
Rerouting The Hemp Road Map

Like any good story, this one is fraught with drama, power struggles, and a new dawn for farmers, innovators, and political spearheads alike. Cannabis is a volatile subject, yet the plant itself is quite sturdy and sustainable. This will not be the only time irony is used, so know that. Point being, cannabis is a diverse plant capable of becoming sustainable household products, euphoric-effect inducing substances, or nutritional body healers. Can any other plant claim as broad a range? The short answer is no, which may be why so many are troubled by how we cultivate this plant in a way that everyone worldwide gets consistent, safe benefit from its use. That debate has raged on for quite some time.

As put by several of the experts interviewed for this book, hemp is a crucial agricultural crop that has grown for thousands of years. We have a robust history with hemp in our country, as do most countries around the world. Intentional division of the cannabis plant by arbitrary designation based upon a single component (THC) has caused this plant to jump through decades of hurdles when all we need to know is that hemp is a crop farmers should be allowed to grow, and manufacturers should be allowed to sell, in every city, state, and country around the world.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the biological and legal definitions of cannabis, hemp, and marihuana. Later we will hear about best farming practices, and what to do with the cannabis plant once harvested from the ground. We will meet a range of cannabis professionals doing their best to put people back to work around the globe.

While the fear, misinformation, and propaganda surrounding cannabis are unrelenting, the reality, as the book will detail, is much brighter. We will present a paradigm shift, where instead of looking at cannabis from its potential to get someone high; we look at it as an entire plant with many different end-products.

The four overarching categories of cannabis benefits fall within:

- H** = Health
- E** = Energy
- M** = Manufacturing
- P** = Planet

Cute acronym, but what does all of this mean? We'll get there. For now, know they weren't just *whistlin' Dixie* in the early 1900s when hemp was called "the next billion dollar crop"; and that was without the technological advances, or environmentally-conscious manufacturing practices, developed in the new millennium to enhance hemp's power. Within those crossroads lies a world of possibilities waiting to be discovered.

But, This Story Has Been Told Before...

Many have written books about hemp, marihuana, and cannabis—most notably *The Emperor Wears No Clothes* by the visionary Jack Herer. That comprehensive work gave us a time capsule preserving the complete history of cannabis that activated a generation of passionate people dedicated to the cause. However, there has not been a new comprehensive look at the hemp industry since 2010. The amount of change occurring in the last two years alone has great significance. In 2018, it is time to take a fresh look at hemp in America, and throughout the world, to reinvent our approach to the way things are done using hemp, or cannabis, or marihuana, or whatever name you call this one plant.

This book is meant to read as a story, not a textbook of terms; which is why the details come straight from the mouths of those experiencing hemp's revolution. We want to pay homage to things written in the past; in doing so, we interviewed the prodigies of Jack Herer who got their start because of his books. These modern-day experts sat in college libraries and friend's living rooms in the 1980s and 90s pouring over the words and wisdom Herer instilled about a vastly misunderstood plant called hemp.

Here is a peek into a few of their stories to get us started, which will be told in greater detail in the coming chapters. At the end of this introduction, there are brief bios on each expert to understand their place in this industry.

Eric Steenstra's Story

I got into the industry in 1991 doing research on industrial hemp. I had a good friend in D.C. who had done some work with Jack Herer, and turned me on to his book *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*. I read it and was blown away. I had never heard about hemp before. I knew what cannabis was, but I had no idea about this history with hemp. We both thought it would be a good time to consider starting a business, did our research, and eventually decided to create a hemp clothing company because there would be a good demand for it. The natural hemp fibers work great for clothing, so we started *Ecolution* in 1993. We were making 100% hemp clothes and accessories. There's a longer story that I could tell you about how incredibly hard it was for us to get that business started, but the point is that's how I entered the hemp industry.

Paul Benhaim's Story

I first learned about hemp in the early 1990s. Despite excellent grades, I left school early, and at the age of 17 was traveling the world. In Asia, I discovered foods were a centralized focus of rural Eastern culture, quite different from Western society's fast food. It was fascinating for me to see people living in dirt, surrounded by disease, yet many of these people were radiant, in fact, some of the healthiest, happiest people I had ever met. Growing up in a multicultural city like London, we had no experience with this type of happy, healthy and vibrant lifestyle. I decided to learn more and began a lifelong journey of studying (and experiencing) the attributes of food. This included multi-national cultures surrounding growing, harvesting, preparing, eating, cleaning, digesting, regular sleep, and, ultimately, longevity. My temporary conclusions were that consuming natural foods, and understanding how they affect not only our physical health but also our mental and spiritual health as well, played a significant part in a vibrant and radiant life. Of course, no university courses supported these studies, so I decided I had to study these ideas for myself. This opened the world to fats and oils as the essential blocks to health and wellbeing that were generally lacking in regular western diets. Through those studies, I became very interested in the Omega-3 and Omega-6 essential fatty acids, and sources thereof. On a visit to my first hemp store in Montreal, Canada I discovered that not only could you smoke this plant, but also use it for textiles, paper, rope, bioplastics, and food that contained the perfect balance of Omega-3 and Omega-6. This piqued my interest in hemp. I then read Jack Herer's book, as many people did, and became inspired to source hemp seeds from the cultures that had always used hemp as a traditional food.

I continued to study the nutritional properties of hemp and went to present to whom I believed to be to the foremost expert on fats and oils, Dr. Udo Erasmus, writer of the book *"Fats that Heal, Fats that Kill"* that I had read. I approached him and said...

"You're an expert on fats and oils, and in the many hundreds of pages you have written, you said in one paragraph on hemp that it is the perfect balance of these essential fatty acids. Why didn't you call your book, *Hemp: The Best Fatty Acid in The World that Can Bring You Radiant and Vibrant Health Again!*?"

He said he had to keep it small because he didn't want to put his name on something related to cannabis because—I believe his exact quote was—*you cannot change people's perception*. Something changed in me after that conversation with Dr. Erasmus, and since have dedicated myself to sharing the health benefits of hemp with the mainstream public. Of course, I was young and naïve at the time and thought that if something was factual and correct, then people would immediately listen...that was 25 years ago.

Courtney Moran's Story

I was a senior in college and given the book *The Emperor Wears No Clothes* by Jack Herer, and it changed my whole life. I couldn't believe what I was reading; I couldn't believe all of the lies I had been told about cannabis. I learned that it did so much environmental good, and offered a variety of uses.

I remember I was taking this class at the time, and we had to write a paper about a plant, I chose cannabis. It was for a plant biology class, so I had to verify everything in scientific studies or historical accounts. I went to the library and read book after book, and everything written in Jack's book was verified in these scientific and historical studies. That discovery never left me. When I saw that, I knew we had to do something about this—we had to educate the public. We have to change the law because right now it is illegal in some places to grow a plant that is sustainable and versatile, and that does not make any sense.

Colleen Keahey Lanier's Story: My Hemp Activist "*Coming Out*"

This sounds wacky, but it was February 2013, and I left the office to grab a bite to eat. I pulled out my cash, and there was an "I Grew Hemp" stamp on George Washington's face of one of my dollar bills. I froze at that moment. I knew what hemp was, as a teenager, I had the hemp necklaces from *Claire's*. I had a hemp purse that I wore around as a pre-teen, so I knew deep down there was a difference between hemp and marijuana. When I saw that stamp—and it wasn't the first time I had seen one—but in that moment it just clicked for me that this was my chance to do something impactful. This fire went off in me.

I'm a military brat; I was born on an Air Force base, and so I had to *come out* to my own Father, who is a retired Colonel and former Commander in the Air Force that this was what I was doing. I'm saying to him that I'm going to use all of my time to advocate for industrial *hemp*, and all he could think was that this is marijuana. I had my first test case on education within my own family and friends, and that was good, it was good for me to go through that.

I went to my boss and said I'm going to use up all of my vacation to go lobby for hemp in Tennessee, and he thought I was completely crazy. I had to have an educational moment with him too about hemp, and that happened every time I would tell someone what I was about to do. They immediately thought I was trying to legalize marijuana. I was really getting trained early on how to defend hemp. Every time I talked about it, I would have to explain how it's different, and that it's already booming in states like Colorado and Kentucky. I had to learn a lot and be on top of every fact, to convince people that this was a worthwhile cause.

My Father was so angry, and he called me one day saying...

"I don't understand what you're doing, I think this is wrong, and it's a bad thing to get involved with."

I said...

"Well Dad, no it's not, and I'm going to do my best to show you that."

He eventually came around, and it was fun to watch. I shared books with him; I pulled up info on the roping they used for parachutes in WWII and other historical things like that. I said Dad, that's hemp, and that's hemp. Let me show you things you can understand about this plant. It's grown for fiber and food and all of these things. Then we watched a bunch of videos and saw Eric Steenstra talk on CSPAN lobbying for it. I just brought all of the tools I could to the table, and my Dad got it.

The other day he said to me...

"I've never done it because it's illegal and we couldn't do it, but I know marijuana is safer than alcohol."

I was amazed, that was so progressive of him to say and incredibly accurate.

Why Read This, When You Can Read That?

First, read anything and everything you can; then decide for yourself how to best help move this industry forward. As a supplement to our *Hemp Road Trip* documentary, this book intends to inform the development, condemnation, and resurgence of hemp learned about during our conversations around the world. There is a severe lack of education (and even some outright lies) circulating the cannabis industry today, greatly due to the confusing—and often hypocritical—legislation enforced illegally by the U.S. federal government, particularly the DEA and local police forces. This is not an opinion, but fact that will be demonstrated in several stories to come.

Education is a running theme found in each of our interviews, said to be the key to bringing all of us together to support this industry. We will explore what damaged the reputation of cannabis causing its shunning globally (and most harshly in the U.S.) at a pivotal point in our industrial past; and why it is so important to clarify exactly what this plant is in order to demystify the truth. New research into the past, as told by researcher John Lupien, builds upon his 175-page thesis outlining the other global interests in the 1920s and 1930s that *lit the political match* burning the budding hemp industry to the ground.

People are legally working with cannabis around the world and will give us the truth on what it can do with verifiable facts from their findings and experiences. In addition, we will discuss the legislation introduced from 2005 to today—what passed, what failed, and what’s working. Finally, we hope to reset the conversation to something much more simple, straightforward, and easy to understand. Like it was before the confusion created by the racist, demonized, and fictional *marihuana* plant.

Says Who?

After meeting more than 1,000 people from 25 different countries during the *Hemp Road Trip* documentary, we discovered there are many, many stories about the current status of hemp not being told. So we conducted in-depth interviews with 20+ experts in various realms of hemp farming, manufacturing, and advocacy. Some spoke of the ways they learned to work with hemp, while others talk about the fight to untangle cannabis once and for all in federal legislation. In this book, you will read stories from physicians using cannabis to battle disease including the deadly *Opioid Epidemic*. You will learn from farmers across the U.S. about how this crop can save a dying industry. You will also read about the fight that politicians and lobbyists are taking up in each state to influence our federal government—just as our Founding Fathers (many of whom were hemp advocates) intended. These experts create change in their respective fields to shed new light on the future we could build using hemp.