

2016 Annual Scientific Meeting  
FIT Open Mic Competition

**Presenter:** Lindsay Fox, MD

PRESENTATION INFORMATION

**Title of Presentation:** Criminal Injustice: Racial Inequality in New York City Marijuana Arrests and Penalties

**Abstract:** More states are legalizing medical and recreational marijuana. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Americans spend years incarcerated for marijuana sale and possession. New York City has been called the “Marijuana Arrest Capital of the World” by multiple major news outlets. The ACLU reports that New York has the second highest rate of marijuana arrests in the country, and simple possession accounts for 97% of these marijuana-related arrests (1) Across the US, enforcement of drug laws is well-documented to be racially biased. New York City is no exception. According to data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) computerized Criminal History system, in 2014 New York City 86% of the people arrested for marijuana possession were black or Latino. (2) Although rates of marijuana use are similar between racial groups, blacks in New York City are 7 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than whites. (2) This presentation will explore racial bias in New York City marijuana arrests and penalties. (1)

American Civil Liberties Union. The War on Marijuana in Black and White. <https://www.aclu.org/report/war-marijuana-black-and-white?redirect=criminal-law-reform/war-marijuana-black-and-white>. Published June 2013. Accessed December 9 2015. (2) Siegel L, Levine H. RACE, CLASS & MARIJUANA ARRESTS IN MAYOR DE BLASIO'S TWO NEW YORKS: THE NYPD'S MARIJUANA ARREST CRUSADE CONTINUES IN 2014. <http://marijuana-arrests.com/docs/Race-Class-NYPD-Marijuana-Arrests-Oct-2014.pdf>. Marijuana Arrest Research Project and the Drug Policy Alliance. Published October 2014. Accessed December 9 2015.

Objective 1:

Describe the historical and current legal status of marijuana in New York

Objective 2:

Summarize statistics related to race and marijuana penalties in New York City

Objective 3:

Support objectives (1) and (2) with human stories and images from popular media