

**Kathleen Sullivan's
Dreamw, Another Way of Knowing**

Post-Election Depression: Can Dreams Help?

Since November 3rd hundreds of local and national articles have provided advice, solace and direction to the millions of people sunk into deep, dark political-pits. Blizzards of email swirl around suggesting solutions like citizenship requirements for Canada and New Zealand. I got a serious letter advocating that doses of anti-depressants be increased or provided to non-users. CNN interviewed psychiatrists on how the politically decimated could survive the approaching holiday season. I'm happy to see this collective pain addressed by the media and the net, but what about the most personal help of all? What of the brilliance of the dream during such demanding times? Several useful dreams have surfaced from my psyche and in my practice, which I offer as my contribution to the collective healing-process.

Scene 1. With others at a city intersection, I watch a military parade. We see Army busses loaded with Buddhist pacifists dressed in Army fatigues. Each person wears individual headdresses identifying their sect, nationality, tribe or place of origin. They all look peacefully powerful as they ride off to war.

Isn't the biggest block to profound healing and development the inability to envision something completely new? For this committed Irish rebel and rabble-rouser to perform her role as political activist from the perspective of a *pacifist* is truly unique. I usually strap on more armor, gather more troops and train for the worst. By doing so today, I become the regime I'm trying to change. The false power of adrenalin will not win this battle. Nor will continuing to use, as I just did, the valued American war metaphors for all challenges, (*war on drugs, war on terror, battle against "the other"* political factions). A deep linguistic and potent inner shift must be accomplished.

Thus, my psyche provides a paradoxical symbol, a variety of Buddhist pacifists going off to war. This is certainly a counterbalance to my natural fighting-rebel response. As I feel into the riddle, I know that I cannot continue my political-activism with the same energy I have used for decades. I must now be guided by a spiritual archetype like the Dali Lama relying upon humor, compassion, a pervading sense of oneness, and, most of all, mental and emotional centeredness. I must react to the challenges ahead by remembering that peace and justice are the goal *and* the means. And as I plan, share and organize friends and other like-minded folks, instead of *marshalling the troops* with fear tactics, I will invite mindful, defenseless participation. Can I accomplish what I want by leading with peace instead of attack? This new way forces me to walk through walls, as this second dream scene of the same night illustrates.

I'm leaving a place by trying to walk through the wall. I've done this previously but now I just bang into the wall with my whole body. I've forgotten to prepare myself with the truth, the memory and knowledge that I CAN do this. So I back up, take a deep and centering breath, approach the wall with complete confidence and feel its materiality

transform to waves of energy as I pass through it with the sensation of moving through fog.

This fabulous experience allowed me to feel the hard physical reality giving way to the spiritual realm. Led by the shift from *doubt* to *trust*, I hope to walk through the national ideological walls that seem now so impenetrable.

A friend shared a simple dream that helps me when the world appears, to my human eyes, such a god-forsaken mess. The dreamer observes three venerable Ancients, Chinese men in centuries old robes, looking down on the earth. They cluck and shake their heads as they observe the explosive scenes that dot the Earth. They observe the seemingly unending childish behavior of the human species inhabiting this planet as wise, old grandparents might watch the antics of preschool children on a playground. When I remember to activate this dream in my imagination, I feel empathy and compassion for the child in me and in us all that is not fully enough developed to walk through the age-old walls of violence that imprison us all.

James Hillman's recent book, *The Terrible Love of War*, exposes the archetypes that, from his perspective, guarantee the inevitability of universal conflict. "There is no practical solution to war because war is not a problem for the practical mind, which is more suited to the conduct of war than to its obviation or conclusion. War belongs to our souls as an archetypal truth of the cosmos. It is a human accomplishment and an inhuman horror, and a love that no other love has been able to overcome." If that is true, why bother with walking through metaphoric walls, why look for personal or collective solutions to extreme political clashes? Perhaps these additional quotes from the book will activate your creative juices. Robert McNamara, secretary of defense during much of the Vietnam War, looking back, writes: "We can now understand these catastrophes for what they were: essentially the products of a failure of imagination." Dreams provide ways of imagining that exceed the patterns of the past. Dream on.