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Opening Hearts and Healing Minds: MAPS and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps

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In 1971, during my freshman year at New College in Sarasota, Florida, I experienced both psychedelics and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap for the first time. After pondering the label, I found that I shared the view that it was essential that everyone come to know in their hearts and minds that all people, all creation, are all one, as I had experienced with my whole heart and being via psychedelics. We must learn to love rather than fear "the other." Although there was something manic and obsessed about Dr. Bronner, the essence of the Moral ABCs was a true message of hope. I didn't realize at the time the losses that Dr. Bronner had suffered and the pain he experienced as a result of the Nazis.

Relatives on my father's side were killed in the Holocaust, and as I grew up, I was traumatized to learn about the horrors of World War II. I felt deeply connected to Israel and worried about the perilous existence of my relatives living there. Like Dr. Bronner, I was further frightened by the potential for a more universal Holocaust during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the nuclear arms race with the Russians.

I began reading the principles of non-violent resistance in High School as the Vietnam War raged. I decided to become a draft resister and not register in what turned out to be the last year of the lottery. Due to the Nazis and the war the Allies waged to stop them, I wasn't a pacifist opposed to war no matter what, so the option of becoming a conscientious objector to all war was not an option. My parents supported my decision but let me know that the cost could be a criminal record and the loss of opportunity to become a licensed professional of any kind.

I concluded that creating the positive alternative to war and hatred would be even more effective than becoming another victim. I was influenced by the spirit of the '60s. There was a sense of possibility about a new global spirituality that was brought about in part by the view of the whole earth from the moon, in part by psychedelic experiences, and in part by the

movements for civil rights and a new ecological consciousness. By the early '70s, however, there had been a massive backlash to the spirit of the '60s. Psychedelics, key tools of consciousness growth, were criminalized, and almost all scientific research was shut down in the U.S. and around the world.

A life-changing book called *Realm of the Human Unconscious* by Dr. Stanislav Grof, the world's leading LSD researcher, confirmed for me that psychedelics, together with science, spirituality and a focus on healing, were key to our survival as a species. I was also inspired by Albert Einstein, who had written, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our way of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive." I understood this new type of thinking and knowing to involve the perception of unity. I began to see that facilitating the mystical experience in large numbers of people was a central key to human survival, with or without psychedelics, and that "All-One or None" was a reality and a strategy.

I decided to devote myself to work toward the resumption of psychedelic research and the responsible legalization of psychedelic medicine, and to become a psychedelic therapist. During this time, I had a dream that I met a Holocaust survivor as an old man on his death bed. He told me that he had been shot in a mass execution of Jews, lost consciousness, then was buried alive in a mass grave on the edge of town. He came to and clawed his way out three days later. He felt he'd been saved for some purpose but at the time didn't know for what. Now he knew that he was supposed to tell me to bring back psychedelic research and become a psychedelic therapist. I accepted, knowing I would fulfill that mission since I'd also decided on it myself. Then he died.

In 1977, on his first day in office, President Carter pardoned all the draft resisters. My road to a career that required a license was now open. In 1982, I resumed my formal education at New College and went to Esalen for a month-long workshop with Stan Grof and his wife, Christina. While at Esalen, I learned about MDMA, called "Adam" in therapeutic circles, while it was still legal. I realized first-hand the incredible power of MDMA to help people open their hearts without fear and judgment,

both in regards to others and themselves. More importantly, individuals suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) could process and resolve debilitating trauma, whether from rape or from war, using MDMA in a therapeutic context.

In 1983, seeking political allies, I wrote a letter to Robert Muller, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and author of the book, *New Genesis: Shaping A Global Spirituality*. His thesis was that underlying conflicts between nations were often religious conflicts and that the mystical experience of unity was the antidote to fundamentalism. He thought we needed to bring the mystics of the different religions together to teach peace. My letter discussed the 1962 Harvard Good Friday experiment that confirmed that psychedelics can help catalyze spiritual mystical experiences with lasting beneficial effects. I asked for help in the effort to resume psychedelic research and, to my utter surprise, Robert Muller replied with a handwritten letter offering to help. His reply was confirmation that facilitating the All-One or None experience is a fundamentally solid strategy to reduce war.

In 1986, I founded a new non-profit, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), to sponsor scientific research to develop MDMA-assisted psychotherapy as an FDA-approved prescription treatment. After graduating from New College in 1987 with a degree in Psychology (emphasis in psychedelic research and transpersonal psychology), I realized that, just like the counterculture of the 1960s, I wanted too much too fast. Since politics were blocking science, I should shift my focus and study politics. I applied to and obtained a Masters (1990) and a Ph.D. (2001) in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School, with my dissertation on the regulation of the medical uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

All the while that I was getting my education, I was working to facilitate and develop psychedelic and medical research through MAPS. In 1992, MAPS formally requested permission for a study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for dying cancer patients with debilitating anxiety. This catalyzed the FDA to formally change their position on psychedelic and cannabis research and put science before politics. The doors to the laboratories were unlocked after more than two decades, and small Phase 1 pilot studies were permitted.

We made real progress throughout the 1990s and a renaissance in psychedelic research was gradually developing around the world.

In 2004, MAPS helped initiate a lawsuit against the DEA for refusing to end the federal monopoly on the supply of cannabis for use in FDA-regulated research. Also in 2004, Dr. Bronner's helped win the hemp industry's fight against the DEA. I was now aware of and respected David and the political work of Dr. Bronner's, but we hadn't yet met.

In 2004, after 18 years of effort, MAPS obtained FDA

permission for our first Phase 2 study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy on people with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD. We've since completed that study with outstanding results, as well as another pilot study in Switzerland, and are currently sponsoring other phase 2 MDMA/PTSD pilot studies in Israel, Canada, South Carolina, and Colorado that will be completed in 2015.

In 2005, I finally met David at Burning Man, where we shared our mutual vision of psychedelics helping to catalyze a peaceful, loving world. Over time, the relationship between MAPS and Dr. Bronner's has deepened and grown, both financially and strategically. Together we provided key early help to Israel's medical cannabis program, and since 2005, Dr. Bronner's has donated over \$600,000 to MAPS, which has substantially increased our capacity. In February of 2013, David joined the MAPS Board of Directors, helping to direct MAPS' growth with lessons learned from Dr. Bronner's growth.

A highlight of the relationship between MAPS and Dr. Bronner's was in 2013 when Dr. Richard Rockefeller visited Dr. Bronner's new offices to

present with me our MDMA/PTSD research with veterans. Richard eloquently explained the biological mechanism of how MDMA helps PTSD sufferers successfully process trauma so that they are not retraumatized by memories of the event. He also conveyed how the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration were now much more supportive of MAPS' project. Richard had been inspired by our 2013 visit to the Pentagon and VA's National Center for PTSD (a healing experience for me as a draft resister and symbolic of cultural healing to come), and the resulting green light to collaborate on MDMA/PTSD research.

Richard tragically died in an airplane crash in June of 2014, and one of his legacies is the expanded relationship with the Bronner family. MAPS is proud to honor his memory and our partnership with Dr. Bronner's in our quest "to dream the impossible dream! To reach the unreachable star! Till All-One, All-One we are!" 🌍

Rick Doblin, Ph.D., is the founder and executive director of MAPS. He received his doctorate in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and his undergraduate degree from New College of Florida. Rick studied with Dr. Stanislav Grof and was among the first to be certified as a Holotropic Breathwork practitioner. His professional goal is to help develop legal contexts for the beneficial uses of psychedelics and marijuana, primarily as prescription medicines but also for personal growth for otherwise healthy people, and eventually to become a legally licensed psychedelic therapist. He founded MAPS in 1986, and currently resides in Boston with his wife and three children.

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