

“Work is love made visible.”

My mother, in her youth, was inspired by the poet Kahlil Gibran, the author of those words about work and love. The Quakers cite it. My wife Lynne—who loves her work—taught it to me.

From the desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

The idea that “work is love made visible” came to mind on October 17, 2011, when I heard the news that MAPS Board Member and my dear friend Ashawna Hailey had died several days earlier. As a fitting tribute, I channeled my grief into work late that night on our shared projects. Ashawna had died probably only a few hours after we had a wonderfully warm and productive phone conversation about the current status of MAPS’ work.

Ashawna had called me a few minutes after I sent him an email with a document to review. It was our Request for Proposals (RFP) for a MAPS grant for developing a protocol to evaluate MDMA-assisted psychotherapy to treat autism spectrum disorders. MAPS had just finished creating the RFP after a year of planning. Ashawna had championed heavily for it. I was proud of the RFP, and Ashawna was delighted to learn that it was complete. Then I realized that he hadn’t seen the email yet; we had just reached out to each other at the same time. This was to be our last conversation and some of Ashawna’s final words.

Ashawna had a brilliant mind for computer software and business, coupled with a wildly creative personal life. In professional as well as personal endeavors, he was driven, focused, and courageous, and loved living life to the fullest. At virtually every MAPS board meeting, Ashawna referenced Stephen Covey’s *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and urged us to “start with the end in mind,” then to work

backwards to plan for meeting our far-reaching and ambitious goals.

Ashawna was the one to realize that our ability to effectively train therapists, both for research and for legal therapy, was the key limiting factor in our MDMA drug development and implementation strategy. During our final phone conversation, he urged me to more clearly articulate our vision for establishing a worldwide network

of psychedelic clinics, to see if we could tell a compelling for-profit story that could attract investors to fund MDMA/PTSD drug development research. We had previously decided we needed to focus on donors rather than investors, but Ashawna said he thought the idea was worth further evaluation.

When I started MAPS in 1986, I could not have predicted how many amazing people would be drawn to it. It was a labor of love about a substance that promotes love in a world that criminalized it as a poison causing brain damage and death. I honestly didn’t know if I’d ever be able to make any progress toward restoring the legitimacy of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy—I just knew that I needed to try. Through MAPS, I had found my point of leverage for contributing to healthy social change, to the Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world.

Ashawna wanted to make sure I wouldn’t be distracted from my original goal of restoring the legality of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. He was concerned that our marijuana research efforts—our lawsuit against the DEA over the need to break NIDA’s monopoly on marijuana for research and our efforts to start a study of marijuana for veterans with PTSD—could get in the way. I argued that our marijuana and MDMA projects were synergistic, working with the same federal regulators and the same clinical condition, but I knew I hadn’t fully relieved Ashawna’s concerns. When articles were published this summer and fall in *The New York*

Times and *Washington Post* about the FDA approving our marijuana/PTSD protocol and then the Public Health Service refusing to sell us the marijuana we needed to conduct the study, I worried that Ashawna might think our top priority was being neglected. But during my last conversation with Ashawna, he was absolutely delighted with all that MAPS was doing. My insecurities melted away, and I was left with a feeling of peace.

About a week and a half after Ashawna died, I was in Chicago with Ethan Nadelmann, the founder and executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance. We were there for a convening of the grantees of the Libra Foundation, whose mission centers on human rights and whose Trustees have decided that ending the Drug War is a human rights issue. Late that night, Ethan and I reminisced about Ashawna. We shared the view that while Ashawna’s death reminded us of how precious is the time we have on this earth, there is nothing we’d rather be doing with our lives than what we are already doing. That was how Ashawna lived as well. For us, and for Ashawna, work is love made visible.

By identifying the challenges that lie ahead for MAPS and encouraging us to think about the future, Ashawna Hailey set milestones for growth that will take decades for us to fully reach. His love for this work will carry on past the limit of his lifetime.

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