

Allison Margolin Founder, Margolin & Lawrence



ALLISON MARGOLIN is recognized nationally as one of the leading attorneys in cannabis licensing and law. One of the first attorneys to specialize in cannabis, she is widely acknowledged as a thought leader in the industry. Margolin is a member of NORML and participates in various other industry-related organizations, including Americans for Safe Access and Advocates for Healing America. She also actively participates in legislative and regulatory efforts concerning adult cannabis use in California, including regularly speaking and teaching on these topics. Margolin is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Columbia University.

What is the perfect day? Take my kids to school, come into the office, plan to win a case for an innocent person, deal with a cannabis licensing matter, work on my book, and go home to my family.

In 2002, you were admitted to the bar and quickly became a marijuana expert. Why? In order to have free speech, you have to have freedom of thought, and I think the First Amendment prohibits the government from infringing on our ability to alter our consciousness, unless it is something that would cause harm to others.

Weed, blunt, pot. What is today's best term? Cannabis.

You are a part of NORML, which your father, Bruce Margolin, founded in Los Angeles in 1967. Is marijuana in your DNA? Yes, but my calling is more to end the drug war.

In 2004, you founded your own firm, which evolved to your current firm. Who is your typical client? Male, in his thirties.

Most of the lawyers in your firm went to Harvard. Yale won't do? The Harvard alumni system makes it easy to recruit other Harvard grads, but I'd be happy with any top person.

Your current focus is on cannabis business regulation and compliance. How do you keep up with the changing legal landscape? I make the time. The main thing about keeping up is to make enough money to employ a staff.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions flipped former President Barack Obama's executive order removing marijuana as a Class I drug. Later, President Donald Trump flipped it back. What is going on? The real deal is not what the president is saying, but what is going on in the streets and in the federal courthouses.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, renowned neurosurgeon, wrote to Sessions outlining marijuana's medicinal benefits. What doesn't Sessions get? The drug war is basically another Jim Crow version to oppress minorities.

Opening a dispensary requires an influx of cash. Are the communities bearing the brunt of past laws able to share in the gains of this new industry? Cities are encouraged to adopt social equity partners, and Los Angeles has done this. This will require a lot of trust building.

Why? These communities do not trust

the government.

Los Angeles City Controller Ron Galperin estimated that Los Angeles could bring in at least \$50 million in cannabis-licensing tax revenue. Do you agree? Yes.

What is the tension between federal and California law regarding cannabis? It's complicated, but California's law technically violates the federal in as much as recreational marijuana is not protected under federal law.

From cultivation, growers' products are labeled A for adult use or M for medical use. Are there dual licenses? As of May 2018, growers are allowed to grow both.

What is the basic difference between medical and adult-use cannabis? There's no difference at all.

For medical cannabis, is a prescription required? No, a recommendation.

Is there a marijuana-equivalent test similar to Breathalyzer for alcohol? No.

What are protocols employed by law enforcement? They trick people into a swab test, taking saliva from the inside of your cheek, which may show use from days earlier.

Yelp reviews say you're great but expensive. True? Yes.

What are your typical fees to open a marijuana dispensary? About \$100,000 for local and state licensing.

Last year, the Los Angeles Daily News reported that California's Department of Food and Agriculture said 2,718 companies were interested in seeking licenses in Los Angeles County. Are you pretty busy? Yes, we have about 50 licensing clients.

How do you envision the cannabis shop of the future? I am hoping that Los An-

geles will allow for onsite consumption. If we don't, the cannabis shop will be something of the past, and there will be more licensed delivery.

How far away from Amsterdam pot bars are we? Less than a year. West Hollywood gave out eight lounge licenses within the last couple of months.

In November 2016, California's Prop. 64 legalized recreational cannabis for people 21 and older. What else did it do? The major thing is that the smell of marijuana can no longer be used for probable cause.

For recreational use, what are the limits? Any adult can have under an ounce and grow up to six plants.

What is the most common way adults use cannabis. Smoke it.

Is the Bureau of Cannabis Control like the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control? Yes.

If you were handed \$10 million tomorrow, what would you do with it? Buy an office building.

Why did you want to become a lawyer? To liberate people who deserve to be free.

You have been named a Super Lawyer Rising Star seven times. What makes you super? I listen to my clients.

What is one trait you like in yourself? Ability to focus.

How do you get your news? I read the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Who is on your music play list? Taylor Swift, because of my daughter.

What was your favorite book as a child? *Tess of the d'Uberilles* by Thomas Hardy.

Are you writing a book? Yes, with my coauthor, Erin Williams.

Title? "Just Dope: The Story of the Drug War and One Woman's Mission to Legalize Everything."

What do you do on a three-day weekend? Walk to La Cienega Park with my children, go to my grandmother's house, and stop in at Champs Elysees for croissants.

What is your favorite vacation spot? The Claremont in Berkeley.

What is your favorite meal and where? I order the toro at Shunji. It's a great place on Pico Boulevard, near Bundy.

What is your Starbucks order? Iced latte—two shots.

What do you make sure you have in your briefcase? Pen and legal pad.

If Trump and you smoked marijuana together, what would you say to him? Let me be the drug czar.

Do you have your own "Golden Rule" by which you live? I try to do as much as I can to help other people, but a part of that is being conscious to preserve myself.

Which are your three favorite movies? I love Ronan Farrow so I don't watch Woody Allen anymore, but *Purple Rose of Cairo* was a favorite. I also like *Up* and *Coco*.

Which two world leaders do you most respect? Barack Obama and Eric Holder.

What is the one thing you would like to change in the world? End the war on humans.



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