

Edition #7 Fall 2008 Edition - Leadership for Resilient Communities

On the Plains of Hesitation, bleach the bones of countless millions who, at the Dawn of Victory, sat down to wait, and waiting died.

I reuse the George W. Cecil quote from the previous edition because I think it particular pertinent to the nature of this edition of Project White Horse 084640 and the time frame in which it is published. This site is about decision making and leadership in crisis, but it is not about politics or political races, although leadership of a United States president is most certainly of significance when disaster strikes. And so “leadership” cannot be discussed in September 2008 without at least acknowledging political context.

“Change” is the call of the day for both parties, but I think we should all keep in mind two things. First, our founding fathers purposefully constructed the initial framework of the government of these United States, so that no one man/woman could dictate to “we the people.” Our presidents are rightly limited by our Congress and our Supreme Court. Second, as we have most recently witnessed, no man controls his fate in the face of Mother Nature, and our world remains hyper complex globally with tribes and cultures having real and extreme survival needs and agendas for establishing their own way of living on this planet. We continue to see the results of the Great Powers decisions at the end of World War I establishing borders and splitting families and cultures.

Our century is a messy place and will continue to be so no matter the headlines on November 5th 2008 or the decisions and actions begun in January 2009. If we expect change, if we “wait” for the “victory” we will only be among those countless millions.

Leadership analysis and discussion is almost always about the individual and never about “the led.” Recent experience indicates that both rare events and those that may occur predictably - but have potential for extremely rare severity - repeatedly overwhelmed traditional mechanisms for crisis planning, management and response. Today’s society is extremely complex. When complex systems fail, the results are catastrophically chaotic. This complexity makes it nearly impossible for traditional leadership and organizational structures to plan, let alone coordinate response efforts. Indeed, the entire community “system” is destabilized. In those hyper complex or “unconventional” crises, the “led” must be able to lead. That requires understanding and then action in regard to two terms, best phrased by my colleague Dr. Dag von Lubitz:

- *preparedness - the availability of all resources, both human and physical, necessary for the management of, or the consequences of, a specific disaster type (one that can be predicted)*
- *readiness - instantaneous ability to respond to a suddenly arising major crisis [e.g. terrorism attack] that is based on the locally available/un-prepositioned and un-mobilized countermeasure resources (the Black Swan either in severity outside that normally expected or in rareness)*

The Fall Edition is on-line. It continues to address and expand the summer offerings on the PWH Forum focused on leadership in the preparedness AND readiness context for leaders, teams of leaders and “the led” - who must become an integrated participant if we as members of resilient communities intend to survive on our own terms when the “unconventional crises” arises. This edition centers on the continuing effort in the Forum but please note the rallying cry from one who understands the crisis and the leadership needs most clearly, General Russel Honore – Special Feature author.

JEB

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