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# Spreading Roots

## Rooted in Roxbury wants to share the cannabis wealth with Boston communities of color

BY DEBBIE WAY | PHOTO BY BEN WIGHT

Massachusetts-based dispensary Rooted in Roxbury is trying to do it right. “We recognized from the very beginning that the way the cannabis industry in Boston was going, it wasn’t going to look like the individuals who were most impacted during the war on drugs,” says Brian Keith, chief operating officer. “So we wanted to bring together people from one of the most impacted communities, Roxbury.”

He; his wife, Joanne; and Solmon and Rokeya Chowdhury have deep ties to the communities of Roxbury and Dorchester. They formed Rooted in Roxbury, as outlined in its mission statement, “to build a community-conscious cannabis business that engages, serves and benefits members of Boston’s communities of color through its financial success and social responsibility.” Part of how the company is doing that is with its investment team, which is 96% Black, 3% Latinx, 1% Cambodian, and 51% women.

As of October 2021, Rooted in Roxbury is about six to eight months from opening its first store at 331 Newbury Street—one of several locations the company is exploring. But a passion project for the group is to open a place in Nubian Square. A planned site hit a roadblock at a Boston Zoning Board of Appeal meeting over the summer, but Keith is undeterred. “We recognize the difficulty that Nubian Square is going through—violence, drug activity—and lack of investment. We want to bring a business that we anticipate will drive 300 to 400 customers per day.

“Our focus right now,” he continues, “because we’re so far along in the process, is on Newbury Street, and getting those doors open.”

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Co-founders and co-owners of Rooted in Roxbury (from L to R) Solmon Chowdhury, Rokeya Chowdhury, Joanne Keith, and Brian Keith

