

Generational Dreams

If dreams themselves were motion picture movies, it might cost less than twenty-five cents to view. People's dreams of the future are often banal, fleeting images essentially catered to the individual who is dreaming. They are jumbled and incoherent at best. Deep inside all of us resides our anxieties, hopes, hidden desires, jealousies and layers of defenses we create based on our interaction with the world which manifest themselves into our unfolding dreams. Isn't it amazing how our dreams internally and externally have changed over the expansion of our lives? It's hard to imagine what we dreamt about when our lives were not so full of all the baggage collected over time. Our minds were empty, yet longing to fill and experience the world. I suppose we might have to go back to our childhood and conjure up the manner in which we liked to simply play for enjoyment. It would be almost imperative to access within ourselves a time before we started conforming to the world's expectations for us. Our society wants us to learn and adopt grown-up strategies while aspiring to be another cog in the adult machine; all the while wanting us to embrace our uniqueness and follow our dreams.

In such a paradoxical quagmire, we exist in an era where dreams are closer to becoming reality than those of our forebears. Just think; driverless cars, virtual world, cloning or even interactive artificial intelligence must have seemed truly ridiculous to them. Yet, with all these advances in changing our lifestyles to equip us for a better quality of life, at what cost does it come? The little pink house with a picket fence coupled with a family of four standing in front of the door, an automobile in the driveway ready to carry the breadwinner to work; used to be considered the standard American Dream. Within the confines of our generations, the very tools we use have come to manipulate and transform the basic concept of "dreams" to possible fears.

The little pink house for some has turned into living off parents or any institution who is willing to provide free food, housing and monetary basics as the person lives online with a mobile device. The family institution has radically transformed where gender blending is destined as the norm and traditional family values are replaced in the face of free expression without consequences. If you feel it, post it.

Working with your community? Nah, work from home or don't work at all, someone else will take care of you. Accountability or being highly qualified today takes a back seat to online mob justice, depending on the temperature of the proverbial water and shift in the culture's climate.

It is no secret the world has problems: environmental change, food shortages, population strain, moral and ethical challenges to our cultures, social media pressure, corporate greed, and government manipulation to name just a few. The individual now who begins their journey in life is exposed to newer, more frightening elements which we today, still do not know the effects it will have on our generations down the road. Gone are the days of consistently going outside to play with friends; now it's meeting them online in a gaming room or on a chat site. Making plans in advance and actually leaving the house to explore has become less and less a thing; just facetime or surf the net. Relying on friends who will change their plans if something else better comes along is a norm because developing deep meaningful relationships takes too much time. Interaction with our peers, friends, and community have become more strained. It too is affecting our dreams because what we want now, changes instantly tomorrow for the next, best thing.

Apps, games, social media platforms, texting, camera and video phones, mobile devices, digital footprints, cookies...have become our new way of life and also our addictive drug. You don't ingest, sniff or inject it, but absorb it mentally and emotionally. The actual new way of life isn't bad, but too much of it is dangerous. The result has a true effect on health, choices, consequences, and most importantly our dreams of what we want for ourselves. It changes so fast because it is becoming increasingly difficult to teach patience in an instant gratification world. As we navigate these dangerous, but exciting labyrinth passageways, many become insecure because they don't have a lot of followers on social media. Perhaps no one responds with likes to their posts? Others become narcissistic with images of how great their lives are, sharing their story on digital platforms. Attention seekers rail to the internet gods on what is in vogue in order to cancel or fight against the tyranny of other people's lives whom they've never met, but must

voice their thoughts; no matter the cost or harm. The simple reality of many youths' lives have been consumed with a need to feel more loved and accepted at a faster rate. The dreams of being now a tik-toker, influencer, youtube entrepreneur, hosting an onlyfans page, destination weddings, or climbing the ladder fast without having to put in the years to establish an impact in the job market now blemish the expansion of the dream. It's the hit of dopamine we crave when those wonderful ding sounds are heard or buzzing from our devices come for being liked for something we post which now makes us feel special. It doesn't just belong to a younger generation. The dream has begun to affect older ones. The dream for many was to find a job or skill you are good at and pursue it in life. "You never work a day in your life, doing what you love" was a mantra shared by family and educators alike. Find one job, start a family and work hard until retirement. The dream encompassed job security. Well, in its basic form. Older generations are discovering the only security in their lives is their resolve to always stay vigilant in the pursuit of their dreams; knowing the variables can change because the working world now is always in a fast paced state of flux. No longer can one rely on or hope for stability. They must change as the times change, which means more learning, adapting to the culture; even if they don't like it.

We all start out as individuals, but in the process of growing up, we tend to gravitate towards conformity of others and how our culture deems we should live our lives. We lose sight of our dreams as well as ourselves. Dreamers dream when they explore new places, read books of interest, eat new foods, explore the past, learn to slow down and meditate, pursue their passions, take time researching a good meal for themselves to sit and enjoy, trust as well as love themselves for their shortcomings and strengths; these are the elemental foundations in which dreamers create their paths. No individual will ever cheat on themselves. A lesson needed to be learned is to understand not everyone will like them, but they can still find self-love. It is from this that self-esteem creates the startup of confidence. Our generations differ in how we all choose to pursue our dreams.

Today's generation are growing up with smartphones, not landlines and full keyboards. They use voice assistants instead of looking for a live operator. They use money transfers without a wallet, instead of

writing checks or using cash. Wikipedia, Google, or Siri serve our youth now instead of libraries, newspapers or even teachers because they can spout facts, data, and research at a faster rate. Even across cultures this generation has spellcheck, A.I. to write their papers, or voice typing without actually using their hands. Typewriters, word processors, or handwriting is all but gone from the everyday handling of composing words. New generations shop for groceries at home on an app, only to drive to the store and have it put in the trunk of their car. Older generations like to choose their items by hand, taking time to invest in finding what they deem suits their liking. Hungry? New generations just order UberEats or DoorDash to their house. Older generations still like to prepare meals and sit down together for it. Is there still an American dream in this growing divide?

The answer is allusive albeit simple, change. Change is the new dream of all individuals. Even as I sit here now typing this piece, I seek inward at my own dreams. I find dreams are not limited to youth, but to everyone regardless of age. When we grow as individuals, our choices and experiences mature our dreams. As our world changes or expands, technology grows, fashion evolves, and what could be now is...I see it is simply change that encapsulates the dreams of the dreamer. Therefore, if we achieve or fail at the dream, another will take its place. It is arrogance and folly for any generation to try and dictate or establish the structure of a dream to any individual. Once we do this, it is no longer their dream, but a forced society's dream. No matter the era we exist in nor the age we reach, change will always influence the dreams of the dreamers and in those times, the dreams will evolve for good or ill. W.B. Yeats (1865–

1939) said so succinctly in his poem, "He Wishes For the Cloths of Heaven,"

But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

To each generation: past, present and future...as we coexist with each other, tread softly because we tread on each other's dreams.