

Voices

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Community Newspaper

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When leadership fails we feel it

from the desk of Managing Editor

Suzan Erem

It's been a hard month for us at *Voices*. It seems every one of our volunteers has been suffering with stress, loss, family problems, health trouble or other challenges of life.

I talk to shop owners, friends far and near, other activists and my own husband, and we're all feeling it. It's worse than malaise. It's an overall feeling of oppression, a weight on our shoulders, on our heads, that drains the energy right out of our feet.

Maybe it's the moon, or something in the water. It will pass, I know, because I've lived long enough to have experienced the ebb and flow of nature's forces.

But when this many people are feeling it at once, I find myself looking at the bigger picture and wondering. What I see is a country without an inspirational leader. I see a country whose elected and appointed officials are mean-spirited and selfish, who believe the best thing about our country is the ability to get ahead at someone else's expense. 9/11? We bomb the heck out of a country that had nothing to do with it, to get at its oil reserves. Katrina? Put incompetent people in charge so you can blame govern-

ment for being ineffective. Then send in the private sector so it can suck at the public trough until there's nothing left for the poor, the sick or the young. Supreme Court nominees? Praise them for their ability not to answer questions about their political positions. Call them "activists" if they protect the rights of women, but "moderate" and "apolitical" if they've written memos for a previous president that show absolute disdain for women and minorities.

I'm convinced that this kind of Orwellian message control is seeping into our daily lives. It takes so much energy for those of us who are aware of it to defend against it. But there are so many more, our young people for instance, who don't even appreciate it. They have grown up with it. It's normal to them, and they are showing it in their consumerism, their self-centeredness and their insecurities about the future.

It has to stop. National elections are still on the horizon, but local elections are com-

ing up quickly. This is my personal appeal to our local candidates. No public office is too small to do these things: Show leadership. Show compassion. Show kindness. Take risks. Be imaginative. Watch out for the little guy (and gal). Take care of the citizens who entrusted you with their governance. Don't be afraid to lead with humanity and courage.

I know it'll seem like you're swimming in poisoned waters, and in some ways you are. But our generation must do what we can to fix what we've done, the mistakes we've made, the policies we've allowed these so-called leaders of ours to implement that destroy our Earth, decimate any hope for working people to ever get ahead, put fear into the hearts of our elders who cannot afford to get sick and set up our children for failure.

This issue of *Voices* addresses in a small way some of the latest trends in education. It is our effort to keep the debate alive. Please write to us and tell us what you think about how we are preparing our children for the future we are handing them.

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