

A Brief History of The Women's Entheogen Fund

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THE WOMEN'S ENTHEOGEN FUND (WEF) was created in 2002 to support the work of women who spend a significant portion of their professional lives researching psychoactive plants and chemicals.

While women have historically played a central role in investigating the use of entheogens, their work has been funded less frequently and has been consistently underrepresented in the scientific and popular entheogenic literature.

It has been especially distressing to see relatively few female entheogenic researchers presenting their work at relevant conferences over the years. This continuing disparity was illustrated once more at the International Symposium on the Occasion of the 100th Birthday of Albert Hofmann that took place in Basel, Switzerland earlier this year. Of the seventy-three confirmed speakers at the event, only eight were women.

Some women who investigate entheogens have good reasons to pursue a lower profile than their male colleagues. Women are often more vulnerable to retaliatory action and frequently have less money to defend themselves within the judicial system. But as I began to keep track of funding for entheogenic research, it became clear to me that more support was needed for women who chose to be public about their work.

A conversation with then-MAPS staff member Carla Higdon in the fall of 2002 was the catalyst for the creation of the WEF. Carla was wondering aloud why there wasn't more support for women like her who wanted to incorporate entheogenic studies into an academic program. In response to this conversation, I created the WEF and gave Carla the first grant to pursue her education.

Since 2003, I have provided the funds for five other women to receive grants of at least \$5,000 from the WEF. Women who receive the grants make recommendations for future recipients. MAPS, which has sponsored the WEF, has also nomi-

nated women for funding. When Carla passed away earlier this year, another woman made a generous grant in Carla's memory, thus expanding the pool of donors to the fund. Other women have now stepped forward to make donations in Carla's honor and create more awareness of the WEF.

I am very pleased to see the WEF community continue to grow and acknowledge the contributions of its members. I would like to thank WEF recipients Sylvia Thyssen and Fire Erowid for taking the time to document their valuable research here in the *MAPS Bulletin*. These women form the center of a community that I hope will continue to support the work of female entheogenic investigators—a proud and sacred tradition that stretches forward from the first wise women healers of prehistory to our modern day woman healers, researchers and writers.

I plan to continue supporting the WEF and I have set aside a portion of the money in my will to continue this funding after my death. I invite others who value this work to donate financially or simply take time to honor and acknowledge the important work of our contemporary wise women.

I would like to close with a passage from the chants of María Sabina, a Mazatec *curandera* and a woman of great moral and spiritual power who spent a lifetime working with healing plants.

*She is a woman of the day
She is a clean woman
She is a well-prepared woman
She is a woman of light
She is a woman of the day
Because I am a woman who lightnings
I am a woman who thunders
I am a woman who shouts
I am a woman who whistles
I am a woman who looks
into the insides of things*