

A Modern History of Psychedelics (in 20 Minutes)

Susan Abbey, MD, FRCPC

Disclosures

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Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. describe some of the complex sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives that colour contemporary responses to the current psychedelic renaissance
2. describe Canada's role in early psychedelic research



“History is not the past
but a map of the past,
drawn from a
particular point of
view, to be useful to
the modern traveller.”

Henry Glassie

During the decades during which they have been known in contemporary Western culture, the psychedelic drugs have been construed as agents that might assist in psychotherapy, produce spiritual transformation, enhance creativity, foster social chaos and moral breakdown, provide access to unexamined realms of a multifaceted reality, or provoke derangement, delusion and toxic psychoses.”

Mangini M. A Short, Strange Trip: LSD Politics, Publicity, and Mythology –
From Discovery to Criminalization. In CS Grob, J Grigsby. *Handbook of
Medical Hallucinogens*, New York: Guilford Press, 2021, p 68

...the capacity of LSD and some other psychedelic drugs to exteriorize otherwise invisible phenomena and processes and make them the subject of scientific investigation gives these substances a unique potential as a diagnostic instrument and as research tools for the exploration of the human mind

Grof, S. *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research*, 1975 p.32



“After a prolonged period of neglect, psychedelics are once again a topic of mainstream societal interest, and psychedelic therapy is reemerging, but decades of misinformation and disinformation about these substances present a formidable body of psychedelic mythology and propaganda that need to be considered.”

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Native American Indigenous Church

- Ingestion of peyote as a religious sacrament with sacred and healing components
- Incorporated 1918
- “The white man goes to his church house and talks about Jesus, the Indian goes into his tipi and talks to Jesus.”

Quanah Parker
Comanche Chief
(cited in Hagen 1993)

- “A Culture’s Catalyst” – Fannie Kahan Edited by Erika Dyck – University of Manitoba Press, 2016



Late 19th & Early 20th C

- European interest in pharmacological properties of psychoactive plants and the isolation and characterization of their constituents
- 1897 – Heffter – isolated mescaline
- 1897 – Havelock Ellis – “unique, vast and enchanted realm(s) of the mind”
- 1897 – British Medical Journal – “New Inferno” – Ellis was castigated for his role in potentially drawing in those seeking new experience

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Late 19th & Early 20th C

- Louis Lewin – 1924 – developed classification system for psychoactive plants:
 - Inebriantia (inebriants)
 - Exitantia (stimulants)
 - Euphoric (euphorants)
 - Hypnotica (tranquilizers)
 - Phantastica (hallucinogens)

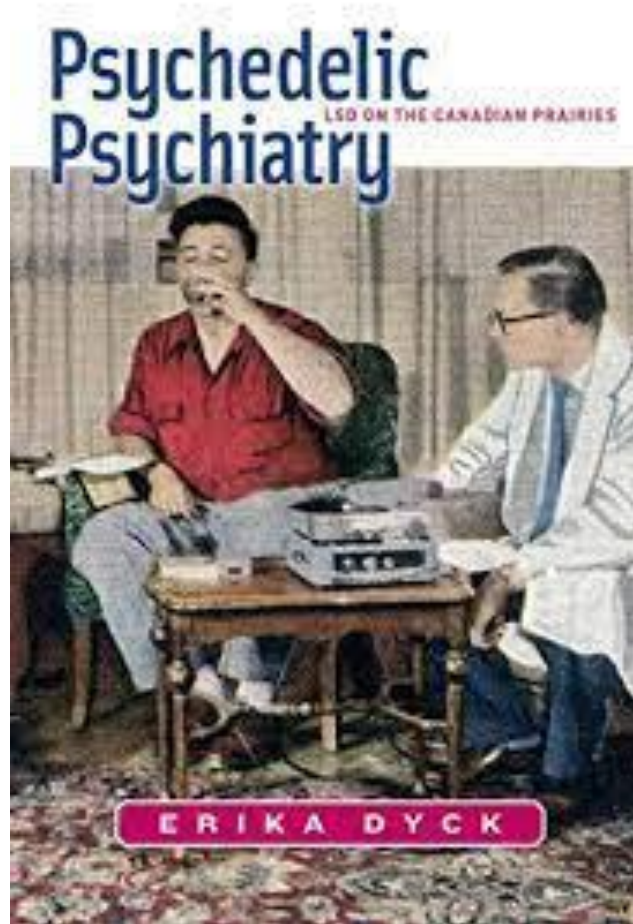
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LSD & “Bicycle Day” – April 19, 1943

- 1943 psychoactive effects of LSD discovered by Albert Hofmann working for Sandoz Pharmaceuticals (Basel) – synthesizing ergot as a circulatory stimulant
- April 16th unintentional ingestion of ~ 20 mcg
“an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures, extraordinary shapes with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colours”
- April 19th intentional ingestion of 250 mcg → intense (and at times quite distressing) experience



Canada in the 1950's – An International Leader in Psychedelic Research



Canada & The Rise of Psychedelic Medicine

- Dr. Humphrey Osmond came to head Saskatchewan Hospital – Weybourne in 1951
 - 1951 paper on the similarities between mescaline and schizophrenia – had been known before for LSD and mescaline – transmethylation hypothesis
- Dr. Abram Hoffer recruited in 1950 to develop a research program - met with Osmond and a collaboration was born

Why Saskatchewan?

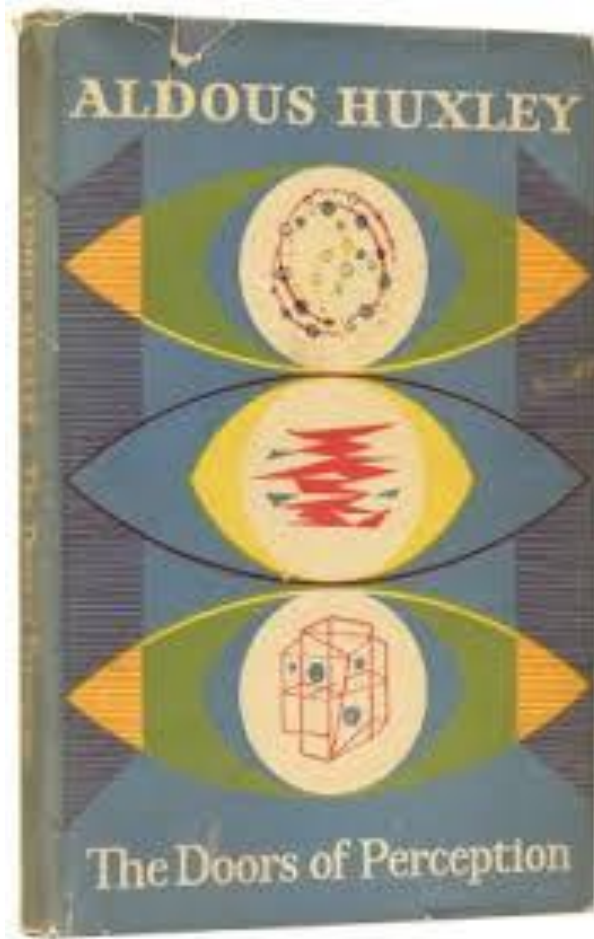
- No organizational/regulatory infrastructure
- Publicly funded healthcare
- CCF (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation) political party & its leader Tommy Douglas encouraged “bold, innovative ideas in health care”

Barber PW. *Psychedelic Revolutionaries: LSD and the Birth of Hallucinogenic Research*,
University of Regina, Press, 2018, p. 34

LSD as a “Psychotomimetic” or Model for Psychotic Illness

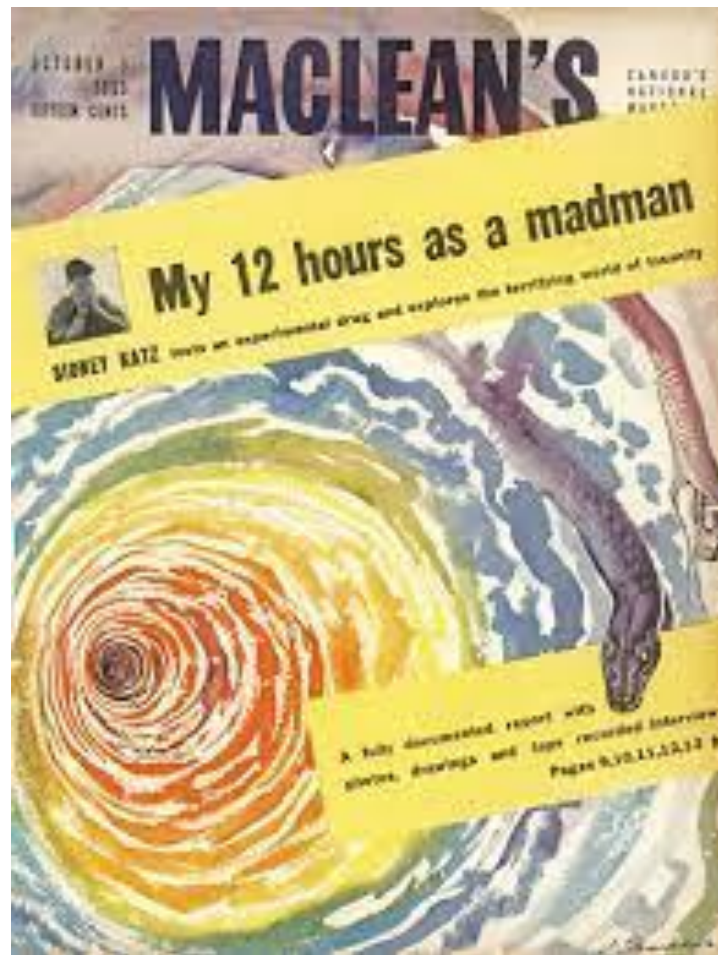
- Search for a biological cause of psychosis
 - Deliriant
 - Psychotomimetic
 - Psychotolytic
- Contrast with dominant view of psychoanalysis of the dynamic roots of psychosis and the “schizophrenogenic mother”
- “Hallucinogens” (Hoffer, Osmond & Smythies 1954) – mescaline, LSD, ibogaine, hashish, harmaine
- Use of LSD as a means of increasing health care workers empathy for psychotic patients
- Increasingly came to the view that LSD did not produce psychosis but rather transcendence – “psychedelic” Osmond

APA 1953 - Osmond, Huxley & Mescaline



- Description of Huxley's experiences with mescaline provided by Humphrey Osmond during a visit to Los Angeles for the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting

1953 – Sidney Katz



1957 – Life – Gordon Wasson

“Seeking the Magic Mushroom”



“Psychedelic”

- Osmond introduced the term
 - 1956 – letter to Aldous Huxley
 - 1957 - New York Academy of Sciences
 - Derived from Greek = “manifesting the mind”
 - “clear, euphonius, and uncontaminated by other associations”

Psychedelics as an Alternative Psychotherapeutic Treatment

- Initially thought that a psychotomimetic experience could 'scare alcoholics straight' - mimic DTs
- Increasing evidence that experiences related to mysticism or spirituality accounted for change
- Blewett recognized the value of transcendent experiences and the potential for healthy people to expand creativity and more fully experience their humanity and their connection with the universe

The Therapist's Own Experience with Psychedelics

- Role of therapist's personal experience with psychedelics
- “One should start with oneself” ... “unless this is done one cannot expect to make sense of someone else's communications and consequently the value of the work is greatly reduced” (Hoffer and Osmond, 1967)

Expanding Use of Psychedelics to Facilitate Psychotherapy

HANDBOOK
FOR
THE THERAPEUTIC USE OF
LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE-25
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROCEDURES

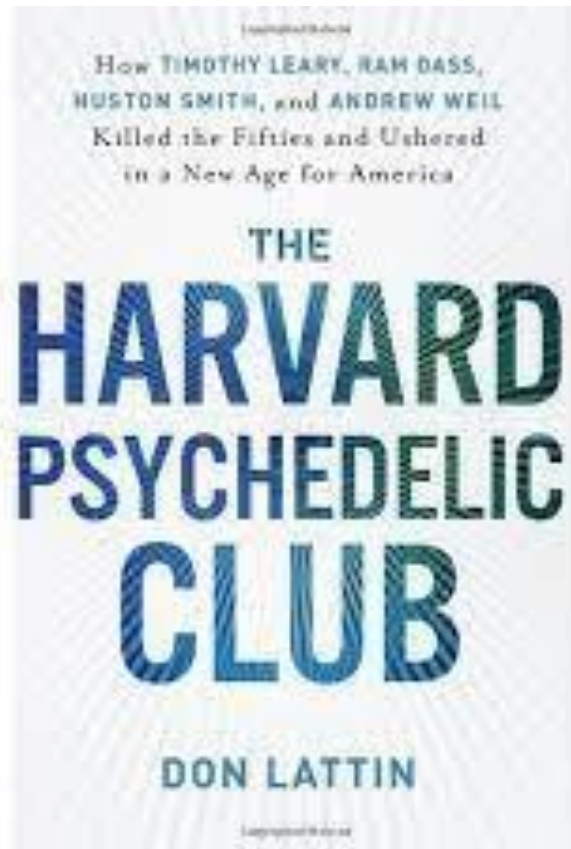
1959
D.B. BLEWETT, Ph.D. M. CHEWELOR, M.D.

OCR by MAPS • Edited by David

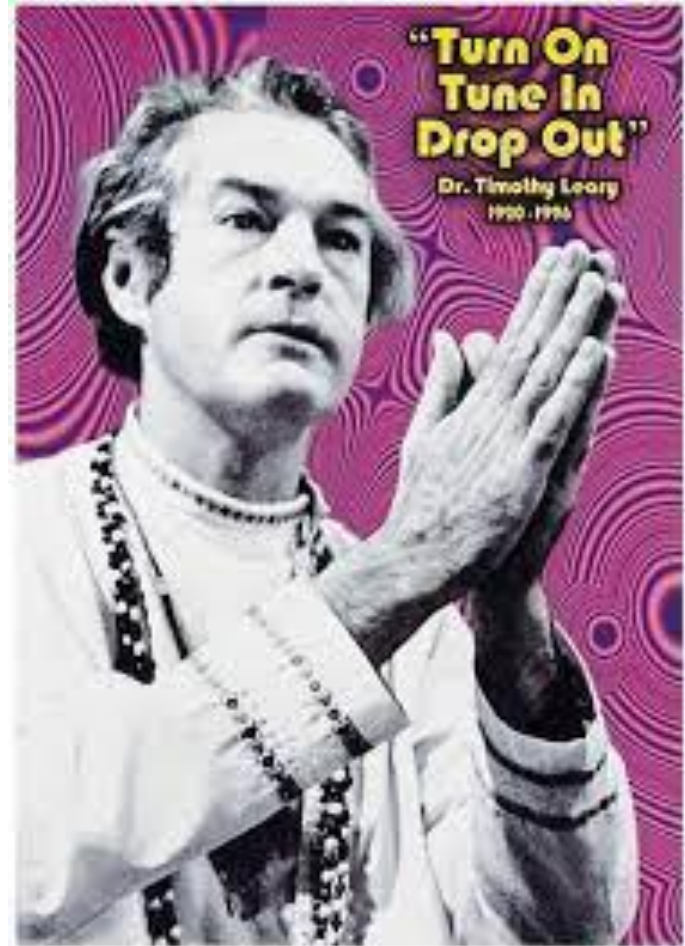
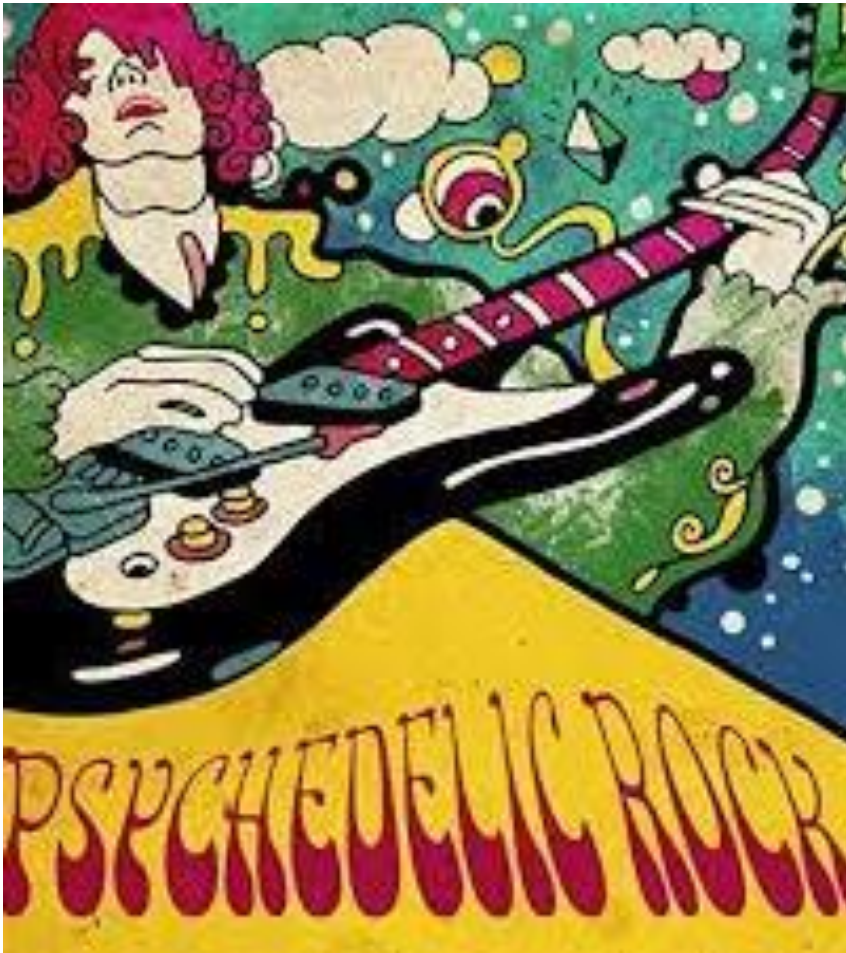
- Facilitate dynamic therapy
- Exploration of how and best to use LSD to facilitate therapy
- Individual and group therapies
- Value of mystical/transcendent experiences
- Blewett – psychedelics “are to psychology what the microscope is to biology or the telescope to astronomy”

Blewett D. *The Frontiers of Being*. New York: Award Books,
1969, p. 20

Harvard & Psychedelics – 1960 - 1963



1960's - Psychedelics and the Countercultural Movement



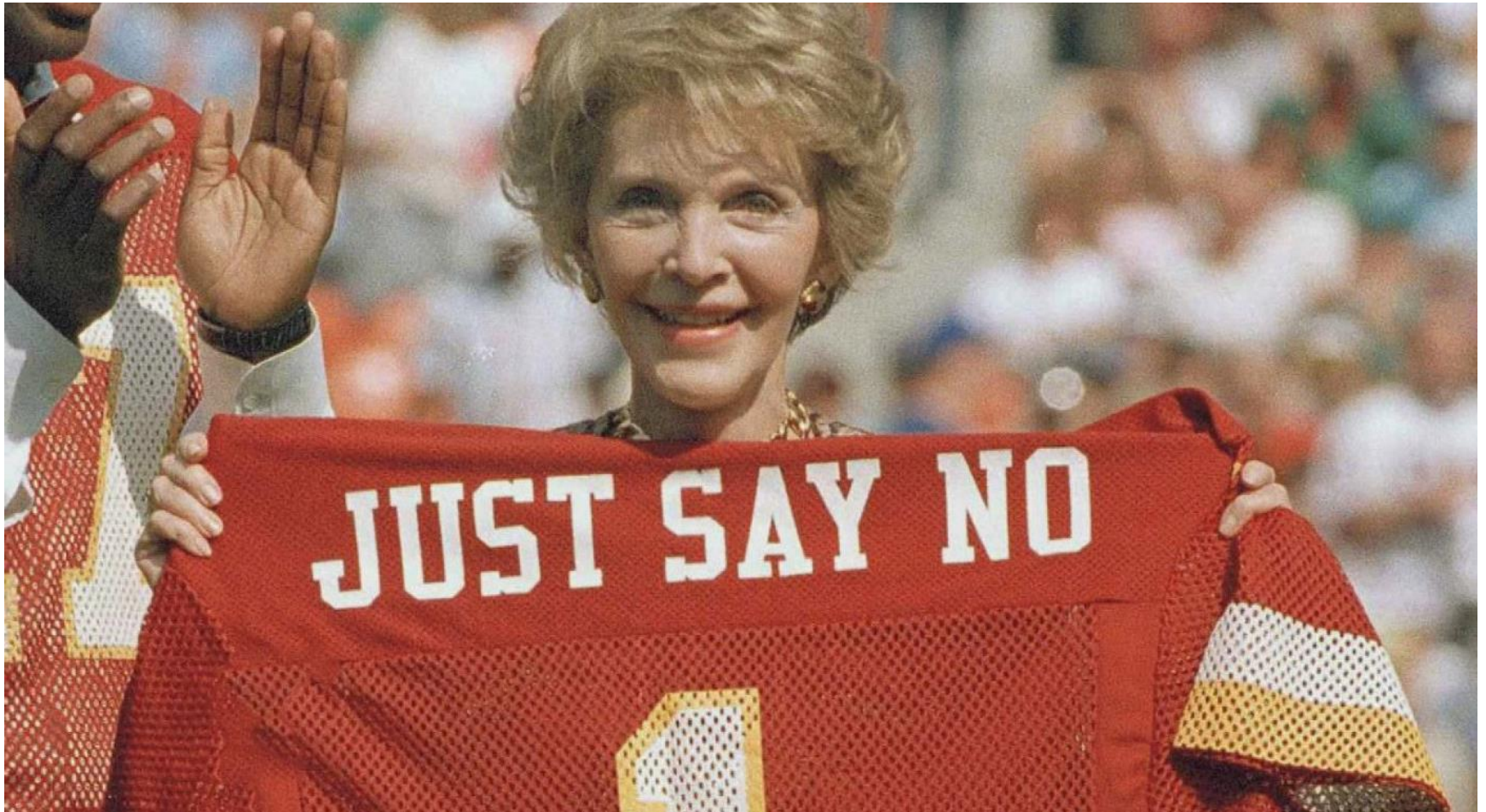
The Downfall of Psychedelics

- The entire story hasn't been written ...
- Multiple contributors
 - Opposition to the cultural changes of the 1960's – psychedelics were easiest to regulate!
 - Increasing focus on “negative” aspects of psychedelics

A black and white photograph of a newspaper headline. The text is in a large, bold, serif font, arranged in three lines: "Nixon", "Calls War", and "On Drugs". The background is a light, textured surface, possibly a newspaper page.

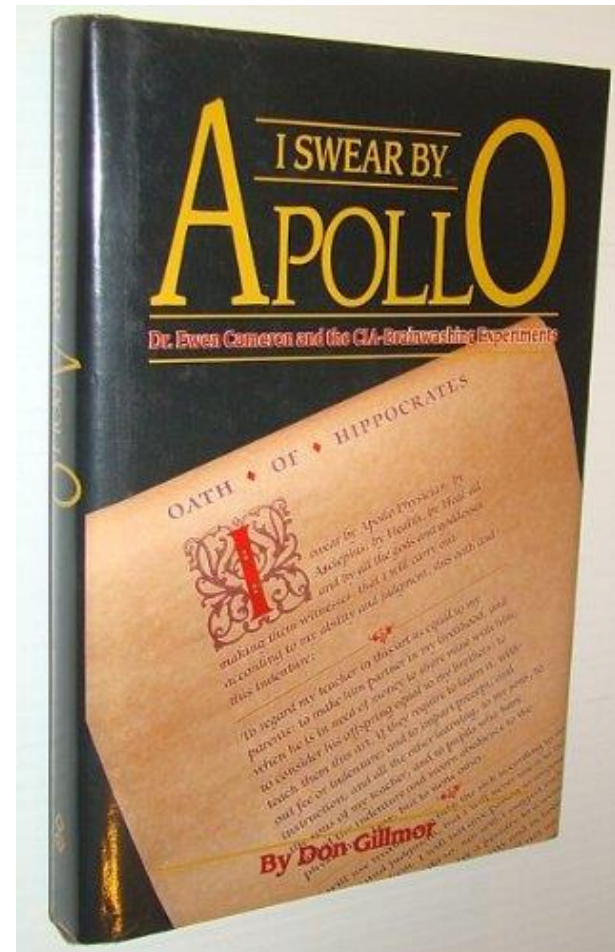
**Nixon
Calls War
On Drugs**

Ronald Reagan & The War on Drugs



The Dark Side

- Ewan Cameron, the CIA's Project MKUltra, and the Allan Memorial Institute, McGill (1957-1964)
- Series of exposes late 1980s and early 1990s



The Psychedelic Renaissance

- 1986 – MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) founded by Rick Doblin
- 1994 – DMT study
- 2010 -present – developing research programs in USA, UK, Switzerland, Brazil

The Psychedelic Renaissance

- 2018 & 2019 – FDA designates psilocybin as a “breakthrough” therapy for TRD (2018 – COMPASS Pathways) and MDD (Usona Institute)
- 2019 – present – development of psychedelic research centers at prominent universities
- 2021 – Phase III study results for MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD
- 2021 – NEJM – Psilocybin vs. escitalopram

What Haven't We Heard About in This Historical Review?

- Remarkable absence of perspectives on ethnicity, gender, intersectionalities, socioeconomic diversity
- Lack of attention to the traditional knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous traditions
- Need to focus moving forward on decolonizing our practices and making psychedelic treatments available to ALL who need them

