

State of the World and Worldwork:  
Interview with Amy and Arny Mindell by Bill Say

1) What is Worldwork?

Thanks for interviewing us Bill, we are sitting in the airport right now coming back from worldwork and we appreciated your teamwork there and the teamwork of our whole staff.

Worldwork? To be brief, it is a way of working on world issues that is both inner, relationship oriented, organizational and large group work. As most know, democracy which is based upon citizen power, that is "demo-kratie" in Greek, is clearly a step further in consciousness beyond dictatorship.

But even though democracy is a step, it does not always work well in the sense of reducing violent conflict. Why?, because it teaches about sharing power but does not teach about relationship, which goes beyond power. The next step beyond power is developing more sustainable contact with others and the ability to work with one another.

Thus, worldwork is based upon what Arny called "deep democracy", which stresses awareness, and not only power. Awareness of interaction means more fluid relationships, awareness of voice and body signals, awareness of shared momentary and historical roles etc. The most outward and dramatic aspects of worldwork appear in large group work, as we just experienced in Warsaw...amazing...to see 500 people from 43 countries working together.

2) What's on your minds today with regard to Worldwork and the current world situation?

We are most aware of the need to focus on solutions and social system change. But sustainable relationships are equally or perhaps more important. To achieve such relationships, some of us need to learn how to facilitate and be elders who know and participate in with the various sides, and various roles inside of themselves and outside in group processes. Such elders can turn conflict into fluid and creative relationships where people understand and work together.

3) In many ways, the state of the world is known through the news we receive by newspaper, Internet, TV and radio. Is there anything about the state of the world that may not be so obvious through these more common place means of communication, especially when looking at it from a Worldwork point of view?

The news is full of polarities as defined by our present consensus reality which depends upon the culture, people and country. Thus, the outer opponents may be one country against another, or one people against another.

What is not so obvious, is that there are always a few people who are able to feel into all sides. And what also is not so obvious is that present day conflicts are based to some extent upon unworked out, undiscussed historical issues which people prefer to forget instead of processing. This is understandable, everyone wants to avoid pain, but we need more than this avoidance. We think of the relationship between Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Estonia, ..... Etc. Just now in Warsaw, the figures of the 2nd world war and the Communist era needed to be experienced and processed first before any understanding could occur between people.

4) Reading about the state of the world can be very alarming. Can you say anything that contrasts the state of the world with the process of the world? And is the process of the world as alarming in your view?

#### The state of the world is a "state", that means a frozen picture which is supposed to be based upon whatever a group considers the good or bad "guys" so

to speak. However, when we begin to process things inside or in organizations or groups, suddenly people realize, they often are not just frozen, but quietly feel a bit like the other side. When someone realizes this, she or he can sometimes switch roles, and become more fluid, and help create a more aware community. When this happens, this fluidity allows for solutions, and relationships beyond any one solution.

5) Your work suggests that entities have thematic roots, or myths, that are present in the very beginning of things, roots that often endure in meaningful ways. Do you have any thoughts as to the most basic theme of the world and of Worldwork?

###there are many mythic roots to a given culture and people. One of the main world myths shows a God who tells the first people not to do certain things in "heaven". When this happens, this "God" gets angry, and sends the first woman and man to earth where death will occur. This story is important, because like that "God", we need to take a stand, and like that "god" say "no" to things we feel are wrong. But at the same time, limiting the life span of the "bad guys" is no resolution.

We need a new myth for sustainable resolutions in which we not only disagree and get angry with others, but also learn to process the relationships and learn to get along with people.

6) In my understanding and experience with Worldwork, it seems that Worldwork has an unusual way of entering experientially into an issue in order to understand, unfold it and build community. Can you comment on this?

###Unusual? Yes, this term depends of course upon the group, culture+ situation. Some groups will work on finding the roles inside. Others are more at ease, playing out roles and switching roles in large groups.

We need a world, perhaps starting with kindergarten where conflicts can be openly and safely discussed and processed inside and in the middle of the group. In a way, we need new kindergartens, and this will enable new worlds to arise.

7) For our very different viewers who may experience varying degrees of inclusion or exclusion, power or the lack of it, and yet are seeking better ways of living and working together, can you offer any general suggestions?

Yes, follow your own self, your own dreams. If possible, speak about conflicts with others, and demonstrate how you yourself can create conflict by being rank-unconscious. Each of us has some rank and power, stand for it, and then be aware that it can irritate and inflame "power struggles" with others. In other words, take a stand, then understand the other, and be them.

8) It seems that many people and groups would like to change, impact or otherwise work with the world and yet may feel unsure of how to maximize their effect. Can you offer any ideas or encouragement to those struggling with how to best make a difference in this world?

###Yes, enjoy any comfort you can find, then go into groups and cultures you don't know much about, or where you feel uncomfortable, in order to learn about different communication styles and ways of being. Create more community among all peoples, do it your own way, but do it.

9) I know you've learned many things from working with groups all over the world, are there any particular lessons that come to your minds today?

Everyone, even the bad guys are part of our family. Also, there are basic process structures that all groups experience regardless of their culture. All groups gossip, have ghost roles, double signals. And in almost every group there are elders who come out of "nowhere"...who are often not the designated

facilitators. These people hold their arms open and are there for everyone and can sit in the fire.

10) Many groups, organizations and communities struggle with conflicts. Do you have any suggestions?

###Fight, protect yourself, then think, how are we the other.

11) How is Worldwork evolving and does its evolution mirror a greater global tendency?

####there is more interest than ever around the world in worldwork—and many leaders are interested but are shy about saying this publicly. But change will happen for us if we start changing in kindergarten, having kids practice worldwork on the playground.

12) Amy, in a talk you and Arny gave in Yachats last year on Worldwork, you spoke of being hopeful about what you see happening in your work with different groups around the world. Could you comment on this hopefulness?

#### yes, when a group uses awareness and appreciates where people are at and use various tools, amazing things happen. People can be conflictual, but with some awareness, groups can be amazing. We have seen this happen in connections with organizations, interest groups, Churches, UN groups, and people around the world.

13) Michal Wertheimer Shimoni asked a question of advice for those living in conflict zones.

###Yes, care for yourself first, then begin to carefully and conservatively play out the opponent and fluid interactions, demonstrating in role play how to do that with your friends and groups. The key is to sometimes be the opponents arguing against yourself.

14) Matt Stella asked a question about applying Worldwork in an area where the populace is pretty homogenous.

###Wonderful. Build up their pride, then slowly introduce the roles of other groups that may not be present. How? Show this while shopping, at the airport, and on the city streets.