

STATEMENT OF STEVE DEANGELO

LUXURY CANNABIS MUST INCLUDE LEGACY CANNABIS!

The legalization of cannabis in New York has unleashed new and exciting opportunities to marry the ancient, enchanting properties of cannabis with the glamor and sophistication that has made New York a global fashion capital— and the Luxury Meets Cannabis Conference is one striking example of this trend.

I wholeheartedly support the embrace of cannabis by the fashion and luxury industries. For far too long, the most amazing and valuable plant on the planet has been relegated to plain brown paper bags, or hidden inside pizza boxes, or even more undignified stash places. So it is wonderful to see the creative genius of New York being put to work placing this plant in its proper context, as a precious gift to be treasured.

As this process of de-stigmatization and re-appreciation moves forward, both justice and style demand that Luxury Cannabis include Legacy Cannabis.

Justice demands it, in the name of the small army of mostly marginalized people of color who carried this sacred healing plant through the dark years of Prohibition; and made sure that the authorities who sought to eradicate cannabis completely did not prevail. Those courageous pioneers were not ever criminals, they were and remain heroes— and should be honored as such.

Style also demands that Legacy be included in Luxury. To its consumers; cannabis is a personal, meaningful, intimate product. The uncertainties of the underground market and the dangers of Prohibition have honed our sense of authenticity— —and our bs detectors to a fine edge. It was an essential survival skill. This same sense we used to sniff out undercover cops and contaminated cannabis will come into play as cannabis consumers survey the choice of new brands and new products.

We will assess how well they reflect our lived experience with cannabis, and the lessons and values that the plant teaches us; values like tolerance, radical inclusion, individual freedom, and kindness. The knowledge and cultural fluency necessary to create brands that truly resonate with the cannabis consumer cannot be learned overnight. Today that knowledge is found almost exclusively in the legacy cannabis community— the real subject matter experts—and one reason no single existing brand has risen to national prominence is because most of them were built on Madison Avenue, instead of in the School of Hard Knocks.

My message to attendees at Luxury Meets Cannabis is that legalization in New York gives you a great opportunity to get to know New York's vibrant, incredibly diverse legacy cannabis community, and the power of its creative force. While cannabis has always been a part of the luxury brand creative process and experience— from idea to sketch to runway and lifestyle—it has been hidden and unacknowledged. But now it can be openly embraced and celebrated.

Take full advantage of that opportunity, come meet some of the amazing people and brands that I have met, include them in *your* plans; offer your support to *their* plans and *their* dreams. Incorporate the causes that are important to us—like racial/gender/environmental justice— into the brands you are building. Experience the immense joy of coming together across the boundaries that usually separate people from one another. Legacy operators and luxury brands can seamlessly work together to elevate brand experiences. And when we do, we will be richly rewarded, both with business success, but also in other ways that we cannot even imagine today.

Be Well, Be Free!

Steve DeAngelo

(Contact info, internet handles)