



Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy

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'Dream' makes the case for a progressive political strategy that embraces a new set of tools. Although fantasy and spectacle have become the lingua franca of our time, Duncombe points out that liberals continue to depend upon sober reason to guide them and suggests ways in which they can adopt the new when producing policies.

Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy Details

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Author : Stephen Duncombe

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From Reader Review Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy for online ebook

Lizard says

an insightful look into the efficacy (or lack thereof) of the contemporary left, Dream is a deeply inspiring and highly readable call to action for art activists, teachers, and social justice leaders everywhere.

Sarah says

It's always a good time to have professional wrestling compared to Brechtian theater.

Lydia says

This book was a bit on the academic-y side for me, but it tackled a lot of issues that i think about a lot, namely: how to better incorporate our ideas of a better society into our methods of protest, how to make a point and have fun doing it, and how to use the system to defeat itself...

It's not a "how-to" book but an exploration of the issue, which I liked. But the author didn't mention Bread and Puppet once, which I thought was silly. My sweetheart Kevin is one of the organizers of the HONK! streetband festival and practically considers this book his bible (those are my words, not his!).

This book is a good starting point for a necessary conversation: how to protest effectively in the world today without burning out and hating it.

Kayleigh says

It took a few chapters for me even to be able to describe the gist of the book, but it ended up being a worthwhile read. Duncombe makes great points about how progressives can create more relatable political goals and actions, and how insisting on staying grounded in 'reality' can do more harm than good.

Molly Ferguson says

This book argues that progressives need the type of engaging spectacles (ahem, the RNC) that conservatives have dazzled people with for several decades. It was a pretty interesting read.

Elizabeth says

There's less to be frustrated with here than in Duncombe's zine history, but I ultimately suspect that this is

because it is difficult to disagree with Duncombe's politics when they are so like my own. His overall argument that progressive politics needs to abandon rational and divisive thought in favor of embracing fantasy and dreams in order to cater to humans' innate desires is interesting, but not quite fleshed out enough to suggest exactly how it might happen. Further, his imaginings of participatory politics and ethical spectacles are clearly only favorable on the terms that he imagines them: that is, when their purpose is to advance his liberal agenda. All of this begs the question: if Duncombe is correct in his assumption that we must take fantasy more seriously in order for progressive politics to flourish, what type of society might we expect to emerge? In other words, how would the total abandonment of rational, Enlightenment subjectivity look, and would Duncombe (or anyone else for that matter) be happy with a society that thrived entirely on people embracing a belief in fantasy (which sounds, to me, an awful lot like a society full of religious zealots)? I suspect not, and think he might have done a better job suggesting exactly how far the imaginative ends of his theory might stretch.

Joseph says

made me want to take off my clothes and run in the streets to make a better world.

Rukshana says

this book makes a lot of good arguments that progressives/leftists need to hear. the argument is more complex than activists simply appropriating strategies used by corporations and their advertising teams. we need to learn to tap into people's emotions, hopes, dreams, and passions the same way that corporations successfully do (to make us feel inadequate, and buy their products!). moreover, we need to tap into our own so that we can bring people into our organizations and movements. many of us who have organized before have heard this argument - we know it, yet our current methods aren't working to build the type of movement we need to win campaigns and change the world.

duncombe also makes a pretty strong critique of enlightenment values (specifically, the appeal to reason), arguing that progressives' belief that the truth will prevail has proved to be untrue. rather, the truth needs to be narrative-ized (yes, i made up that word) to reach a broader audience and create an impact. he also advocates heavily for participation, inclusiveness, fun (!), playfulness, and joy in our actions and movements.

all of this is difficult for a self-serious leftist like myself, but i am willing to listen, pay attention, and change if necessary because we need to be effective - our lives and future depend on it.

duncombe's argument is nuanced and worth reading this very accessible and short book.

BTW, duncombe was interviewed on KPFK here in los angeles.

Kavita says

Most recent book written by my grad advisor. Well researched and thought out analysis of what it means to a progressive or radical activist/organizer in the "Age of the Spectacle." Plus, I'm listed in the acknowledgement, so I gotta represent. :P

teresa says

found this book while looking for the smart meme collectives book called "ReImagining Change." and it ain't no coincidence that this book is in bibliography for the book that i was initially for.

Ida says

recommended by Ben S

Onnesha says

Pretty interesting analysis of how progressive politicians need to embrace the tools of manufacturing reality: advertising. The book was a little rambly and irritating (a lot of "it is, but it isn't..") but made solid points. The book takes off from that freaky quote that Ron Suskind extracted from someone in the Bush administration about how he [Suskind] and others don't get it because they're living in the "reality-based" community whereas he and the Bush admin create reality. I'm sort of obsessed with the quote and have it on my wall, so I was happy to see someone really exploring the implications.

The book, in short, is well worth reading. It's an interesting and unique perspective from someone who has a decent grasp of theory and who works as an activist as well. My biggest bone to pick is his fixation on using pop culture examples. Las Vegas and Grand Theft Auto as THE tools to understanding what people's desires really are. For me, these represent more what people want to indulge in in large part as escapism. Duncombe's point is that fantasy and "dream" needs to be made part and parcel of the progressive political agenda. Fair enough, but I could have used a little more nuance.

Steev Hise says

Really inspiring, at least that someone in academia is recognizing and deeply thinking about this serious need for rejuvenating left activism through play, art, spectacle, infotainment, what have you.

It's a little LESS surprising or educational than I had hoped - basically all the examples he used were old, stuff i already knew about - the zapatistas, reclaim the streets, billionaires for bush, etc. but the frame he puts it all in makes it worth reading.
