

Introductory Note from Associate Editor Bia Labate, Ph.D.

I AM VERY EXCITED TO present here the Spring 2020 Special Edition of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) *Bulletin*, focusing on the now-timely topic of “Psychedelics: Commercialization and Access.” I am especially grateful, as I have just been promoted to Associate Editor of the *Bulletin*, working side-by-side with Chief Editor Brad Burge, who has been diligently dedicated to promoting MAPS’ voice, identity, and media for the last decade. My new responsibilities as Public Education and Culture Specialist are part of the changes MAPS is experiencing, along with the arrival of Ana LaDou, our new Chief Operating Officer, who is moving and shaking things around at MAPS, leaving the fresh perfume of new female leadership in the air. I like to think that my own work at MAPS reflects MAPS’s recognition that culture, education, and policy are not just the “cherries on top of the cake,” but, rather, are central to our mission. At the same time, all can benefit from more critical and reflective perspectives as psychedelics go mainstream.

We are currently facing an explosion of interest in psychedelics and the spread of drug reform policies all across the US. From Michael Pollan’s bestselling book *How to Change Your Mind*; to reports from Hollywood celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow; positive right-wing media reporting; new psychedelic retreats and business popping up at lightspeed; waves of new would-be experts, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists circling around to find the best bet to invest in; millennials creating a new psychedelic technological culture; patent lawyers lining up, and so much more; everything seems accelerated and we in the movement are left both confused and intrigued. What is happening in the emergent psychedelics industry and ecosystem? Are we all being dragged into a new era of psychedelic market competition and economic individualism? Are psychedelics the locus of a new “gold rush”?

Similar queries follow in the field of regulation: Does decriminalization negatively affect progress with clinical trials? Is decriminalization preferable to legalization, or vice-versa? Should we favor decriminalizing just psilocybin, all plant medicines, or all drugs? Are the psychedelics going through U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clinical trials for specific ailments more desirable than psychedelics being used outside research for therapies and self-exploration? Do we need licensed practitioners, or do we trust communities’ abilities to self-regulate? Or are these all false dichotomies? How are we including Native Americans and disfranchised communities in these conversations?

These topics and others related to changing regulations around psychedelics have been generating passionate disputes in our community. For some, psychedelics are sacred; they believe we need to honor ceremony and the traditional populations that brought them to our attention, and that our health care system

is broken, and that FDA trials inevitably limit healing potentials and unnecessarily restrict access. Others believe FDA-approved clinical trials offer the safest, most effective, and most legitimate way to mainstreaming psychedelic medicines. And there are others who feel that, because we live in a global society, only Big Pharma has the power to scale up healing for the millions who suffer, and claim it is naïve to think that corporations will stay out of the game. Still others think that the solution lies in hybrid models that mitigate the danger of a capitalist takeover of psychedelic potentials. They suggest that stakeholder inclusivity, distributed local ownership, and cooperative structure represents the ideal way forward, and advocate that we foster and steward companies that prioritize accountability, ethics, and accessibility. These discussions have become increasingly ironic and complex because regulatory structures are not yet in place. Despite all the progress, we still have work to do. Recently, I personally experienced rejection from three different banks when I tried to open an account for a non-profit that had the word “psychedelic” in the name.

This special edition of the MAPS *Bulletin* is an attempt to give a bit of a narrative and framework to the times we are living in. Whereas we don’t provide specific answers and solutions, and the articles reflect the authors’ views and not our own, we feel it’s important to promote a collective conversation around these issues. We are an interdependent species and, as a movement, we need to build collective trust to move forward. Having these hard conversations is the first step.

We would like to use this opportunity to affirm that both MAPS and MAPS PBC have signed the Statement Towards an Ethos of Equity and Inclusion in the Psychedelic Movement (chacruna.net/towards-an-ethos-of-equity-and-inclusion-in-the-psychedelic-movement), and that we will no longer join events or conferences that exclusively feature white males. As a queer Latin woman and first-generation immigrant to the United States, it feels good to affirm that we embrace women and diverse minorities as psychedelics enter this new decade full of hope and promises of healing.



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