It's All Just a Bad Dream

By Kelly Busklee

HOW OBSESSED are people about the still undecided presidential election? So obsessed, they do not just think about it all day — they dream about it all night, too.

I have been doing research on dreams and presidential elections since 1992. I have interviewed hundreds of college students, attended the meetings of various political organizations, spent hours on electronic bulletin boards and posted requests for electronic bulletin boards and posted requests for

First, many people simply can't get the election out of their minds when they go to sleep. Numerous people have reported annoying recurring dreams of ballots, voting, flashing TV news reports, counting and recounting votes, and even those notorious chads. One person, a Republican who voted for Bush, recounted this dream: I was talking with someone about pregnant, dimpled, and hanging types of chads, and which should be counted as a vote. This dream looped back to me all night long.

The single most intriguing finding of my research is that many more Democrats than Republicans are reporting election-related dreams. Most of these dreams are nightmares about the prospects of an ultimate Bush victory.

Aliens taking over the Earth and turning all humans into slaves; terrorists attacking the country with biological weapons; the economy faltering into the ocean and being chased by a hungry shark; losing control of a car and driving off a cliff — these are some of the distressing images that are filling Democratic imaginations. A few Democratic dreamers are using rather wicked sarcasm to express their feelings of anger, outrage, and disbelief. Two nights after the election, a 38-year-old woman from Colorado reported: I remember dreaming about George Bush Jr. He was talking to his mom, Barbara. He whipped like a 2-year-old saying, 'But Mommy, you said I could be president!' The night of the election, an 18-year-old woman from New York dreamed: I was in my room watching the news on the television and eating chips. Then George W. Bush came into my room and stole my chips! I was surprised and caught off guard.

The fact that so many more Democrats than Republicans are reporting election-related dreams may simply reflect the limited scope of my research. It may also reflect an actual personality difference between people who are attracted to Democratic political beliefs and people attracted to Republican beliefs. If so, I can all too easily imagine each side spinning such a finding in its own dreamy characteristic way.

From the Democrats: "See? This just proves that Democrats are imaginative, self-deprecating, emotionally sensitive souls, while Republicans are uptight, repressed automatons with the character depth of a pudding.

From the Republicans: "No, what this proves is that Democrats are pathetically unstable lunatics who see lost in their own twisted fantasies, while Republicans are simply clear-eyed realists — focused, grounded and capable of dealing with the world as it is."

It is perhaps inevitable that partisans will see this research as confirmation of their own innate superiority. I believe that it makes it all the more important to note that at least a few people are having "non-partisan" or "bipartisan" dreams, dreams that point to values and virtues beyond the victorious desire to beat one's opponent into a bloody pulp.

The night of the election, a 26-year-old Democratic woman from New York had this dream: I'm in a busy New York City street. The polls have closed and everyone is running around. We know that Gore has lost. I see Gore, crying. He looks exhausted, disheveled. Tipper helps him walk, and I ask her, 'Does he want anything to eat? Or drink? Anything!?' She says, 'No, sweetie, police cars dotting the streets to Gore's old high school, St. Stevens, where it turned out headed.

Seeing Al trudging up a hill, just 537 votes short of it, Mrs. Bush pushing his burden to get his campaign back on track. Gore's political arm, the man in the middle, the man who's going to the edge of the world. It's sad to picture Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers. It's sad to picture Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers. It's sad to picture Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers. It's sad to picture Gore the numbers and Gore the numbers.

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"That's OK," Here is a dream that goes beyond expressing bitter outrage at the winner to show a deep sense of compassion and consideration for the loser. How many people have given even a second thought to the emotional suffering this election has caused the candidates and their families?

A couple of nights before the election, a 43-year-old woman from Pennsylvania dreamed: I am an ardent Democrat who was anxiously waiting for Gore to win. This dream was vivid, I am with George W. Bush, going with him through a beautiful dinner on a large oceanliner. We sit next to each other and eat together. As we're chatting, I realize that he's really not a bad guy. The idea that he's not as disapproved of as many people believe is the most encouraging thing.

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