



The Naulls Case(s):

Nanny State Snatches Kids From Devoted Mom and Dad

By Fred Gardner

Which psychological torment would you rather be spared (bearing in mind that you don't know how or when it will end):

1. Being made to wear panties and chained to a heap of fellow prisoners while gross foreigners insult you. Or,

2. What Ronald Bradley Naulls endured after his house and his Corona, California cannabis dispensary were raided by the DEA July 17, 2007?

Naulls' torment was amplified because his wife Anisha was put through it, too, and their children were the very instrument by which it was applied. On the day of the raids Aaliyah, Amaiyah, and Aryanna Naulls — ages 5, 3, and 1, respectively — were taken from their home and placed in foster care at a location undisclosed to their parents. In the name of "family values" these healthy, well-cared-for little girls — impressionable, frightened little girls — were taken from their mother and father because the raiders had found edible marijuana stored in a refrigerator in the Naulls' garage.

The rip-off of the Naulls kids was described to *O'Shaughnessy's* in late July, 2007, by James Anthony — a former assistant city attorney in Oakland who had helped Naulls fight a move by Corona politicians to close his dispensary.

O'S: Is it just your three girls living there or is there a bigger group?

RN: From what I gather they have other kids there. Aaliyah says that the kids are being mean to her. They don't allow her to use the night light — she had a night light at home. My one-year-old has a diaper rash, which she never had before. Amaiyah had a scratch on her arm.

O'S: What's the criterion for the decision to let them come home? James Anthony said they were going to drug test you and if your THC level was going down, that would be a factor.

RN: My levels have been going down. But the social worker said that the criminal investigation could curtail them from coming home.

O'S: Any sense that the social worker is sympathetic?

RN: No. They're treating it like another drug case. I can tell by his demeanor, we're just "drug people." I gave him a copy of my doctor's recommendation, but... Our lawyer is trying to be tactful and not offend the social workers. We're afraid if we make any demands they'll say 'you're not cooperating' and they'll keep them longer.

No happy ending

On Aug. 13 Naulls told *O'Shaughnessy's* that the girls were still in foster care.

RN: We still haven't gotten our kids back. The social worker came by on Friday afternoon to inspect the house and make sure it was safe for the girls, so we got our hopes up. He went through the house, said he would make his decision today. He told us to call him at 3. We were still trying to reach him after 4. The fact that we couldn't get ahold of him told me the news wasn't going to be positive. Then he finally called back and said that their decision was not to give us the kids back because of the pending criminal investigation. He told Anisha, "You have an open case and Ronnie has an open case and what if you go to jail?" She said, "It's not up to you to decide

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whether we go to jail." So we go for another hearing to ask a judge to overrule Child Protective Services.

O'S: How often does that happen?

RN: We're told it's 50-50. They look at the situation and also if we've been following Child Protective Services' requests, like I am not using medicine and my THC levels are declining and my wife doesn't have any THC in her system at all. We've been testing every other day.

On Aug. 16 the Naulls went to court and prevailed — they got their kids back after 30 days of separation, fear, and uncertainty — but there is no happy ending. Ronnie is facing federal charges for selling a controlled substance and may have to rely on a public defender. Federal law doesn't acknowledge that cannabis is a medicinal herb or that California voted to legalize it. In the land of Common Sense there would be a "this-family-has-suffered-enough" defense; but we live in the land of Mandatory Minimums.

In the land of Common Sense the Naulls would have been given a warning of some kind instead of having their kids ripped off. The Naulls girls seem to be overcoming their ordeal. Some forms of torture leave no visible marks but cause nightmares down the line. We can only hope that their foster home was one of the good ones and that, having had each other throughout the five-week separation from their parents, they pulled through intact.

This is Anisha's take on things after the girls had been home about five weeks: "They told the girls that they were at the babysitters. And that we were working. So, that's what they think. And they're just kind of like: 'Why did it take so long?' And we say, 'Well, we were trying to get things together for work.'"

"They're adjusting to being back home. It's a process. They have a little bit of separation anxiety right now. My oldest will wake me up, 'I had a nightmare the police took you.' When Aaliyah started back to school — she had to miss a week of school — one of her classmates came up to her and was like 'My mommy said that your mommy's in jail.' So Aaliyah comes home and says, 'Mommy, my friend says that you were in jail. Is that what you were doing when I was at the babysitters?' And I'm like 'Wow, no. Mommy wouldn't go to jail. Why would mommy go to jail? Your friend doesn't know what she's talking about.' We've had a few conversations like that.

"My three-year-old will say, out of the blue, if I'm leaving, 'Please don't leave me on the freeway.' And I'm like 'Wow, mommy's not going to leave you on the freeway.' So... But they're okay, they're getting back to normal."

Anisha had just learned that Riverside County is charging her with three counts of felony child endangerment — one for each of the girls, including Aryanna who could barely walk back in July, let alone get into the refrigerator in the garage. "These people are not nice," says Anisha.

False Premise of Endangerment

The premise on which the government snatched the Naulls girls is fraudu-



THE NAULLS FAMILY — Ronnie and Anisha with Aaliyah, Amaiyah, and Aryanna Naulls — reunited in September, 2007. For how long is uncertain; Ronnie is facing five years in prison for operating a dispensary in Corona, CA.

lent. In the *extremely unlikely* event that the girls went into the garage and the parents didn't hear the alarm and the girls opened the refrigerator and found the marijuana edibles and unwrapped them and proceeded to gorge themselves, they would experience a cannabis overdose, which involves a very unpleasant torpor that can last for eight hours (some of which is typically spent asleep). There is no subsequent adverse effect.

The most likely longterm reaction to an overdose of edible cannabis is an aversion to cannabis in any form. Just as there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, there is no poison in cannabis. The government promulgates whatever lies and policies are needed to advance corporate interests. War in Iraq: good for the oil companies. War on pot: good for the drug companies. War by any lies necessary.

The vote by more than five million Californians for Prop 215 was above all a testament to its safety, not its efficacy. Very few people who smoked pot in social settings in the '60s and '70s and '80s were aware of its medical effects, let alone that it had been widely used in tinctures produced by Eli Lilly, etc.. But they did know that they and their friends never experienced reefer madness or any other health problems.

Even most people who never smoked pot have known people who did and observed that its impact is negligible compared to alcohol and tobacco. The Prop 215 vote was a message from the people to the government that marijuana is relatively benign.

The government's response has been, "Our mind is made up, don't confuse us with the facts." It is not just the feds who treat cannabis as if it causes grave harm; Riverside County's Department of Social Services is operating on the same false assumption.

After Prop 215 passed, Tod Mikuriya, MD, warned that implementation would hinge on state, county, and city agencies revising their protocols and procedures. Mikuriya implored Ethan Nadelmann of the Lindesmith Center (now the Drug Policy Alliance) to conduct or underwrite what he called an "audit" that would involve contacting, advising, and pressuring every agency that had to adjust to marijuana becoming legal for medical use. But DPA instead devoted its resources to funding medical marijuana initiatives in other states.

You don't have to study Sun Tzu on the art of war to know that sometimes a victory has to be consolidated before you try to gain more ground. The danger with advancing too soon is that your forces get overextended and you can't defend what you've won.

The latest

As this issue goes to press, Anisha Naulls is charged with three counts of felony endangerment and is preparing for a preliminary hearing. She rejected a plea bargain — one felony count, for which she would do 800 hours of community service and three years probation, after which it would be reduced to a misdemeanor.

Ronnie Naulls' federal trial for selling a controlled substance is set for May. He will not be allowed to argue that he was operating legally under California law. He faces five years in prison. His family faces five years of no dad on the scene. Attorney James Anthony has organized a Naulls family defense fund.



"As American as..."

A common expression used to be: "As American as motherhood and apple pie." You don't hear it much these days. "New Hayward mom faces Iraq tour in Army," was the headline on a recent *Oakland Tribune* story about Ashleigh Higgins, a nursing mother, who was ordered to leave her 4-month old baby and report for active duty. Higgins' mom protested: "Why would anyone think you would want a postpartum mom who has a bad knee in basic training?"

Immigration officials snatch babies from nursing mothers all the time... The new reality: "As American as CPS and food-like substances."