

POWERLESSNESS

I have heard it so many times I don't want to hear it again. The most unlikely people keep saying the same thing. The first time I heard it, I couldn't believe my ears. I couldn't believe people I had known and worked with on justice issues would actually say something like that. They were so sincere and moved deeply, but trapped in the mire of existing conditions. I could not imagine them making such a statement, but they did, and so have too many other people.

"I feel so helpless. I don't know what to do. I feel powerless," were the words that crawled and staggered out of their mouths. "Helpless" and "powerless" were spoken by middle class and upper income white men and women who vote in America.

They are part of the most influential and affluent groups in the country, yet, they have arrived at a moment when everything they possess does not give them sufficient voice and presence to stand against a government that ignores its own people, and leaves a clear, unambiguous message, "You are on your own."

Although the President and his minions tout messages about homeland security, there is a great sense of insecurity and fear amid an air of frustration among America's broad and diverse population.

People feel no matter what they say or do, President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and members of the United States Congress (House and Senate) are acting in ways contrary to the public's demand.

The most blatant reminder of this blind arrogance and willful behavior is the War in Iraq. Even following a mid-term election that sent an urgent plea to stop the war and bring the troops home, the White House and the Congress danced to a different tune. The war drags on to a murderous and vile beat while politicians trade barbs and lop softballs at each other.

If ever there was a time when the people's confidence in government waned, this is the seminal moment. The pervasive sense of powerlessness and helplessness boils like an internal furnace in the souls of Americans from sea to shining sea. College campuses appear like cold, lifeless dungeons where critical thought has been taken hostage. The dangerous streets of cities are no threat to the passive, apathetic pedestrians who stroll along with I-Pods in hand, tuned out to the reality of compromised public servants and stolen tax dollars.

Muted voices dare not scream against the machines of neo-conservative think tanks that pump out misinformation and self-interest global agenda. The myopic prophets of feign civil religions proclaim the coming of a New World Order as they sell their souls to the highest bidders.

It has taken 229 years to arrive at this point in American history. The once, self-inflated baby nation on the world stage wasted no time decimating indigenous cultures, kidnapping Africans, felling ancient woodlands, contaminating waterways, and polluting skies. In the blink of a geological eye, the young upstarts managed to harness nuclear energy and turn it into a world-ending threat. Even in the aftermath of its own glimpse into the shock and awe from an external attack, America quickly reversed international sympathy into worldwide regret for having compassion.

The question of an 18-year-old South African student who dreams of serving her country as a pediatrician, rings with a piercing refrain, "If America is truly a democracy where its citizens have choice, why did Americans re-elect George Bush?"

It is more than mere inquiry. It is an indictment. And, although many voters would argue they did not elect or re-elect George W. Bush, none can deny the obvious fact that he and his administration have served without interruption since the bogus conclusion of the November 2000 Supreme Court appointment of the Commander-in-Chief. However way anyone wants to describe the shenanigans that put this corrupt, criminal, insane party in the White House, the bottom line reveals no serious opposition has come forward to recall, impeach, or censure the cabal.

We have witnessed event after event that required presidential leadership to step forward and guide this fledgling nation. One week before the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center, an official American delegation headed by then Secretary of State Colin Powell, attending an international conference in Durban, South Africa, walked out when voices from Third World nations were raised in protest to racism and policies affecting Palestinians.

On September 10, 2001, George W. Bush had achieved his lowest level in the polls since he entered office. The next day when two commercial aircraft crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City, he seized the moment to express his wildfire commitment to "smoke out and round up" those responsible for the hellish acts of terror. Within days his message to the American people was simple and precise, "Go shopping."

Almost four years later, another catastrophe beset his administration. Having observed seasonal storms that buffeted the East Coast for three previous years, a warning about a major hurricane hurling toward New Orleans and the Gulf Coast reached the President's desk. Fortunately, the storm's force did not create the devastation predicted, but worse was yet to come for the people in the Bayou.

After the storm past, weaken and exposed levies broke and exploded with a rush of cascading waters. Waters already bloated with harmful, carcinogenic elements crashed through Louisiana's lowlands, flooding every vulnerable inch. The hour for homeland security emerged from the depths of disaster. And the President used three words to express his feelings about how his administration dealt with that tragedy, "Well done, Brownie."

Michael Brown, former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, was in charge but failed to adequately and properly serve the nation's most desperate citizens. He provided such a non-critical response that more than a thousand people died and hundreds of thousands were displaced, many never to return to their homes. Before he was eventually fired, George Bush squeezed Brown's hands and proclaimed before the media and the public his approval of Brown's handling of the situation.

Two years after Hurricane Katrina, more than Michael Brown went away. The Bush Administration has left that region to fend for itself as he remains poised to inject another \$120 billion into Iraq. Americans, ultimately, are "on their own." There is no real homeland security when disaster hits.

Disillusioned by betrayal and crimes against humanity, citizens of the United States are flailing against a tide of stubborn, blind, deaf, insensitive characters, who have abandoned the Constitution, and stomp onward into utter madness.

Prophetic witness informs us impending danger awaits if we remain paralyzed by a seemingly overwhelming evil presence. Those who feel helpless and powerless must reassess the conditions in which we exist and determine how long they will allow their voices to remain silent. People of faith, people of the God who holds the power of night and day; thunder storms and blistering winds, must awaken and arouse the nation.

In the words of William Cullen Bryant, "Truth, crushed to the earth, shall rise again!" So, we must keep the faith and tell the truth. Even as masters of manipulation and lies weave their tales of expedience, other voices must speak up.

Real power is found in God. Our recovery from the abyss of fear and profound weakness comes when we seek to join God's plan to contend against wickedness and unrighteousness. Now is the time to be strong and unafraid. Now is the time to pray our confessions of complicity and repent. Now is the time for people of goodwill and justice to stand up and present an alternative to current priorities that deny adequate education to children, healthcare to the working poor; affordable housing and a clean, healthy environment.

The salvation of America rests with those who dare to be faithful to God by serving the poor, the oppressed, and those who are vulnerable. As the prophet Amos reminds us, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." When we do that all false notions of helplessness and powerlessness dissipate.

Our love and compassion spring into a fountain of human potential, and we inspire people in every corner to rally to the cause of goodness, justice, and righteousness. God knows the suffering of innocent souls. If we fail to respond, God will. Biblical history instructs us of the consequences of human rejection to what is necessary and right.

Let there be no doubt, our choice now is what side we will take. Will it be to continue wallowing in a state of self-pity? Or, will we move into God's arena and take a position that is occupied by "so great a cloud of witnesses?" The world awaits an answer from the American people.

Art Cribbs – July 11, 2007