

# An Anti-Authoritarian Response To the Actions of Dr. Bia Labate & Chacruna



David Nickles

Apr 25 · 9 min read



Image from the zine, *Fuck Abuse, Kill Power: Addressing the Root Causes of Sexual Harassment and Assault*, by Crimethinc. Available [here](#).

Recently, Chacruna decided to publish an article entitled, “Confronting Sexual Misconduct in the Psychedelic Community: An Interview with Daniel Pinchbeck.” Despite the fact that Pinchbeck’s “It was me” statement included absurdly troubling phrases such as, “I never had nonconsensual sex...What I have done [included] the use of substances

as tools of seduction,” this piece unapologetically puts Pinchbeck’s perspective front and center. Considering allegations that members of Chacruna have actively silenced at least one of Pinchbeck’s survivors, this promotion is especially disturbing.

### **Chacruna’s promotion of Daniel Pinchbeck**

Chacruna is run by Dr. Bia Labate, who has repeatedly demonstrated problematic behavior when it comes to addressing issues of misogyny and sexual assault. She is also an employee of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), whose founder and executive director has not only explicitly defended Pinchbeck’s continued prominent participation at psychedelic events, such as the Horizons-promoted MAPS fundraising dinner in NYC in 2018, but whose ranks of therapists and affiliates appear to be riddled with perpetrators of sexual impropriety and misogyny. At least two therapists associated with MAPS are currently involved in legal proceedings involving sexual impropriety, and there is a much longer history of these problems, which appears to be inseparable from the history of psychedelic therapy.

When the Chacruna article was posted, I commented both on the Chacruna page, as well as Dr. Labate’s personal page. I was surprised to discover that Dr. Labate almost immediately began deleting my posts from her personal page. Here are screenshots of some of my comments, which she deleted while appearing to suggest that they were “agressions [*sic*] and lies.”

CHACRUNA.NET

## Confronting Sexual Misconduct in the Psychedelic Community: An Interview with Daniel Pinchbeck



**Bia Labate**

1 hr · 🌐

Check [Chacruna.net](https://chacruna.net)'s interview with Daniel Pinchbeck. It's important to include men in the #MeToo conversations, to have real accountability and also to be able to reconcile.

👍❤️😂 16

1 Comment 1 Share



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**David Nickles**

I would suggest that when an organization includes folks who have labelled survivors as "crazy," "a total bitch," argued against the idea that a single "no" should be enough to end sexual advances, refused to support events dealing with consent and psychedelics, and otherwise silenced/disregarded accounts of survivors repeatedly times, they are particularly ill-suited to attempt this conversation. And that's without getting into the issues of access to platforms/publicity/visibility/etc.

Like · Reply · 1m



Write a comment...



**David Nickles**

She literally told me about her intentions to do this piece months ago and I explained to her why it was such a terrible idea. She seemed absolutely thrilled by the potential for controversy, with chacruna at the center of it all! It's all grandstanding and aesthetic without a real grasp of the issues.

Why is a reactionary authoritarian bottom lining numerous events about critical/radical topics and ideas? It's about gatekeeping and control, imo, not actual concern with these incredibly important topics. Any attempts to question her motivations are met with appeals to authority rather than genuine engagement, imo.

It's disgusting, imo.

Like · Reply · 1m



Agree with [redacted] Pinchbeck seems an odd choice for this interview considering his long-standing reputation as a Creeper. Not to mention he shares the same ethnicity as most of the high-profile MeToo perpetrators...

Like · Reply · 17h



Sure, it's important to include men in the #metoo conversation.

Does that mean we should put abusive men at the forefront? For god's sake no.

Why on earth haven't you interviewed a qualified woman to talk about sexuality, consent and psychedelics. This is disgusting journalism. There is no excuse.

Like · Reply · 12m



Write a reply...



**David Nickles**

[redacted] Bia has repeatedly silenced women in these spaces on these issues. I have significant email correspondence evidencing exactly that. Bia has been deleting my comments on her FB and has now unfriended me.

As far as I have experienced, she is more interested in advancing her own political agendas, visibility, and power within psychedelic spaces than supporting survivors. She has outright lied to me about ongoing issues dealing with perps and repeatedly gas-lit me when the conversation has come up.

Like · Reply · 2m



**Bia Labate** Intellectual and constructive feedback is welcomed, aggressions and lies will be deleted. We welcome contributions to our series Sex, Power and Psychedelics, which includes multiple voices in an on going open conversation. <https://chacruna.net/sex-power-and-psychedelic-series.../>



CHACRUNA.NET

Sex, Power and Psychedelics Series Call for Articles

Like · Reply · 1m



**David Nickles** Hi Bia, thank you for letting me know. I will be publishing our email correspondence in order to demonstrate they are not lies. I appreciate you clearly drawing that line in the sand. Thanks.

Like · Reply · 1m

As Dr. Labate has insinuated that I am lying, and as truth is the only absolute defense to allegations of defamation, I have decided to share evidence for my assertions. I have not made this decision lightly and though I do not expect everyone to agree with this approach, I would ask any readers who are skeptical to consider the evidence at hand, as well as my right to protect the integrity of my name and approaches before condemning my decision to share personal correspondence. If you still disagree with my decision after reviewing the facts, I can accept that and simply ask you to understand that there are times

where each of us must make difficult decisions and do what feels “right” to us in that moment.

### **A brief note on confidentiality**

As I write this, I am acutely aware that as a long-time underground researcher and facilitator of communications between diverse pools of researchers, I am potentially jeopardizing a significant credential that allows me to do my research: my ability to keep my mouth shut. The vast majority of the work I have been able to contribute to psychedelic spaces has largely hinged on my ability to not share personal/sensitive details about the projects I’ve been involved in. While I do not, personally, engage in illegal activities, I have had frequent contact with many people and communities who do. I have tremendous respect and appreciation for people who put their freedom (and potentially lives) on the line in order to pursue important psychedelic work, whether out of a love for research/inquiry, or because they feel called to manufacture high-purity compounds that would otherwise be nearly-impossible for the average person to procure.

All of this is to say that I do not take sharing personal communication lightly. I recognize that what I am about to share, even though it does not contain the type of information mentioned above, may damage my ability to carry out/coordinate the type of work that has been so near and dear to my heart for the past decade. Should sanctioned or underground researchers decide that my decision to share personal correspondence, even in this specific, delimited context, indicates I am untrustworthy, that will significantly hamper my research contributions moving forward.

***That being said, I believe there are times when our personal desires and predilections must be set aside in order to address more pressing issues. This is one of those times, for me.***

I also want to be clear that I repeatedly informed Dr. Labate that if she was unwilling to stop deleting my posts on her Facebook, I would have no choice but to publish these emails. After she deleted those comments and suggested people submit writing to a series Chacruna is putting together on sex, power, and psychedelics, I informed her that I would, in fact, be publishing these emails. Since giving her notice of my

intentions, I have received no request to refrain from doing so, and am proceeding as such.

### **A brief note on authoritarian tendencies and tactics of isolation and atomization**

According to generational labeling, I am a “millennial,” which I am told explains my extreme disdain for labels of all kinds. This includes many many years ago when I was an amateur chemist, and let me tell you, that occasionally made for some interesting guesswork. That being said, if I had to apply political labels to myself, the first two would likely be anti-authoritarian and anarchist. While this is not the place for me to delve into a deep explanation of my political values (please see my body of work if that’s what you’re looking for) it does feel important for me to highlight these values, as I believe they will go a long way in explaining my approaches and why I have now decided to share this personal correspondence.

I believe that human beings require social relationships free from coercion and domination in order to fully participate in the divine mystery of existence. To this end, I believe that horizontal social relationships, where we all understand each other to be on equal footing regardless of material wealth, institutional credentials, intellectual/physical abilities, etc. are a fundamental prerequisite for liberatory existence. I believe that when individuals attempt to coerce and subjugate others, it is antagonistic to all who share community/space/social spheres. That antagonism cannot be resolved without directly addressing the source/individual(s) who are engaging in the coercive or domineering behavior.

Isolation is a common tactic of authoritarians of all stripes. By isolating their targets, authoritarians seek to disempower them and marginalize them. By pushing them outside of the framework of acceptability and attempting to convince others that they too will be alienated and alone unless they distance themselves from such people, authoritarians seek to negate the strength that people find through solidarity. Solidarity means that we recognize our fundamental interconnection with and reliance on other human beings. It means that we care for each other and stand up for each other, even when it’s difficult to do so. Through acts of solidarity, we can render tactics of isolation and atomization

irrelevant and build resilient relationships that allow us to re-imagine and reconfigure the social fabric into which our lives are interwoven.

Within psychedelic spaces, I have watched as various authoritarians have attempted to isolate and alienate survivors of sexual assault and misogyny, as well as assorted “psychedelic dissidents.” I know that this is happening because I am one of those dissidents. I know that this is happening because these authoritarians have repeatedly demonstrated their values through their words and actions. I know because these people have become so used to acting with impunity they hardly even bother to hide it. It’s tragically ironic that even in a subculture where Tim Leary once said “Find the others,” these bad actors have been unable to recognize that we have been finding each other. As I said in an email to one of these authoritarians on August 10, 2018, “I don’t just say we’re stronger together because I think it sounds good (doesn’t it, though?) but because I actually believe it.”

So with that said, here is a look at:

#### **Dr. Bia Labate’s approach to sexual impropriety in psychedelic spaces**

This traces back to an email I wrote on June 17, 2018, entitled, “Institutional mishandling of sexual misconduct within psychedelic spaces.” That email is presented in its entirety, below.



## Institutional mishandling of sexual misconduct within psychedelic spaces ➤



David Nickles

Sun, Jun 17, 2018, 1:00 PM



to bcc

Hi there,

If you're getting this message from me, it's because I value your opinions and perspectives within the psychedelic arena (and quite likely, beyond). It recently came to my attention that [Horizons has attempted to avoid any discussion over its fairly recent dismissal of Neal Goldsmith for alleged sexual misconduct](#). The actions and statements presented here are incredibly problematic, to put it mildly and I'm a little disgusted that there's been little to no public pushback against this.

I'm shocked and horrified at how successful they've been at this attempt to shut down communal discourse and keep awareness of these events to a minimum. So far, I've found very few people interested in engaging in any discussion of how to address these issues head on, aside from quiet discussions I've had in a variety of contexts with many of you. I'd like to continue these conversations in a decidedly less quiet, more visible manner.

I wasn't sure about reaching out to so many people, so I BCC'd all of you. I didn't want to share emails without getting permission, so if you'd like to have nothing to do with this, please let me know, and I'll make sure that your email address is removed and you neither receive any more messages nor have your email shared with anyone else. I won't be sharing any emails without explicit permission. Additionally, if you know people you feel would be good additions to this discussion, please let me know. I would like for this discussion to be as inclusive as possible. I know that comes at the cost of the conversation potentially becoming unwieldy, but as this is all digital/text, I don't think it will be too bad for the moment.

I know this is a difficult, triggering, and controversial subject matter. I'm not looking to add to anyone's stress or work levels, I simply value all of your opinions. I'm at the point where I can't just keep sitting by and watching these conversations continue on quietly, year after year, while people keep perpetuating these behaviors ad nauseam and institutions do their best to minimize dealing with the fallout. I hope you agree with me. I'd like to discuss strategies for advancing this dialogue, both around the specific case of Horizons (as it's the most recent/relevant institutional example) and the broader issues that psychedelic communities are grappling with around sexual misconduct.

I've already written more than I intended to, so I'll leave it at that. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Love, Hugs, and Solidarity,  
Dave

### The reply I received from Dr. Labate follows:



Bia Labate

Jun 17, 2018, 5:42 PM



to me

Hi David

Nice to see your passion and that you are willing to address really complicated topics.

I really appreciate leadership and people that have strong ideological commitments.

However, I think that your impressions are not accurate, it has not been this way, you are not very well informed.

They did a really great job, several meetings, a million conversations, hired external people to give a fair treatment to the subject, and Neal is going through a restorative social justice practice.

Neal threatened to sue people that came against him, so they are preserving the victims.

The whole process has been highly communal, well thought and careful, the ones involved were pretty satisfied with it.

I have dealt with this subject and I am not willing to talk more about this, as I need boundaries for my time.

One person perhaps nice for you to talk would be [redacted] whom I copy here.

Just sharing, Kevin B. invited Jullie Holland and I to be moderators of Horizons, replacing Neal, and we are happy that women were called, as it is a nice symbol that it is not ok to be a jerk to women, and that abusive times need to end.

On a last note, I am very much looking forward to seeing you in CIIS for our event, and I hope you start preparing your contribution to chacruna soon. And that you join our presenter's dinner too!

Warm regards

...

Bia

Unbeknownst to Dr. Labate, I was already in communication with a number of Goldsmith's survivors and victims, some of whom had expressed sentiments and experiences that directly contradicted what she was telling me. Additionally, I had recently attended an event where Goldsmith was publicly outed, which seemed to offer further contradictions to the picture Dr. Labate was now presenting. At that event, I perceived frantic attempts at "damage control" from the founder of one of the most prominent institutions in the field of psychedelic science.

Here is my reply:





David Nickles

Jun 18, 2018, 9:00 AM



to Bia

Hi Bia and

Bia,

Thanks for your reply. I appreciate you taking the time to reach out, even though it sounds like you're at capacity on this matter. I'm definitely looking forward to the CIIS event and the presenter dinner, and I will be in touch soon about my Chacruna submission. Unfortunately, I felt that I needed to address the Horizons stuff first, for several reasons, including some personal issues relating to myself and a few other folks in the community.

I appreciate you looping in and hope that be able to further inform me :)



Great to be in touch with you again, although I wish it was under different circumstances!

From what Bia has said, it sounds like Horizons has made significant efforts to handle this matter internally. I was aware of this issue well-before Horizons ever took any steps to handle it and was actually pretty stunned by some of the proposals that other (highly visible, institutionally-affiliated) community members advanced in the wake of some of the initial, more public murmurings. With that said, here's a "short" list of some of the issues I see at the moment. Hopefully you can clue me in and give me greater context and we can go from there. Let me say in advance, I appreciate your time in reading/engaging this and look forward to your reply.

To summarize, it appears, from the outside, that Horizons (or at least Balktick) discovered (at some point in 2018) that there were numerous complaints against Goldsmith. After some undisclosed period of time where Balktick (and others?) were aware of the allegations against Goldsmith, Goldsmith was let go on April 3, 2018. On April 30, 2018, 27 days later, ostensibly folding to community pressure/inquiry, Balktick offers a [singular public statement on the Horizons FB page](#). The comment essentially states that Goldsmith did bad things, Goldsmith was let go more than three weeks prior to the notice, and that Horizons has no interest in entering into any larger community discussion around these issues because it's resolved the matter as it sees fit.

Now, the things that I was initially troubled by are the facts that:

- 1) The timeline and silence around Goldsmith don't make a lot of sense. If he was known to have been engaging in predatory acts on April 3 (and clearly before, as that's simply when he was terminated) why didn't Horizons make a public announcement on that day, and in a more visible manner than facebook? Even if it was just to inform people he'd been let go for this reason, thereby allowing people to avoid him.
- 2) Horizons' statement about "maintaining the privacy of all involved" seems to miss the fact that in attempting to "maintain privacy," they appear to have allowed for the maintaining of a window of time where Goldsmith's actions were known to them, but unknown to the broader community, potentially failing to alert people to a known threat/risk/danger.
- 3) Horizons' statement about being committed to safer spaces feels pretty empty in light of the timeline and their apparent reluctance to engage with this issue beyond institutional tidying.
- 4) It seems odd that the only institutional channel that has been set up to communicate issues of assault/misconduct is via an attorney. I shouldn't have to point out the obvious, that Horizons is mostly patronized by members of criminal subcultures and that many of them may not feel safe discussing these issues with an attorney (or otherwise having perceived "engagement" with law-related entities). A point that could likely be debated ad infinitum, but nevertheless an issue that I and others have come across before.
- 5) Horizons singular FB post on this topic stated "This is our final statement on this matter, and we are moderating all comments related to this topic," thereby indicating to me that they are fundamentally uninterested in communal discussion/accountability. I simply don't know how else to take that, and the fact that the post has nine shares and zero comments is pretty telling.

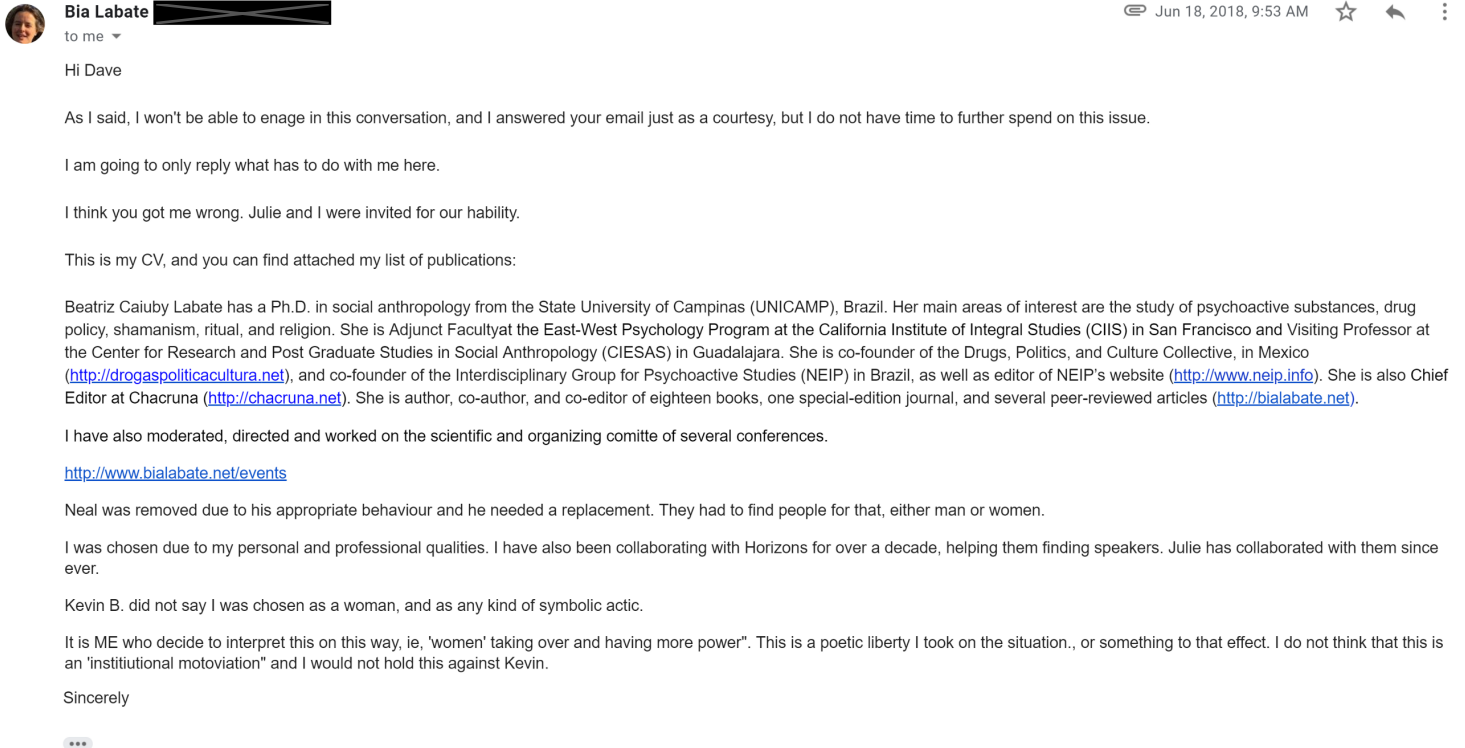
I'm also a little troubled by the understanding I currently have from Bia's email; that Neal was threatening to sue people (applying coercive pressure) but all of the survivors are now "pretty satisfied with" the outcome. I hope you can see why this might make for a troubling read at a distance, especially in the context of Horizons keeping everything under wraps. Additionally, I'm curious about this "restorative social justice process." I've seen accountability processes that worked out OK (more or less), but I've also seen accountability processes that have totally flamed out and led to all sorts of problems (including physical and emotional violence). I'm also grappling with the meaning of "restorative social justice" in a context where this entire process is being kept well out of the public eye. Horizons and the few people it may choose to allow behind its closed doors are not "society" no matter how I try to slice it, they're not even "psychedelic society," so that feels like it needs a bit of exposition, to me.

And finally, while I think that Julie and Bia are brilliant human beings (who are also women) and superbly equipped to moderate at any psychedelic event, I do find myself ever-skeptical of these kinds of institutional chits, whereby wrongdoing is acknowledged through semi-symbolic gestures. That is, Julie and Bia should be moderating Horizons because they're psychedelic badassess who are (and were) better equipped to do so than Goldsmith, not because Goldsmith engaged in inappropriate behaviors and now Horizons wants to highlight promoting women, or something to that effect. Don't get me wrong, I'm stoked for Bia and Julie, but I don't trust those institutional motivations for one second. There's no merit to holding these appointments up to the light, now, in this context, from my perspective. That ship has long sailed.

I'll leave it at that for now. I've got plenty of other thoughts, particularly about how this dovetails with so many other people/institutions/problems, but I'd be very interested in seeing your response to these points and going from there. Thanks again for engaging with this, I know it's a lot!

Warmly,  
Dave

Dr. Labate followed up, although I believe she missed my point about her and Dr. Holland, as she essentially reiterated what I said. Namely, that they should be recognized on their merits, rather than being held up in celebration as replacements for Neal Goldsmith:



And in the interest of transparency, here is the final exchange of that conversation



David Nickles

to Bia ▾

Jun 18, 2018, 10:56 AM



Thanks for clarifying, Bia.

I appreciate your perspectives and wasn't trying to pull you back into the conversation. Hope you're able to find time for yourself in these coming months before we get to share space again.

<3

...



Bia Labate

to me ▾

Jun 18, 2018, 10:59 AM



Looking forward to connecting to you soon!

Please also answer re the dinner for the presenters.

...

Prior to the California Institute of Integral Studies CIIS event titled, “Cultural and Political Perspectives on Psychedelic Science,” Dr. Labate and I had several more email exchanges. One of these focused specifically on issues of sexual impropriety in psychedelic spaces. In initiating this conversation, Dr. Labate emailed me, but also cc'd a friend and mentor of mine, ostensibly out of a desire to have them “reign me in.” That person’s name has been redacted, as they had nothing to do with the conversation, and I believe Dr. Labate was attempting to use their presence to coerce me into the course of action she wished to see. Additionally, I have removed sensitive personal information that Dr. Labate chose to share with me, as I do not wish to share anyone’s intimate life experiences, even when directly relevant to the coercive behaviors they are engaging in.

## David's comments on [REDACTED] in Facebook

Inbox x



**Bia Labate**

to me [REDACTED]

Mon, Aug 6, 2018, 7:00 AM



Dear David

I am travelling in Costa Rica with irregular acceso to email. I was not able to follow the discussion you created in FB but just now schemed through it and found this

How do we square that? How do we square the fact that folks like yourself put up smokescreens while other licensed psychiatrists involved in psychedelic trauma therapy research actually make statements like the following with the belief (I assume) that these words somehow exonerate them:

"She did express her preference to use protection. This is true. But dialogue about how condoms decrease pleasure and preferences led to CONSENSUAL unprotected sex...I think it would also have been disrespectful to think [she] wasn't an adult capable of negotiating and saying no if she meant no."

Can you square that for me? How about Rick Doblin? Can Mr. Rick Doblin square that one for me?

I would like to tell you that as a woman and as a Brazilian I do not find a 'scandal' that a man tries not to use protection. In fact, [REDACTED] I find this kind of accusation rather hysterical and very American.

But that is another matter. The fact is that [REDACTED] is a mentally unbalanced person. She invaded a talk and shut it down because this guy did not want to date her and tried not to use a condom. I have [REDACTED] Does that entitle her to go around and make a performance against me in public?

[REDACTED] was in our women and psychedelic's list. She behaved like a fascist over there. She trashed everyone, called people white supremacists and ent crazy. She was a total bitch. She terrified our list.

I dis-invited [REDACTED] to participate from the conference after her behaviour in the list. Originally, she was in the same panel that you.

I suggest you do not affiliate yourself with her; I also suggest you do not throw fire on this topic; I suggest you get better informed about her attack/ ethics and mental health; I suggest you do not mix up topics like that.

I have not been able to read all.

I'd also like to say that this provocations such as "I wanna see what MAPS' employees have to say" are not helpful in my opinion. There is currently a big discussion and drama in MAPS regarding COMPASS. A lot of people in MAPS are pissed off with MAPS' support to COMPASS. But they are afraid of losing their jobs. [REDACTED] herself tried to be hired by MAPS). We need to empower these people.

Finally, I'd like to say that I think the focus should be attacking COMPASS more than MAPS.

In any case, I think your initiative is good and I have not read the whole thread, so I can't say more.


One last thing: I suggest you save your ammunition to write a fucking awesome article to chacruna about all of this, instead of spending it all on Facebook debates. This could become a real reference and game changer.

I am happy that you are coming and that we have that panel. It's super timely! It will rock!

Warmly

...

At the time, I was completely swamped, as I had just written my first open letter about COMPASS and was overwhelmed by the responses. As such, these were my replies to Dr. Labate:

**David Nickles** [redacted]

Mon, Aug 6, 2018, 12:11 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

to Bia [redacted]


Hi Bia,

Thanks for reaching out. If it is OK with you, I would prefer to discuss these issues with you in-person when we meet after CIIS. I'm a little overwhelmed at the moment between responses to and dialogue around my open letter, feminist dynamics in psychedelic spaces, and my day jobs. I also have a conference I should be getting ready for ;)

I hope you understand and I'm very much looking forward to our meeting, as well as the conference. I hope that my actions have not put any undue burdens on you and have helped catalyzed discussions around important topics that were already of relevance to the nature of the conference. It is my sincere desire that these issues now be highlighted and emphasized in important ways.

Hugs,  
Dave

...

**David Nickles** [redacted]

Aug 6, 2018, 12:41 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

to Bia [redacted]

One last thing, for the moment.

I think it's important for me to clarify that my comments were made in regards to Ben attempting to cover for John Harrison's sexual impropriety. I used [redacted] quote because I saw relevance in it, however, the smoke screen Ben was attempting to deploy was for John Harrison, who engaged in different behaviors than Will.

I have had significant interactions with Ben and others around the way he tried to cover for Harrison. That type of behavior is not OK, especially from an MD involved in trauma research, imo. But I also acknowledge that is simply my perspective. I have insight into Ben's inappropriate engagement with the topic and while I don't plan on elaborating unless absolutely necessary, suffice it to say I consider it to be "actionable intelligence."

Thanks again for reaching out.

...

Dr. Labate seemed unwilling or unable to hear where I was at with my workload and invited me to “debate the issues at stake,” because, “Maybe we have different cultural views.”



Bia Labate

to [redacted] me ▾

Aug 6, 2018, 8:02 PM



Hi David

I sincerely think you are doing a mistake and bad service by quoting Will's words in that context with no explanation. It's not clear that you are referring to John but it seems you are supporting [redacted]

I have followed in detail the [redacted] drama, and as a result I have 3 to 5 women that do not like me now, some crazy feminists or haters.

By quoting [redacted] and descontextualize the larger context -- which is her public invasion of a lecture and public acusation that was never further detailed, followed by insulting and bullying dozens of people, calling them white supremacists etc - you are helping to legitimize her and her narrative and her views.

We can debate the issue at stake. Maybe we have different cultural views. To me, as a women, and as a Brazilian, negotiating condom during sex is totally normal. To say that a women can't say no is to underestimate her. I think it is also ridiculos to say that a psychiatrist can't do this or that in bed. That is not how things work. However, that is beyond the point here.

The point is that your post makes it look like you you know and followed what happened in detail, and are supporting her narrative at large, which I find very problematic considering the rest of her behaviour.

I find this undermine our efforts in the women and psychedelics list, which is to create a culture of victims coming out, and not creating lies and using personal scorn to attack your others.

I would like to ask you to delete that part of your comment.

Thanks.

All the best

\*\*\*

I took her words at face value and did my best to explain where I was coming from, despite the fact that I was quite pressed for time and doing so required me to draw from incredibly painful personal experiences and lessons learned from intimate relationships. I replied as follows:



David Nickles

to Bia

Mon, Aug 6, 2018, 8:49 PM



A few points:

1) By Will's own admission, [redacted] *had already said no*. How many no's = no? I think this is an important question. I'm unclear as to how this waiting for a "real" no dynamic works, as it's literally antithetical to everything I have ever learned about consent and appropriate sexual/romantic conduct. So I'll attempt to explain where I'm coming from, in the hope that maybe you can explain it to me.

Are two no's enough? Five? Ten? Does the person who is saying no have to actually remove themselves from the physical space of the person who is repeatedly pressing the question, in order for it to be understood as a "real" no? What if she can't get away? What if that person has past experiences of sexual violence and/or coercion and is triggered or re-traumatized by the perceived coercive dynamics? What if she finds herself dissociating due to these dynamics? What if she literally feels "safer" to say "yes," against her will, for fear of retribution or retaliation that may come from continuing to say "no?" It doesn't have to be a rational fear, that's what it means to be triggered, as I understand it. As I see it, accepting a no as meaning no immediately negates all of these issues.

These are not abstract questions, I have had numerous sexual partners with these histories. I have done my best to understand and navigate them. And to be honest, I'm not particularly thrilled that I feel obligated to dip into these difficult personal experiences in order to make a point. To me, this aspect, particularly around trauma and sexuality, is incredibly relevant to Will's professional training.

2) Will felt comfortable enough with his and Nick's narrative to publish it to a social media platform. I was rather appalled to read that writing, and shocked that they published it, given the liability/exposure presented.

3) Are you familiar with the allegations involving the use of MDMA and additional dynamics that were not published in that letter?

4) I believe in intersectionality and I do not ascribe to ally politics in any way, shape, or form. I know this may sound abnormal in this particular space at this particular time. I would attribute this to the lifetime spent with activists and the experiences I already referenced. For an elaboration on my reasoning behind this, feel free to check out [this brief audio clip](#) and/or [this zine](#).

5) I believe it is important to point out that, as far as I am aware, the incident(s) took place in the US, between two Americans. I respect your experience as a Brazilian woman who didn't take issue with [redacted] (this is what I understand you to be saying, but if I'm misunderstanding, please feel free to correct me), but I am struggling to see the cultural relevance here. Can you help me out?

6) My point about Will's professional credentials was not to suggest that professional credentials dictate bedroom behavior. My point was that, as a trained, licensed psychiatrist, I would expect him to be sensitive to the emotional states/needs of the people with whom he interacts. This includes understanding that no means no and not resorting to coercion in an attempt to change a "no" to a "yes." Please see point 1 for my reasoning here. We may simply have to agree to disagree on the relevance of his professional training.

7) Might I inquire as to your feelings about Daniel Pinchbeck's public statement that "I never had nonconsensual sex...[w]hat I have done [includes] the use of substances as tools of seduction?" I only ask because I feel like I am struggling to understand how you conceptualize consent, and, as one of the anthropologists who inspired certain aspects of my pursuit of psychedelic research, I value your perspectives and am trying to understand your thoughts and considerations.

Thanks

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Dr. Labate's reply—which I found incredibly hard to process and caused me to reach out to several friends (letting them know I felt “gas-lit” and “fucked up”) for emotional support—follows:



Bia Labate

to [redacted] me

Aug 6, 2018, 9:01 PM



I read and I disagree, however, I am opting out of this discussion.

You lost me on this one, David!

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I hope this makes it clear that nothing I have posted in response to Chacruna's recent decision to highlight Daniel Pinchbeck's perspective on his admitted serial sexual abuse, use of drugs as tools of sexual coercion, and general sleazy behavior is a lie, as Dr. Labate has claimed. I welcome any response she desires to give and hope that by airing some of these issues, we can begin to address the root causes of these dynamics within psychedelic spaces.

Thank you,

David Nickles

Degenerate-at-Large

