

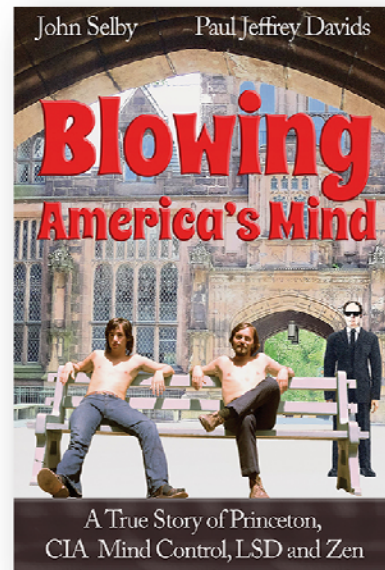
Article

Blowing America's Mind

A True Story of Princeton, CIA Mind Control, LSD and Zen

By John Selby and Paul Jeffrey Davids

(627 words)



WHO GOES THERE? PRINCETON UNDERGRAD GUINEA PIGS, SHRINKS ON LSD, HYPNOSISTS AND SPIES

USA Today states “You’re not tripping: LSD is making a comeback.” A 40% jump in those 18 to 25 using acid is reported.

What scared the hell out of America in 1966 when LSD was criminalized for the first time? And why aren’t the young today frightened anymore?

The new book BLOWING AMERICA’S MIND (subtitled A TRUE STORY OF PRINCETON, CIA MIND CONTROL, LSD AND ZEN) now appears on the scene as an emotional catharsis for anyone who ever put his toes into the cosmic pond of psychedelia. The two authors waited almost fifty years to publish it (coinciding, almost, with the death of everyone in the book who might have raised hell). The authors are well-known Princeton grads (Selby a writer of popular psychology and Davids a producer / director of controversial TV films for NBCUniversal).

Dr. Humphry Osmond, a British psychiatrist, came up with the word “psychedelic,” meaning “mind-manifesting” and is considered one of the Superstar ‘Psychedelic Pioneers.’ Selby and Davids both had the privilege (some might say misfortune) to stumble upon Osmond and the now-defunct New Jersey Neuro-Psychiatric Institute (NJNPI) when they were Princeton undergrads majoring in psychology, at a time when Humphry Osmond had opened up shop there. Unknown to the authors, Osmond’s shop was funded not only by the National Institutes of Health, but barrels of cash were flowing in from cover organizations established and controlled by the CIA.

NJNPI was just one of what declassified documents now establish were 86 U.S. institutions conducting almost 150 mind control projects for the CIA as part of its notorious MK-ULTRA. This is a shocking, formerly top secret, episode in American history with plenty of Ivy League twists.

For Osmond, blowing minds with LSD wasn't enough. He added hypnosis. Officially, the goal was to use hypnosis (with a pinch of acid here and there), to put neutral subjects (i.e., the book's authors) into both schizophrenic and expanded states of consciousness to study human behavior under contradictory hypnotic conditions. It was CIA-sponsored "Mind Blowing" all in the name of science, with the sweet ribbons and bows of the Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" playing in the background (and plenty of lady love interests around for good measure, back in the days of all-male Princeton.)

Admitting to this awkward phase of their post-adolescent lives now almost fifty years later, co-authors John Selby and Paul Davids describe in hair-raising detail how they became volunteers, guinea pigs in early LSD and deep hypnosis research that they thought could offer mind expansion, artificially-induced nirvana and even improved sex lives. The results were not quite what they had anticipated. Their journey of mind manipulation is a fascinating emotional roller coaster which at times reads like the strange inward journeys from *A BEAUTIFUL MIND* (also set at Princeton), *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST* or *THE ELECTRIC KOOL-AID ACID TEST*.

It is perhaps an item for the Guinness World Records how these authors actually stuck with this project after beginning it in 1972, and they finished it in 2017 just time for the resurrection of LSD among the 18-to-25 year old set. ("It rose to item number one on our bucket list," explains Davids, who recently stopped dying his hair for the youth look and let the white hair blossom).

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John Selby and Paul Jeffrey Davids are the authors of *Blowing America's Mind: A True Story of Princeton, CIA Mind Control, LSD and Zen*, published by Yellow Hat Publishing, 2018.

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