

From the Desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

AT THIS TIME OF SPRING and new life, MAPS, and guest editor Bia Labate, are bringing forth this special theme issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* focusing on Women and Psychedelics. We're glad to bring to the fore a series of articles all authored by women addressing a wide range of issues of concern to them relating to psychedelics and the psychedelic community. These concerns relate to matters of equity, ethics, consent, integration, and training in this psychedelic community we are in the midst of building. While none of these matters are inherently women's issues, reading about all of them from a woman's perspective can better educate all people. The Women's Visionary Congress, co-founded by Annie Oak, an author of an article in this *Bulletin*, has done and continues to do pioneering work in bringing forth women's voices in psychedelic conferences and other settings. This issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* was inspired in large part by their work.

For historical and cultural reasons, the most visible people and voices of the psychedelic community in the U.S. and Europe have been predominantly male. Working toward more gender balance and actively amplifying marginalized voices in the psychedelic community is crucial so we can more effectively and gracefully mainstream the use of psychedelics and their widely varied applications in medicine, spirituality, creativity and culture.

Similarly, the psychedelic community in the U.S. and Europe has been predominantly white. In our community, over time, we can rectify these gender and racial imbalances, as well as sexual orientation and other sorts of imbalances. We can integrate lessons from unitive states into our daily lives by welcoming, celebrating and honoring diversity of all kinds.

One of the ways MAPS has tried to positively create gender balance has been implementing our therapeutic model of a two-person co-therapist team, one male and one female. Using male/female co-therapist teams has contributed in a positive way to our treatment outcomes and to the growth of our community of therapists. However, we're not rigid about this. Transgender and non-binary therapists are most welcome and bring their own unique contributions, and the article in this issue by therapists Anne Wagner, Annie Mithoefer, and Candice Monson discusses same-gender teams.

In terms of MAPS staff, we have 8 men and 16 women. For the MAPS Public Benefit Corporation, we have 10 men and 20 women. In terms of the Board of Directors, MAPS has 5 men and 1 woman. The Board of Directors of MPBC includes 3 men and 1 woman. We are going to be adding at least one

more woman to both boards, although we are still searching for the right fit for each.

We're currently in the midst of an incredible renaissance in psychedelic research around the world. Psychedelics are being used with psychotherapy to treat posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, drug dependence and alcoholism, anxiety and other mental health conditions, to study spiritual and mystical experiences and their connection to meditation and mindfulness, and as neuroscientific tools to explore brain function and the enduring mystery of human consciousness.

MAPS has started FDA-approved Phase 3 research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD, with approval anticipated at the end of 2021, though of course nothing can be taken for granted. MAPS is about a year behind in starting Phase 3 research in Europe compared to the U.S., and needs to raise another \$8.1 million to fund that research. Other groups are laying the groundwork for Phase 3 research with psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression and for major depression (Penny Patterson wrote an article in this issue about the psilocybin research plans of the non-profit organization, Usona).

At a time of rising nationalism, tribalism, fundamentalism, and authoritarianism, the world needs more people to experience our fundamental unity and shared humanity, a spiritual/mystical experience that psychedelics, when used wisely and with support, can help to catalyze, and the world needs more people to overcome trauma and multigenerational trauma, so we can work together to resolve our differences in a peaceful manner.

As the psychedelic renaissance continues to gather momentum, the perspectives of all people need to be taken into account. Our goal for this special issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* is to bring forth the views of women on psychedelics for the benefit of men, women, those who don't identify with either gender, and those who associate with all genders to ponder. It's only together that we can experience and implement the full flowering of the psychedelic renaissance.

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Psychedelically yours,

Rick Doblin

Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

MAPS Founder & Executive Director