

# DRUG WORKERS

FORM COALITION TO REDRESS GRIEVANCES, END DISCRIMINATION, + FOSTER EMPOWERMENT

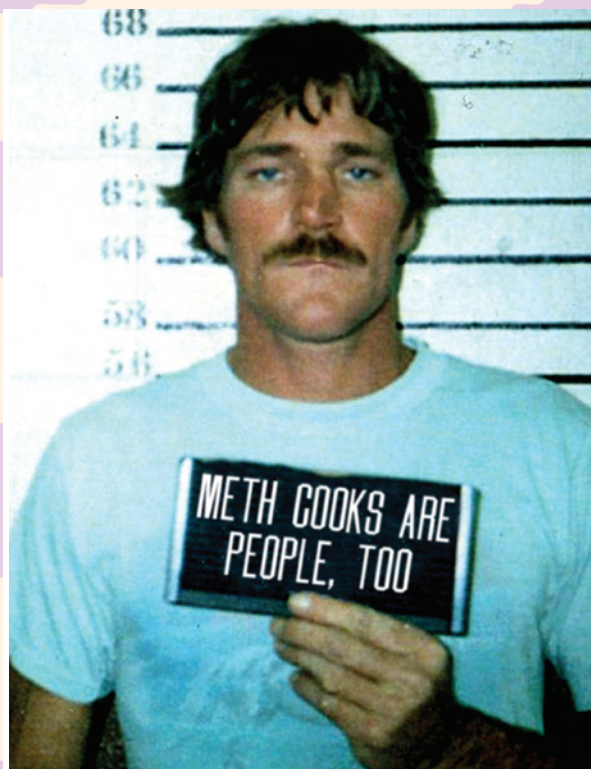
**Hello, my name is Carmine Loveshock, and I'm excited to be able to tell you all about my organization, the Drug Workers Outreach Project.**

As a Drug Workers' Rights Worker and part-time Drug Workers' Social Worker, I have a lot of experience working with drug workers.

Quite simply put, a "drug worker" is a worker who earns money through providing drug-related services. As you all know, especially if drug use is a part of your lifestyle, we live in a culture which is drug-negative in many ways. At the Drug Workers Outreach Project, we seek the immediate decriminalization of all drug work, the retroactive release of all drug prisoners, as well as respect, equality, and freedom for all drug workers everywhere. We seek to eliminate discrimination against those who labor in the drug industry. We struggle to improve and foment drug-positive attitudes amongst the drug-hating and drug-negative elements of our society. We want fair wages, sound working conditions that are safe and clean, and free health care.

Unfortunately, there persist cultural factors and societal attitudes that prevent drug workers from seeking help after they've been assaulted, falsely imprisoned, robbed, or otherwise verbally abused. We will push for our constitutional right to use our bodies in whatever way we see fit.

Drug workers, both male and female, are subject to a great deal of stigma, emotional abuse, and violence. Our society makes it nearly impossible to find another career after being a drug worker, and our society needs to



**"I realize that some people consider me a caricature," says Carvin Flanders, a methamphetamine chef and part-time auto-parts auctioneer from Ocala, Florida, "but society don't exactly make it easy on drug workers. We have feelings, we have hopes, we have dreams, and we just want to force society, by any means necessary, to acknowledge our humanity."**



be held accountable for that. At the Drug Workers Outreach Project, we pledge to fight the corruption and injustice that occurs in the drug industry as a result of criminalization.

Through workshoping and community-building, we seek sufficient empowerment to enable us to remove the cloak of superstition and repression in our drug-negative society. I'm not sure which is most important—the human outreach, the community education, or the grassroots organizing. But they're all important. Not to mention the ceaseless workshoping. You have to workshop these issues with a group of concerned individuals. We can't have some people doing nothing but outreach work all day long while others are stuck doing nothing but workshoping. We all need to work *together* in this.

We seek to foster drug-positive attitudes and expose the hazards which face drug dealers. We need to end the senseless, systematic killing and devaluation of drug workers. We are dispelling the myth that drug workers are anything short of innovative artists and street geniuses.

We provide outreach. We're reaching out. We reach out to the struggling drug worker in the hopes that he, too, is reaching out to us, and that our fingers will meet at some magical point in the middle. We seek to create an informed dialogue and a fact-based public discussion and proactive human-rights and public-welfare agenda regarding this maligned and misunderstood segment of our population. Through mass email campaigns, flyer distribution in urban shopping malls, and direct action both on the street and with our public officials, we seek to establish an ongoing dialogue of respect and understanding between drug workers and other segments of society.

We host monthly meetings designed to engender understanding and a sense of community among drug workers. Each monthly meeting also features a performance of some kind. Last month we featured a play by Bert Nettles, the famous drug workers' historian. His one-man tour-de-force, *Keep on Pushin'*, *Pusher Man*, smashes traditional stereotypes about

drug workers while offering scathing commentary about class, race, gender, and addiction in American society. It is by turns hilarious and explosive, passionate and mournful. Next month's meeting will feature a Drug Workers Art Show spotlighting male burlesque performers in a cabaret-style program whose encore inevitably features chocolate syrup.

And we continue to speak out about our jobs, to speak out about our lives. We seek to lend a human face to the oft-gritty, oft-misunderstood world of drug work. We workshop against violence against drug workers and conduct discussions concerning the legalization and/or decriminalization of drug work.

We are constantly contesting the meaning of the term "drug worker" in the public sphere. We offer legal service, training, documentation, and policy advocacy for drug workers. We seek to protect the rights, dignity, lifestyle, and safety of drug workers who by choice or coercion find themselves toiling in the drug industry.

We provide candid and in-depth press releases for the media's perusal concerning the health, safety, rights, and dignity of drug workers worldwide. We provide training, advocacy, documentation, and group therapy regardless of race or creed—unless they're Muslims, and then they have to fill out a special questionnaire. We provide additional resources aimed to inform, edify, and invigorate drug workers and their loved ones. We provide even further resources based on a sliding-scale, first-come/first-served, cash-and-carry basis.

The issues facing drug workers are, in a microcosmic way, a reflection of the issues facing all Americans in our unpredictable, topsy-turvy world. Drug workers face increased vilification, stigmatization, and legal harassment from the very society whose needs they service by selling them drugs. This is the great irony, the great hypocrisy, the grand conundrum of all grand conundra.

We need to redefine drug work for the new millennium. We need to reevaluate structural issues such as class, gender, and addiction. Drug workers need to, first and foremost, initiate change themselves from within, and then—and only then—will they be able to change others on a global and local level. We demand the right to work on the same basis as other independent contractors and self-employed contract laborers.

Our jobs require precise skills and standards, and we need to educate drug workers about these. We seek to provide legal support for drug workers who wish to sue those who've exploited their labor or, as they say on the street, "ripped them off."

We need to educate the public about how our so-called "law-makers" waste our hard-earned tax dollars by systematically harassing and incarcerating full-grown consenting adults who choose to engage in cash transactions for drugs. They drain public resources by setting up stings and entrapments, trampling the individual liberties of peaceful citizens who merely wish to enjoy themselves. We need to get Uncle Sam off our street corners. We'll fight, on a case-by-case and street-by-street level, for the right of ordinary citizens to purchase whatever drugs suit their fancy.

We also network with other drug-positive organizations such as Project PUSH (People who Understand Sellin's Hard) and the Bay Area-based Consortium of Drug-Positive Workers, a



**Urban youth who dress in flavorful "hip-hop" costumes such as this may or may not be drug workers, but in a society free of prejudice, we wouldn't have to wonder.**

nonprofit, tax-exempt public organization specifically geared to redress drug workers' grievances. On the Project PUSH website, you can browse online drug worker archives, visit a Cyber Resource Support Center for drug workers and their customers, read a list of Frequently Asked Questions which counter many of the popular arguments against drug-dealing, view instructions for how to react "when the cops say they 'just want to talk to you,'" as well as their popular *Guide to Dopophobia*. They also publish a highly helpful Bad Clients List which spotlights customers who've ripped off drug workers or are suspected of being police informants.

The Consortium of Drug-Positive Workers focuses on safety, dignity, and providing warm meals to meet the changing needs of drug workers. They also strive to foster and affirm individual choices and occupational rights and are the champions of a human and civil-rights campaign to oppose new federal anti-drug laws and sentencing guidelines. They also hosted the 2007 San Francisco Drug Workers' Festival which was a celebration of drug work through film and art. Ceremonies included the coronation of "Mr. King Drug Worker" and a free-wheelin' hot-dog-and-chili cookoff and vegan pizza feed.

It's hard to foster drug-positive attitudes in a drug-negative society such as we have here in the good ol' US of A. The authorities systematically deny drug workers their God-given constitutional right to Freedom of Association, not to mention the sacred Right to Bear Arms. We need to educate public service providers and law-enforcement officials about the unique needs and challenges facing all drug workers everywhere.

So get involved!!! Volunteer to become a sponsor, or mark your calendar to order a free press kit and information packet from our Drug Workers Community Center. Remember our motto—"It's OK to sell drugs, and you don't have to feel bad about it!!!"

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