

Montel Williams to Receive Award for Medical Marijuana Advocacy

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What's Your Reaction?

Montel Williams became a household name by hosting a national TV talk show that provided a platform for people to share their personal stories. Now Williams, who hosts the nationally syndicated daily radio show *Montel Across America*, is being recognized for sharing his own story as a medical marijuana patient and advocate -- and in the process, giving voice to thousands of other medical marijuana users and caregivers whose struggles don't make the news. Williams, who suffers from multiple sclerosis and uses medical marijuana to relieve chronic nerve pain, is being honored for his groundbreaking journalism and outspoken medical marijuana advocacy by receiving the Edward M. Brecher Award for Achievement in the Field of Journalism at the International Drug Policy Reform Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico on Nov. 13, 2009. The biennial award from the Drug Policy Alliance, the nation's leading organization promoting policy alternatives to the drug war, is given to media figures who show the courage and leadership to question official drug war propaganda. "I utilize medical marijuana to help alleviate the extreme neuralgic pain I suffer from," Williams said. "I am not alone. There are thousands of patients like me, and we should not be treated as criminals." Since going public with his personal medical marijuana use in late 2003, Williams has tirelessly campaigned for changes in state and federal laws to expand access to marijuana as a medicine. In addition to writing *Climbing Higher*, his 2004 autobiography that detailed his struggle with MS and the therapeutic effects of cannabis, Williams has hosted TV shows on the topic of medical marijuana, authored Op-Ed pieces in major newspapers and used his platform as a public figure to press legislators across the country to enact new drug policies based on compassion, reason and science. In particular, Williams has traveled to state capitals in Albany, NY and Trenton, NJ, as well as Washington, D.C., to urge elected officials to pass medical marijuana legislation. "Montel is in a league of his own insofar as the effort to legalize medical marijuana is concerned," said Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance. "No one has used his media pulpit as effectively and passionately as he has in combating drug war intransigence." Previous recipients of the Edward M. Brecher Award include: ABC News Anchor Hugh Downs; Cartoonist Gary Trudeau; *The Economist* magazine; *Rolling Stone* magazine; William Finnegan, staff writer for *The New Yorker*; and Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation* and *Reefer Madness*, among other distinguished honorees. The International Drug Policy Reform Conference, co-hosted by the Drug Policy Alliance in Albuquerque, NM from Nov. 12-14, 2009, brings together nearly 1000 leading international experts, treatment providers, researchers, policymakers and key activists at the leading global forum on drug policy reform. For more information or to register for the conference, please visit www.reformconference.org. *Tony Newman is the Director of Media Relations at the Drug Policy Alliance Network (www.drugpolicy.org)*