownst to the rest of America, a frothy broth, seasoned with cannabis and LSD, was brewing in the Haight, a diverse community of working-class whites, poorer blacks, San Francisco State University students, and beatnik refugees from North Beach.

Each weekend Bay Area youth got high on grass and acid and danced with reckless abandon at concert halls such as the Fillmore and the Avalon Ballroom while liquid blobs of light pulsed across the walls and local bands played inventive, mind-melting music known as "acid rock." Jefferson Airplane sang "Feed your head," Quicksilver Messenger Service implored "Take another hit," Country Joe and the Fish crooned "Don't bogart that joint, my friend," and a boozey chick singer named Janis Joplin left it all onstage with Big Brother and the Holding Company. And, of course, there was the Grateful Dead, the premier psychedelic band. These first-rate Bay Area acts attracted international attention.

As news media began to notice what was happening in Haight-Ashbury, the City by the Bay became a magnet for lost souls and utopia seekers who didn't fit in anywhere else. They gravitated to San Francisco, where they could be "out of step together," as the Jefferson Airplane's drummer, Spencer Dryden, put it. Or perhaps they were a step ahead together as they groped for a way of life that didn't damage the planet. "Why San Francisco?" asked Herb Caen. "Because this is where the winds of freedom blow. And because there has been an atmosphere of abandon here since the Gold Rush days. And because this city has always taken the oddball and the alien to its heart . . ." Caen called the latest wave of oddballs "hippies," and before long the Haight was clotted with barefoot, bedraggled youngsters begging for spare change.

But the love generation hit a few speed bumps on the highway to Nirvana. California outlawed LSD in 1966 and the rest of the country soon fell in line. And marijuana remained unequivocally illegal—which was useful for peevish authorities. The cops couldn't bust people because they had long hair and dressed funny. It supposedly wasn't a crime to think differently in the United States, but possessing an illicit substance was grounds for immediate arrest. Official disapproval of marijuana had less to do with what the weed actually did than with what it seemed to represent: disrespect, bad manners, licentious sex, a lack of patriotism, laziness, permissiveness in general.

As the use of marijuana increased so did the number of individuals who were hassled and arrested for smoking the herb. To dramatize this growing problem, the San Francisco Mime Troupe performed *Search and Seizure*, a skit written and directed by Peter Berg, a Haight-Ashbury community activist. Berg cast his friend Emmett Grogan in the lead role as a belligerent law-enforcement officer. His acting was so fierce and persuasive that when Grogan and another "cop" burst into the Matrix, a popular San Francisco nightclub, and started roughing people up, the audience thought they were real policemen busting folks for drugs. "*Calm down everybody, this will only take a little while*," Grogan bellowed as he grabbed someone in the audience, dragged him onstage, and started asking: "*Where did you get the drugs?*" "*Who did you take them with?*" "*Do you know what kind of danger you are to children?*"

The line between spectator and spectacle was deliberately blurred during this riveting episode of "guerrilla theater," a phrase coined by Berg, who explained: "I was after an emotion that would build a culture of resistance." He and Grogan split from the Mime Troupe in 1965 to form the Diggers, a group of artists, anarchists, and street toughs who staged food giveaways and imaginative street theater that catered to the needs of a community increasingly under siege.

Drug busts were occurring all the time. Ken Kesey and Mountain Girl were

nailed one night while sharing a joint on a San Francisco rooftop. It was Kesey's second marijuana arrest (the first case was still pending) and the legal implications were grim. Kesey ran off to Mexico, a traditional place of refuge for gringo stoners and cultural expatriates. He hid there for several months with some Prankster friends, including Mountain Girl, who gave birth to Kesey's daughter while they were on the run. They drifted apart after Kesey snuck back into California, where the FBI caught up with him; he did six months on a work farm.

By this time, Mountain Girl had left the Pranksters and moved in with her future husband, Jerry Garcia, and the other members of the Grateful Dead. They all lived together in a thirteen-room communal house on Ashbury Street until the cops stormed the premises and busted eleven people for marijuana. A spokesperson for the Dead pulled no punches after the raid: "The arrests were made under a law that classifies marijuana along with murder, rape and armed robbery as a felony. Yet almost everyone who has ever studied marijuana seriously and objectively has agreed that marijuana is the least harmful chemical used for pleasure and life-enhancement. The law encourages an even greater evil. It encourages the most outrageously discriminatory type of law enforcement."

#### A Tipping Point

Pot and political protest went hand in hand in the cacophonous Sixties. Much of the turmoil took place on college campuses. The Free Speech Movement (FSM) at the University of California in Berkeley staged the first student takeover of an administration building in the fall of 1964, after police arrested a young civil rights activist for distributing political literature on school grounds. FSM leaders gave impassioned speeches critical of impersonal university policies geared toward turning students into fodder for corporate America. Roused by calls for social justice and for greater student say in higher education, several hundred demonstrators occupied four floors of Sproul Hall and demanded that their First Amendment rights be respected.

The Free Speech Movement energized students throughout the country by emphasizing that personal alienation and private problems were relevant political issues. They believed that, as young citizens, they could collectively transform their lives. Student activism became the core of an insurgent New Left, which was unusual in many respects. For the first time in U.S. history, the force at the cutting edge of radical change was distinguished principally by age rather than by race or class.

The so-called Baby Boom generation was a unique demographic phenomenon—by 1965 half of America was under thirty. It was a decade of unparalleled economic prosperity and middle-class affluence; the U.S. Gross National Product doubled during the 1960s. But student dissidents rejected the notion that an expanding GNP was necessarily the best measure of human happiness. Some felt encumbered by “the chains of privilege.” The scarcity they rebelled against was not a material scarcity but a lack of meaning, an inner emptiness, the prospect of a comfortable life that was dull and unfulfilling. In keeping with the popular slogan of the day, “Don’t trust anyone over thirty,” these young radicals were wary of any set, hand-me-down ideologies that geneflected to either the industrial proletariat or the “free market.” At the portals of the New Left, one had to curb one’s dogma.

The phenomenal growth of the New Left in the mid-1960s coincided with marijuana’s emergence as the collegiate drug of choice. Cannabis was no longer just a weed smoked by Mexicans and African Americans. An illicit substance previously confined to the lower socioeconomic strata in the United States, marijuana made a quantum leap and suddenly found favor among white middle-class youth. This curious development was noted in articles with headlines such as “Dope Invades the Suburbs” and “The College Drug Scene.” What the magazines called “drug abuse” was almost entirely a matter of young people smoking grass.

As the times changed, so did the arguments against marijuana—the “killer weed” of yore morphed into the ‘60s “drop-out drug,” which allegedly blunted ambition and stifled motivation, thereby causing users to detach from society. No single factor could account for why marijuana proved so attractive to large numbers of people on a continuing basis around this time. In some unexplained way, cannabis met the needs of young Americans as they grappled with “growing up absurd” in a catch-22 world.

A tipping point for cannabis in the United States occurred in 1964. That was when white America discovered pot and *marijuana* became a household word. It was also the year when the U.S. surgeon general released a widely publicized report on the health hazards of cigarette smoking. For the first time, it became common knowledge that cigarettes caused cancer and other serious diseases, killing hundreds of thousands of Americans annually.\* Yet the U.S. govern-

\* Doctors had first linked cigarettes to lung cancer in 1946, but the American Medical Association downplayed the danger for many years while railing against what the AMA referred to as “socialized medicine.” According to ancient Native American lore, the gods craved tobacco. To please the gods, one offered them tobacco during shamanic rites. In effect, the

ment continued to subsidize tobacco growers. The hypocrisy of singling out marijuana for criminalization, while sanctioning tobacco, a deadly, addictive poison, was glaringly obvious to anyone with a half-open mind.

Miltown, Librium, Valium, and other highly addictive hypnotics and tranquilizers—known as “dolls” in mid-Sixties happy-speak—were also readily accessible along with a cavalcade of uppers and diet pills. Physicians routinely prescribed millions of uppers and downers to help Mom and Dad get through the day and fall asleep at night, and these drugs were often misused. Overconsumption of alcoholic beverages was even more commonplace. President Lyndon Johnson’s Advisory Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse noted that “the rarest or most abnormal form of behavior is not to take any mind-altering drugs at all. Most adult Americans are users of drugs, many are frequent users of a wide variety of them.” This being the case, it seemed arbitrary and capricious for the government to sanction drugs that were demonstrably harmful while banning marijuana.

Marijuana’s status as a forbidden substance added to its allure. Smoking herb entailed an elaborate ritual—copping the weed, removing the seeds and stems (an antiquated folk art in the sinsemilla era), rolling a joint or packing a pipe, and sharing it with others behind drawn shades while incense burned to mask the smell. “When a young person took his first puff of psychoactive smoke, he also drew in the psychoactive culture as a whole, the entire matrix of law and association surrounding the drug, its induction and transaction. One inhaled a certain way of dressing, talking, acting, certain attitudes. One became a youth criminal against the State,” said Michael Rossman, a leader of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement.

There’s an old joke among stoners that if pot were legal, it would stop working. Imbued with the intrigue of sneaking behind enemy lines, marijuana’s popularity was inextricable from the outlaw ethos surrounding its use. While antimarijuana legislation did not act as a deterrent, it did cause young people to be more cynical about the establishment. The U.S. government lost credibility among teenagers and twentysomethings who tried cannabis and found that, contrary to shrill warnings, it didn’t wreck their lives. Although the ef-

gods were dependent on the generosity and goodwill of human beings, who could withhold tobacco if the gods became peevish with harvests, food supplies, and other essentials. Tobacco leveled the playing field by empowering native people to bargain directly with the divine spirits. But the rules of the game were broken when white folk took tobacco from the Indians and consumed it without offering any to the gods, who retaliated with a vengeance. Thus came to pass the scourge of addiction, lung cancer, emphysema, and a plethora of nicotine-related diseases.

fects of marijuana wore off in a couple of hours, the attitudes changed by the herb would persist. Skepticism regarding marijuana policy encouraged doubts about officialdom in general. By eroding confidence in the powers-that-be, cannabis functioned as an antiestablishment catalyst, just as Ginsberg had anticipated that it would. Cannabis was like compost starter for cognitive dissonance that spread across the social landscape.

In 1965, President Johnson dramatically escalated American military involvement in Vietnam, increasing U.S. troop strength from 23,000 to 184,000. Opposition to the war became the preeminent New Left issue. Students burned draft cards, picketed ROTC classes, and rallied against university ties to military contractors. As it gained momentum on and off campus, antiwar protest became more imaginative and more combative. Cannabis was intimately associated with the grassroots movement that led Americans to question, reevaluate, and oppose their nation's bully-boy foreign policy. "You couldn't separate laws against drugs from the war," said Paul Krassner, editor of *The Realist*, who declared at a peace demonstration that he "wouldn't stop smoking pot until it was legal."

For many young people, getting high on grass was an affirmation of generational solidarity, a badge of identity. It was also an act of defiance, a way of saying "No!" to authority. Not everyone who smoked grass became politically engaged, but there was considerable overlap among cultural and political rebels—the "heads" and the "fists," as author and journalist Laurence Leamer called them. A broad (and at times uneasy) alliance formed between the two camps. This convergence was reflected in the *L.A. Free Press*, *Berkeley Barb*, and other underground newspapers that sprang up everywhere in the mid and late '60s. The underground press covered a wide range of subjects—everything from magic mushrooms to Mao Tse-tung—and blended a spectrum of radical viewpoints. Replete with stoned humor, "comix," such as R. Crumb's *Mr. Natural* and Gilbert Shelton's *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, were featured in several hundred underground media outlets. Even high school kids published underground newspapers that called for the legalization of marijuana.

But cannabis and LSD also comprised an axis of division among rebellious youth who debated the political implications of recreational drugs. Some felt the key to social change lay, first and foremost, in personal transformation. Free your mind—with pot, LSD, whatever—and the rest will somehow follow. Others were less sanguine about the notion of "better living through chemistry," as the famous '60s poster (and DuPont ad) proclaimed. They worried that marijuana and psychedelics would divert energy from the political struggle against rapacious capitalism and U.S. imperialism. And the capitalist system,

in their view, had extremely toxic side effects—or main effects—that no drug alone could cure.

Allen Ginsberg felt that both arguments had merit. He was not averse to holding contradictory ideas at the same time, embracing each of them emotionally without reconciling them logically. Ginsberg's willingness to abide ambiguity was an asset during the Sixties as he sought to bring various strands of cultural and political rebellion into the most intimate possible interplay. He considered the cross-hatch of New Left activism and bohemian outrage to be both workable and exciting. Ginsberg straddled both worlds. A key link between Beats and hippies, he was, in the words of Ted Morgan, "the bridge . . . the culture carrier and transmitter, the electrician who connected the wires."

Even though he was over thirty, Ginsberg became a trusted spokesman for the younger generation. He had a major impact not only on the fledgling counterculture, but also on student radicals and New Left activists during the 1960s. In a direct carryover from the Beats, Sixties rebels broadened the very definition of politics to include problems of everyday existence, loneliness, interpersonal relationships, and various lifestyle choices, such as smoking pot. They pursued a dual-pronged radical project that involved individual as well as social transformation. They were intent on changing their own lives while also trying to change the world. The legalization of marijuana was one of the causes embraced by Sixties activists, and Ginsberg would be their mentor.

### Legalize It!

On August 16, 1964, a young Haight-Ashbury resident named Lowell Egge-meier strutted into a San Francisco police station, calmly lit a reefer, took a big toke, and exhaled slowly. "Arrest me," he challenged the cops, who promptly did just that.

Eggemeier's in-your-face gesture marked the beginning of the marijuana legalization movement in the United States. By boldly puffing where no man had puffed before, he made explicit what was already implicit to millions of Americans: Smoking marijuana was unavoidably a political act, an act of non-violent civil disobedience. ("If a law is unjust, it's your responsibility to break it," said Gandhi.) The decision to smoke cannabis was not just a departure from cultural convention; it was a decision to violate the law.

In a marriage of political opposites that prefigured an ongoing trend within the pro-pot movement, Eggemeier retained as his attorney James R. White III, an ultraconservative civil libertarian who described himself as "to the right of

Goldwater." For White as well as for Eggemeier, smoking pot was above all a personal-freedom issue. They strongly believed that what a person chose to imbibe for recreational or medical purposes was nobody else's business but their own—not the government's, and certainly not the cops.

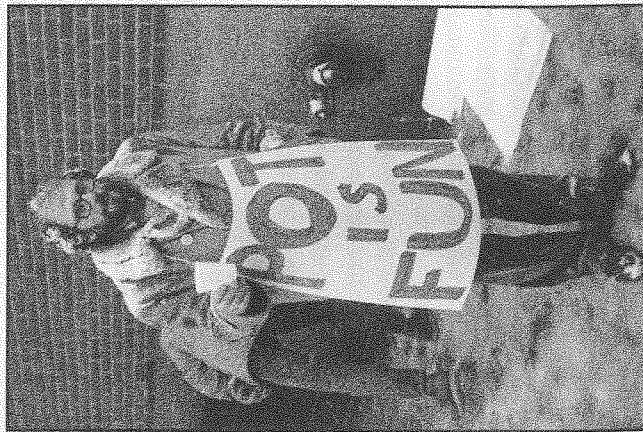
White's legal briefs for Eggemeier, who insisted on going to trial, included reprints of excerpts from the Indian Hemp Commission study and the La Guardia Report. As part of his defense strategy, White formed a group called LEMAR (*Legalize Marijuana*). It was the first U.S. organization devoted to overturning legislation that banned cannabis. LEMAR sponsored several public demonstrations on behalf of marijuana law reform. Eggemeier was eventually convicted of possession, served a short sentence, and then vanished, leaving others to build a nationwide grassroots movement that his lone act of civil disobedience foretold and inspired.

Allen Ginsberg happened to be in the Bay Area in December 1964 when LEMAR held its initial protest against marijuana prohibition. The peripatetic poet was sufficiently impressed to think that this just might be the right moment to walk the talk and raise the cannabis issue to another level. When Ginsberg returned to New York City, he huddled with Ed Sanders, a shaggy-haired, Zapata-mustached classics scholar, age twenty-five, with a flair for humor and energetic agit-prop. They proceeded to set up a LEMAR chapter in the Big Apple "to get people who use marijuana to stand up and agitate for its legalization," as Sanders explained.

A former Boy Scout from Missouri, Sanders had read *Howl* when he was a teenager, and, as he put it, "My life changed overnight." He migrated to New York's East Village in the early 1960s and fell in with a loose-knit cadre of literary bohemians who sought to translate the Beat critique into political activism. After Sanders served a sixty-day prison term for challenging nuclear proliferation, he befriended Ginsberg and the two poets became lifelong collaborators.

On a cold day in January 1965, Ginsberg and Sanders led a pro-marijuana march outside the New York Women's House of Detention on Sixth Avenue, where several left-wing war resisters were imprisoned for civil disobedience. LEMAR supporters chanted slogans and waved placards, resulting in one of the quintessential images of the Sixties: a photograph of Ginsberg, snowflakes on his beard and head, holding a sign that said, POT IS FUN. Published around the world, it made quite a splash. Another picket sign read: POT IS A REALITY KICK.

Afterward, the Lemarians shambled across lower Manhattan and gathered at the Peace Eye Bookstore, which Sanders had recently opened on Tenth Street in the East Village, a block away from Ginsberg's apartment. The Peace Eye had converted a butcher's shop into an incubator for alternative ideas and a



Allen Ginsberg protesting in front of the New York Women's House of Detention, January 10, 1965 (Courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez)

"scrounge lounge," as Sanders described his storefront, which still had "Strictly Kosher" on its window. Peace Eye offered an eclectic variety of books and journals, including *Fuck You / A Magazine of the Arts*, edited and produced by Sanders, which featured poetry and prose by Ginsberg, Burroughs, and other writers. Every mimeographed issue of *Fuck You* was a no-holds-barred attack on the state of the planet. In keeping with Sanders's avowed mission to wage a "total assault" on mainstream American culture, a mimeograph machine in the back room of Peace Eye churned out pro-cannabis leaflets and assorted missives—including two issues of the *Marijuana Newsletter*—in an effort to "liberate pot from the grouches of the überculture," as Sanders put it.

Before long, the NYPD raided Peace Eye, seizing books and pro-pot literature, and sending Sanders back to jail—this time on obscenity charges. Ginsberg did a benefit poetry reading to help pay legal fees, and Sanders eventually beat the rap in court. It was all grist for the mirth-mill of the Fugs, an underground folk-rock band founded by Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg. In addition to composing poems, cartoon illustrations, and a how-to booklet, *1001 Ways*

to *Live Without Working*, Kupferberg published *Birth*, a small-press periodical that devoted an entire issue to marijuana and other psychoactive drugs. Notorious for their irreverent and bawdy lyrics, the Fugs (the name was a euphemism for the sex act) cut several record albums and performed songs such as "Kill for Peace," "Group Grope," and "CIA Man" during cross-country concert tours that rankled Hoover's smut-obsessed FBI, which vicariously monitored the Fugs' activities.

Despite frequent run-ins with police, the Fugs earned enough money to finance *The Marijuana Review*, LEMAR's hip-zine for heads, which included detailed reports on the price of pot, what was available on the street, legal and scientific developments, activist campaigns, and other examples of reefer rable-rousing. *The Marijuana Review* was largely the bailiwick of Michael Aldrich, a soft-spoken, studious young man, who had discovered cannabis as an undergraduate at Princeton after seeing the word *marijuana* in print for the first time in Ginsberg's *Howl*. A South Dakota native, Aldrich smoked hashish in India while on a Fulbright scholarship, and then completed his graduate studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo, where he organized a LEMAR chapter and wrote his doctoral thesis on "Cannabis Myths and Folklore." Aldrich briefly worked as Ginsberg's secretary. Nicknamed "Dr. Dope," the genial hemp historian with the PhD would continue to play a notable role in the legalization movement for many years.

Small LEMAR affinity groups sprang up in several cities in the mid-1960s, including Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and Toronto. The poet-activists d. a. levy in Cleveland and John Sinclair in Detroit both ran afoul of the law after forming LEMAR chapters in their respective locales. The Cleveland Narcotics Squad raided levy's Asphodel Book Store and carted off nine crates of printed matter, including levy's self-published *Marrhawanna Quarterly*. "I am part of a movement trying to make this planet more civilized," he told local reporters after his arrest. Out of disdain for the municipal authorities, levy wrote a gonzo novel called *youcanhaveyourfuckinacityback*. Indicted on obscenity charges and continually harassed by the police, he committed suicide in 1968.

When he wasn't traveling, Ginsberg spent lots of time with Sanders at Peace Eye, crafting LEMAR position papers and strategizing about how to respond to the latest wave of heavy-handed government censorship. The authorities' ace-in-the-hole was the cabaret license system, whereby musicians and spoken-word artists needed a city-certified card to perform in public. Talented artists lost their ability to earn a livelihood when their cabaret cards were canceled because they got busted for weed or for any other transgression that resulted in a police record. New York City censors revoked the cabaret cards of

Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk for several years in the 1950s, although neither was ever convicted of a narcotics charge. Even poets were required to register with the police in order to read—for free, no less—at coffeehouses and art galleries.

Led by poets and musicians, a grassroots citizens' movement to rescind the cabaret card requirement would succeed after several years of struggle. This, however, was small consolation to Lenny Bruce, the social critic/comic who ruffled prudes and rankled squares with razor-sharp riffs on topics ranging from the narcotics heat to America's congenital racism and the bishops of Religion Incorporated. His use of profanity undermined long-standing barriers against free expression and challenged people to ask themselves what was truly obscene—four-letter words or the depravities of modern warfare? But Bruce paid the price. The king of existential absurdity was arrested numerous times on drug and obscenity charges. In 1964, he was sentenced to four months in prison. His routines from this period were peppered with frequent references to oral sex, sodomy, suppositories, syringes, zig-zag rolling papers, and *schtupping*, Yiddish for "fucking," a word he wasn't supposed to utter in English onstage. He did anyway. Occasionally during his performances, Bruce circulated a satiric pamphlet about pot smoking entitled "Stamp Out Help." In 1966, Bruce, age forty, overdosed on a lethal combination of cops and heroin. Before he shed his mortal coil, dozens of artists, including Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan, came to his defense.

For Ginsberg, the struggle against censorship and the fight against pot prohibition were inseparable. After visiting Professor Alfred Lindesmith, an early drug-policy critic, in Bloomington, Indiana, and studying his extensive files on the history of U.S. narcotics legislation, Ginsberg penned a prose essay on the merits of marijuana. Called "First Manifesto to End the Bringdown," it appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1966. The Federal Narcotics Bureau, according to Ginsberg, had perpetrated an "insane hoax on public consciousness." He drew attention to the racist origins of America's drug laws and explicitly linked the "suppression of Negro rights" to marijuana prohibition. Ginsberg proposed the formation of an impartial national commission to study the marijuana issue and make recommendations regarding the herb's legal status.

Ginsberg also wrote about his own hassles with the narcotics police. Thanks to J. Edgar Hoover, Allen's name appeared on the government's list of suspicious persons. A spurious reference in Ginsberg's FBI file to his "reported engagement in drug smuggling" was a convenient pretext for keeping tabs on him. On several occasions he was strip-searched by vice squad or customs officers looking for dope. They never found anything. Ginsberg was always

squeaky clean when he traveled, and he warned visitors not to bring illicit drugs into his apartment. He had good reason to be cautious.

In 1965, Ginsberg learned of a scheme by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics to set him up on a pot bust. A jazz musician named Jack Martin was arrested for marijuana possession, and four narcotics agents met with him privately and threatened to raise his bail from five grand to one hundred grand unless he helped them get Ginsberg. Martin refused to cooperate and blew the whistle on the feds. Sanders banged out a news release and LEMAR denounced the plot to entrap Ginsberg at a press conference that named names. The Fugs played at a hastily organized rally protesting "the rudeness, brusqueness, crudeness & violence" of the FBN, which maintained a dossier on Ginsberg that included a photograph of the famous poet "in an indecent pose." The picture was marked "for future use" and kept in a vault at FBN headquarters. "I feel like the noose of the police state is closing in on me," Ginsberg told *The New York Times* after he got wind of several other attempts to frame him for drugs.

There was plenty of marijuana circulating in the Village and other New York City neighborhoods in the mid-Sixties. But smoking it was very hush-hush. "It wasn't being done openly. It was done with a lot of fear—*great gods of fear*, in fact, always looking over your shoulder," Sanders told journalist Martin Torgoff.

The pervasive paranoia surrounding the use of illegal substances was evoked by Bob Dylan in "Subterranean Homesick Blues," the opening song on his 1965 album *Bringing It All Back Home*. Composed while he chain-smoked reefer, this high-energy rant portrayed the pitfalls of pot puffing in Anytown, USA, where the narc in "the trench coat" has a "bad cough" and wants to be "paid off." It was Dylan's most pointed statement about the outlaw aspect of the mid-Sixties drug scene. In a video that accompanied the release of "Subterranean Homesick Blues," Allen Ginsberg was seen loitering in an alley while Dylan sang like someone who couldn't fall asleep at night.

By this time, Dylan had angered folk music purists by strapping on an electric guitar and belting out incredible tunes that reinvented rock 'n' roll as a medium of social criticism and much more. His next album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, featured the international chart-buster "Like a Rolling Stone." Freightened with spiritual turmoil, it was a paean to a generation in motion yearning for freedom and adventure, a transcendent hymn for restless youth who'd been twisted out of shape by society's pliers. Dylan's chemically fueled burst of creativity in the mid-1960s marked a shift from straightforward topical protest songs to strange, elusive compositions that implied soul searching, rejuvenation, and open-ended change. During this period, he smoked lots of grass.

dropped acid, and tried just about everything else to "open his head," according to his biographer Tony Scaduto.

Dylan the trickster got his band high on grass and booze—and all the musicians supposedly switched instruments at his request—before they recorded "Rainy Day Women #12 and 35," his boisterous, rollicking song about pot and public opprobrium. "I would not feel so all *a-lone*," Dylan moaned, as if prescribing a subversive, do-it-yourself remedy for adolescent alienation: "Everybody must *git stoned!*" Released in 1966, it was a shot across the bow in America's escalating culture war, a bull's-eye blast that defined an era. It became the biggest hit of Dylan's recording career, even though many radio stations in the USA and Britain refused to play the song because of its rowdy refrain. The message spread far and wide on the wings of Dylan's double entendre—getting stoned could mean the psychoactive buzz or the biblical punishment. Tens of millions of fans took his injunction to heart. And many would be punished for their transgression.

### Flower Power

The music was key. Urgent, rebellious, and emphatically pro-pot, rock 'n' roll dominated the airwaves, providing an audacious soundtrack for a decade of cultural tumult and generational self-assertion. "The political and societal juggernaut of the 1960s rolled on wheels of music," said novelist Tom Robbins. Revered by impressionable youth, rock musicians were cultural arbiters as well as ardent marijuana smokers. They played a crucial role in the proliferation of recreational reefer during this period. Just as the jazz vipers of an earlier era had portrayed reefer as a kick not to miss, rock stars promoted a similar message to a huge audience. Numerous rock songs contained subtle and not-so-subtle allusions to cannabis.

"Got to Get You into My Life," one of several druggy tunes on the Beatles' *Revolver* album, was "entirely about pot," according to Paul McCartney, who acknowledged that marijuana had a huge impact on the Fab Four in the mid-Sixties. After the Beatles got into grass, they began to think of themselves as artists, not just performers. The herb triggered a creative surge that altered their approach to writing and recording songs. ("We were smoking marijuana for breakfast," Lennon jibed.) Cannabis opened the door to new dimensions of popular music, and the Beatles carried the youth of the world with them across the psychoactive threshold.

During the mid-1960s, London's burgeoning "spontaneous underground"