



**Transcendence &  
Transformation**

## **Psychedelic Intersections 2024 Presentation Guide**

### ***Keynote Speakers***

#### **Luis Eduardo Luna, “Plant Animism in Western Amazonia. A Personal Chronicle”**

*Plants affecting mood, perception, and consciousness were (and still are) particularly important in pre-Columbian America, given their role in rituals and practices of various kinds. These plants are considered to possess intelligence and even to be teachers that facilitate communication with the myriad other entities believed to exist according to animistic conceptions of the world. This paper, based on Luis Eduardo Luna’s fieldwork in the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon regions in the 1980s and 1990s, will highlight the work of practitioners, artists, and scholars who advance the idea of an intelligent universe, while also advocating the necessity, in our historical juncture, of paradigmatic changes in our worldviews.*

Luis Eduardo Luna was born in Florencia, Colombia. He has a B.A. from Universidad Complutense de Madrid (1972), an interdisciplinary Master’s from Oslo University (1980), and a Ph.D. from the Department of Comparative Religion at Stockholm University (1989). He was an associate of the Botanical Museum of Harvard University (1987). He was an Assistant Professor in Anthropology (1994-1998) at the Department of Anthropology of Santa Catarina Federal University (UFSC) in Florianópolis, Brazil. Besides publications in various journals, Dr. Luna is the author of *Vegetalismo: Shamanism among the Mestizo Population of the Peruvian Amazon* (1986), and co-author with Slawek Wojtowicz, Rick Strassman, and Ede Frecska of *Inner Paths to Outer Space: Journeys Through Psychedelics and Other Spiritual Technologies* (2008). Dr. Luna has lectured worldwide on indigenous and mestizo shamanism and has been a curator of visionary art exhibits in Europe, Latin America, the United States, and Japan. He is the Director of Wasiwaska, Research Center for the Study of Psychointegrator Plants, Visionary Art and Consciousness, Florianópolis, Brazil ([www.wasiwaska.org](http://www.wasiwaska.org)). He is currently an Honorary Research Fellow of the Department of Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology of University of Exeter, England.



#### **Carl Hart, “Psychedelic Exceptionalism is Killing Us”**

*The naïve notion that so-called psychedelics are a superior class of drug has led to wider mainstream acceptance of specific substances, while contributing to the continued vilification of others and the people who use them.*

Carl L. Hart is the Mamie Phipps Clark Professor of Psychology (in Psychiatry) at Columbia University. He is also a Research Scientist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Professor Hart is one of the world’s preeminent experts on the effects of drugs the brain and behavior. He has published more than 100 scientific and popular articles in the area of neuropsychopharmacology. He has received numerous awards for his research and teaching. His book *High Price* was the 2014 winner of the PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award. He is co-author of the textbook *Drugs, Society and Human Behavior* (with Charles Ksir). His latest book *Drug Use for Grown-ups* has changed the national conversation on responsible drug use. In 2022, the American Association for Social Psychiatry recognized his contributions to human rights by presenting him the Abraham L. Halpern Humanitarian Award.



## Psychedelic Spirituality & Race

**Yvan Beaussant, Harvard Medical School**

**Candace Oglesby, Junee Mental Health Consulting**

“Opportunities and barriers for BIPOC therapists to engage in psychedelic-assisted therapy and research: preliminary findings from the Psychedelic Therapists Diversity (PTD) Study”

*Clinical research on psychedelics has been resuming and exponentially expanding over the past two decades, and psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) is increasingly recognized for its potential to address a number of psychological and psychiatric conditions. However, as in many areas of clinical research and care, ethnic and racial minorities are underrepresented in psychedelics studies, hindering generalization of reported treatment outcomes and the development of culturally-informed treatment modalities. Furthermore, the current effort to medicalize and commercialize these therapeutic approaches raises questions about who will access and profit from them. Psychedelic medicines are associated with or derived from indigenous communities, which have been repeatedly oppressed and extracted by white colonialism. Black, Indigenous, and Other People Of Color (BIPOC) communities are disproportionately targeted by the war on drugs, exposed to the stigma of use of illicit substances and likely to experience the traumas that psychedelic therapies hold promise to address.*

*For psychedelic research to develop in a more diverse, equitable and reciprocal way, it is critical to achieve a better representation of BIPOC communities among psychedelic researchers and therapists. Yet, little is known about current opportunities and barriers for BIPOC therapists to engage in the psychedelic space. We conducted a qualitative study, the Psychedelic Therapists Diversity study (PTD study), exploring these issues through the perspective of 25 BIPOC therapists and researchers who participated in semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups. Ongoing stigma and misconceptions within BIPOC communities are key contributors to existing barriers that we have identified within our study. Elevating education, awareness, and holistic integration, which encompasses spiritual practices, holds the potential to enhance the engagement of BIPOC communities in this domain. This lecture will highlight additional themes that emerged from our in-depth template analysis, with a particular focus on the significance of these findings at the intersection of psychedelic spirituality and race.*

A hematologist and palliative care physician-investigator trained in psychedelic-assisted therapies, Yvan Beaussant is an instructor in medicine at HMS and Instructor in psychosocial oncology and palliative care at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Dr. Beaussant's research focuses on investigating the safety and efficacy of psychedelic-assisted therapy and defining standards of care across indications and populations of patients with serious illness. He is the principal investigator for the first study looking at the therapeutic use of psychedelics at Harvard since Timothy Leary's.



Candace Oglesby, the program director for Fluence Training's Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy (KAP) certificate program and a licensed psychotherapist in Maryland. Candace entered the field of psychedelic-assisted therapy in 2020 when she participated as a clinical trial therapist in a study exploring psilocybin's effects on cancer and TRD patients. As the founder of Junee Mental Health Consulting, LLC, Candace extends mental health support to individuals, businesses, and historically marginalized communities. She advocates for making cutting-edge therapies accessible to all, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion within mental health care.



**Julián Sánchez González, Columbia University**

“Spiritual Promiscuities: Continental ‘Witchcraft’ Meets Psychedelia in Bogotá”

*This paper discusses the psychedelic and decolonial underpinnings of the intellectual networks brought together as part of the Primer Congreso Mundial de Brujería, a massive event celebrated in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1975. Heralding the slogan “In the Shadow of Difference with Love and Wonder,” the four-day congress gathered over 3,000 people in the South American capital to partake in at least twenty academic conferences, four ritual demonstrations, two major art exhibitions, and other cultural events. Rooted in the mystical and LSD-infused disruptive explorations of the Nadaísta literary and artistic avant-garde movement in Colombia, the event achieved hitherto unexplored connections with like-minded figures across the Americas and the Caribbean. Presentations by Andrew Weil, Thelma Moss, Lee Sannella, Freda Morris, Douglass Richard Price-Williams, Jean Mayo, and Robert Lima, ensured a kaleidoscopic participation of researchers based in major US institutions. Prominent voices such as Jean Baptiste Romain and Joseph Mompont-Mondésir from Haiti, Livio Vinardi from Argentina, and Brenio Onetto Bachler from Chile also made an appearance during the event. To top it off, the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector and the Israeli illusionist Uri Geller presented their literary and magical gifts as guests of honor. In its sheer diversity, the congress posited the use of the word “witchcraft” as an umbrella term in which the study and lived experiences of Indigenous and Afro-Diasporic traditional medicines and botanical knowledge met parapsychological, astrological, and extraterrestrial explorations. Contrary to previous processes of hybridization and creolization taking place in the Americas and the Caribbean, the event proposed an intentional intermixing of spiritual traditions in a manner that sought to subvert, or rather pervert, modern forms of knowledge and world purviews. The audacity of this proposition gained the congress widespread media attention nationally and internationally, with mentions in major media outlets. For the deliberate and irreverent manner in which the term “witchcraft” assembled various otherworldly interests in the Bogotá convening, this paper explores how it exemplifies the concept of “spiritual promiscuity” as a decolonial practice deriving from the south. This train of thought will be supported through the work of major Afro-Diasporic and US-Latinx theorists such as Sylvia Wynter, Édouard Glissant, Chela Sandoval, and José Esteban Muñoz.*

Julián Sánchez González's work specializes in the intersection of artistic and spiritual practices in the Americas and the Caribbean throughout the twentieth century. His dissertation analyzes the influence and interrelation of non-hegemonic spiritualities in the arts of Colombia, United States (California), and Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s and 1980s. This project seeks to build an innovative theoretical framework that incorporates the concepts of interspirituality and spiritual promiscuity into the writing of modern and contemporary art history. Julián's academic career has been supported by the Fulbright Program and the Pérez Art Museum Miami, as well as the Heyman Center for the Public Humanities and the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life at Columbia University.



**Grant Jones, Harvard University**

“Naturalistic psychedelic use and health in communities of color”

*Psychedelics are gaining increased attention in both clinical research and broader culture as they represent novel treatments for a host of mental health conditions (e.g., PTSD, depression). Much of this interest has been driven by a number of groundbreaking clinical trials that have demonstrated the possible therapeutic efficacy of these substances in carefully controlled treatment settings. However, these trials have two key limitations. First, they have limited ecological validity (i.e., these findings might not generalize to real-world settings). Second, they feature a severe dearth of participants of color. This paper addresses research that I have done to address the limitations to this existing research, and provides an overview of my research findings in the field of naturalistic (i.e., non-clinical, real world) psychedelic use and health in communities of color. Additionally, this paper addresses the key next steps inspired by this existing research as well. Ultimately, this paper aims to provide foundational knowledge about real-world psychedelic use and health in populations of color, and to point the way towards essential future directions towards better understanding the link between psychedelic use and health for diverse groups.*

Grant Jones (he/him) is a contemplative, musician, and researcher who is currently enrolled in the Clinical Psychology PhD program at Harvard University. He is also a co-founder of The Black Lotus Collective, a meditation community that centers the healing and liberation of populations that disproportionately experience marginalization. His life work centers around developing and implementing contemplative and liberatory tools for the aforementioned communities. His music is rooted in Black soul, R&B, and alternative music traditions.



## Psychedelic Spirituality & Medicine

### Sharday Mosurinjohn, Queens University

“Psychedelic Medicine, Panpsychism, and Theodicy”

*Psychedelic medicine grapples with the issue of “bad trips”—painful or challenging psychedelic experiences—within the framework of regulatory systems obsessed with a narrow and inhumane concept of “safety.” That is, one that permits the sale and cultural celebration of a class 1 carcinogen (alcohol), but refuses access to toxicologically harmless psilocybin to dying cancer patients on the grounds that it is too “risky” for them. Since this framework recognizes only an essentially behaviourist version of distress—does a person’s distress convert into litigious behaviour or behaviour that creates financial and legal liabilities?—in order to defend against any claims made against it, psychedelic medicine is not incentivized—even disincentivized—to contend with the inside of that experience, its phenomenology and its metaphysical dimensions. At best, it tends to rely on admonitions for research trial designers, therapy protocol designers, and individual users to be careful about set and setting. There are other, better frameworks for working with these experiences and making sense of why they happen which have been developed in cultural contexts that have long practice working with these experiences, namely, certain Indigenous communities with traditional use of spirit medicines, certain non-Indigenous grassroots psychedelic communities, and certain religious and spiritual communities that have refined practices to elicit, navigate, and integrate “special” or “extraordinary” experiences. Still, within these, are open questions, and even to the extent that such questions have answers, they need translating into other cultural contexts so that there can be a robust, public discourse on them. Namely, whereas psychedelic western biomedicine may wish to imagine that any psychedelic experience can be made full of love and light, at least in its aftermath, if only the circumstances and interpretation are correct, some traditions, say, of ayahuasca shamanism or mushroom shamanism, acknowledge malevolent spiritual forces, including of plants, fungi, and other non-human beings themselves. How does this malevolence arise? How can we understand the theodicy it presents? Moreover, can we also physically explore whether there are ways that a molecule can encode or store such - e.g. malevolent or benevolent - intentionality? If we can approach these questions in academic psychedelic research, and not just within communities of practice, then all strata of the psychedelic world stand to benefit: advancement of the metaphysical modelling of being going on among psychonauts and in particular psychedelic traditions, greater rapprochement may occur between academic and grassroots communities, and western biomedical uses of psychedelics could better understand their limitations and be designed to elicit fewer challenging experiences in the absence of equipment and will to deal meaningfully with their perceived dangers.*

Sharday Mosurinjohn is Associate Professor in the School of Religion at Queen’s University, Kingston ON, where she researches and teaches on esotericism, occult sciences, and new religious movements. Mosurinjohn is interested in working with, and enlivening integrative, non-mechanistic worldviews within Western esoteric traditions. Her focus is on entheogens and psychedelics. Her first book is *The Spiritual Significance of Overload Boredom* (2022; McGill-Queen’s University Press). One of her current projects is about synthesizing maps of meaning for navigating psychedelic spiritual crisis and existential distress and healing. This project integrates scientific and humanistic research methodologies at the same time as building bridges between academic perspectives and the indispensable insights gleaned from communities deeply engaged in psychedelic practices.



### Victoria Litman, POPLAR at the Petrie-Flom Center at Harvard Law School

“Psychedelic Chaplaincy and the Role of Spirituality in Psychedelic Medicine”

*There have been ongoing debates as to what the role of spirituality should be in psychedelic healing in medicalized settings. An observed increase of suggestibility among individuals under the influence of psychedelic medicine shaped by the patient’s “set and setting” only further fuels this disagreement. Part of the challenge of psychedelic chaplaincy is illuminated by religion scholars who grapple with secularism as something that does not simply mean the absence of religion. Is it possible for medical researchers to facilitate a truly “secular” psychedelic experience or are they doomed to impose their own secular psychedelic theology? In this paper, I argue that chaplains and other spiritual care providers have an important role to play in psychedelic medicine and identify special considerations that are needed to ensure that participants can fully consent to their spiritual experience.*

Victoria Litman, MDiv., JD., LL.M., is a project-affiliated researcher of the Project on Psychedelics, Law and Regulation (POPLAR) at the Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy at Harvard Law School. She is an interdisciplinary psychedelic studies scholar focused on the intersections of religion, drugs, and law. Her work has focused on the emerging psychedelic church movement, psychedelic chaplaincy, and other issues at the intersection of constitutional law and drug law. She has presented at Psychedemia, Philadelic, and the Drug Law and Public Safety symposium hosted at the Arizona State University School of Law and published in a variety of venues.



### Moana Meadow, Berkeley Center for the Science of Psychedelics

“Relationality in Psychedelic Facilitation Training Programs: The UC Berkeley Case”

*The training of psychedelic guides is understood differently among researchers, health care professionals, spiritual and religious groups, and indigenous communities. In the right contexts, these groups can share and learn from one another’s specialized knowledge. UC Berkeley’s Psychedelic Facilitation Certificate Program aims to support integrated dialogue and relationship-building that allows instructors and learners to seek deeper understandings of these medicines and their role in human spirituality and healing. Key features of the BCSP Certificate Program include instructional collaboration between spiritual care and other health care providers; intentionally small, in-person learning groups; the centrality of long-term relationships among instructors, students, and their spiritual and professional communities; and the inclusion of traditional lineage-holders in these conversations, all of which empower participants to engage in ethical, reciprocal, and just applications of these powerful medicine allies.*

Moana Meadow, MA, MDiv, serves as Program Director of the BCSP Psychedelic Facilitation Certificate Program, within UC Berkeley’s Center for the Science of Psychedelics and the Berkeley School of Education. With experience as a birth doula, hospice chaplain, spiritual director, and psychedelic guide, she teaches spiritual care skills for expanded states of consciousness. Meadow was ordained as an interfaith minister at the Chaplaincy Institute, where she served as guest faculty and academic advisor until 2018. She later served as Executive Director of a non-profit church focused on plant medicine traditions, and participated in the early development of the Sacred Plant Alliance. She has studied with Indigenous elders in the United States and Mexico, as well as with Western practitioners providing psychedelic facilitation in a variety of contexts. She holds a BS from MIT, an MA from Boston University, and an MDiv from the Pacific School of Religion.



### Franklin King, Massachusetts General Hospital

“Psychedelics: ‘Intervention’ or Practice?”

*One of the most public debates within the emerging arena of psychedelics as therapeutics involves whether their effects can be understood in purely biological terms—implying that implementation can be rationalized and standardized—or whether they rather represent a complex, intersubjective process that cannot be reduced to a one-size-fits-all model. This debate reflects a broader one within contemporary psychiatry between those adhering to a strictly biological, psychopharmacological and brain-based understanding of mental illness, in contrast to those advocating for a discarding of this model as reductionist and anachronistic, arguing for a return to a “softer” and more contextually-oriented form of psychiatric practice. The former model is favored by the current system, given the decades-long focus within the NIMH on brain-based models of mental illness, and the regulatory purview of the FDA, which generally is tasked with evaluating the effects of drugs, not how they are administered. Competing epistemologies with relevance for spiritual practice are revealed in this debate, as psychedelics can be argued on the one hand to be mere objects of inquiry—something to be administered—or, as tools to be implemented within a process- or practice-based modality, such as an ongoing psychotherapy or a personal or spiritual practice. While there is likely no single answer to settle these debates on one side or the other, it is important at this juncture to more deeply consider whether the current medical model’s limitations may be driving an unintentional simplification and reductionism regarding psychedelics to fit the current system in place. Without more fully evaluating other forms of conceptualizing what psychedelics are and how they might be best utilized, opportunities may be lost for a more open and holistic integration of psychedelics as they find their way into the Western world.*

Dr. King is Director of Training and Education at the Center for Neuroscience of Psychedelics, Massachusetts General Hospital. His focuses include the implementation and innovation in psychedelic-assisted therapies and utilization of PAT for functional medical conditions. He is currently the Principal Investigator in a study of psilocybin-assisted therapy for IBS and is Co-Investigator for a study on the effects of MDMA-assisted therapy for fibromyalgia. With colleagues, he is also co-developing a training and education initiative, the Harvard Interdisciplinary Program in Psychedelics.



# Psychedelic Spirituality & the Underground I

## Allison Hoots, Attorney and President of Sacred Plant Alliance

“Definition of Religion in the Context of Modern Religious Use of Psychedelics and its Legal Protection, Demands, Confusion, and Potential Expansion”

*In the US, there is court precedent that has granted exemptions from the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA) that has permitted specific religious communities to use their sacramental substances, which would otherwise be prohibited, as a result of their right to religious exercise protected by laws, such as the 1st Amendment and pursuant to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and state analogs. In fact, RFRA was enacted in response to a U.S. Supreme Court case that failed to protect sacramental use of a controlled substance as religious exercise. In this rising tide of underground ritualistic use of psychedelics, the definition of religion is certain to be challenged and potentially redefined. Where legal protection of religion is explicitly intended to protect the religious minority, it is unsurprising to see many individuals and communities who comfortably self-proclaim the spiritual use of psychedelics begin to identify as engaged in religious exercise. Previously, the courts have prevented their own evaluation of whether religious beliefs are “mistaken or insubstantial”, with some circuits finding sufficiency where beliefs are in the believer’s “own scheme of things, religious,” but sincerity remains a factual determination. So, what is enough to constitute a sincere religious belief system and church under US laws? What is a psychedelic church’s congregation (a requirement for church existence by the IRS) and community offerings in modern society? And, is it reasonable to apply certain existing requirements of the RFRA religious use analysis, such as existence of ceremony to demonstrate sincerity, a quasi-medical health screening process prior to such ceremonial use, or proof that participants in ceremonies are not attempting to circumvent the controlled substances laws? Ultimately, the question of how “religion” is practiced and legally defined today, particularly in the context of the religious use of controlled substances, will need to be addressed by the US government and may be shaped by those who are engaged in these ceremonies and how they articulate their beliefs.*

Allison Hoots is principal attorney at Hoots Law Practice PLLC. She has had a diverse experience practicing law, including in the legal areas of employment, corporate/business, employee benefits, tax, intellectual property, and right to religious exercise and advising churches’ on operation and limiting liability in the religious use of sacraments. She is a member of Chacruna’s Council for the Protection of Sacred Plants and the lead author of *Chacruna’s Guide to RFRA and Best Practices for Psychedelic Plant Medicine Churches*. Allison is also President of Sacred Plant Alliance, Inc., a self-regulating organization and professional society of spiritual practitioners with religious communities dedicated to the advancement of the ceremonial use of psychedelic sacraments within the United States.



## Brad Stoddard, McDaniel College

“Curating the Entheogenic Underground”

*Scholars informed by critical thought have a growing awareness that religious freedom laws don’t simply empower or restrain religion; rather, they “produce” religion, as the state creates and interprets the laws that, for legal purposes, constitute religion. Building off this central insight, this paper will explore the various ways that laws pertaining to religious freedom create the entheogenic underground, where individual practitioners and communities embrace models of religiosity that are not recognized as such by the law.*

*This paper is based on three years of ethnographic research in various entheogenic communities and with various entheogenic practitioners. Some of these communities and practitioners have attempted to model “religion” as recognized by the courts. To that end, they typically hire attorneys who help them file the paperwork that incorporates them as legal churches. These attorneys also instruct their clients to create entheogenic communities that reflect the courts’ understanding of religion as articulated in cases like *United States v. Meyers and Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente União do Vegetal*. This modeling requires these clients to modify their communities to conform to dominant models of religiosity. For this reason (among others), many entheogenic practitioners and communities choose not to make what they identify as concessions. Instead, they deliberately embrace what they contend are different models of religion and spirituality, models that require them to operate in the underground. In other words, these communities and practitioners feel forced into the underground by the very laws that are designed to protect and empower religious freedom. These communities and practitioners are the primary focus of my paper.*

Brad Stoddard is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at McDaniel College in Westminster, MD. He is the former president of the North American Association for the Study of Religion. He is the author of *Spiritual Entrepreneurs: Florida’s Faith-Based Prisons and the American Carceral State* (UNC Press) and *The Production of Entheogenic Communities in the United States* (in contract with Cambridge University Press). He has also edited, coedited, or coauthored four additional books and has published several dozen additional publications, including his most recent publications, “Entheogens: Psychedelic Religion in the United States,” parts one and two.



## Tarryl Janik, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

“Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church of Mother Earth v. The DEA: Religious Sincerity and Situational Adjustments in the Process of Defining a Church and a Plant”

*Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church of Mother Earth Inc. (Soul Quest)—a domestic non-profit corporation based in Orlando Florida—self identifies as a neo-shamanic Christian syncretic religion whose central sacrament is an Amazonian plant medicine called ayahuasca. Ayahuasca, in the United States is an illegal schedule I controlled substance that contains N dimethyltryptamine or DMT and is consumed by church members as a means of not only communing with the divine, but also as a way to heal a variety of psychosomatic conditions and illnesses. What sets Soul Quest apart from other American ayahuasca churches such as Santo Daime and União do Vegetal is the fact that they are operating without the approved religious exemption status of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In 2016 Soul Quest was “invited” by the DEA to apply for religious exemption and was later denied exemption for “a lack of religious sincerity” as well as not conforming to proper storage and importation protocols in the Controlled Substance Act of 1970. In this paper, I will provide an overview of the case and closely examine the ways in which Soul Quest strategically situates itself within the legal landscape that they seek to become a legalized church. I pay attention to the process by which Soul Quest undertakes to demonstrate their practice and belief in terms that will conform to the State’s idea of what “church-ness” looks like and how sincere belief should be demonstrated in terms the law will find legible.*

Tarryl Janik has a PhD in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and his fieldwork is based in Guyana, South America, and Orlando, Florida. His areas of interest are the anthropology of shamanism, entheogenic sects and psychedelic religions in the United States, the anthropology of law, and Indigenous studies.



## Mike Marinacci, Author, *Psychedelic Cults and Outlaw Churches*

“Psychedelic Sects: A Brief History and Taxonomy of Entheogen-Using Religious Groups in North America”

*Over the last century, a subculture of churches and sects dedicated to the sacramental use of entheogens has emerged in North America. Originating with the peyote-using Native American Church’s incorporation in 1918, these groups have sought to be recognized by both courts and the public as legitimate organized expressions of religious freedom.*

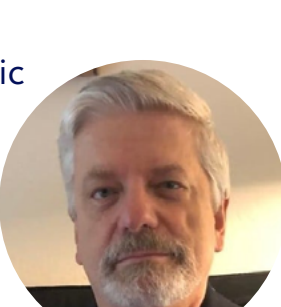
*This presentation opens with a short history of organized Indigenous peyotism, and its century-long—and ultimately victorious—struggle to establish itself as a legally-recognized religion. Non-American peyote groups, and their less-successful efforts to obtain this status, are also briefly examined.*

*From there, the focus shifts to the postwar emergence of a spiritual underground dedicated to the use of LSD. The beliefs and doings of LSD-using churches during the Sixties and Seventies, from Timothy Leary’s League for Spiritual Discovery to more obscure groups, are described. Sects that dodged legal troubles by using non-prohibited psychoactive substances as sacraments are also covered.*

*Cannabis, a plant with a long history of sacramental usage in the Old World, is the next subtopic. Sixties cannabis churches, a Seventies homegrown Rastafarian movement, and contemporary cannabis sects are considered, along with the impact of decreasing legal prohibitions on the plant.*

*Finally, the presentation examines the rise of ayahuasca- and psilocybin-based churches, and the increasing acceptance of these entheogens as legitimate therapeutic and spiritual agents. The conclusion predicts the gradual movement of these groups towards mainstream legitimacy, and recommends more research of their histories, beliefs, and activities.*

Mike Marinacci is an independent scholar, and an expert on psychedelic spiritual groups and nontraditional American religious sects. He is the author of *California Jesus and Mysterious California* and coauthor of the bestselling *Weird California*. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.



## Psychedelic Spirituality & Indigenous Traditions

### Osiris González Romero, University of Saskatchewan

“Xochipilli: psychoactive plants, game and ritual in Aztec worldview”

*This paper aims to display a systematic analysis of the information about Xochipilli—the deity of flowers, happiness, song, games, pleasure, and fertility—founded in codices and historical sources. The first section focuses on the symbolic links between Xochipilli, “the nobleman who gives flowers,” and the psychoactive plants used by the Aztecs. The second section focuses on analyzing rituals and ceremonies consecrated to Xochipilli. It is a divinity revered by the nobles and principals and the various guilds of artists such as musicians, singers, and weavers. In section three, the sacredness of the game will be addressed, especially ritual games such as patolli and tlachtli, the ball game. In section four, the song to Xochipilli will be presented and analyzed. Regarding methodology, it has been necessary to apply an interdisciplinary research methodology to relate the information in the written sources about Xochipilli with the images found in the codices and sculptures. In order to carry out the analysis required in this research, it has been necessary to apply diverse methodologies from disciplines such as historiography, iconography, and philology. The hypothesis of this research argues that in order to affirm that it is a deity linked to joy, singing, play, flowers, and fertility, it is necessary to take into consideration: (a) The iconographic analysis of the representations found in the codices; & (b) The study of the rituals consecrated during the xochihuitl festivity. The results provided by this analysis will provide sufficient elements to understand the role of this divinity in the Aztec worldview more broadly.*

Osiris Sinuhé González Romero earned his PhD at Leiden University, in the Faculty of Archaeology – Heritage of Indigenous Peoples. He finished a postdoctoral fellowship on “cognitive liberty and the psychedelic humanities” at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He is member of the Philosophy and Psychedelics Research Group at University of Exeter, UK, and collaborates with the Chacruna Institute for Psychedelic Plant Medicines. He is a founding member of Via Synapsis, an academic society focused on the organization of the University Congress of Psychoactive Substances hosted by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Faculty of Philosophy. He has published several papers on psychedelics.



### Colin Simonds, Queen’s University

“Intersections with Indigeneity in Psychedelic Buddhism”

*In the last decade, the renewed interest in psychedelics in the general population has spilled over into Buddhist communities where prominent teachers are beginning to incorporate these contemplative technologies into their practice. In these contemporary iterations of Psychedelic Buddhism, Buddhism is intersecting with indigeneity in unprecedented ways. This paper will critically analyze two approaches to Psychedelic Buddhism in the work of Mike Crowley and Spring Washam to tease out how these teachers think about, talk about, and engage with the indigenous communities from which their practices originate. It will first establish what a colonial and a decolonial approach to psychedelics looks like with reference to the work of Yuria Celidwen. Then, it will evaluate these two Psychedelic Buddhisms in terms the language they use, how they position indigenous knowledge in their teaching, their relationship with indigenous communities, and their commitment to indigenous lifeworlds. Ultimately, this paper will argue that Crowley’s Psychedelic Buddhism uses pseudo-history to justify an extractive relationship with psychedelics in both Tibetan and American indigenous communities. It uses exclusively western terminology to describe psychedelics, speaks on behalf of Tibetans, works outside of indigenous communities, and uses a logic of bricolage to piece together its own lifeworld from appropriated aspects of Tibetan, indigenous, and contemporary psychedelic cultures. Contrastingly, Washam presents an example of positive engagement with indigeneity in Psychedelic Buddhist contexts. She uses indigenous terminology in her presentation of plant medicine, centers her Shipibo teachers in her discourse, has a strong history of working within the religious structures and social expectations of indigenous communities, and syncretically presents both Buddhist and indigenous teachings as equally valid. This paper will thus conclude by forwarding Washam’s engagement with indigeneity as an exemplar for how Western religious groups can integrate psychedelics into their practice without perpetuating neo-colonial relationships with indigenous communities.*

Colin H. Simonds is the Baker Post-Doctoral Fellow of Contemporary Asian Religion at Queen’s University at Kingston. His work focuses on the intersection of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and contemporary ethics with a specific attention to the more-than-human world. He has published on a wide range of topics including Buddhist environmental ethics, animal ethics, the ethics of AI, and psychedelic practice. His most recent work on Buddhist psychedelics, titled “View, meditation action: A Tibetan framework to inform psychedelic-assisted therapy,” can found in the *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* and analyzes clinical psychedelic modalities through the lens of Tibetan Buddhist contemplative frameworks.



### Alex Gearin, The University of Hong Kong

“Psychedelic Atmospheric: Mood and Meaning in Psychedelic Healing Spaces”

*This paper develops the concept of “psychedelic atmospheric,” exploring how space and environment play crucial roles in shaping the mood and atmosphere within various psychedelic healing settings. Central is the idea that psychedelics are not just mood-enhancing molecules but are significantly influenced by their surroundings. Drawing on ethnographic research in ayahuasca drinking settings in shamanic tourism Peru and neo-shamanic Australia, this work explores the roles of materialities at the interplay between physical settings and mood and atmosphere in psychedelic healing spaces. It examines how each space’s socio-cultural and cosmological significances intertwine with psychedelic experiences to modulate mood and atmosphere. Psychedelic atmospheric provides a framework for understanding the intricate assemblages of sensory, spatial, environmental, and cosmological/meaning factors that can shape the different moods and atmospheres of psychedelic healing. The paper also considers when psychedelic healing atmospheres become unsettled, break down, and transmogrify.*

Dr. Alex K. Gearin, Ph.D., is a medical anthropologist researching psychedelic substance practices across the globe. He has published on the intercultural ethics of shamanic tourism in Peru, spirituality and individualism among psychedelic healing groups in Australia, cultural dimension of psychedelic awe in mainland China, and metaphor and therapeutic literacies in psychedelic medicine narratives. His forthcoming book *Global Ayahuasca: Wondrous Visions and Modern Worlds* (Stanford University Press, 2024) explores the psychoactive plant brew ayahuasca among retreats in Peru, Australia, and China. His work is featured in *Current Anthropology*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Anthropology Today*, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, MIT Press, and other outlets.



### Mason Marks, Harvard Law School and Florida State University

“How medical psychedelic laws collide with spiritual and Indigenous practices”

*Many US cities and states are implementing psychedelic policy reforms. This article asks how the decisionmakers behind them should engage spiritual and Indigenous communities. It analyzes relevant political, legal, and regulatory processes, emphasizing the roles of spiritual and Indigenous groups such as the Mazatec, the Native American Church, and newer spiritual communities. The author reviews primary sources, including campaign materials, statutes, legislative hearings, and other public records.*

*The article concludes that psychedelic campaigns, statutes, and regulators often reference spiritual or Indigenous communities. However, they typically fail to meaningfully involve them in campaign decisions, legislative drafting, and administrative rulemaking. Oftentimes, policymakers consult spiritual and Indigenous communities after legislation has been drafted and submitted to the state, when there is no time to incorporate their feedback. When drafting the Oregon Psilocybin Services Act, the authors reserved only one seat on a seventeen-member advisory board to represent Indigenous perspectives. While other seats were promptly filled, that seat remained vacant for over a year. Colorado decisionmakers repeated this pattern through the Natural Medicine Health Act. An amendment promised to reduce barriers to spiritual and Indigenous participation in Colorado’s psychedelic industry, but only “when financially feasible.” It required the creation of an Indigenous task force to advise regulators, which remains unformed over six months later. Meanwhile, though the original Act allowed spiritual and Indigenous practitioners to engage in unpaid advertising and be compensated for their services, the amendment eliminated those options while retaining them for healthcare professionals.*

*After analyzing these and other examples, the article describes how policymakers should engage spiritual and Indigenous communities. They should engage them early, before legislation is drafted; give them meaningful representation on boards and committees, delaying action until adequate representation is achieved; and give them equal rights, and their views equal weight, relative to conventional medical practitioners and perspectives.*

Professor Marks is a medical doctor and law professor who teaches Psychedelic Law at Harvard Law School and Florida State University. An expert on drug policy, his research on psychedelics has been published by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *JAMA*, *Nature Medicine*, the *Harvard Law Review Forum*, and other leading journals. His work has been featured by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, and other national outlets. His forthcoming book on psychedelic law is under contract with Yale University Press.



## Psychedelic Spirituality & the Underground II

### Rachel Harris, Author, *Swimming in the Sacred* and *Listening to Ayahuasca*

“Swimming in the Sacred”

*Swimming in the Sacred* is based on in-depth interviews with the people who have the most experience working with the full array of psychedelics—fifteen women elders who have worked underground for thirty or forty years. Rachel describes themes from their childhood spiritual experiences to apprenticeships that shine a light on how these medicines are used in sacred ceremony. From the book: “The women guides of the psychedelic underground have been in relationship with these medicines for decades, providing a sacred container for entheogenic journeys. We need to hear from them now more than ever.”

Rachel Harris, PhD, is the author of *Swimming in the Sacred: Wisdom from the Psychedelic Underground* and *Listening to Ayahuasca*. A psychologist who has been in private practice for 40 years, she spent 10 years in an academic research department where she published more than 40 scientific studies in peer-reviewed journals and received a National Institutes of Health New Investigator’s Award. Rachel splits her time between an island in Maine and the San Francisco Bay Area. Visit her online at [www.swimminginthesacred.com](http://www.swimminginthesacred.com)



### Michelle Lhoq, Journalist & Author, *WEED: Everything You Want to Know But Are Always Too Stoned to Ask*

“Is God a DJ?”

*This presentation will be a critical analysis of a particularly well-known dance-scene meme that features a screenshot of a man on a TV talk show who “believes that ‘Trance’ is God’s music,” along with other prevalent spiritual tropes/cliches in the rave scene (“God is a DJ,” the club as a “church”), as a way to conceptualize the shifting paradigms of contemporary drug culture and nightlife’s enduring quest for meaning.*

Michelle Lhoq is a Singapore-born, LA-based independent journalist covering the intersection of underground raves and psychedelics, with a particular interest in the shifting paradigms of counterculture in the era of drug legalization. Her work has appeared in *The Guardian*, *GQ*, *New York Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, and she is the author of *Weed: Everything You Want to Know But Are Too Stoned To Ask* (Penguin Random House). She chronicles her forays into the frontlines of today’s drug and party culture in her newsletter, *Rave New World*.



### J. Christian Greer, Stanford University

“Beyond the Counter-Culture: Towards a People’s History of Psychedelic Networks”

*Over the last five decades, the concept of the “counter-culture” has misled scholarship on the figures, fellowships, and movements that have animated modern psychedelic history in the US. A piece of sociological jargon, “counter-culture” lacks historical specificity (has there been only one counter-culture, or many?), casts psychedelic networks as a purely oppositional force, and, most significantly, homogenizes a heterogeneous mix of communities into a single grouping. As I will show, this concept should be abandoned as an artifact of the Drug War. In its place, this paper introduces a new framework for the study of modern psychedelic history that takes a bottom-up approach, underscoring the complex differences that have distinguished modern psychedelic imaginaries.*

*My argument is that the networks dedicated to psychedelic exploration were not a feature of the so-called “counter-culture.” On the contrary, these communities responded to, re-worked, and revolutionized culture itself. The so-called “counter-culture” is a poorly defined way to talk about the explosion of spiritual, artistic, activist, and scientific activity that followed the popularization of psychedelics in the mid-1960s. Tracing the extent of this cultural transformation is beyond the scope of this paper, so I will limit myself to three blind spots in the scholarship: 1) the contributions of women, the LGBTQ+ community, and people of color; 2) the expansion of psychedelic communities from 1970s to the present; and 3) the diversification of psychedelic institutions.*

*While more empirical research is needed to understand the proliferation of psychedelic imaginaries over the last half century, such work is secondary to elaborating how these ideas have been written out of the history books. Accordingly, the paper concludes by offering new terminological conventions that challenge the conceptual basis of what I term the “Drug War epistemology,” by speaking to the diversity of identities, social structures, and ideals of psychedelic people.*

Dr. J. Christian Greer is a scholar of Religious Studies with a special focus on psychedelic culture. While a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Divinity School, he led a series of seminars on global psychedelic spirituality, which culminated in the creation of the Harvard Psychedelic Walking Tour, a free audio guide detailing how the Harvard community has shaped the modern history of psychedelic culture. He is also the co-founder, and currently the co-chair of the Drugs and Religion program unit at the American Academy of Religion. His latest book, *Kumano Kodo: Pilgrimage to Powerspots* (co-authored with Dr. Michelle Oing) analyzes the pilgrimage folklore associated with the rainforests of Japan’s Kii Peninsula. His forthcoming book, *Angelheaded Hipsters: Psychedelic Militancy in Nineteen Eighties North America* (Oxford University Press), explores the expansion of psychedelic culture within fanzine networks in the late Cold War era. He has recently launched “The Psychedelic Universe: Global Perspectives on Higher Consciousness,” an intensive summer school seminar hosted every June by the University of Amsterdam’s Graduate School of Social Sciences. He is currently a lecturer at Stanford University.



### Jeffrey Breau, Harvard Divinity School and Center for the Study of World Religions

“With Best Intention: Psychedelic intention setting at Burning Man”

*This paper explores the role “intention setting” rituals can play in shaping spiritual psychedelic experience. Acting with intention or setting intention is a common practice in the New Age, psychedelic underground, and clinical psychedelic research: Deepak Chopra lists intention as one of the “seven spiritual laws of success” (Chopra, 1994), Vice News details “How to Set an Intention for Your Drug Trip” (Weiss, 2021), and the MAPS protocol for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy instructs therapists to set intentions with their patients (Mithoefer, 2016). As such, intention — as a concept and practice — is one that bridges psychological, spiritual, and recreational psychedelic communities. Yet, there has been little research into how intention and intention setting is deployed and conceived of within these communities. This paper enters that gap by discussing an intention setting ritual performed by a psychedelic spiritual community practicing in a “recreational” setting. Observations are drawn from ethnographic fieldwork at the 2023 Burning Man festival and in-depth interviews with a group of self-identified “spiritual but not religious” practitioners using psychedelics spiritually. With a focus on the group’s opening intention setting ceremony, this paper discusses the nuanced ways intention is understood by participants, how signaling intention can shape a psychedelic experience, and intention setting’s function as a ritual mediator between the secular and spiritual.*

Jeffrey Breau is a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School and a research assistant with the Center for the Study of World Religions. His work focuses on novel psychedelic spiritualities and psychedelic chaplaincy; his current project is an ethnography of self-identified “spiritual but not religious” practitioners who use psychedelics in “recreational settings” as part of their spiritual practice. Prior to Harvard, Jeffrey managed an ashram in New Mexico and before that was a project manager at Google.



## Psychedelic Spirituality & Ancient Traditions

**Geoffrey Smith, University of Texas at Austin**

“From Messiah to Mushroom: A Brief History of John Marco Allegro’s *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*”

*In 1970 John Marco Allegro published The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross, in which he argued that Jesus of Nazareth was a mushroom. The Gospels, he claimed, are not biographies of a teacher who lived and breathed, but troves of sacred mushroom knowledge written down in coded language by members of a drug cult. Allegro’s thesis caught many off guard, especially since in his earlier work on the Dead Sea Scrolls he seemed to regard Jesus as a historical figure. This paper will explore the evolution of Allegro’s thinking about Jesus from 1964-1970 on the basis of archival research I have done in the United States and the United Kingdom. We will discover that Allegro’s thinking about Jesus evolved over time, and that he arrived at his mushroom hypothesis years after he initially began work on what would become The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross.*

Geoffrey Smith is currently serving as Director of the Institute for the Study of Antiquity and Christian Origins (ISAC). He is an Associate Professor and Fellow of the Louise Farmer Boyer Chair in Biblical Studies. He received a PhD in Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity from Princeton University in 2013. He has published three books: *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2015); *Valentinian Christianity: Texts and Translations* (University of California Press, 2020); and (coauthored with Brent Landau) *The Secret Gospel of Mark: A Rogue Scholar, A Controversial Gospel of Jesus, and the Fierce Debate Over Its Authenticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023). His research has been covered by several media outlets, including CNN, the BBC, and the *New York Times*.



**Anna Sierka, Tel Aviv University**

“Nuts and Cannabis—On Shaping Ex-stases”

*Is there any common ground on which legendary hermits dwelling in the deserts of Arabia can encounter Walter Benjamin and a contemporary truth-seeker of Cannabis Torah? If we assume the existence of such a Foucauldian heterotopia, we may also embrace the possibility of experiencing the altered states of consciousness elicited by psychoactive substances. The paper seeks to benefit from analyzing three types of discourse revolving around the use of psychedelics: elements of sacred pharmacology incorporated into kabbalistic teachings and focusing on the curative consumption of the marking-nut (known as balādhur—a designation derived from the Sanskrit term bhallātaka), Benjamin’s intoxication experiments documented in *On Hashish*, and Yoseph Leib Ibn Mardachya’s journey to discover the Jewish spiritual tradition of marijuana depicted in his *Cannabis Chassidis: The Ancient and Emerging Torah of Drugs*. Benjamin replaced balādhur, a drug applied by medieval ascetics with the intention of opening their hearts (petihat lev, ‘opening of the heart’) and thus boosting the effectiveness of their daily studies, with hashish, which provided him a key to understanding Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe. By smoking marijuana, the American teenager Yoseph Leib discovered an ecstatic vent to escape the problems of adolescence and delve into the spiritual life of Israel. I propose to ponder on their ex-stases from a phenomenological angle, as a movement of self-penetration directed inward, which, in the sense of transgressing the boundaries between the self and the other (thus as a spiritual experience of the restored whole), also involves inter-penetration. Suchly perceived internalized exstases are often de facto enstases predicated upon indistinctiveness between the self and the other in the coda of mystical union.*

Anna Sierka earned her PhD at the University of Munich with a doctoral dissertation focusing on the adaptation of divine chariot (merkavah) imagery known from the medieval Ashkenazi esoteric sources in Lurianic Kabbalah. She has been a Golda Meir Postdoctoral Fellow and a Minerva Fellow in the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica at the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard. Her research explores shifts in esoteric and kabbalistic doctrines, their philosophical inspirations, and bifurcated anchoring detectable both in other domains of knowledge, for instance medicine and astronomy, as well as in folk culture.



**Finnian M.M. Gerety, Brown University**

“The Soma Question: Vedic Traditions and the Historiography of Psychedelics”

*Historical narratives have as much to tell us about ourselves and modernity as they do about societies and cultures of the past—and the grand narrative of psychedelics in the ancient world is no exception. In this paper, the question “what is soma?” invites reflection on the historiography of psychedelics in relation to Vedic traditions of early India. The Vedas, founding Sanskrit texts of Hinduism (ca. 1200-600 BCE), document the sacramental use of soma, a plant-derived drink said to confer power, inspiration, and immortality, as well as access to altered states and divine visions—yet soma’s botanical identity remains contested. Engaging recent work by the cultural historian James McHugh, I draw attention to the way that shifting candidates proposed for the authentic soma of Vedic India have neatly tracked trends in the drug zeitgeist since the 1950s. The soma of the past, it seems, is entangled with psychedelic trends of the present. In the absence of archeobotanical evidence, is it possible to recover soma’s identity at all? I conclude by considering prospects for future research, emphasizing ritual studies and ethnographies of surviving Vedic traditions in south India.*

Finnian M.M. Gerety is a historian of South Asian religions focusing on ritual, sound, and Sanskrit texts. He earned a PhD. in South Asian Studies from Harvard University, where he studied Vedic traditions, including sacrificial use of the psychoactive sacrament soma; he now teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University. Finn’s forthcoming book for Oxford University Press, *This Whole World is OM: Sound, Silence, and the Sacred Syllable in Early India*, is the first-ever academic monograph on OM, the preeminent mantra of Asian traditions.

