

EntheoGeneration

Community Connection, Integration, and Growth



Ryan Jay Beauregard

Community as Sacrament

This year's EntheoGeneration gave me the opportunity to host Audri Scott Williams and Tony Moss for a conversation entitled, "Community as the Psychedelic Sacrament." During our conversation, Tony suggested that we could achieve deeper healing of our ecosystem and our collective trauma if we scale-up our idea of community — moving from our smaller, sometimes more homogenized (in values or philosophies) groups into viewing humanity as a planetary species. Audri reflected on her experience with communities around the world. As we better understand ourselves as members of a global community, perhaps we can move towards understanding our impact on a larger scale.

Community as Psychedelic

The promise of psychedelic-assisted therapy for healing individual and collective trauma is inspiring, and I've become convinced in my last eight years of working with Zendo Project that community is, in fact, the true solution to heal humanity's trauma.

Like psychedelic journeys, community is not always smooth or easy, and can sometimes show us the difficult aspects of ourselves or the world around us. Community can also be supportive, celebratory, and extremely nurturing. If we are truly present with the opportunity that community presents us, we have the ability to grow, heal, and refine ourselves to become who we are meant to be and deliver our gifts to our community through service and stewardship.

Merriam-Webster defines community as "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society." The internet has given us global access to a variety of communities aligned with our values, viewpoints and visions; yet, as we've been informed by in documentaries such as *The Social Dilemma*, some of these platforms for community connection and discussion are lacking the social and anthropological models that have allowed us to have authentic, meaningful and truly connecting conversations.

We discover our first communities through family, school, neighborhood, but eventually we find ourselves gravitating towards individuals based on similar interests: sports, hobbies, religion, philosophy, art, and music. For some of us, those interest and curiosities magnetized us towards psychedelics; some for recreation, others for creativity; some for spiritual exploration, others for healing. Regardless of what brings us together, community can be—just like psychedelics—a non-specific amplifier which shows us a multidimensional perspective of ourselves and the way we intertwine with the world around us.

Community as Resource

With community, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One of the beautiful challenges we see before us as we grow up our responsibility of planetary stewardship—both to the outer ecosystem and the inner landscape—is exemplifying more authentic and vulnerable models of leadership, and ultimately, helping our planet to cope with the difficulties of being human right now. Despite our amazing leaps in technology, our collective focus has brought us more advancement in extractive consumerism (automobiles, smart phones, television) than the truly appropriate technological application we could be making in bioremediation, waste management, water filtration, and regenerative agriculture.

Mentors can be a good foundation as we seek more exemplary models of human beings conducting themselves with open hearts and minds and high integrity. Those who have taught me along the way show me, beyond words, that it has been community that has given them support, held them accountable when they misstepped, and provided the opportunity to deliver their gifts as service.

Community as Connection

Another useful tool for better co-creation and connection within communities is to directly understand one another's values, ethics, and philosophies. While it's not essential for everything to always align, it is helpful for us to first know ourselves, our own boundaries, our values for making connection, and how we choose to act when we feel unsafe.

Initiation is another core component of community cohesion. By sharing rites of passage amongst a community, safety and comfort is exchanged for a deeper reflection of ourselves, our inner workings, and the way we walk in this world. Too often in our global culture, our youth has been seduced by rites of passage that can sometimes cause more harm than good: sex, drugs, violence. And more specifically in this psychedelic movement, so many of us have taken the path of self-initiation.

I would assert those of those that have only walked the path of self-initiation are half-baked, deluded by our own self-importance. True initiation requires mentors, teachers, students, and a myriad of support roles; it requires community.

Community as Medicine

I get curious about the Archaic Revival of community that Terence McKenna hinted at. Specifically, the community that I know my grandparents lived in only 45 years ago is much different

than the community I grew up in or witness today. In some ways, I wonder how much technology has disconnected us from our truest human nature — a social creature with instincts of compassion, collaboration, and caretaking.

In my years of stewarding the Zendo Project community, as well as letting the community caretake me, I learned that psychedelics are a powerful tool, that with compassionate support and proper integration, can be a powerful tool in assisting the healing of trauma, bring growth, and reveal amazing solutions to life's dilemmas. I've also witnessed in these eight years that psychedelics alone are not the answer; with-

out support and integration, a person in a rough headspace on a psychedelic substance can experience notable challenges.

I'm convinced that community is the real magic pill here, and that psychedelics are helping community to rediscover themselves, to wake up to the possibility that for all our collective intelligence and technology, that we could really improve the standard of life for most of our collective species; our human community.

Community living isn't paradise; it is messy, awkward, confusing, and on some days, it may be the hardest thing you have to do.



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Community as a Living Example

They say it takes a village to raise a child. I believe the better framing for today's world, in the absence of most of us living in a village, is that it takes a healthy community to support the human journey into embodiment of their gifts, and recognition of their wounds so that they can heal more completely.

One of my favorite authors and teachers, Martin Prechtel, talked about the difference between an offering and sacrifice culture. The simple expression of gratitude, the recognition that the cost of all that was given by our ancestors, this planet and the entirety of the universe for us to be born into this world and sustain our existence is quite miraculous, if we really give ourselves permission to reflect on the journey that got us here and all the generations of humans and innovation that took place. That simple story alone births us into debt; not the financial debt that some of us know upon graduating college, but the energetic (and perhaps even spiritual) debt that we could never repay in a single lifetime — to our planet, to our family, to our community.

Real community has a perpetual indebtedness that can never be repaid, nor is supposed to be. Mutual indebtedness reminds us of our connection, our mutual interdependence. And the gratitude for the gifts we have been given just to be alive on this planet.

For most of our global culture, we have forgotten that gratitude. The simple appreciation of not only being alive, but having access to tools that were invented by another, extracted from the earth by another, manufactured and shipped to us by another... we have a huge opportunity to step up our game of gratitude and to willingly give of our own free will a meaningful gift of appreciation—a song, a dance, a creation of our own two hands—and to give that gift back to that timeless, faceless energy from which we came.

To give in that way, with gratitude, with reverence, with acknowledgment and a genuine grief is what creates a healthy community which brings offerings to express gratitude. The opposite of that is a community that gives nothing, never says “please,” “may I,” or “thank you”; this type of culture is a sacrifice culture because it takes without giving back, and the universe being in dynamic homeostasis, seeks balance, and takes in return — in the form of violence, destruction, and trauma.

With powerful modeling, mentoring, accountability, we can likely end these patterns of trauma, but it takes a village; it takes a community. A diverse, multigenerational, accountable, and supportive community, willing to heal from its mistakes, set healthy boundaries, and evolve with the changing needs of this planet.

Ryan Jay Beauregard received his B.A. in psychology from Claremont McKenna College, and spent 10 years mentoring at-risk teens and families through wilderness survival skills and nature connection. His passion for community connection, the environment, and intrapersonal healing continued with his involvement in permaculture, natural building, and ancestral grief rituals. As a volunteer with the Zendo Project since 2013, Ryan has had the opportunity to connect and expand the scope of psychedelic harm reduction in communities and festivals all over the globe. As the Zendo Project Manager, he integrates his skills in psychology, design and community engagement. When he isn't on the road with the Zendo Project, Ryan can be found at his home in Boulder, CO enjoying the great outdoors, experimenting with sustainable technology, and designing websites, logos, and sacred geometry art.