

To the magical Goddard graduating class of 2022!

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. Regretfully, I wasn't able to join you in person: I was double booked at two different psychedelic conferences this weekend, but ended up not rocking either of those as I got Covid (again) on re-entry from burning man last weekend. That as usual was quite an amazing experience. I help create a camp that blasts foam on naked ecstatic burners, enabling them to wash and dance together like kids, in a safe space we hold with the mantra: "nudity not lewdity". We also support the Zendo camp, which provides psychedelic harm reduction at the burn, providing a safe space with trained volunteers for burners who get a little too far out there, often in an emotional spiritual crisis kind of way, and need a place to ground out and do their inner work and navigate through to a good conclusion. And by "we" I mean the foamy homies, some of whom happen to work at a certain soap company, as no branding or commercial anything is allowed on the playa, where the burn and the magical Black Rock City manifests for a couple weeks every year. Immediate human to human experience in all our freaky weird liberated creative glory is the goal and currency of the realm there.

I also wanted to share briefly the foamy homie song that our resident Love mystic Terry Love wrote for our camp's opening ceremony. Called "One Body One Soul," it resonates to another foamy homie song, "We're All Cells in the Body of God". This time I had a speaking part at a certain point while the chorus (and song title) was sung as a mantra for a good minute by my wonderful wife Mia, and I was debating between sharing two different experiences that helped me realize our oneness with each other and the larger natural living world we are part of, which is all part of GodSelf. The one I didn't end up going with was earlier this year, I was feeding and petting our sweet puppy Appa a few months ago while deep in my nightly cannabis flow, and I flashed on petting my prior sweetest puppy Karlie who died two years ago, and then our childhood super friend Bonnie, then was seeing and feeling all the people feeding and loving their dogs in this way, and all the people and dogs in generations past, and all the humans and canines in the generations to come, all feeding and loving on each other, and I pondered and felt the Being that lives through the life death rebirth of it all, as the generations rise and fall, and thought, "Wow, when your feeding dog food, your feeding God food!" Thinking about this last night, this also is true of feeding and caring for ourselves and each other, that we're all always connected to the infinite All... one very tiny tiny mouth in GodSelf, like a tiny tiny cell in our tummies. And makes me think of that mystical Love genius who said: "As you do to the least of these, so you do unto me." May we care for and take care of each other (the title of another foamy homie song).

The experience I ended up sharing though at the opening ceremony, related in theme, was my first mushroom trip as a junior in college, where I was a Biology major and pretty agnostic after losing my childhood Christian faith when I was 13, wondering: "Why would God send his one and only Son to this one spot on Earth, what about all the Chinese people, slash all the other planets?" Didn't make that much sense. I also grew up reciting the Jewish Shema in both Hebrew and English in honor of my grandfather, and in his more universal translation, "Listen Children Eternal Father Eternally One!". Leaving alone the gendering (I prefer Mother / Her /

Goddess myself but of course both, all and beyond), it's pretty on point. The native American understanding that Creator and Creation / living miraculous nature are holy and One are what I feel at the deepest level this prayer is about. But I didn't appreciate this as a junior in college any more than the words of Jesus or any of the other spiritual giants who have sprung from and walked among all the cultures of the Earth.

But by junior year I was smoking cannabis daily and hanging in high vibration with friends listening to incredible music, which was obviously so much better than getting drunk at the bars every weekend. This was my entrée to question authority on a deep level: why on the one hand would this benign plant and sacred ally be a schedule 1 drug, with American citizens and their families and communities being shredded by the drug war machine, especially people of color; and on the other, alcohol was totally cool with all its problematic dynamics (and I'm not in favor of prohibiting alcohol)? I was also by this point growing impatient with scientific materialist reductionism on the one hand, and postmodern relativism on the other, which I was being inoculated in my classes, where human consciousness, culture and being was presented solely as epiphenomenon of physical and evolutionary processes on the one hand, and was radically culturally constructed and contingent on the other, with no deeper spiritual / universal truths.

It was in this context on my first mushroom experience, I remember looking down at my arm and thinking, what does it mean at a quantum energetic level, there's no difference between the world and myself... it's just one continuum of energy! And then I looked out the window at the world, at the trees and buildings, and realized, when I eat and poop, the world is flowing through me, I'm not even the same blood and stuff month to month or year to year; the world is pouring through me like a river, and through all beings. And all beings alive now will soon die, and another generation will be born, in a much bigger living dying rebirthing reality process than just little tiny privileged me living over here separate from a mostly dead static world out there. The whole world is alive, living and breathing, through me and everybody and every being else! The generations rise and fall like inhalations and exhalations of the Earth.

That reminds me of another vision on ibogaine, a powerful psychedelic derived from the iboga root that the pygmies have held for who knows how long, and have passed onto tribes in West Africa. In this one, I was at the beach looking at a wave about to crash, and in this wave was all of existence right now on Earth, all the people eating with their families at the table, living their lives, their struggles and joys, cities, farms, the natural world, all of it, and it was peaking up but soon to crash, and then beyond I saw swells in the water to the horizon, representing all the generations to come in their potential soon to be actually manifest realized incarnated world selves, each in turn peaking up and in turn giving way to the next, in the immensity and mystery of time and existence on this planet and star system, giving birth to life and consciousness.

And that reminds me of another experience on ibogaine when I was in low Earth orbit, and seeing all the life artists and activists fighting the unconscious machine that we default into and participate collectively in, that's ripping the world apart and driving us over the climate change cliff. And I was wondering hoping wow are we gonna make it? And wasn't certain but feeling

extra dimensional presences plugging in to help the Earth in this moment in time, and all of a sudden I saw golden light break out over the Earth in Peace Love Understanding that passeth understanding. My grandfather Dr. Bronner was holding position in low Earth orbit smiling too. And this was all part of a cosmic Christian trip, where all of creation was the incarnation, Life on the cross like a Phoenix, living dying rebirthing, suffering, struggling and flowing forward and onward, on these small planetary orbs circling stars in cosmic space, their surfaces flowing with the dream and incarnation of God, Light made Flesh. I also don't mean to claim that our generation has the front row seats to planetary awakening... obviously not but hopefully in not too many more generations we really start humming together in our own most liberated soul selves, and who knows what kind of new order of being may emerge.

This particular experience was also hugely about my dad Jim Bronner, a phoenix himself who rose from the deep post-Holocaust trauma that my grandfather Emanuel suffered with the murder of his parents, Berthold and Franziska. My dad's mother Paula died when he was very young, and he had a terrible childhood growing up in orphanages and foster homes while my grandad was on his passionate mission to unite the human race across religious and ethnic divides. But my dad made an incredible beautiful family for me, my brother and sister along with my mom, Trudy. Not that they didn't have their stuff but holy moly wow, I should be on my hands and knees thanking them every day. Also for throwing out the TV when we were kids; that was a key move! In vision, I also truly felt and honored my dad's experience of amazing grace and divine love as he was struggling deeply in his dying process, that was as powerful and profound as any who have walked this Earth, within and unpacked in the traditional Christian path and way. (Although my dad didn't need, many grappling with existential dread in their dying process have broken through in similar ways with the help of psilocybin-assisted therapy). I think its key to really meditate on, feel and learn from our parents and ancestors, good and bad, their struggles and triumphs; and feel into the deeper mycelial level of our ancestral source being, where we spring from generation to generation like fruiting mushroom bodies, or leaves that live, die and re-emerge over and over from the ancestral Tree of Life.

Also I should share that upon graduating college I was still pretty clueless, not at all as on the ball driving forward with so much passion and purpose as all of you most impressively are, launching from this clearly magical institution. And that it wasn't until Amsterdam in a gay trance club in 95, that I got blown to smithereens on LSD and MDMA, going through judgment day of my toxic masculinity that was unconsciously assaulting and crucifying my own soul as well as sabotaging my partner at the time, and dying and being embraced into the Love and Light at the heart of existence. The disconnected, insecure and aggressive patriarchy is a disease in our lives and culture, oppressing and abusing us then enlisting us Stockholm syndrome-like to in turn to oppress, shame and abuse others. We all need to exorcise this collective demon from our individual hearts and minds, and collective institutions and policies.

On this tip, the gender binary is like a patriarchal straight jacket imprisoning our souls, and while I'm relatively straight, I'm also relatively queer, and we're all on a spectrum of gender and orientation. In fact I'm planning on coming out as he /they on Oct 11, national coming out day.

I've been able to pass without doing too much harm to my soul in regular society, and not be at risk of suicide like so many of our LGBTQ siblings growing up in this sick world, but the harm was still immense, the intense social pressure for boys to not be "gay or girlie" energetically warping my being. Thankfully I have an incredible community of family and friends who support and appreciate me, and spaces like Burning Man to truly self-express and rock my soul truth however that might be flowing day to day.

The Foamy homies have another song, whose chorus says: "Thank you for having the courage to be yourself, cause when you're yourself, it makes it easier to be myself." We're all in this quest for collective liberation, none of us truly prospers until all of us prosper, and live lives free from hunger and want, finding and expressing our souls' truths in a society that supports each and every one of us.

And crucially and so importantly, want to call out and thank all the incredible struggles and sacrifices of the activist heroes past and present who have created the degree of liberation we get to live and breathe in today. I really appreciate the activism and intention in various of your presentations, go get em!

I'm sharing all this in this way for a couple of reasons. First, a big part of my mission in life is to responsibly help steward and destigmatize psychedelic medicines in American and global culture, so people feel comfortable and supported accessing them as tools of healing, self-insight and self-transformation, without shame or judgment. It's important that we "come out" in the example of the gay rights movement and create the cultural space and permission for people to freely access psychedelic medicine, and celebrate, share and integrate their experiences without fear or shame. Hopefully many of you already know what I'm talking about, and for the rest maybe some of my sharing might encourage your own exploration and experience in this area (along with your parents if they haven't already too). In my own life, it has been such a huge help, and to be clear while I'm sharing some of my peak experiences, the major part of my and others' medicine work and experience is really hard shadow work, confronting and seeing difficult dynamics in ourselves, and working out things that aren't the most awesome in us; but also a lot of that work is done on the other side of the lessons we receive inside medicine space. When engaged responsibly with humility and respect, I believe psychedelic medicines are a key tool in our individual and collective awakening. I hope that you might embrace a regular medicine rhythm, and that someday soon in society, it will be as natural to ask about someone's chosen medicine practice and rhythm, as it is to ask about their meditation practice; which is also hugely important, to help deepen and integrate these experiences, and generally also as a means of self-care and insight.

The latter is also a huge tool in support of what the late great David Foster Wallace was advocating in his legendary commencement address to the 2005 graduating class of Kenyon college, later turned into a short book entitled "[This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life.](#)" In this address, which I highly encourage all to read as soon as possible, and inspired my own here, he rails against the default inertia of everyday self-centered living and consciousness, encouraging us to break out of this in

creative ways to recognize our common precious miraculous humanity, even in the toughest moments, like being stressed in a busy supermarket check-out line, or in traffic on the freeway, annoyed with our fellow humans in all their whatevers. That we swim, eat, breathe, suffer and struggle together in the miracle and mystery of existence, and as much as possible, to try and think and act from that vantage as much as we can; which means in large part disengaging the relentless inner commentary and judging of self and other that interferes with direct presence and awareness of each other's deep being and the miraculous world we live in. That of course is much easier said than done, as David's tragic fate at his own hands attests, like the fate of so many of our most sensitive beautiful loving souls and artistic geniuses! But nonetheless is the goal of a life well-lived that he advocates, and I enthusiastically support. (also check out his incredible essay "[Consider the Lobster](#)").

I also appreciate how his, and my own sharings here of my medicine experiences and visions, resonate to the theme of your residency as stated by Lola Olufemi, *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*:

To imagine... is to conjure an idea, a feeling, a thought, a sensory or affective response that was not present before the act of conjuring began... all those movements that clear space and mark our struggle to live *free*, live *better*, love *more*, to knit abundance, all that is the work of another realm that in not-here.

And before leaving the topic of medicine work, I want to express huge gratitude, deference and respect to the indigenous medicine cultures and traditions who have held and preserved their healing medicine ways in the face of colonialist decimation and genocide and so much trauma, and are teaching and sharing with us how to integrate and walk the medicine path in the right reverential way in our own culture, while respecting and learning from theirs. I have the privilege to work with the [Indigenous Medicine Conservation Fund](#), an indigenous decision-making body raising funds to support indigenous-led biocultural conservation projects around the world, supporting tribal nations whose lives and cultures are permeated and integrated with peyote, ayahuasca, iboga, toad or mushroom medicines. A sister project is [GrowMedicine.com](#) where people who have benefited from these medicines and healing ways can make individual donations to reciprocate and support this work.

Thinking about what other things I wish I had heard more about and paid more attention to upon graduating college, and implemented sooner in my life, would be some kind of regimen with a therapist who you resonate deeply with, which can be a process to find. I really appreciate the Jungian themes and ideas permeating a few of the graduating class projects, illuminating inward soulscape dynamics, of shadow and persona, anima and animus, synchronicity and the transcendent function. I've found various neo-Jungians really relevant to my life in general but most directly and obviously inside of medicine experience, where we can get more perspective on ourselves and disengage from the habitual ruts of thought and behavior we get stuck in. Jung's useful interpretive framework is discussed directly in Suzanne Tremblay's graduation presentation, "Entheogen Therapy to Address Spiritual Trauma in First

Responders,” which I look forward to reading, of the deep spiritual healing of the wounds and trauma first responders carry and from their lives prior, as we all do to some degree.

But also don't accept it all uncritically; for example Jung's insight how the soul shows up in dreams and vision is profound, which he terms the anima / animus, but is also anachronistic and partial in my experience, being so strictly gendered (anima for men, animus for women). While I have had powerful encounters with my soul in female forms, carried in vision by remarkable women in my world like my ex as well as my current wife, I've also encountered my soul as my dad, my kid, a cosmic Rasta Lion, Jesus and other manifestations. The common denominator being mega love and/or ecstatic joy in a numinous dimension. I think the divine / our soul shows up to us in the form, person or being most appropriate to where we're at when we're ready at a given time in a given experience and life context. A real good example in cinema is the movie Contact, based on the book by Carl Sagan, where Jodie Foster's character Ellie, an avowed atheist, travels in the climatic close to a far distant alien world and race, who stand in for the divine intelligence and love at the heart of existence. They manifest and speak to her as her beloved father who died tragically when she was a child, which in dream and vision would be her soul. I highly recommend watching as her visionary journey is a metaphor for profound medicine experience, one of the best I've seen visualized, and the movie in general is incredible.

Medicine is for everybody, and everybody please take your medicine! Which isn't necessarily psychedelic medicine, which isn't everybody's cup of tea: there's also the medicine of inward reflection, meditation and prayer; making sure we're regularly immersing in nature; getting after our fitness in whatever form as much or moreso for our mental as physical health; building and nourishing blood and chosen family and community; engaging in and appreciating creative arts and music (I love to listen to music and dance); and doing the deep self-work in whatever way most resonates. Hopefully as more and more of us get after this, we can stop unconsciously raining and re-inflicting the trauma that's ricocheting down and within the generations, and show up in a more integrated, healed and authentic way for ourselves and immediate community and larger world. And a huge part of our [individual and collective health is our diet](#) and choosing [regenerative organic](#) plant based or plant forward meals where especially the meat, dairy and eggs are sourced from high level farmers and pasture-based systems, who are taking care of their land, people and animals in the right way. Otherwise your supporting the ethical and ecological disaster of factory farming and industrial agriculture on the planet, a huge contributor to climate change as well as the sixth great extinction event we are inflicting on the natural world. I've personally found that the discipline of a vegan diet helps me not make the wrong decisions with the vast majority of animal products on offer in our culture.

We're all wounded healers and children on the path, and by no means do I want to tout myself as fully arrived. I'm very much a work in progress with many past mistakes and many more to go I'm sure. Also there are dangers of spiritual bypassing, ego inflation and narcissism in psychedelic medicines, where the mental ego that by definition isn't part of these deeper experiences, reasserts and inflates and takes credit, or deflects and bypasses the hard work so

crucially necessary to truly respect and integrate the peak states and lessons we can access on medicine. We might already be All One on the deepest spiritual levels, but that is also showing us how clearly far from that we are in our actual everyday world. We have to see and own the massive historical trauma and inequality in the world, that some of us benefit from while many of us don't, recognize our own relative privilege and responsibility, and do the work in our immediate lives as well as the hard policy activist work at a collective level, to one day make this a heaven on earth, where all are supported and healed, all are loved, all are liberated in everyday existence not just in deep spiritual insight at the source of our beings. This truth asserts in the face of all the suffering and absurdity of the past and present world, and gives hope for the future. But it's not going to happen by itself; we got to get after it.

I'll share briefly some final insights shared at various points in my life by mentors and elders, crucial to my own growth. First, being an adult means putting on the pants and showing up when you don't want to. Second, sometimes you got to bite the sour apple: you just got to do the hard thing. And third my own trick related to that, is looking back at your life in five, ten or how many years, will you regret not choosing and doing the hard thing that's in front of you, and wish you had? If so, do it. Like Avatar Kyoshi said to Aang in Avatar the Last Airbender, you've got to be decisive and not overstep on your options. After enough rumination you got to choose and act, and learn and course correct if necessary. Pretty much trial and error is how we do it.

And then briefly I love the Soap, Soul and Joy triangle my brother and Dr. Bronner's company president Mike Bronner came up with out of the blue a couple of years ago. We already had the soap and soul articulated from our soul comrade Jelly: "soap" meaning taking care of and rock your immediate responsibilities day in day out; and "soul" meaning your also engaging in deeper more meaningful social and spiritual activism and life. But then Mike shared the third leg of the triangle is Joy: to as much as possible also live life with joy, freedom, creativity, and laughter, hanging with family and friends, being kind and considerate of each other... joy feeds on joy. Let's create as much as possible! Easier said than done sometimes and I spend much of life being and doing the opposite of everything I'm saying here, and life surely has its ups and downs... but it's the goal.

I also got to briefly plug my sister Lisa Milam's new book "Soap & Soul" coming out November next year, about how to clean, simplify and green our homes and lives, and nourish our souls!

OK that's all I got, except one more thing: the big bang didn't stop banging, we're all here in the cosmic singularity of existence banging away right now! May you live a banging life and in turn help others bang theirs. And may not too many more generations pass before we all are banging together in global peace, love, understanding, and respect, in deep profound harmony with Nature. Bam! Big love and gratitude to all.