

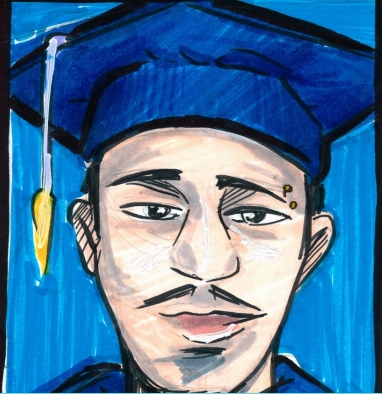
# THE VOICE

# BA✊CA

## NEWSLETTER/BOLETÍN



# COM UNI DAD





# THE VOICE

## Bay Area Latino Cannabis Alliance BALCA

### Issue 3, Volume 1

**Bay Area Latino Cannabis Alliance “BALCA”** is proud to continue its mission in empowering Latino/a/x in the cannabis industry, releasing ***The Voice Newsletter #3***.

We are a 100% volunteer organization; our **5 Points of Unity** hold us together, we stand for Latino/a/x in cannabis to attain or practice: **Professional Development, Business Ownership, Civil Rights, Education** and **Culture**.

As we visit cannabis dispensaries throughout the Bay Area, more and more budtenders, managers, and business owners are positively engaging **BALCA's The Voice** as contemporary quality cannabis literature. **BALCA** is building a community of empowerment by developing authors or enhancing already dynamic projects, such as Latino/as in Cannabis on Clubhouse.

**BALCA** has monthly community zooms, a place where we generate community connections and generate community support for new Latino/a/x cannabis businesses or community initiatives. It is also a space where **BALCA** authors can openly articulate their visions, further explaining their article submissions. Thank you to the authors whose submissions made this Newsletter possible.

**BALCA** members are on the frontlines of the California cannabis industry: from **Cindy De La Vega's** first hand account opening up STIIIZY Union Square retail, to **Izzabella Velez's** life of resilience establishing equity verification, **David Rodrigues'** launching a medically focused delivery in San Jose and a dynamic crew that formed around Latino/as in Cannabis on Clubhouse, the spiritual vision of Seventh Wave and Daniel Palanco's CED Podcast building important connections and networks,

Welcome to **BALCA's The Voice Issue 3**. Continuing our journey of documenting the knowledge and leadership **Latino/a/x are executing in our young cannabis industry**.



# THE VOICE

Bay Area Latino Cannabis Alliance BALCA

Issue 3, Volume 1

## BALCA's FIVE PILLARS

**Education:** We are committed to shattering stigmas and educating latino communities about the latest cannabis science, cannabis for wellness, and the growth of the regulated cannabis industry.

**Professional Development:** We are champions for upward mobility and will provide the resources needed for our community to ensure proper compensation, pursue growth opportunities, and build towards cannabis business ownership.

**Civil Rights:** We will challenge civil rights violations in the industry (racism, sexual harassment, sexism, tokenism), and will remain uncompromising in our search for full worker's rights.

**Business Ownership:** We support Latino entrepreneurs in building their own businesses, and developing unique products or services for the industry.

**Culture:** We will share the stories of latinos in cannabis, and ensure that we provide a space for our communities to express our culture.

Website [BALCA.live](http://BALCA.live)

# THE VOICE

Issue 3, Volume 1

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*Bay Area*



# THE GRAND OPENING

Written by: Cindy De La Vega  
[@cincin415](#)

October 9, 2020 Grand opening day has arrived, if I told you I slept the night before, I lied. I was overwhelmed with the outpouring of support from the community, the City and even folks that drove into the City from all over, from LA even from Arizona to help celebrate this historic day with me. I was the first Female Latina to open and own a cannabis storefront through the San Francisco city's equity program.

My name is Cindy De La Vega. I am a proud Mexicana and I'm the CEO, owner of STIIIZY Union Square 180 O'farrell Street. I'm a lifelong resident of San Francisco, a Frisco Native. I Grew up in the Sunnydale housing projects, and still reside in the same neighborhood. Known as Visitacion Valley.

I'm a United Playaz, we are known for the saying "it takes the hood to save the hood" we are a non profit organization that has just made its 26 year anniversary October 8, 2020 which also was the soft opening of my storefront.

I don't believe I slept all week from the joy and overwhelming feelings from how far we got. This has been one of my greatest accomplishments.

Never in a million years would I believe that something we started working on back in 2017 had finally been completed and opened October 2020 during this awful pandemic. The same month we celebrate UP! Anniversary, can't tell me that wasn't God!

**"IF I TOLD YOU I  
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# THE GRAND OPENING



Now I keep talking about how I didn't sleep perhaps all month lol The morning of October 8 2020, we also went in front of the cities planning board commission in support of my mentor/brother, the executive director of United playaz Rudy Copuz Jr in receiving his permit to go into buildout of his cannabis storefront through the San Francisco equity program.

We couldn't have planned this, it was all God.

Of course Rudy passed and is now in the buildout phase, one step closer to opening and I cry of joy because what most don't know is that my brother Rudy Corpuz Jr. passed this Union Square opportunity to me and here we are now, he's now being blessed with his very own storefront to open any month now.

I call this a circle of blessings.

We both partnered with STIIIZY/Shryne group and we will soon both be owners of two storefronts you can best believe have made it our mission to give back in a major way by any means necessary.

This is security for United Playaz Organization. What does this mean, so much and not enough words.

But the most important part in all this is the Hope that has been created through our accomplishments and the inspiration we can be to those that look just like us, reside in low income neighborhoods just like us, have been through similar obstacles just like us and most importantly were highly affected by the war on drugs just like us.



# THE GRAND OPENING

When you see us as CEO/Business Owners entrepreneurs may it encourage everyone to get involved with the cannabis industry so that together we can heal the world and create revenue and better our communities by being able to pour back into them financially.

That's Equity!

What can people see or feel when you shop at my shop, is a question I've recently been asked.

My answer, you will see people that work there who look just like me, come from communities like mine, have also been affected by the war on drugs.

You will see Verified Equity applicants employed there. You can feel the Story behind the Shop when you enter, you will be helped out by other equity applicants currently gaining skills they will need to succeed in the industry, you should know that money spent at equity cannabis shops like mine means you're also putting back into the community and are appreciated for doing so. You will see equity brands on the shelves, It's a win for all!



I'd like to believe that the healing has started, since the opening I've met some of the most amazing people. I've had great conversations with so many people that my story touched and being able to write that there feels amazing. I'm currently working on a few other projects, and know that I will have so much more to say.

This is just the beginning Rudy and I are also part of The San Francisco Equity Group.



# THOUGHTS FROM THE KITCHEN

**By Enrique Soriano Lead Chef Cocina Del Corazon** [@cocinadelcorazonoakland](https://www.instagram.com/cocinadelcorazonoakland)

A couple days ago my brother, Jesus, was helping me cook and I brought down fresh grapefruit juice mixed with soda water for him and I to refresh and take a break with. "You like grapefruit?" I asked as I extended a glass to him. "Yup, sure do." He replied as he swiftly took the glass. "The reason I asked," I explained to him, "is that most people don't like it. It's just one of those things, yadadamean?." With that we took a drink and continued on our knife work with our food prep. "You know I was just thinking about this guy I used to work with." Jesus said, breaking the silence and removing his earbud. "We used to work together. He did time in the Pen and used to work in the kitchen.

He told me he would spend hours cleaning grapefruits. Peeling them and making sure there were no whites on them and segmenting them into beautiful little pieces with no skin." "My God," I thought to myself, "this man with no culinary background really understands the grapefruit!" "Well," Jesus continued bringing the knife to his face as he wiped his forehead, "he would say that when guys would come around him and ask him why he spent so much time cutting grapefruits.

He would just grab one of the segments, slightly dip it in sugar, and hand it to them. Once they ate that grapefruit they were so blown away they'd just walk away and leave him to it." "Man this guy gets it! He knows how to surpass all the white bitterness of the grapefruit and get to the goods" I interjected, "Food is powerful." "For real, well this juice hella reminded me of him telling me that story." he closed as he put his earbud in place, continued his online class, and continued chopping.



# THOUGHTS FROM THE KITCHEN

As I stood there, head down intently slicing carrots into thin rounds. All I could think about was just how powerful food is. The taste of the grapefruit triggered a nostalgic memory in my brother that took him to the moment his friend told him this story. Here was this man, locked up with food as his only escape. He was able to focus his intentions into cutting what is revered as the bitter grapefruit and transport himself to another place.

I could imagine him, at his prep counter. Open case of grapefruit on the ground. Mounds of peels on the table next to a pan with beautifully segmented grapefruit. I could imagine him losing himself for hours on end.

In a trance like concentration with a grapefruit in one hand, pairing knife in the other, intently and gently removing the rind. His body grounded in the kitchen inside of prison but his mind free in a meditative state induced by citrus. I could imagine his cellmates wondering why he took so long just cutting grapefruit, glaring at him wanting to check him for taking so long doing one task. I could imagine the tension of them running up being broken by this carefully cut misunderstood fruit sweetened not just with sugar but with time, love and attention. I could see them understanding finally.



**FOOD IS MEDICINE AND  
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# THOUGHTS FROM THE KITCHEN

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This man was able to translate his experience of eating a simple beautifully prepared fruit into his time in the kitchen. He was able to turn, at least for those few hours, what is bitter into something sweet.

Even more touching, he was able to take his time to make sure each fruit was just as good as the other, for somebody else to enjoy. I stood up and took another sip of the grapefruit soda to try and connect with this story more.

Food is medicine and has the power to heal. It heals in many ways but the best way it heals is through the soul. It is easy to miss if you don't pay attention. If you don't slow down to really taste the flavors. To enjoy the moments. To really love.

Maybe next time I eat or drink grapefruit I'll be transported to the time when my brother would help me in the kitchen and he told me a story of his friend who'd done time. I hope the nostalgia feels warm then.





# THE SEVENTH WAVE LEGACY: TIMO AND ELIZA ESPINOZA'S STORY

Written Collaboratively by Javier Armas, Eliza Espinoza & Timo Espinoza



Timo and Eliza Espinoza formed a special partnership, not just their own relationship but for the formation of a groundbreaking legacy grassroots equity cannabis company called Seventh Wave, and the process was real. "I named the company Seventh Wave, when I went to the ocean, spoke to the ocean and I asked for her powers to help me get licensed. If I succeed in cannabis, I made a pact that I would give back to her."

Timo and Eliza's story behind Seventh Wave stretches back to the 60s. Timo's father was a legacy cannabis operator, deeply connected to the San Francisco Mission District as a barber. He would tell stories about white guys going to Mexico via a boat and bringing back hundreds of pounds. Timo remembers seeing pounds of weed as a kid, it wasn't a big deal until he gave some to his cousin, who then was expelled from school for possession.



Timo grew up around 24th and Hampshire, known for cannabis, with the sidewalks littered with those colorful dime bags in the 80s-90s. Naturally as a kid, Timo picked up selling skills from such an environment. Timo would go to local mexican bars, Dolores park, and connected early to the cannabis market.

Timo further reflects, "I had a different way of life. I have been preparing for this my whole life. I lived in the hood and my dad was able to get me into private school, so I learned to work two different worlds, two different sides with two different languages, the hood and college prep. That has allowed me to deal with San Francisco and Humboldt County."

In the first two weeks of attaining the property, someone had called the police on Timo. The racism was evident. But so is the resilience of legacy operators. Timo and Eliza continued to develop **Seventh Wave** in Arcata. Timo's father passed away in 2015, who left behind a long history of cannabis operations in Humboldt County. Due to a special relationship Timo's father had with some of these veterans, a quality building was offered to Timo and Eliza's launching of their cannabis business.

# THE SEVENTH WAVE LEGACY: TIMO AND ELIZA ESPINOZA'S STORY

“WHEN I WENT TO THE OCEAN...I ASKED FOR HER POWERS TO HELP ME GET LICENSED. IF I SUCCEED IN CANNABIS, I MADE A PACT THAT I WOULD GIVE BACK TO HER.”

Seventh Wave is the very first equity license in Humboldt County. This will be noted in cannabis history. Timo is also a verified equity applicant in San Francisco, helping form 560 Valencia Cannabis Marketplace, a dispensary shaped to serve the community of the Mission District in San Francisco. In a world where underground growers hid from police and DEA invasions, the prohibition of cannabis criminalized generations still has a living pain. Humboldt is mainly known for having the best quality cannabis in the world, while it's story of criminalization has yet to really be told. For these reasons, Seventh Wave is creating a powerful road for many in Humboldt to come out of the shadows and take on the legalized market. Seventh Wave becomes a living model for those to enter the legal market.

**Seventh Wave** is also deeply spiritual. No decisions are made without consulting their spiritual guides. A Santero/a is a person who has been initiated in the religion, Timo himself is a practicing Santero in the Lukumi tradition of 15 years, and is passionate about spiritually vetting every business decision. Eliza states, “Yemaya, is the mother of all, she is who owns my crown and for **Seventh Wave**, we made sure she gave us her blessing. This is how I knew this was the path that we had to walk.”





# THE SEVENTH WAVE LEGACY: TIMO AND ELIZA ESPINOZA'S STORY

One key issue that arises is Seventh Wave's partner, Eliza Espinoza does not often get the credit for her business leadership as the Chief Operating Officer and Co-Owner. "The majority of the communication is through me. I set up appointments, I do introductions to dispensaries.

When I walk into a room, I am not as accepted as Timo and I believe it's because I am a woman and Latina. They don't understand we are in a partnership and we make decisions collectively." Eliza has a Masters Degree from the University of San Francisco in Public Administration and is applying to a PsyD. Counseling Psychology program this fall to further study how the Endocannabinoid Systems (ECS) can help those with serious trauma, like her parents who were war refugees that fled the 1980-1992 Civil War in El Salvador.

Aligned with the BALCA mission, Eliza is passionate about offering cannabis education to the community. Eliza demonstrates when key Latina leadership in the Cannabis industry gets ignored, it's only at the industry's own detriment.





# THE SEVENTH WAVE LEGACY: TIMO AND ELIZA ESPINOZA'S STORY



Timo and Eliza were talking off the cuff ideas. Timo reflecting on the old competitions of weed sellers in the neighborhood, he had to be crafty. “Remembering how everyone would have the same size 20 sac, he was going to market a bigger bag at the same price. So instead of a small bag, I want to give half a gram more. With the same high quality or better, then we have a jump on someone,” Timo explained.

Using his legacy knowledge, Timo and Eliza launched **4Geez**, making serious headway in dispensaries across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Eliza concludes, “Legacy is what we are trying to build. It's one thing to build for yourself and it's another to build for others to come. For us, we want to focus on giving back which is part in why we helped form Latinos in Cannabis on Clubhouse. We vow to always have a mindset of helping out, especially because we didn't get those opportunities when we first started.”

It's a breath of fresh air to talk to Eliza and Timo, business leaders who value earth, equity, legacy operations, empowering the community all while building a business from scratch. Eliza and Timo are Cannabis Latino leaders, helping shift the industry towards the value cannabis is grounded in; medicine, community and holistic connection.

Tell your Local Budtender about 4Geez Contact Seventh Wave; Timo and Eliza at: **[Seventhwavellc@gmail.com](mailto:Seventhwavellc@gmail.com) [@7th\\_wave](https://www.instagram.com/7th_wave)**



## JOSE VALLE. CHICANISMO IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Written Collaboratively by  
Daniel Montero & Jose Valle  
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**"I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE TO BE MEXICAN, I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE TO BE MEXICAN IN THIS COUNTRY, I DIDN'T CHOOSE AMERICAN OCCUPANCY OF THE SOUTHWEST, I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO BE POOR OR TO GROW UP IN THE BARRIO".**

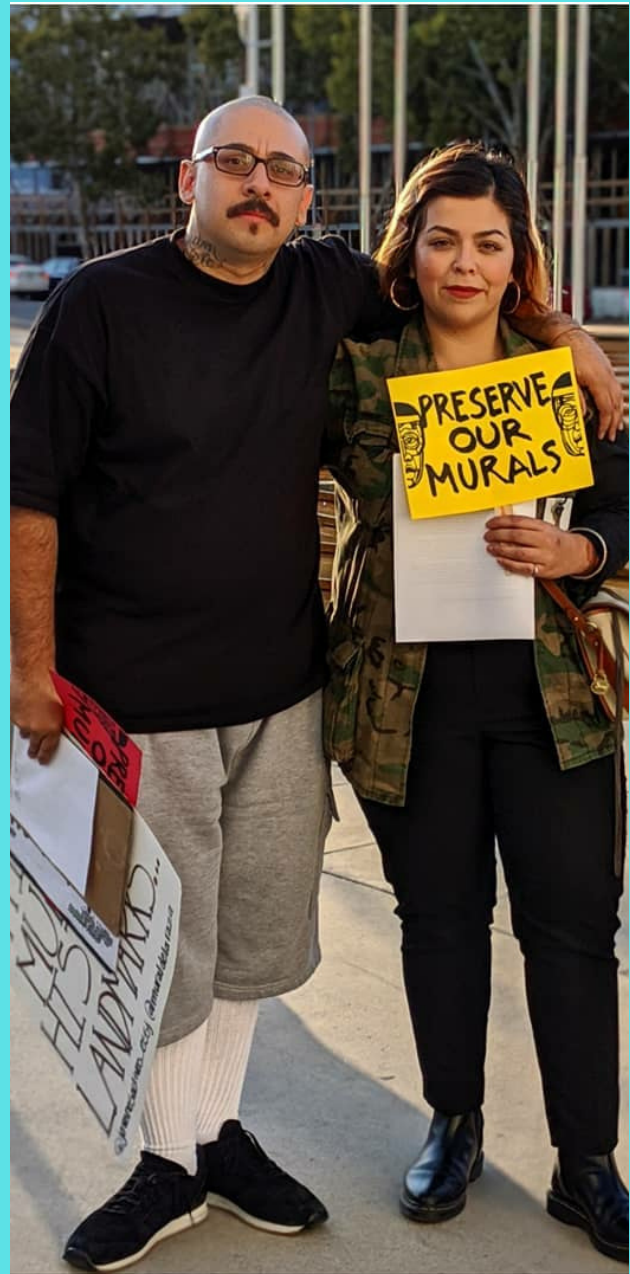
Jose Valle is a well spoken community leader born and raised in the Eastside of San Jose. I recently connected with Jose because I wanted to know his definition of Chicanismo and what it means to be Chicano. I think deep down inside I wanted to know if I too am Chicano even though my roots are in South America.

I first met Jose Valle in the Summer of '19, he took the lead in organizing a protest against the removal of Mural De La Raza in Eastside San Jose. I participated in the protest along with Jairo SJCEWG, it was an experience I'll never forget. Of course I had plenty Chicano homies in SJ, but Jose was the first Chicano activist that I had the fortune of crossing paths with. What I remember most about that sunny day is the interview Jose gave to the local news reporter. He spoke directly at the camera, his conviction unwavering, his purpose clear. He spoke of cultura and how San Jose's Mexican American roots were being dishonestly erased and removed from our communities. His conviction made an immediate impression and for me a lasting one.

Growing up in 80's and 90's in San Jose was a unique experience. As a kid coming back home from school I clearly remember the lowriders on Tully and King and the Chicanos who drove them. I remember the bright paint and how their occupants exuded a sense of pride and accomplishment. I was too young then to understand much about Chicano culture and as I grew into an older boy, many of my perspectives were shaped by Hollywood's negative stereotypes that focused on criminality and violence. Mainstream culture willfully manipulated America's views of one of the most misunderstood cultures in the US.

Jose defines Chicanismo as the culture, people and experience of being Mexican in this country. Particularly the Southwest, the land that was Mexico: California, Texas, Colorado, Nevada and Arizona. Jose added, "I didn't have a choice to be Mexican, I didn't have a choice to be Mexican in this country, I didn't choose American occupancy of the Southwest, I didn't choose to be poor or to grow up in the barrio". Jose explains that being Chicano is not a nationality, therefore being Chicano has been fluid throughout every generation. It's not how creased your Dickies are or how down you are for la causa. It's not about being an activist or being "woke", it's an experience that cannot be given or taken away. He described a scene from the 1981 film Zoot Suit where an Anglo character claims his identity while being falsely imprisoned for being a Zoot Suiter, "Now I'm in here because I hung around with Mexicans, but I grew up with vatos! And I'm Pachuco too see, Simon esa, you better learn what it means to be Chicano" he exclaimed. Jose adds, "Well if a white boy can do it, I don't see why a Latino from a different nationality can't, so long as they hold their own". The film also reminds us how Chicano culture is too often confused with gang culture, how urban Chicano males and females are stereotyped as dangerous outcasts.

Jose explains that Chicanos should not accept societal stigmas and to say no to identity politics. That as Raza we need to accept our diversity and what this really means is that we'll end up having a real good selection of food at the table. Whether it's Chicano, Mexican, Mexico, Indigenous, Puerto Rican, Nicaraguense, Latino, Hispanic, or Latinx, we don't have to fall under one banner, we are not monolithic, and that's ok. Jose's vision for the Chicano community is economic power and financial independence. Jose added, "We need to own our own homes, property, and own our own businesses, that's where the real power is." Jose wants to build opportunities for system impacted Latinos, many of who paved the way for the legal cannabis industry during a time when getting caught meant spending time within the prison industrial complex.



**JOSE VALLE. CHICANISMO IN THE 21ST CENTURY.**



## JOSE VALLE. CHICANISMO IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

This is the significance of creating pathways for legitimate business. It allows our Chicano and Latinx communities opportunity to invest and organize change in San Jose. To create murals honoring Mexican American history and contributions. To integrate Chicano studies into U.S. and World History in public education. To fund museums, art galleries, live music venues and small businesses that are not downtown-centric. To fund literature and documentaries about the Chicano experience that's not academic-centric. To create paths for formerly incarcerated to grow, manufacture, supply and sell cannabis legitimately and thrive.

One of Jose's wildest marijuana memories growing up was during middle school and running across highway 101 to score brick weed from Mexican nationals in the local homeless encampment. He also recalls cutting the first day of school in the 6th grade at Fischer Middle School to smoke weed with his homies and the sounds of the newly released Dr. Dre album, The Chronic. He shared with me that during high school when Bomb came out, everyone he knew back then was hustling weed and smoking it. An activity that was once illegal is now a burgeoning legal enterprise. Unfortunately many youth of color had paved the way for entrepreneurs today in the legal cannabis industry with the price of losing their freedom. BALCA is committed to ensuring that our entire Latino community has access to this nascent and promising industry. Chicanos are some of the original cannabis businessmen and women and with the proper organization, education and support we can make a living with the plant and be praised for our entrepreneurialism instead of being handcuffed and thrown in prison. The future is now!

Si Se Puede. Together We Can.



# CED. CANNABIS ENTREPRENEURIAL DIALOGUES

Written By: Daniel Polanco [@ced\\_connects](https://www.instagram.com/ced_connects)



Cannabis Entrepreneurial Dialogues, CED, launched in 2015 and it was the brainchild of world renown cannabis chef, Andrea Drummer. She has been in the cannabis industry for quite some time and although her main passion is for cooking and curating “cannabis experiences,” she also noticed that we needed to create a space to discuss cannabis. Where we were, what our vision was for the future and where, as people of color, we needed to go.

With the opening of the First cannabis cafe in Los Angeles and COVID, keeping CED Talks alive felt necessary but a bit daunting. We’ve decided to take a different approach. We’re launching a podcast in March 2021. One in which we will discuss where we are with cannabis today while continuing to elevate people of color and all of the work they’re doing for their families.

The goal is to bring relevant stories to the table. The consumer, the business owner, the social equity applicants, the challenges, the stigma and the successes we’ve had throughout the industry. The two current hosts for the PodCast have worked along Chef Andrea for the last 4 years. Daniel Polanco is a first generation Salvadoran and a father; he started his journey through the cannabis industry as a delivery driver for a Dispensary in Venice, Ca. From there, he joined a major cannabis company that helped him navigate the legal market and become a part of the Operation and Distribution Management team. Julia Morales is also a first generation Salvadoran Woman, mother, and started working in the Cannabis industry by organizing and facilitating private dinners and events. She has been a cannabis advocate and has worked closely with the elders in her community to educate about the benefits and medicinal properties of the plant. She is also Cannabis Compliance and Packaging Supervisor for a Cannabis brand in Los Angeles.

Because CED has been dormant, we felt it would be a great opportunity to highlight Women in Cannabis throughout the month of March in our community. Our podcast can be found on Spotify and iTunes to start. We’re excited to have you as our listener and you can follow us on Instagram at [@CED\\_Connects](https://www.instagram.com/CED_Connects) for more notifications. You can also reach out to us at [dannypced@gmail.com](mailto:dannypced@gmail.com) if you would like to be a guest on our show!

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: IZZABELLA VELEZ

Written By: Daniel Montero [@gwsmokebreaktv](#)



A self-described 'City Kid', Izzabella Velez is far removed from the stereotypes that the palabra 'kid' brings to mind. In reality, Izzabella is a self-driven entrepreneur born in the Mission and raised all her life in San Francisco. She credits SF's very own United Playaz for providing her with the mentorship and guidance that helped her overcome some of the tough times she experienced growing up. It is clear that she now too has those same values of mentorship and community instilled within her as she seeks to stake her claim in the burgeoning California cannabis industry.

"Make money but for what?" was one of the statements that stood out to me the most during my interview with Izzabella. Here on the West Coast, particularly the Bay Area, we are programmed to hustle, to find a way no matter what, to work hard 24/7 if we have to.

**IZZABELLA IS FOCUSED ON HOW HER FUTURE SUCCESS CAN SERVE TO TRANSFORM THE NEIGHBORHOODS SHE CALLS HOME.**

More often than not the mainstream examples given to us on how to spend our money are designed to be unfulfilling vs building our character. As an example, the phrase that comes to mind is "you should not be proud of what you have instead be proud of who you are." It was quite refreshing for me to understand that Izzabella is focused on how her future success can serve to transform the neighborhoods she calls home and the community she loves so much.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: IZZABELLA VELEZ

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Izzabella has been around ganja most of her life and now finds herself in the driver's seat after enjoying a stamp of approval from San Francisco's cannabis equity program. Her experience in the beauty industry has given her an upper hand when it comes to talking business, she is assertive, consistent and non-wavering in her approach. Her managerial experience with Stiizy has given her the insight and understanding of what it takes to operate a retail enterprise in California. And best of all, she brings an authentic, multicultural big city flavor to the game.

I'm thoroughly impressed by Izzabella's well thought out strategy for succeeding in the most challenging industry in the Golden State. And even though she has a jam packed schedule working, helping her family and building her vision, she has made time to help distribute physical copies of The Voice to dispensaries in San Francisco. Not only that, she took the initiative to help design the flier for the March Latinos In Cannabis Digital Mixer and also made time to help design Issue 3 of The Voice.

April's Member Spotlight goes to Izzabella because she is a clear example of the drive and spirit we must have if we truly wish to make a place for ourselves in the cannabis industry. California is rich in culture and good energy because of the beautiful people who call the Golden State home. And when determined entrepreneurs like Izzabella have their minds set on community building and making a positive impact, I know that the future is bright here on the West Coast. Bright as the Sun.



# IFLYWELLNESS: FORMING SAN JOSE'S MEDICAL CANNABIS COMMUNITY, ONE DELIVERY AT A TIME

Written David Rodrigues

[@iflywellness](https://www.instagram.com/iflywellness)

Coming in 2021 San Jose will have its own exclusive delivery service, created by the everyday cannabis user and San Jose native, David Rodrigues. David, principal founder of iFlyWellness will be delivering to exclusively San Jose. Many local San Jose residents struggle to afford their medicine due to rent and bills being so high in the south bay, iFlyWellness will strive to provide affordable high quality cannabis with a safe, timely and discreet manner.

San Jose has not always been as lenient on Cannabis as it is now. Growing up in San Jose people were getting arrested left and right for cannabis. In the 90's and early 2000's getting caught with 1 gram of flower by the police meant they were going to arrest you and treat you like you had committed a major crime. I have been through it personally, treated like a criminal and arrested in 2006 for under 3 grams of flower. The criminalization of the plant penetrated San Jose, we felt it growing up. Now, San Jose has evolved into accepting cannabis, an incredible thing to see. San Jose is incredibly diverse, with over 1 million people living here; with a high percentage of 21 years old or older residents who use cannabis. Being there is limited licenses given out in San Jose the options or choices of delivery services are limited as well.



# IFLYWELLNESS: FORMING SAN JOSE'S MEDICAL CANNABIS COMMUNITY, ONE DELIVERY AT A TIME



iFlyWellness Delivery Service is San Jose's first delivery service with the San Jose people and local community in mind. Offering multiple options to choose from at all different price ranges, all being high quality, and often straight from the farm. Affordable medical or recreational cannabis for the everyday cannabis user in San Jose is the goal for iFly Wellness. Helping working class communities get access to medicine that is needed and not often affordable. Many San Jose patients have medical needs without a medical card so access to affordable and clean flower is medically important for San Jose. This definitely applies to San Jose large Latino and Asian communities.

iFly Wellness' mission is to provide the highest quality medical flower at the lowest price, all accessible on the recreational market, giving San Jose access. With no corporate investors, all done from hard work of eight years of San Jose cannabis retail experience, iFly Wellness has been in touch with the San Jose's super diverse medical cannabis community, knowledgeable of the nuanced medical cannabis needs. Due to networking with BALCA leaders, iFlywellness has been connecting with regenerative Humboldt cannabis farms, opening up the ability to source straight from craft agriculture. iFlywellness is one step towards completing its mission, building a medical community San Jose has been waiting for.





# LATINO LIBERATION. BIG MEDICINE FROM OGLALA LAKOTA COUNTRY.

Written by Daniel Montero  
@gwsmokebreaktv

“Aho!” is a common greeting among the Lakota People at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. I’ve been learning about Lakota culture since November of last year when I was put in contact with Victorio and Mazhonaposhe Camp. The brothers are born and raised on Pine Ridge and are sons of Carter Camp, well known for the historical contributions he made for Indigenous People with his involvement in the American Indian Movement. Vic and Mazhon have also dedicated their lives to protecting Lakota land, water and People. The Camp Family is a traditional family, descending from Chief Red Cloud and holds their tradition, language and culture dear to their heart.

Movies like Thunderheart with Val Kilmer and books like Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee give us insight to what preceded the destitute conditions of life on the Rez today. The Pine Ridge Tribal Council legalized marijuana last October and I now find myself fully committed to contributing towards the Camp Brothers vision for a vertically integrated, self-sustainable Indigenous owned cannabis enterprise and independent cannabis economy at Pine Ridge.



I’m currently gathering industry support to provide equipment, material and resources to ensure a successful harvest as well as expertise for the optimal implementation of the Camp Brothers vision.

What has become a personal revelation for me during these past five months is that I find myself re-connecting with the Indigenous blood that flows through my veins. I’m a first generation American. My Dad is from the Altiplano of Bolivia and my Mom is Chilena. After swabbing my DNA and getting the results back I discovered that I’m 65% Indigenous to the Andean region of South America. I’m 65% Inca/Aymara. I’ve always been proud of my South American heritage but growing up in a private school in San Jose had its consequences.

**"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PROUD OF MY SOUTH AMERICAN HERITAGE BUT GROWING UP IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL IN SAN JOSE HAD ITS CONSEQUENCES."**

# LATINO LIBERATION. BIG MEDICINE FROM OGLALA LAKOTA COUNTRY.

The best consequence was learning the brutal truth of the Conquistadores and particularly American History. I was barely a teenager then but the result was a fire lit inside me so strong that it guided me to rebel against the system at the age of 18 by jumping into the game of slanging and growing herb full time. I'm extremely fortunate to have survived that chapter of my life.

What does it mean to come full circle? What does it mean to truly liberate ourselves, to taste untethered freedom that's sold to us in 30 second commercials by the world's largest corporations? I've discovered that as a Latino and Mestizo, that true liberation means connecting with my Indigenous past. And guess what? Most if not all Latinx also Indigenous descent!

To intimately know where you come from is one of the greatest gifts to receive in this lifetime. If we're talking real empowerment then to me it means coming to terms with our violent history as Latinos. A history that was forced upon us and in many ways still is. To know that we have the power to right all the wrongs made to us by continuing to self discover and share the gift of self awareness.

This is the gift I've received from Victorio and Mazhonaposhe Camp and I have yet to touch down in Oglala Lakota Country. Creator willing, GW Smoke Break will visit Pine Ridge this year to document the Camp Brothers journey into the world of legal cannabis and honor Lakota culture and tradition.

In the meantime, let us remember that it is better to give than to take. That in the spirit of giving comes healing and change that no one can take away. I'll conclude with a quote by Bob Marley that's dear to my heart:

"Live for yourself and you will live in vain. Live for others and you will live again."





## MY LIFE

Written by Izzabella Velez

[@izz\\_a\\_bel\\_la](#)

**EVERYTHING I'VE HAD  
SINCE 12 YEARS OLD I'VE  
WORKED HARD FOR AND  
HAVE TAKEN CARE OF MY  
FAMILY EVER SINCE.**

My name is Izzabella Velez and I'm a verified equity applicant in San Francisco. I'm born, raised and still living in San Francisco, I've lived in many neighborhoods in the city but I'm mostly from the SOMA and Excelsior District. I am Filipina, Italian and Latina. I'm the youngest out of five and I'm the only one out of my siblings that is mixed as they are all full Filipino. I've always felt like an outcast and have always moved at my own speed and stayed in my own lane.

Being verified is a blessing that came at a perfect time. I first applied in December 2019. I got blessed with my verification in Feb 2021.

During the middle of this, the world felt the impact of Covid-19. I found myself not making a fair wage, I lost my job and went back to what I knew best. And that is hustlin...

My story behind getting verified starts before all of this. It starts with me being 11 years old and getting introduced to the dope game. My older sister was a major dope dealer and had me bagging all her weight. As time went by, I got a little older and more familiar with the dope game. She took me out to the block and told me "keep your head up and your eyes and ears open"... I spent my time being a lookout for my sister then graduated to dealing myself.

My sister got locked up and because she was the breadwinner in my family, we began to go broke. My Mom did not have the best relationships and unfortunately at this time her "man" took everything from us and left us destitute. I had nothing but the clothes on my back. Since then my story takes many twists and turns.... But everything I've had since 12 years old I've worked hard for and have taken care of my family ever since.



# MY LIFE



I was a little girl on a block with nobody to protect me, just a mouth and underwear stashed with crack rocks. It was very hard for me to stay in school, I was in 7th grade and I practically dropped out. I was sleeping on church floors and homeless shelters at night and spent all day on the block. When the block was hot, I would go to the library and attempt to educate myself. When I felt like being a kid, I would go visit my friends at other schools and just kick it. I made up lies that I was on the run and in a group home so my peers wouldn't know the truth.

Eventually my Mom and I struck what felt like gold and we got a spot right on Mission. At this time, I was to start High school and I thought my life would finally be normal. What I wasn't aware of, was that I had to heal. I was so far out of touch from the regular kids at school. At this point I've already felt so much pain, saw so much on the streets, I was young and corrupted. Then one of my closest homies passed away and my sister's boyfriend got murdered. This was another breaking point in my life. I didn't know how to process the hurt I felt, I was out of touch at school and not one counselor reached out. I was just a lost cause to my high school. I didn't know, but I was in desperate need of someone just asking if I was Ok.

I was 14 years old when I first used cannabis. I already sold drugs and had guns by this age. I didn't kiss boys until I was 15, so I still joke around about how cannabis is my first true love. The stigma behind cannabis being a gateway drug isn't true to me. I was exposed to so much more before using it myself. Cannabis did help me alot at this time, but I did not learn other coping mechanisms. Which eventually led to destructive behavior.

I was lucky enough for United Playaz to find me. What happened to me as a court mandated thing, ended up being something that changed my life forever. United Playaz helped me understand that my voice was important, that I went through real things, that I can have a bright future despite all this. I was my happiest when I was there, I learned a lot about life and the power I had within myself.

Unfortunately I ended up getting into an abusive relationship and had to re-learn all of these things on my own. I'm still understanding what love is as it comes in many forms. Time and time again I have to remind myself of these same lessons that were taught to me at United Playaz. I went off and got help from a job placement program called New Door Ventures. They helped me get a job that still opens doors for me today.

# MY LIFE

I eventually won a scholarship to go to the best beauty school in the City. My hairstyling career took off and I won two national competitions and got to do hair at New York Fashion Week for a handful of seasons. My best friend put me on and got me a chair when she opened a salon right on Market by Kearny. Concrete Rose Salon (check out the history behind Filipino Immigrants & Kearny St. / International Hotel and tell me she didn't put on for my people!) S/O to Jessica Buera! I have worked in restaurants, bars, clubs, hotels, dispensaries and salons. I've assisted some of the best stylists in the City. I even worked at a strip club for 5 years as a bottle server and had record breaking sales.

As time passed, I found myself managing a dispensary that had no respect for me. I worked hard and still didn't get paid enough to live a normal life. On top of that I got sexually harassed at work and didn't even get the job title for the position I was actually doing everyday. I knew that there was so much more to my life than that. I know there is more to my life than \$23 an hour, fighting over workplace politics and being unhappy. Despite all that I've tried to build myself to be, every job I've had I've been either sexually harassed, talked down to for growing up the way I did, or just blatant racism. The only place I didn't experience it was when myself and like-minded peers created opportunities for ourselves.

So here we are again. 15 years later from where I was at 12 and history is repeating itself. I'm out here hustlin in every way I can except now I'm a verified equity applicant and what I'm hustlin isn't illegal. My mind is on a location, a building, a dream, a business. It's here in SOMA where I stood ten toes down. It's a product I'm creating and launching. During the time I waited for my verification I got a scholarship and went to Oaksterdam. I'm a member of Success Centers, I got gamed up and made connections with retailers, manufacturers, lawyers, consultants, CEO's, and cultivators like Spring Creek Farm. I still went through tragedy, I can't write the story about my equity verification without mentioning the unfortunate recent deaths that opened my eyes to the fight that consumed my life.

Virgil Tilley Jr, this is for you. You held me up when I was down. Virgil was a young gay black man that lost the fight against the War on Drugs. He told me he didn't want to be another statistic, that he felt the hate that the world had for him for the things he couldn't control being. But Virgil wasn't just gay or black and was not someone who just used drugs either. Virgil was a son, a big brother, a model student, an artist with so many different platforms. Virgil taught me about Spirituality, he talked me up and saw light in me when I couldn't see it in myself, he got me a job when I needed it the most. He was there for me at my lowest, and I know he's with me in spirit as I climb up to my highest! 10/13/89-01/05/21.

Shortly after, we lost John Thomas, he was a member of United Playaz, he was the father to my niece and the stepfather to my other niece. He loved and took care of them as if they were both his own. We had our ups and downs; his life taught me about forgiveness. My family took a tragic loss, my sister is feeling pain that I can never fathom. It's no mistake that I got verified a couple of days after he passed. He knows and truly I know, that I will use this blessing to create generational wealth in my family and his kids will be taken care of. 06/05/87- 01/27/21

With everything in me, I'll keep pushing for our communities that have been marginalized, for our people who don't think they have a voice, and for the future of my family! God willing you will see me on shelves soon!!

# LATINO/AS IN CANNABIS: CLUBHOUSE MODERATORS



Written by Jessie Alvarez [@jdab415](#), Timo & Eliza Espinoza [@7th\\_wave](#), Bianca Gutierrez [@biancastarr](#), Samir [@sambat415](#), & Daniel Polanco [@ced\\_connects](#)



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**JESSIE ALVAREZ**  
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**DANNY POLANCO**  
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Host of CED Potcast



**TIMO ESPINOZA**  
CEO & Founder of  
Seventh Wave



**SAMIR BATARNI**  
Scientific Consultant  
at Joyus Recreation &  
Wellness Group

Join us every Saturday from 11:00am- 1:00pm



# LATINO/AS IN CANNABIS: CLUBHOUSE MODERATORS



Latino/as in Cannabis is a group that was created through the Clubhouse app, by Jessie Alvarez and Timo Espinoza. Our club is an open forum we created to discuss all things cannabis, with a Latino twist. The members of this group organically formed, took on leadership roles, and created weekly discussion topics. We share personal experiences within the cannabis industry and invite our community to participate. The room is held every Saturday morning from 11am - 1pm PST. All are welcome!

Jessie is a 1st generation Salvadorian, born and raised in San Francisco. She has been in the cannabis industry since 2003 working in various roles. Currently, Jessie is the Chief Operations Officer and founder for both Joyus Recreation & Wellness Group, LLC and General Separations, LLC. In addition, Jessie is a verified equity applicant in San Francisco.

Samir is a 1st generation Mexican and Syrian, born and raised in San Francisco. Currently, he works at UCSF as a Research Scientist and Lab Manager. In addition, Samir is a Scientific Consultant for both Joyus Recreation & Wellness Group, LLC and General Separations, LLC.

Danny is a 1st generation Salvadorian that started his journey in the cannabis industry 6 years ago in fine dining and cuisine with Chef Andrea Drummer. Through his roles there, he became one of the 10 original members of Lowell Herb Co and was on the Operations and Distribution Management team. Now, he's the Co-Host to "CED Connects," a podcast committed to creating a platform for People of Color in the cannabis industry to help elevate, promote, and share stories behind the people working tirelessly for their families and this wonderful plant.

Bianca Gutierrez, founder and owner of BSA (Bianca Starr Agency), a cannabis focused creative agency that centers around brand development & lifestyle through events and content. Bianca is a 1st generation latina, born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and also a verified equity applicant. Through her background growing up in SF and working across the industries of: fashion, music, nightlife as well as various community based campaigns and initiatives, cannabis has always been a common thread bringing folks together whether that's socially, medicinally or via commerce. The current place the legal industry is in, is beyond what she ever imagined and she is excited to play an active role in moving the culture forward and to ensure her community does not get left behind in the process of cannabis growing into a multi-billion dollar industry. Through her long years in branding and events, she saw an immediate need to utilize her skill set, creativity and network to connect like minded people to support each other and grow together.

# LATINO/AS IN CANNABIS: CLUBHOUSE MODERATORS



Eliza is a 1st generation Latina born and raised in San Francisco. Eliza has a long history of community organizing, youth development in San Francisco, and within the last 2 years has become Chief Operations Officer and Co-Owner of Seventh Wave, LLC; a cannabis manufacturing, distribution, and delivery company in Arcata, CA. Eliza holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco and is seeking to receive her PsyD in Clinical Psychology. As a rising leader in the cannabis industry, Eliza has partnered with Timo Espinoza to help advocate and assure legacy operators continue to hold stakes within the cannabis industry.

Timo is a 2nd generation legacy operator in the cannabis industry and his family collectively holds over 60 years of legacy experience. Timo himself has over 30 years of experience sourcing flower within California and provided medicine to elders in his community. Born and raised in the San Francisco Mission District, Timo has experienced—first hand—casualties resulting from the war on drugs. As a result, he decided to partner with Eliza Espinoza not only to demand reparations for the war on drugs, but to ensure that those affected receive benefits in this industry.

When Clubhouse began, it exposed a very real issue that we all noticed was in the cannabis industry; the lack of Latino/a representation. This group organized in a very organic way. We all were in a room on Clubhouse and saw the need for Latinos in the cannabis industry to connect. We came together and felt it necessary to support one another. The goal was to create a safe space for Latino/as and BIPOC to come together to listen, share stories, and help one another build within this industry. We believe if our communities can see individuals that look like them, thrive and give back to the community, it will create a positive domino effect of change in the industry and allow the medicinal properties of cannabis to shine. The core members have been able to connect personally, lend a helping hand and most importantly, create a family amongst each other. Through this initiative, we want others to find their tribe that will help them accomplish their goals along the way.

Folks can support Latino/as in Cannabis by simply joining our room Saturday mornings and contributing to our conversations. We make it very clear that we are inclusive of everyone from all walks of life, you do not have to be Latino/a to join in. Lastly, when going to dispensaries, ask for Latino/a-owned brands, it is one of the easiest ways to show dispensaries that we are in demand.