

The Cage Is Every Day

Even if you're not a mixed martial arts aficionado, watching a bout will leave you impressed by the skill, creativity and intensity of the fighters and the sport. We're running on pure instinct—a pair of graceful, ferocious lions battling for territory.

Behind those handfuls of magic minutes in the cage, though, are hours of training and practice. As an MMA fighter, I train for twenty to twenty-five hours a week, conditioning my body and mind for speed, strength, stamina and power. The goal is to reach a balanced state of fitness, because I need to be able to dodge, be lightning-fast, and land a devastating blow. My mental acuity needs to be at its best, because I'm applying strategy and tactics in a situation that can go from defeat to triumph in the space of a few seconds.

The same combination of innate talent, trained and practiced skill, discipline and agility are what I bring to my work as a board member of the National Cannabis Industry Association and a multi-state dispensary operator. I have to be ready to respond to threats and opportunities at a moment's notice, bringing my experience and discernment to bear.

Our industry is unique in that it faces an ever-changing legal landscape at local, state and federal levels. And the structural racism that permeates our society makes doing my job like fighting in the cage with one arm tied behind my back. When I make decisions, I have to contend with stigma, caused by decades of the racist criminalization of cannabis. And even before I open my mouth, some people have already made up their mind about me because of the color of my skin. I need strength, speed, stamina, wisdom and cunning, because the cage is every day.