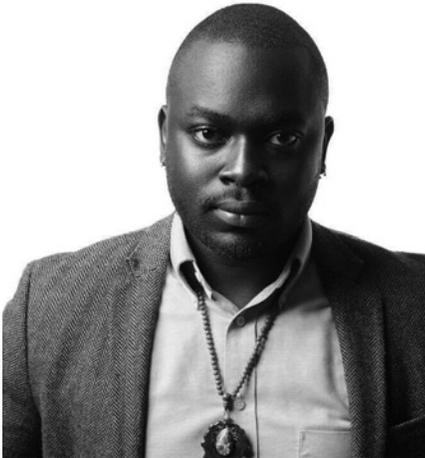


Psychedelic Integration Through Community Service: My Experience Starting a Psychedelic Society

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DURING A CONVERSATION I RECENTLY had with Colin Pugh of the Brooklyn Psychedelic Society, he asked a question that really resonated: “If society were more psychedelic, what would it look like?” One answer was obvious to me: It would be more giving!

Two years ago, in 2016, I hosted a Global Psychedelic Dinner (psychedelicdiners.org) to raise money for the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)’ MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD research. Based on its success, I helped launch a psychedelic society in Buffalo, New York. From the beginning, I wondered what events could truly engage people in an effort to build community, foster discussion, and create opportunities for people to be truly psychedelic. How could we create not just a psychedelic society, but a society that was psychedelic, with psychedelic values? Again, the answer showed itself to me fairly quickly: by engaging in community service.

In my personal psychedelic travels, the inward journey found three common themes: take better care of yourself, take better care of others, and take better care of the planet. These themes highlight for me a quintessential truth of life, that we are all one. Based on this philosophy, the Buffalo Psychedelic Society placed a priority on community service. We began doing regular cleanups of city streets and parks. We started a community garden open to the public to source fresh fruits and vegetables. We volunteered in soup kitchens and homeless shelters when help was needed. We held fundraisers for community organizations, like Journey’s End, whose mission is to welcome refugees without regard to ethnic origin or creed, and to assist them in becoming healthy, independent, contributing members of the community. We also provided psychedelic harm reduction at local festivals through a project called the Sanctuary, which we modeled after the Zendo Project (zendoproject.org). Engaging in service, and providing opportunities for others to be involved with service, became our ways of integrating our psychedelic experiences.

This work also provided opportunities to educate those outside of the psychedelic community about the ever-growing movement, and the society grew to establish chapters in three cities: Buffalo, Rochester, and Batavia. Not only were we practicing psychedelic values, but by doing so, we were also helping to break the stigma associated with psychedelics.

In April of last year, the work I led created an opportunity for me to attend Psychedelic Science 2017 (psychedelicsscience.org) through the Perspectives Scholarship, which sponsored people of color to attend and help raise their voices within the movement. It was a blessing to be connected to the global psychedelic community. I met leaders in the space from cities across the United States, India, and Ghana, to name a few.

So motivated by the practice of community service, I sought to encourage other groups to integrate this model. The encouragement presented itself through the Global



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Psychedelic Month of Service, which I led by reaching out to psychedelic group organizers around the world, and marketed to individuals through campaigns with The Third Wave, Psymposia, and Psychedelics Today. It occurred this past November 2017 and engaged seven organizations and 30 individuals from around the world, who carried out community service projects in the name of psychedelics. Notable was a four-week course created in Brooklyn, New York, by Katherine MacLean, called The Psychedelic Good Samaritan, which touched on topics of self-care, psychedelic integration, harm reduction, and education on the effects of psychedelics.

The success of that event inspired me to revisit a topic which I was introduced to at Psychedelic Science 2017, the issue of psychedelic plant conservation. Mother Earth provides us with healing medicines that have impacted cultures and individuals for millennia, but due to the widespread use of psychedelics, some of these medicines are experiencing a conservation crisis. When I encountered this idea, it took me aback—it was something I never truly considered. Issues of conservation are widespread in nature, even with potable water, so why wouldn't this be the case with psychedelics?

The notion motivated me to take on a new current endeavor, the Global Psychedelic Earth Day Cleanup, where we are encouraging psychedelic groups around the world to honor Mother Earth by organizing a community clean-up on Earth Day. In doing so, the project will draw attention to, and support for, the issue of psychedelic plant conservation.

Do you want to learn more about this problem? Are in interested in contributing to the cause? Visit psychedelicearthday.dudaone.com to find more information, make a donation, find a cleanup near you, or to add a cleanup of your own.

Let's celebrate Gaia, take care of our communities, and practice the psychedelic value of environmental awareness. Together, we can synchronize to accomplish something greater than ourselves. 🌱

Kwasi Adusei is the founder of the Psychedelic Society of Western New York and one of the connectors and administrators of the Global Psychedelic Network (GPN). Through his work with the GPN, he has led projects that include *Psychonauts of the World*, which shares meaningful psychedelic stories from around the globe, with the intention of publishing them in a book as an avenue to raise funds for psychedelic research, the Global Psychedelic Month of Service which encouraged psychedelic groups and individuals from around the world to engage in a service project catered to the needs in their regions, developed a guide on starting psychedelic societies which consolidates methods and practices from the global psychedelic community into one resource, and leads a campaign to address drug checking initiatives across the country. Locally, Kwasi incorporated an organization known as *Emergence-In* to provide various harm reduction services, including psychedelic harm reduction at music festivals through a project called *Sanctuary* and provides opportunities for his community to practice of psychedelic values by engaging community service. Kwasi is also registered nurse and a doctoral student at the University at Buffalo, studying to be a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. He can be reached at kwasiadu@buffalo.edu.



Community service volunteers reorganized a food pantry for Compass House, a children's shelter.



A psychedelic harm reduction training for Sanctuary volunteers.