



History Publishing Company

For Immediate Release

“Smack in the Middle” Puts Readers Smack in the Middle of a True-Life Heroin Treatment Drama

In his new book, Gibbs Williams, Ph.D., revisits his bizarre and troubled tenure 50 years ago at New York City’s famed Odyssey House

New York, NY, December 3, 2019—In late 1967, an eager 30-year-old therapist named Gibbs Williams was offered a job treating heroin addicts at a new establishment in lower Manhattan called Odyssey House.

What followed over the next two years represents one of the most harrowing and illuminating journeys a young professional can experience at the beginning of a career. In no small measure that was thanks to Odyssey’s brilliant, pioneering, inscrutable and, in time, despotic founder and leader, Dr. Judianne Densen-Gerber. Williams documents his journey in a new book published by the Black Opal imprint of the History Publishing Company (Palisades, NY) called “Smack in the Middle: My Turbulent Time Treating Heroin Addicts at Odyssey.”

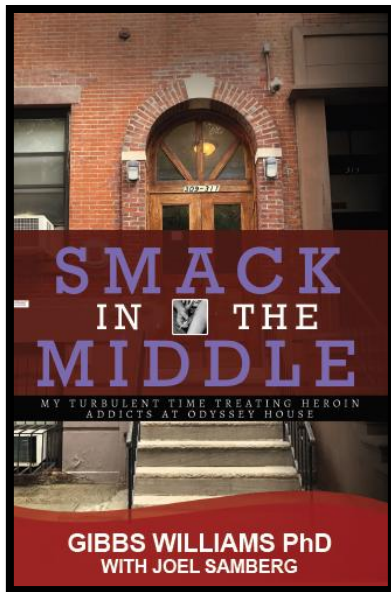
“Although my fascination of Dr. Judi’s colorful disposition and esteem for the depth of her convictions never wavered, I reached the point where I had no choice but to get the hell out of there,” says Dr. Williams, who has been a prominent psychotherapist in New York City for more than 50 years. “On the other hand, I found it exceedingly difficult to leave because of my continued fascination with her.”

Among the book’s astonishing disclosures:

- One drug resident who shared some possibly drug-induced memories in a group encounter was suddenly accused of murder and had the police come after him;
- Odyssey House residents were once subjected to a ‘Starvation’ during which food was withheld for no valid reason;
- Even after Mr. Williams made his displeasure with Odyssey House management known, he was asked to meet the nightgown-clad director one night—in her bedroom...

In addition to being a remarkable first-person account of an extraordinary place and time, “Smack in the Middle” also opens important dialogue about cult-like leadership and authoritarian rule, which makes the book as important as a contemporary study as it is compelling as a nonfiction journal.

Densen-Gerber was a Columbia University-trained attorney and New York University Medical School-trained psychiatrist who founded Odyssey House in 1966. Odyssey House sought to teach addicts that its program held out a better alternative for them than their present lifestyles. They were motivated to make progress by distinguishing themselves with productive work in and around the House, and eventually reenter society as productive and responsible citizens.



A comprehensive and extensively researched profile in New York Magazine in 1979 reported that “The goings-on at Odyssey House seemed to reflect Dr. Densen-Gerber’s psychological needs more than those of the addicts she was committed to serve.” About herself she stated to the magazine: “Am I considerate of the feelings of others? No... I don’t play by the same rules that other people play by.”

Gibbs Williams, Ph.D. is a practicing psychoanalyst in Manhattan with expertise in helping clients explore existential questions of identity and purpose. He trained at Columbia University, Yeshiva University, New York University, and the Greenwich Institute for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. In addition to his practice, over the last few decades he has investigated the perplexities of meaningful coincidences. His book on the topic, “Demystifying Meaningful Coincidences (Synchronicities),” is one of the only volumes that expressly covers the specific fields of speculative philosophy, depth psychology, the esoteric occult, and spirituality.

“Smack in the Middle: My Turbulent Time Treating Heroin Addicts at Odyssey House” (173 pages) is available on Amazon and all other online booksellers.

Dr. Gibbs Williams is available for questions and interviews, and can be reached at 914-473-7140 and via email at gwilliamsny11@aol.com. For more information please visit the book’s website at <https://gibbswilliams-smack.com/>. For information on review copies, please contact either the [author](#) or the [publisher](#).

Some early comments from readers in the professional community:

“Gibbs Williams’ book is an entertaining and revealing trip into the social-psychological dynamics of a therapeutic community from the inside out. He describes in insightful detail how the process works and at times doesn’t work in treating addiction.”

—Lewis Yablonsky, Professor Emeritus of Criminology, California State University

“Gibbs has written a compelling narrative that braids together his life story, professional development, and tumultuous experience as a counselor at Odyssey House.”

—Frank Lachmann, Ph.D, psychoanalyst and author

“This is the first book to tackle the early history of Odyssey House head on, good and bad, and in doing so crystallizes the experience of a generation. It is rich in insights not just about the past but about the present, and becomes an odyssey of discovery and illumination.”

—Dr. Craig Fees, Chief Researcher, Research Library and Study Centre, England