

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

MAPS' focus on psychedelic and medical marijuana research studies, politics, organization-building and fundraising occupy almost all my working hours. Yet what initially motivated me to invest my life energies into this work were my personal psychedelic and marijuana experiences, and those of others who shared their stories with me.

It's these intensely personal narratives that can get lost in the details of this research project, that regulatory hurdle, this media article, that donation, each small step toward our larger goal of building a society mature enough to integrate psychedelics and marijuana rather than prohibit and repress them.

This special issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* on psychedelics and self-discovery is edited by Jag Davies and Sarah Hufford. MAPS' increasing use of email updates and our website to communicate about our work in detail and on a timely basis creates this opportunity for us to take a short hiatus from using the Bulletin for reports about MAPS' growing number of promising research and educational projects. This issue is an effort to bring to the foreground the experiences that often remain in the background of MAPS' work, to look in more depth at what lies beneath the surface of all our efforts.

I'm writing now after returning from Israel. I traveled there with my family this time, so my brother, my wife and I could show our three children and nephew their ancestral roots. We went on a lengthy search under the blazing sun in Jerusalem, looking for the grave of my great-great grandmother. She was buried there exactly 100 years ago, in 1907. She was the first of our relatives in modern times to move there, which she did alone, leaving her grown children behind. After finally locating her grave on the Mt. of Olives, where Jews are traditionally buried in expectation of being first in line for the resurrection, I couldn't help but wonder what she would think about MAPS' Israeli psychedelic and marijuana projects. After all, I can't quite see the point in trying to be first in line after the resurrection.

While in Israel, I worked to prepare for the enrollment of the first subject in MAPS' MDMA/PTSD study. I also laid the ground-

work for MAPS' first Israeli medical marijuana projects. Along with Philippe Lucas, founder of the Vancouver Island Compassion Society (VICS), who MAPS brought to Israel as an expert consultant, I met with the Israeli Ministry of Health (MOH) official considering whether to license a non-profit medical marijuana production facility. Joining us were an Israeli MD with expertise in herbal medicines (especially the pomegranate) and several Israeli medical marijuana advocates. The facility is providing marijuana for sale to a limited number of MOH-approved patients, to keep them from having to obtain black market supplies.

I assume my great-great grandmother would initially be perplexed and inclined to disapprove of my work. Yet, I think she would come to understand and support our efforts to provide medicines and healing to those in need. What might give her pause is our broader struggle to help people experience the underlying sense of connection and meaning provided by the mystical experience, which psychedelics can catalyze. Since she had some sort of spiritual yearning, I hope that she'd see this aspect of our work as an antidote to fundamentalism, fostering a more universal spirituality that nevertheless embraces the unique particularities of religions.

The need for touchstones between religions, and for MDMA/PTSD research, was made vivid as my family and I traveled through areas of Israel that were evacuated last year during the war. One day, we walked throughout the Old City of Jerusalem, commenting on the relaxed atmosphere. The very next morning, a running gun battle broke out in the Christian Quarter, where we had been walking so shortly before. A Palestinian jumped an Israeli guard, took his gun, shot him in the shoulder, ran, and was killed by another Israeli guard who chased him. Ten bystanders were hurt, some from ricocheted bullets.

It's in large part to provide antidotes to and prevention of these worldly, destructive non-psychedelic moments, that motivate me now to continue MAPS' work, inspired and empowered by the sorts of experiences presented in this special issue.



— Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President