

# **“He is now legally allowed to carry the same amount of marijuana he received a felony for years ago”**

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the November 27, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the Arts in Bethlehem* 

*Kimberly Schwartz is a student studying Sociology & Anthropology at Moravian College. She is passionate about criminal justice reform, equal rights, feminism, and climate change. This piece was originally written for a course at Moravian titled Writing as Activism, taught by Dr. Joyce Hinnefeld, in which students are encouraged to consider topics such as mass incarceration, migration, and how to change the world through writing.*

## **What I Know, Right Now, About Incarceration in The United States:**

### **A History of Learning Through Experiences and Exposure**

#### **part 5**

*Earlier this year, my now ex-boyfriend applied for and received his medical marijuana card. He is now legally allowed to carry the same amount of marijuana he received a felony for years ago on his person or in his vehicle.*

I am 21 years old, and I'm sitting outside of a courtroom, awaiting a preliminary hearing in which I am meant to act as a witness for the defense. The man on trial is a friend of mine, Derek. He is charged with

aggravated assault after a drunken fight between him and another friend ended in a stabbing. He has spent the last several months awaiting trial in Northampton County Jail after being unable to post bail. He is facing a felony charge which could result in up to 10 years in state prison, and he is prepared to take a plea deal. Before the hearing starts, the prosecutor pulls aside our other friend, the one who was stabbed. She asks him if he remembers who started the fight. Every person in the courtroom hears him answer, "I don't remember, it might have been me, I was drunk." The prosecutor promptly drops all charges, and the court is dismissed as soon as the trial begins. Derek is no longer facing charges, but he remains in jail for the next year. This occurs because his involvement in the fight is considered a violation of his probation, which he was given after being charged with simple possession of marijuana.

*fifth part in a series . . .*

**The Bethlehem Gadfly**