

An Open Letter to Rick Dobin, Ph.D.

Hi, Rick. It's been a while. The Association has grown considerably since I joined ten years ago, the Bulletin seems to get better with every issue, membership grows, as does your staff and funding, and we grow older. I recall corresponding with you, talking with you over the phone and finally taking you to lunch after some conference in LA. You were always personally what you present yourself to be through the auspices of MAPS—diplomatic, serious, gentle and dedicated to the scientific advancement of psychedelia within strictly monitored and legally sanctioned protocols.

To say that we disagreed on these goals would be an understatement. But since you were the guy with the clubhouse, I asked if there was any way in which I could help out, and you set me up with a few writing assignments, none of which ever panned out, which, if I were given to irony, I might say about most of your research protocols, as highlighted in the last MAPS Bulletin (V. XIII, N. 1). This is no dig at you, Rick, but only to emphasize what I've said from the beginning: the US government will never permit consciousness expansion to be legally conducted in this country under a medical model short of armed revolution. I do not advocate the latter, mind you. I simply state the facts as I see them.

As a lawyer, indeed, as a former state prosecutor, I have watched the amazing degree to which heretofore persecuted groups have vindicated their rights through political struggle over the last 30 years. African-Americans, Women, Latinos, Gays and Lesbians, the physically and sexually abused, have—in my opinion, largely as a result of the shifting sense of empowerment arising out of the consciousness expansion movement of the 60s—won their liberation and dignity through a process of self-identification, unification, and emancipation. And yet, in that eerie irony that is so much a part of the psychedelic life, these newly freed souls

haven't the faintest sense of the debt they owe to the chemists and freaks who fought the hippie wars to free them, and worse yet, we who still fight these wars deem ourselves somehow above the lower depths of "dirty" politics, legal battles and talking heads.

The "M" in MAPS stands for multidisciplinary. Up to now, that has meant anything from "neuro-bio-psychiatric" to "psycho-neuro-biological." Yes, there is something wonderfully ethereal about the biochemistry of ayahuasca and its anthropology or puzzling out the anomalies concerning the effects of certain psychedelics on particular neuroreceptors and concomitant behavioral observations. I realize that this foundation is your baby, Rick, but after so many years, and now that you've got the Ph.D. and we're not one step closer even to legal marijuana in the USA, don't you think that the crusade at MAPS ought to be expanded just a little? Your approach remains largely at the begging level: "Oh please, FDA, DEA, let us do our little study." Simply by virtue of your impeccable credentials, your submissions to government, academia and private foundations are taken seriously. But where has all this seriousness gotten us? The federal prisons are still stuffed with the victims of the policies of those who seriously consider you—hell no, I send you 35 bucks every year—our proposals, reject them and say, "there is no evidence to support"...whatever.

I say it's high time to try to recognize the reality-challenged as a legitimate minority in this country. I say, march on Selma and Montgomery because just as in 1967, I have a dream today. I'm a little older than you, I think, Rick, and I was out in the streets when the whole thing was in its prime, when it was nutso city, the real reason for it all, Elysian Fields and Strawberry Fields and the Dead and the Airplane and the New Riders and the String Band and the whole street scene—like I wonder if anybody today could imagine, but then I'm an old man now and don't get out much so who the hell

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knows. But that was the reason for it all, Rick. It was about freedom. Freedom “to” and freedom “from.” There were tough guys if you wanted to be a tough guy, but by and large, if you were a “flower kid” you could be as peaceful and lovely as you wanted, too. The color and the music and the generosity and the sex for the few short years that it lasted. And for those of us who were educated, and there were more than a few, oh, the talk ‘til dawn and then class or bed or the park or the day’s hustle. Nobody’s told that story, Rick. It vanished like Camelot, the “real” one. But that was what it was all about.

I was so pleased to read the fantastic interview with Larry Hagman. He is a great soul. But more, it was a break in the biochem, like the “Creativity Issue.” Perhaps the message is coming through. So here’s the pitch. Please devote some space to other issue areas in the Bulletin: interviews with non-chemists, etc., stories about the days of Hippie-excess, legal and political approaches we can look at to make us free. Maybe it’s time to poll your members to see what they’d like to see in the Bulletin.

Your friend,
Frederick Grab

Response from Rick Doblin:

“Fred - Thanks so much for your letter and your spirited critique of MAPS’ strategy and Bulletin. We’ll definitely include a wider range of articles in the Bulletin than biochem (hope you like the Burning Man article). I do feel that we’re making progress toward our research agenda, it’s just much slower than we all have hoped for. But there’s enough progress that I’m not ready to abandon the effort to initiate scientific research to focus MAPS on general legalization. One day, MAPS may branch out to include a 501 (c) (4) to do political lobbying, but we’re not quite there yet.”

*Garuda, gold
Tibetan style
Mineral colors and liquid gold
71.5 x 42.5 cm
Neema Dorje
Kathmandu, 1998*

Congratulations on IRB Approval for the MDMA/PTSD Study

What a wondrous project! I have a poster that depicts the oceans wearing away the rocky coast, and use it as a focus for me, it says, “things take time.”

But the beginning of the change in how we deal with psychiatric issues is upon us. I have many jobs and one is working in a small community hospital as a staff nurse on a mental health unit. Almost all the clients have been abused in some form as children, and are left with horrendous self-concepts.

We do little except intervene with antidepressants and mood stabilizers, and that is not enough so they self-medicate.

I know what this medicine can do for the psyche from my own experience. I am honored to be a part of your organization. Many you continue to receive many blessings.

Namaste,
Kathleen Panagiotes, RN,MA

