

What happens to a dream deferred?

by Lily Z.

In the poem “Harlem” Langston Hughes has warned the world of the explosive power of unfulfilled dreams. While the poet was originally referring to the oppression of Blacks in the United States, we are now watching a similarly explosive situation in the Arab world. The question arises as to what it is that makes a man happy? What happens if these most important dreams are not fulfilled?

Firstly, it is the lack of a say in politics of the citizens that causes the people to conflict with the government of a country. As we can easily perceive from various occurrences in the past, democratic regimes are much less likely to be scorned by the masses. Even though there are always classes that support the regime, no matter how ridiculously unsuitable it is, those in favor, are usually part of a significantly small minority.

Secondly, it is freedom of thought and speech and freedom of the press, which leads to a harmonious relation between the public and the government. Only if the government is willing to grant these liberties to its people, will the relationship be based on trust, loyalty and hope. The continuous breakouts of hatred, violence and the public’s yearning for change, in the example of Egypt, perfectly depict the lack of these values.

Thirdly, equal rights for citizens of all nationalities, educational levels and professional and social statuses must be fixed, in order for a population to be able to live in accord. If the dreams of the people are hopeless and ridiculed from the very start, owing to any of the above mentioned diversities, their suffering will inevitably lead to disappointment and depression, which, at some point, are quite likely to explode in appearance of demonstrations and riots.

All in all, man is somewhat dependent on the standards and conditions imposed on him by the state. Whether our individual dreams can be fulfilled or not lies, to a great extent, in the hands of our governments. Yet, it can be said that the public always has the option of showing its government that the situation of the people must be improved, by taking a stand and revolting. Egypt has come to a point, in which the population has lost its patience. Now the people are fighting for their rights, and therefore fighting for their dreams.

May these dreams come true.

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Nina K.

In the poem "Harlem" Langston Hughes has warned the world of the explosive power of unfulfilled dreams. While the poet was originally referring to the oppression of Blacks in the United States, we are now watching a similarly explosive situation in the Arab world. The dream of freedom and democracy has been deferred for so many years, leaving the citizens with nothing but despair, which over time becomes so powerful that the situation escalates.

Langston Hughes says that a deferred dream, the word "dream" in this context stands for a lifelong wish rather than an unrealistic fantasy, "festers like a sore- and then runs". This festering is exactly what a person wouldn't want, because the wound would take a long time to heal and leave a scar forever. It doesn't just dry up, but it gets infected, hindering the body to function normally. What Hughes implies is that when one is denied the fulfillment of a dream, it affects a person like a wound that refuses to heal.

In addition, it can also present itself like "a heavy load" that "just sags", meaning that you always carry the deferred dream around with you, making you walk slowly because of the heavy load. In the case of Afro-Americans or Arabs, their dream of freedom kept being deferred, so they would just lug around oppressing thoughts, like "What if I had a different skin color" or "What if I was born in a different country?" In the end, this just inhibits you from living a happy life, just like a heavy load makes you sag.

However, when this dream reaches a certain magnitude, when it evokes a certain degree of desperation, it can be compared to reaching an expiration date and simply explodes. This explosion can occur as suicide, homicide or a revolution, like in the case of the Arab world.

In conclusion, it can be said that a deferred dream keeps clinging onto you, crushing the innards of your soul, so long until you can't take it anymore. This is when a person, or a group of people take extreme measure, comparable with an explosion.