

the Ally



In Good Company

Actress and musician Jada Pinkett Smith (with Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann) came out to show her support for the drug policy reform movement at a fundraiser for the Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act (Proposition 5 on California's November ballot) held in Southern California in October.

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Fighting for Voting Rights in Alabama Prisons

Historic Effort to Register Eligible Voters in Alabama Prisons Encounters Partisan Opposition

gabriel sayegh, Director, State Organizing and Policy Project

This Election Day, people in every part of the country lost their opportunity to cast a ballot. Voter suppression tactics and dirty tricks aside, many currently and formerly incarcerated Americans simply aren't aware that they are eligible to vote. Widespread misconceptions also keep eligible potential voters – both in and out of prison – from even trying to register.

In Alabama, DPA helped assert the constitutionally protected voting rights of Alabama prisoners, many of them behind bars for simple drug law violations. Our work with The Ordinary People's Society (TOPS), a nonpartisan Alabama organization, grabbed national headlines and contributed to the broader struggle for more democracy and greater representation during this historic election cycle.

Alabama does not bar all people with felony convictions from voting, only those convicted of crimes involving an ill-defined "moral turpitude." Thus, under Alabama's Constitution, the right to vote of people convicted of nonviolent, low-level drug crimes is protected. However, most of the

estimated 10,000 people in the Alabama criminal justice system for low-level drug law violations have never been informed that they retain the right to cast a vote. Even once they find out that they are eligible, these drug war victims in prison and on and off parole have no easy access to the ballot box.

In September, DPA began working with TOPS to repair the democratic process with a groundbreaking voter registration project. The effort was spearheaded by our close ally, Rev. Kenneth Glasgow, an advocate for inmate and felon voting rights and co-founding executive director of TOPS.

To remedy this egregious example of how the drug war undermines our democracy, TOPS went into prisons to register voters this fall. Focusing on people serving time on drug possession charges, DPA and TOPS contacted nearly 500 prisoners and registered almost 200 – at which point the Department of Corrections (DOC) stopped our work, reportedly because they had received a letter from the Alabama Republican Party asserting vague fears of voter registration fraud.

Rev. Glasgow, working with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, filed a lawsuit challenging the DOC. The

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Rethinking Reform: California Rejects Historic Sentencing Reform

Margaret Dooley-Sammuli, Deputy State Director, Southern California

On November 4, 2008, California missed an historic opportunity to pass what would have been a monumental shift toward a public health approach to substance abuse. Voters rejected Prop. 5, the Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act (NORA) which would have been the biggest reform of prisons and sentencing in U.S. history and the biggest reform of drug policy since the repeal of alcohol Prohibition 75 years ago.

NORA, written and sponsored by DPA Network, stood to change the laws of California – and transform the national debate on drug policy reform. NORA would have allowed tens of thousands of nonviolent drug offenders to enter court-supervised drug treatment, created the state's first system to help young people with drug problems, and provided treatment and rehabilitation services to people behind bars and on parole.

NORA would have built on the success of Proposition 36, a program overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2000 that diverts low-level drug law violators to treatment in the community. In just seven years, Prop. 36 has graduated 84,000 people and saved taxpayers nearly \$2 billion with, according to UCLA researchers, no resulting increase in crime.

California now continues to face one of the nation's worst prison overcrowding crises, with more than 170,000 people crammed into prisons built for 100,000. Despite this crisis and the lack of resources for programs proven to reduce incarceration, California's powerful law enforcement lobby, together with casinos and distributors of alcoholic beverages raised \$3.6 million to run deceptive TV ads across the state.

The drug czar even traveled to California to help defeat NORA and we couldn't beat back their lies.

Even without the expansion NORA promised, Prop. 36 will continue to divert more than 30,000 nonviolent drug offenders to community-based treatment each year.

So where do we go from here? Together, we must find another way to reduce California's overreliance on incarceration in dealing with drug addiction and drug offenses.

Fortunately, on the national scene, key Congressional committees and subcommittees are chaired by some of our closest allies, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Judiciary Chairman John Conyers, and Crime Subcommittee Chairman Bobby Scott. We've already taken steps to recommend qualified individuals for positions in the Obama administration. And with your help, we can ensure that a new drug czar begins to reflect our values by stopping those ridiculous anti-marijuana ads and ending the federal ban on syringe exchange funding. The defeat of NORA is not an end, but a beginning.

DPA wishes to thank our colleagues Dave Fratello, Bill Zimmerman and everyone at Zimmerman & Markman, who helped craft NORA and worked tirelessly to get it passed. Most of all, we wish to thank you and the people of California for your wisdom and generosity. We are certain history will judge California's failure to pass NORA as one of this country's great missed opportunities to finally declare peace in the failed drug war.

Fighting for Voting Rights in Alabama Prisons

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lawsuit was quickly settled and we went right back into Alabama's prisons to continue our work, albeit with Rev. Glasgow now permitted only to inform incarcerated citizens of their rights, not to register them.

The powerful work DPA and TOPS are doing in Alabama paves the way to address larger questions about the intersection between voting rights and the criminal justice system. One of these questions takes on particular relevance given the close results of recent elections: Of the 5.3 million Americans barred from voting because of felony convictions, an estimated one third can be attributed to the drug war.

We have a long way to go to restore democracy to our criminal justice system. But we're proud that Alabamians who were previously unaware of their voting rights were able to count themselves among the record numbers of Americans who cast ballots on November 4th.



DPA Communications Specialist Tony Papa created this painting, "Vote," while serving 12 years of a 15-to-life sentence at Sing-Sing under New York's draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws.

DPA Members Bring Drug Policy Reform to Online Communities

Jeanette Irwin, Director, Internet Communications

The pathways of advocacy are changing fast and DPA is keeping pace. A new set of advocacy tools and websites are allowing DPA and you, our members, to facilitate more connections among drug policy reformers. In recent months, this has led us to expand our online presence into a variety of new online venues. Twitter, Second Life and Facebook are just the latest means DPA supporters can use to get involved with our work.

We launched a group on Facebook, the popular social networking website, to oppose random student drug testing. The group brings together students across the country who object to student drug testing policies on the grounds that the policies are both invasive and ineffective.

Called “Student Drug Testing Invades My Privacy,” the Facebook group helps students share information and coordinate strategies to fight these terrible policies. Our goals are to raise awareness among high school and college students, and provide

more young people with tools to take a stand against random student drug testing.

Our efforts are working: more than 400 of you have joined the group since it launched in August. You can get involved by adding the Facebook Cause “Drug Testing Invades My Privacy” to your Facebook profile.

Our Second Life presence features DPA literature, drug facts and guidance on taking action offline to oppose the war on drugs. Second Life is a 3-D virtual world created by its residents. We celebrated the launch of our “Second Life DPA office” with an online meet-and-greet event where people could talk with our staff about DPA and drug policy reform in general.

DPA’s Twitter feed is another online innovation that will increase your access to drug policy information. Twitter is a short-form messaging service that delivers updates to your

computer or mobile phone. Our Twitter feed (at Twitter.com/DrugPolicyNews) connects subscribers to top drug policy headlines.

And don’t forget DPA’s website – www.drugpolicy.org – for some of the best drug policy information and advocacy tools available on the web. The more empowered you are the stronger the drug policy reform movement gets.



Join the Reformers Club

- The Reformers Club is growing! The Reformers Club, DPA’s monthly giving group, has doubled in size in the last year. Joining the Reformers Club is the best way to get the biggest bang for every buck you give DPA. Monthly donations provide a solid foundation on which DPA can build lasting, sustained campaigns. You can join our most committed supporters by signing up for the Reformers Club today.
- As a member of the Reformers Club you’ll receive special updates from our executive director, Ethan Nadelmann. Plus, if you sign up now you’ll also receive a copy of the groundbreaking book *The Marijuana Conviction* by Richard Bonnie and Charles Whitebread II.
- You can donate monthly to DPA through your credit card or by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your checking account. It’s safe, secure and easy. To join the Reformers Club, please call Judh Grandchamps at 212.613.8031 today!

**Join by calling Judh Grandchamps
at 212.613.8031**

Absinthe Event Raises Consciousness, Glasses to End of One Prohibition

Stefanie Jones, Event Manager

DPA combined art, activism and absinthe in May at “Absinthe Makes the Heart Grow Fonder,” a cocktail party held in the SoHo area of New York. More than 500 young professionals attended. DPA members showed up in force and brought their friends, making this our best attended social gathering to date. Gallery 151 generously donated the space for the evening, and guests enjoyed absinthe – the event’s signature beverage – donated by Le Tourment Vert.

Absinthe was prohibited in the early 1900s due to its supposed psychedelic qualities (never conclusively verified), but probably more so because of its identification with bohemian counterculture in Europe. Absinthe has long been associated with artists like Vincent Van Gogh and poets including Paul Verlaine. Following similar actions within the European Union, the ban on absinthe was lifted in the United States in May 2007.



More than 500 people packed the room to try the recently decriminalized absinthe.



Le Tourment Vert donated all the absinthe for the event.

The donated gallery space was hosting an art exhibition that included a piece recently discovered within the building itself during renovations: a group graffiti mural with tags from Basquiat and Fab 5 Freddy, among others. The graffiti piece and DPA’s absinthe-themed gathering illustrated how art, drugs (including alcohol) and social convention can mix in volatile, but always interesting ways.

We welcomed longtime supporters who’d never before been to a DPA event, people who learned about the event via Facebook and other websites, and an impressive mix of media and downtown trendsetters. Guests celebrated the re-legalization in the U.S. of absinthe, drawing attention to the fact that a once-demonized and outlawed substance is now being safely regulated and enjoyed.



Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann connects the dots between lifting the ban on absinthe and ending the failed war on drugs.



This was an opportunity for some of New York’s young professionals to come together and learn about DPA’s important work.



Donations made to DPA at the event were matched dollar for dollar by another donor.

You and New York's Top Artists Help Raise \$130,000 for DPA at Art Auction

Stefanie Jones, Event Manager

This September, DPA hosted the *re:FORM* art auction at the Cheim & Read gallery in Manhattan, with all proceeds benefiting our work to end the war on drugs. *re:FORM* welcomed more than 200 supporters and art buyers, including financier and philanthropist George Soros, Jason Flom, a senior executive with Universal Music Group, and Terrence Stevens, noted drug war survivor and activist, plus reporters from art magazines and society pages.

Thanks to your commitment, the auction surpassed all fundraising expectations. Contributions from supporters through ticket sales and donations brought in enough revenue to cover the auction's direct costs. On the night of the event, our guests bid on more than \$100,000 worth of art, the proceeds of which went directly into our work to end the drug war. Original works were donated by top artists including Louise Lawler and Alex Grey. Many thanks to all of the artists for their generosity.



Above: More than 200 supporters and art buyers joined us for DPA's *re:FORM* art auction. Right: Artists Fred Tomaselli and Louise Lawler, whose painting "Red, Yellow and Black" raised \$38,000 for DPA.

You may remember our first art benefit held in 2005. This year's event expanded on that groundbreaking partnership between the art world and the drug policy reform movement.

"DPA is honored to have such friends – the creators of such powerful visions – who share our understanding that the drug war is deeply, irreversibly flawed," said Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann, "It is indeed moving to know that they share our vision of a future where, absent harm to others, no one is punished simply for what they put into their bodies."

The *re:FORM* event honored long-time DPA Board Member and amfAR Founder Dr. Mathilde Krim as well as two other dear friends of the organization: artists Donald Baechler and Fred Tomaselli, who expressed their commitment to the movement for sane and compassionate drug laws. Darren Aronofsky, Alba Clemente, Walter Cronkite, Peter Lewis and Russell Simmons all served as honorary co-chairs.



DPA Board Members Mathilde Krim, founding chair of the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), and George Soros, chairman, Soros Fund Management, joined Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann and Terrence Stevens, director of In Arms Reach – a community program for children of parents who are incarcerated, for our *re:FORM* art auction. Governor George Pataki granted Stevens clemency after he had served eight years of a 15-to-life sentence under the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws for a low-level offense, when five articles focusing on his plight appeared in the *New York Times*.



Steven Salzman, artist, and Robin Cembalest, executive editor, *ARTnews*.



DPA Board Members Mathilde Krim, founding chair of the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), and Jason Flom, a senior executive with Universal Music Group.

November 11-14, 2009
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Save the date for the
2009 International Drug Policy Reform Conference!
www.drugpolicyevent.com

Since We Last Spoke: Updates from Around the Nation

U.S. Conference of Mayors Unanimously Passes DPA Resolution in Miami

In June, the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) unanimously adopted a resolution supporting policies that could save thousands of lives by preventing and reversing fatal drug overdoses. Santa Fe Mayor David Coss sponsored the resolution, researched and drafted by DPA. Drug overdose is an unrecognized national crisis. It is the second leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. after auto collisions. Many overdose deaths occur because witnesses wait to call 911, or don't call at all, for fear of arrest or police involvement.

At the 76th USCM Annual Meeting in Miami, Florida, our resolution set forth a comprehensive strategy to reduce death and injury from overdose. Because most overdoses occur in the presence of witnesses, the resolution supports local programs that distribute naloxone – a nasal spray that temporarily restores breathing following a heroin overdose – directly to drug users, their friends, families and communities.

The resolution urges state governments to adopt emergency Good Samaritan immunity policies, like the DPA-championed law recently passed in New Mexico, that would shield from prosecution people who are experiencing or witness an accidental or intentional drug overdose and contact 911. DPA is working to pass similar, life-saving legislation in California, Illinois, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Washington.

“Following these raids, it’s very likely that SDSU students will actually be less likely to call for help if someone is experiencing an overdose, for fear of prosecution.”

Deputy State Director for Southern California
Margaret Dooley-Sammuli, a San Diego native

San Diego Demonstrators Call for Overdose Prevention

In May, a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) drug sting at San Diego State University (SDSU) in California grabbed national headlines. Nearly 100 students were arrested on a variety of drug charges, including possession and sales. In justifying the college sting operation, the DEA cited a student's overdose in 2007 and touted their raid as a significant victory in the drug war – a model for other campuses to follow. Working closely with our allies at Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP), DPA responded by calling on SDSU to enact a life-saving Good Samaritan immunity policy – in force at dozens of U.S. universities – that would encourage more students to call for help during a drug overdose emergency.

Many of you joined with us and other students, parents and drug policy reformers in responding swiftly by organizing a demonstration the next day to call attention to the need for more effective and sensible responses to overdose and drug abuse. The demonstration, led by SSDP, was a mock graduation for the 75 students who were arrested and the two SDSU students who recently died of preventable drug overdoses, one of which led to the DEA investigation.

New York Convenes Historic Assembly Committee Hearings

DPA has played a leading role over the past decade in efforts to reform New York's draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws. Now we're expanding our message and advocacy to incorporate this work into a broader campaign to treat drug addiction primarily as a health rather than criminal issue in state law and policy. In the spring, DPA and our allies prompted the New York State Assembly to hold two unprecedented hearings to consider just that. The hearings coincided with the 35th anniversary of the enactment of New York's draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws. Under the disastrous laws, New York has had one of the highest racial disparities in the nation.

The hearings were conducted jointly by six Assembly Committees – three from the field of criminal justice (Codes, Corrections, and Judiciary), and three from public health (Health, Alcoholism and Drug Addiction, and Social Services). DPA worked with our allies to bring together an array of stakeholders to discuss and explore what a coordinated public health approach to drug policy would look like. As a follow up to the Assembly hearings, in January 2009, DPA and the New York Academy of Medicine will co-host a two-day conference to develop detailed proposals on the issue.

New Jersey Medical Marijuana Hearings Produce Passionate Testimony

If you or someone you love were seriously ill and none of the available medications relieved the suffering or improved quality of life, wouldn't you want access to medical marijuana if your doctor recommended it? Overwhelmingly, most respondents in New Jersey answer "yes" to this question. A recent survey from The Polling Company found 86 percent support access to medical marijuana. DPA New Jersey scored a victory for compassionate drug policy when the NJ Assembly's Health and Senior Services Committee held informational hearings on the Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act in May.

Numerous organizations from DPA New Jersey's *Compassionate Use Campaign* coalition testified in favor of the legislation including the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians, New Jersey League for Nursing, New Jersey State Nurses Association, New Jersey chapters of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and New Jersey Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. But the most passionate testimony came from the courageous patients and families who came to tell their stories. Scott Ward, a 24-year-old diagnosed with multiple sclerosis while training for the Marine Corps Marathon, and Don and Gerry McGrath, parents of Sean McGrath, who was 28 when he passed away from cancer in 2004, spoke passionately about the relief medical marijuana provides. With your continued support, DPA will fight for legal access to medical marijuana in New Jersey until we get legislation passed and signed into law.

DPA New Mexico Urges Comprehensive Prison Reform

Families and communities across the country are increasingly feeling the burden of our nation's failed drug war in the form of rising criminal justice system costs. In 2007 alone, New Mexico taxpayers spent over \$22 million to incarcerate people convicted of nonviolent drug possession offenses. In addition to this immense waste of taxpayer dollars, the majority of people with drug addictions are unable to receive substance abuse treatment, and people coming out of jail or prison often lack the resources and support they need to rebuild their lives and succeed. In the face of these challenges, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who last year signed both DPA's medical marijuana and Good Samaritan 911 laws, took a proactive step in the spring of 2008 by convening the Prison Reform Taskforce to address over-reliance on incarceration, rising costs and high recidivism rates in New Mexico.

DPA New Mexico took part in each taskforce meeting and sought community input to help influence the final report. We are pleased to announce that the NM Corrections Department has already moved forward with one recommendation by establishing the Reentry Bureau within the department to facilitate people's reintegration into the community following their release. The 2009 legislative session will bring new opportunities for our members to advocate for comprehensive prison and criminal justice reform.

Bungled Drug Bust in Maryland Exposes Drug War Failures

Cheye Calvo, the mayor of Berwyn Heights in Prince George's County in Maryland, became an unlikely victim of America's drug war. Coming home one night in late July, he found a large package that, unbeknownst to him, happened to contain marijuana. It turns out he had fallen victim to a drug-smuggling scheme that targets innocent UPS customers. Moments after bringing the box inside, SWAT officers standing by broke in and shot his two Labrador retrievers. As the dogs lay bleeding to death at his feet, Mr. Calvo and his family – including his mother-in-law – were held in the same room, handcuffed for hours. Mr. Calvo's story made national headlines.

DPA jumped on this story and exposed the fact that the outrageous tactics used against Mayor Calvo happen in communities around the country on a daily basis. Nearly 40,000 such raids are conducted each year, according to a Cato Institute report, "Overkill: The Rise of Paramilitary Police Raids in America." DPA staff members wrote op-eds that appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*, *Hartford Courant* and the *Huffington Post*. We drew attention to this war at home where innocent people are terrorized, doors are knocked down and guns are pointed at families. The next time you see or hear about an injustice in your community related to the failed drug war, write a letter or an op-ed and send it to your local newspaper. It can do a world of good.

Questions? Feedback?

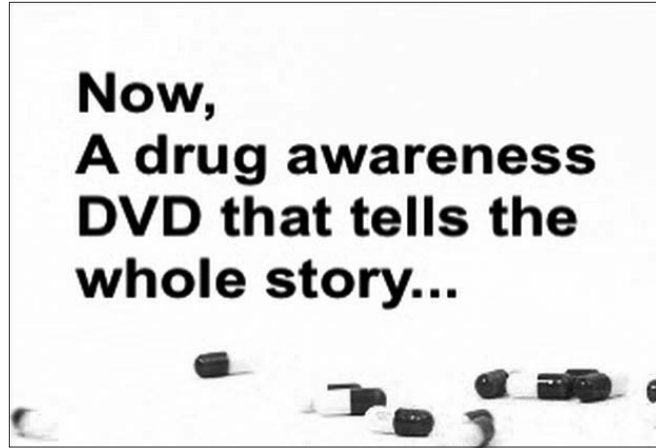
We love to hear from our members. Contact *The Ally* by writing to Isaac Skelton, editor, at newsletter@drugpolicy.org.

DPA Releases New Drug Abuse Prevention Video for Teens

DPA New Mexico has just completed and released an educational DVD produced with the support of a U.S. Department of Justice grant championed by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). *Just4Teens: Let's Talk about Meth and Other Drugs* is an innovative drug education video that helps teachers, counselors, prevention specialists and parents to initiate an open, honest discussion with young people about the realities of drugs and drug use.



Building on DPA's other youth and drugs publications, *Safety First* and *Beyond Zero Tolerance*, the *Just4Teens* DVD provides alternative methods and strategies for drug prevention that foster trust and use science-based information, rather than scare tactics and unrealistic messages like "Just Say No." The DVD includes a 15-minute video and a 14-page Facilitator's Guide with tools that can be used to supplement current prevention programs. Using the DVD, teachers and other adults can start in-depth conversations about drugs and drug use in their after-school programs, classrooms or other youth groups.



The video is being provided for free to New Mexico residents, and DPA New Mexico will be conducting free train-the-trainer drug education workshops around the state in 2008 and 2009. To promote the video and trainings, we hosted *Just4Teens* video premiere events in Santa Fe, Albuquerque and several other communities across the state. For more information about this video or to order a copy, visit the DPA website.



"Any message that fails to contain balance is not credible," advises Marsha Rosenbaum, director emerita and author of *Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens and Drugs*.



Screen stills from *Just4Teens: Let's Talk about Meth and Other Drugs*



"This is Vicodin. I take it for pain."



"Unless you lock your kid in their room, they're going to try and go out and just experience it."

Learn more about our work in the **2008 DPA Annual Report**, available for free at www.drugpolicy.org/annualreport