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Chemist James Woodford says he has investigated several cases where Blacks may have been falsely accused of abusing marijuana.

SCIENCE

Scientist Reveals Blacks Who Fail Marijuana Tests Could Prove Drug Free

Blacks and other naturally dark-skinned people may be getting shafted when they flunk urine tests that indicate marijuana abuse because they possess high levels of the pigment melanin, which is chemically similar to the ingredient in marijuana.

Furthermore, melanin actually soaks up chemical compounds similar to tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in marijuana.

James Woodford, a forensic chemist from Atlanta, and associate Steve Swimmer, also of Atlanta, have studied cases where

Blacks were suspected of using marijuana and fired from their jobs after they maintained their innocence. Hosea Williams, Atlanta City Councilman and civil rights activist, supports their stand.

Woodford and Swimmer are working with dozens of people who have been suspected of abusing marijuana and later lost their jobs. "Virtually all of them are Black," Swimmer declared.

Woodford recently submitted an affidavit in a Cleveland, Ohio, case where a group of police cadets tested positive for marijuana use a month before their graduation from the academy. Ten of 20 Black and Hispanic cadets tested positive for marijuana use—although they maintained their innocence—along with 3 of 20 White cadets. Woodford's affidavit suggests that melanin is responsible. The case is pending. "If the people question it themselves I certainly would go along with them," Swimmer told JET. "Because I have learned to trust people over these companies that are selling the tests."

For example, Woodford said manufacturers contend their tests are 99% accurate. However, he said the tests have a 10 to 15 percent margin of error, noting that no two laboratories are operated the same way.

Urine tests for marijuana often pick up 5 to 10 nanogram (one billionth of a gram) when the average marijuana smoker's body can show thousands of nanogram per test.

Company officials, in some cases, have accused employees of be-

ing impaired when 5 to 10 nanogram show up on a simple marijuana test. Evidence shows a person can possess nearly 100 nanogram on a simple test but complex tests many detect no trace of THC.

"He's a very highly qualified chemist," Williams said of Woodford, who has a doctorate in chemistry from Emory University in Atlanta and received post-doctoral training in medicinal chemistry at the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy. He also holds a Schedule One license with the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration and is registered with the Georgia State Board of Pharmacy. He also was a visiting scientist at Scotland Yard's Forensic Science Laboratories.

"I have authored articles about inaccuracies in rapid screening procedures for drugs and have qualified as expert witness in Georgia state, other states and federal courts," Woodford added.

Williams, who also has training in chemistry, has worked closely with Woodford and Swimmer in unfolding evidence of people being falsely accused of abusing marijuana.

Woodford contends everyone possesses some degree of melanin in the blood, brain and urine. In fact, medicines such as Advil, Nuprin and some natural dietary substances have chemicals that resemble THC and can show up falsely on tests. Woodford called many marijuana tests "non-specific tests."

"The higher the melanin it's

more likely to have (an) error," Williams added. "People are losing jobs and careers and Blacks are the ones suffering most for this."

Swimmer noted a person can smoke a marijuana cigarette on the weekend and it will show up on tests by mid-week. However, people can consume designer drugs such as synthetic heroin and synthetic cocaine that don't show up on tests.

Woodford agreed with Williams and Swimmer that there is too much fallacy in using the results of a marijuana test when determining the future of Blacks and other naturally dark-skinned people.

Text by WILLIE WOFFORD
Photos by BUD SMITH

Associate Steve Swimmer (l) and Atlanta City Councilman Hosea Williams both contend there's too much fallacy in most marijuana tests when determining one's employment future.

