Opinion
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Voices of Sisters
Social Justice



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Nov. 6, the day after Election Day.

It's morning — a cold, dark, empty morning.

But it was never meant to be that way.

And yet there's no sound of music coming down our side streets, no veritable gathering of a people on the brink of new life. Instead, there are only the memories of happy roars quieted and whispering now, "We will work and we will win!" And worse, there are no moments of deep delight, no fast-swelling cries of "And we're not going back!"

It all disappeared that fast. After months of new life, all the new energy had sagged again. Gone was a vision of the healthy integration of those who would come needing American jobs and the relief of American farmers who need laborers to harvest our fields.

Gone was the hope for the integration of women in major decision-making processes everywhere as well as respect for the needs of women even in this modern country.

Finished now was the notion there will be a single word about how defending ourselves will be used on innocent others when America becomes involved in any country’s private war and allows American resources to exterminate their enemies — as Israel has done to Palestinian citizens in the name of "having the right to defend themselves."

Election Day was meant to be a turn in the American orbit — to become a new movement together — away from hate, away from sexism, away from a new American fascism where the president of the United States becomes an imperial keeper of the three main pillars of constitutional democracy: the executive, the legislative and judicial branches of our government — a concept foreign to everything American that ever was.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, sees his renewed presidential authority as a mandate, a center, the controller of all three pillars, regardless of the limits the Constitution itself has ever imposed on presidents.




An election official scans ballots in Philadelphia during the U.S. presidential election on Election Day, Nov. 5. (OSV News/Reuters/Rachel Wisniewski)

But leadership, real leadership we learned as we grew, while keeping a watch on the wholeness of the system as well as a claim on our own authority, would never allow personal authority to obscure the freedom of the people.

It's we now — the Americans themselves — who have the obligation of making democracy a living creature, not a lapel symbol of nothing. It's we now who must be quick to protect it ourselves, and ready to sacrifice ourselves to maintain it.

Leadership requires that we work with leaders everywhere so that all peoples anywhere can rest on their own lands and live by their own laws. But most of all, now shadowed by the thought of possible fascism within our own system, our own people depend on us to make their freedom free always.

Leadership in a democracy does not tolerate rejection of those whose backgrounds are not as imperative, not as clear to many, as to us. Which is why the simplest of people are worth our support so that we can all grow up assured that every new

neighbor in our lives is also our new guide.

Leadership makes education, understanding and human rights our first obligation to those who have no access to any of the rules you and I take for granted.

And why all of this? So that we ourselves may grow in vision and a sense of global responsibility for the poor, for the oceans, for the lands and for the children of tomorrow.

May we always open our hearts to respect the life of those who have things they want to tell us if our own leadership is to be real.

And why would we be even thinking of such things now, of all times? I'll tell you why — because we ourselves in this very era, in this very election, saw so-called "leaders" turn on the weak with filthy mouths, destructive agendas, painful and unacceptable attacks. We have seen those who see themselves to be our leaders but do not bother to see the weak, or answer them kindly, or help them rise up with dignity, or turn them over to people who can help them more than "leaders" who clearly do not intend to do anything for them, or with them or because of them.

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Indeed, we have already seen public bullies pretending to be leaders.

It is on real leaders who see their role as the point from which they develop their own spiritual lives that we depend. These people are leaders who make our institutions work. They live their own lives out in the interest of all the others. And from them comes the community of hope that makes war impossible, rejection unthinkable, and success — ours, as well — grows rooted in people who, at the cost of their own lives, take care of ours.

We know what leadership is because we have seen it before: We have lived knowing multiple great hearts, seen one kind of American care for others, saw in our leaders the humility that carries within them the vision of a beaming tomorrow, the virtue of their own integrity, and the development of the entire people.

And yet at the same time, we have also seen those who at the cost of the people themselves seek the greed and power, the dominance and delinquency of unholy

leaders who sank into their degeneracy and lost their own souls.

So now we have a new leader.

The question is what kind of leadership will we get?

Whatever it is, we must always remember that in a democracy, we put the leaders there ourselves and so we must save it ourselves, as well.

As the old lady down the street said to the gang of bullies when the world around them came finally tumbling down: "You wanted it; you got it. So shut up."

Then maybe all today's quiet people will begin to sing again.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.