

of submarines, cruise ships, ferryboats, barges, and spaceships. Sometimes important meetings are taking place aboard the community ship to decide the fate of the community, at other times there are murders that go unsolved, sometimes all the doors to all the rooms are removed and everyone lives in harmony. Terrible storms are weathered, celebrations are enjoyed. Vanishings and rebirths are frequent and always exciting.

Every issue of **Gates** focuses on the dreams that are submitted by the residents. Since there is a natural theme of "dreams about the water front", this is generally adhered to. However, all dreams that are submitted are published and many times there are dreams of universal significance that are entered because the dreamer feels that it is important they be published. **Gates** has become an important outlet for dreams and is a focus of many people's dreamwork. Everytime **Gates** is published the importance of remembering and working with dreams is reinforced, and the appearance of **Gates** often sparks renewed interest in dreams. Many people who were once dedicated non-recallers have become dream contributors to **Gates** and keep their own personal dream journals.

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Jeremy Taylor

## DREAM WORK AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As the only child of a passionately pacifistic single parent, I came to the search for social responsibility and the struggle for social justice quite early in life. By the time I entered university in 1961, not only was I a committed non-violent social activist, I was also fairly experienced in pacific action and "propaganda of the deed". As I continued my community organizing and consciousness-raising work as an undergraduate, and later in graduate school, I came to understand with increasing clarity that my own motivations were ultimately mysterious to me - and so were everyone else's. That is to say, I became aware in retrospect that my deepest motivations, and those of other people, were ultimately irrational, and for the most part not-conscious - particularly at the all-important moment of decisive action. I came to see that the vital question of human motivation for both individual and collective action was deeply "psychological".

It was this understanding - that in order to be truly effective, strategies for social action and social change had to address issues and emotions that were/are repressed and otherwise unconscious - that led me to take serious interest in the psychology of the unconscious in general, and my own and other peoples' dreams in particular. My wife, Kath, and I started sharing our dreams as we remembered them from time to time amidst the personal and political struggles of those years, and soon discovered that the process of sharing dreams alone, (regardless of whether we reached any conscious understanding of their meanings or not), had the profoundly positive effect of bringing us even closer, as well as often stimulating and releasing bursts of creative energy and ideas that enriched and enhanced our waking lives.

I did my first piece of formal, organized, group dream work in 1969 in connection with an eight-week seminar sponsored by a suburban church on "Overcoming Racism". At that time, I was working on the staff of a community organizing project in the black communities of Oakland and Emeryville on the eastern shores of San Francisco Bay. It was in my capacity as a staff member of U\*U Project - East Bay that the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Church asked me to conduct the seminar for a racially and sexually mixed group of people who had a desire to better understand and support the work of the Project, but who did not themselves reside in the community where the work was focused.

Although every participant in the seminar was already deeply committed intellectually and emotionally to the concept of racial equality and social justice, some of them had had unpleasant, frustrating, and disillusioning experiences in the course of their previous efforts to put these ideals into practice. As we discussed our experiences and ideas, we soon reached the edge of what we already knew and had already tried, and faced the issue of acknowledging and exploring the unconscious sources of racist feelings in ourselves as the first step toward bringing them to light and consciously transforming them in the society at large. It was at this juncture in the group process that I proposed that we share our dream experiences with one another - particularly those dreams where people of other races appeared, or where matters of race and racial feeling were a clear part of the manifest content of the dream. I was already very aware of the potential value of such an exercise from the years of sharing dreams with Kath, particularly in relation to our on-going mutual efforts to free ourselves and our relationship from the unexamined assumptions and oppressive stereotypes of sexism. However, even this profoundly positive experience had not adequately prepared me for the power that was released when we shared and worked on our racially charged dream images in the group.

The suggestion to share and work on dreams had been accepted by consensus at the close of a meeting, and the next week when we met and actually started sharing dreams, the seminar "took off" in an electrifying fashion. The work with the dreams began with an acknowledgement that all the characters and situations in our dreams were, at one level at least, representations of aspects of our own interior, unconscious lives and dramas. When this basic insight of the Gestalt school was combined with the dynamic model of repression and projection of archetypal material - most particularly the archetype that Jung called the "Shadow" - we began to understand and acknowledge our own racism more clearly, to "own" it, and then to let go of it. We began to experience the interior energy surges that arise when the effort previously wasted and expended in maintaining the self-deception of repression and projection is released and made more freely available as the projections are withdrawn. The acknowledgement of the previously unconscious, interior dramas of fear and rejection of parts of our own psychological make-up, (reflected in the distorted, projected perceptions of others), brought us to increased candor and intimacy, and at the same time filled us with energy we had previously not imagined we possessed. It was clear that the work with dreams was transforming the remnants of unconscious racism in us, and allowing us to respond and relate to one another as unique individuals rather than as "types" - a transformation which had profound implications even beyond the vitally important task of consciousness-raising with regard to racism.

When the seminar came to close, several of the participants volunteered themselves and their skills in support of the organizing effort in the black community, and we all discovered that many of the old conflicts and dramas of hostility and mistrust softened and dissipated in a very short time. The visible success of the seminar was, in my view, primarily due to the introduction of dream work into the mix of other ideas and exercises to promote growth and consciousness-change with regard to racism. From that point onward, I began to devote more and more of my attention to the problem of how best to unravel the multiple meanings in dreams, and how best to develop equalitarian techniques to teach the skills of open perception, mutual respect, intuitive sensitivity, and intellectual and emotional honesty necessary for good dream work on the one hand, and effective social action on the other.

In the years that have passed since that first exercise in group dream work, my initial enthusiasm has been confirmed and deepened again and again. I remain as committed to the goals of social justice and responsibility as I was in my youth, only now it seems to me that

the most effective strategies for achieving those goals must include the promotion of psychological growth in the very midst of the organizing efforts. The tools available for promoting this growth - particularly the tool of dream work - may initially appear to be "overly introspective", and may even be mistaken for "distractions" from the pressing collective tasks what face us if we are to survive the horrors of our own technology, but in fact they appear to be the only tools capable of reaching into our unconscious depths from whence real individual and collective change arise.

Over the past decade and more, I have been privileged to be associated with the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley where I have taught a class to lay people and seminarians of many denominations and persuasions called the "Meanings in Dreams and Dreaming".

Over the years, many people have learned the basic skills of working with dreams, and have incorporated dream work into their ministries and humanitarian organizing efforts. I have continued my own dream work and dream work training and carried it into voluntary associations, schools, hospitals, prisons, and mental institutions. In every instance, I have been at pains to make clear the connections between the seemingly private world of dreams and the glaringly public world of history and current events. In the course of this work, I have seen rigidities of personality relax and dissolve; I have seen grim radical activists discover greater spiritual depth and importance in their work; I have seen "ivory tower" intellectuals and "other worldly" religious seekers awaken to the practical imperatives of social responsibility. I have seen self-deceptions recognized and abandoned, fears overcome, and the consequent integrations of personality and releases of creative energy and ideas - all as a direct consequence of dream work. I have seen these things happen to others, and I have experienced them as they happen within me.

As James Joyce once said with great clarity: "History is a nightmare from which we are trying to awake". For perhaps the first time, we are recognizing the unconscious, symbolic nature of our collective political/ecological predicament, and finding ways to awaken ourselves to new possibilities of growth and reconciliation.

We are not yet out of the woods - we may still destroy ourselves, but for perhaps the first time in history, we are also beginning to think and perceive in planetary terms, and to develop a clearer understanding of ourselves as unconscious beings, living out symbolic dramas acted on the stage of global history. At the same time, we are also

beginning to forge tools and techniques of interior work, particularly dream work, which allow us to enter into those collective unconscious dramas with increasing conscious self-awareness and to transform those dramas with our individual and collective creative actions.

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Alix Pirani

## DREAMS, THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE, AND THE WHITE HOTEL

... a note on social dreaming and visions of redemption

In January and February 1982 I took part in a seven-week Project in Social Dreaming and Creativity at the Tavistock Institute. The last dream I reported, at the final meeting, was of a large building burning: I wanted it to burn but I didn't really want to see it destroyed. This related to my own feelings about the Project itself and my wish to transform it, and to a wider anger with men, male-made institutions and social structures, and my wish to 'inflamm' them and transform them through some sort of fire. The building in the dream resembled a roadhouse-hotel I'd visited that week near Aldershot whose pretentious architecture and military clientele I'd disliked.

The following week I saw in a bookshop window a display of copies of the Penguin **White Hotel**, with the burning hotel building and the 'inflamed' woman on the front. The time had clearly come for me to read the novel.

I'd left the Tavi project feeling that I might at some time attempt to write a novel to express adequately my experience there. Thomas's novel had a powerful impact on me - and it seemed to have done