

## COMMENT

# Tyranny of the lesser leaders

**LEADERSHIP HIJACK:** Society has to remind future generations what good leaders, or evil ones, are capable of doing

**T**HERE are always turning points in individual lives and in the lives of nations. Malaysia is an unfinished work in nation-building and is now at a turning point. History is about continuities and discontinuities with forces of good and bad at work.

What is so often repeated must again be noted in the quote by Edmund Burke, an Irish statesman and British parliamentarian: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

We have many good leaders of substance in all spheres. They tend to be humble and practical, not wanting to be involved in the contest for personal power or egotistical battles.

This very humility has led to a situation where outspoken, lesser leaders have hijacked the leadership in public as well as private domains. At stake are the minds, mindset, spirits and souls of the future generation of Malaysians. With arrogant impunity, so many lesser leaders are taking the vision of nation-building

away from great visionary leaders.

With what ideas of nation-building, or nation destruction, and with what xenophobic or universal values are the minds and souls of future generations to be furnished?

Left to lesser leaders, we can already draw a compendium of discontinuity on nation-building efforts that we have known for six decades or so. Left to leaders with a touch of greatness, there is still hope for millions of our citizens who want to live in peace, mutual respect and dignity.

There are evil leaders in human history, cultures and civilisations. There is no reason to believe that evil leaders do not exist now. There are evil leaders in the making in our midst.

We just have to examine their intentions, articulations, reasoning and actions to know whether they are champions of virtues or evil intentions towards others who are different from them, or, those whom they define as their enemies.

Evil leaders want the following:

**THEY** want to change society radically;

**THEY** use ideology, race, religion and language;

**THEY** have obsequious circles of followers;

**THERE** is disdain of law and order, but they create their own codes and "laws";

**THEY** do not respect others;

**THEY** are racists, bigoted, extremists or simply sick;

**THEY** have psychological problems and may be misogynic;

**THEY** suffer miseducation and are ignorant in significant ways;

**THEY** can be myopic or with megalomaniac ambitions; and

**THEY** do not really accept divine teachings.

Pacifists excuse the plans and provocations of evil people by arguing that they are misguided.

Eventually, the consequences of evil acts are that the lives of individuals, families and communities are destroyed in the name of some ideology or belief. Such "misguided" actions by the Ku Klux Klan and

others for ethnic or religious cleansing can then be excused.

It is a paradox that as more and more people have education and freedom of expression, more and more people will emerge as toxic leaders with the potential to do evil when they have power and opportunity to oppress others.

Society has the responsibility to provide the young with examples of good role models, who are revered not only by their own communities, but also by people from different societies. This may not only be current, but also in history.

When Nelson Mandela died, the world mourned. When Mahatma Gandhi and John F. Kennedy were assassinated, the world empathised; when Mao Tze Tung and Ho Chi Minh were gone, people honoured them.

However, except for a close circle of followers over the years, who has mourned Adolf Hitler, Ku Klux Klan leaders, Pol Pot and others who were involved in ethnic cleansing, ideological purgatory and religious persecution?

It is time that the media projects a kinder, gentler Malaysia, with credible people who love their children and care for their neighbours' children; who practise the true teachings of religion; who learn the best of lessons about humanity in schools and the marketplace; and cherish the positive values of sacrifice, humility, magnanimity, respect, truthfulness, piety, justice, peace, equality, freedom and beauty.

Politics and political manipulation, or inertia, will continue to play the decisive tipping-point role. However, civil society, communities, families and parents can share with the young their knowledge and experi-

ence of "good people" with integrity from among family and community members, as opposed to those who are corrupt in ambition and in ways and means of achieving self-interest and egotistical journeys.

Society has a responsibility towards the successive generations to sensitise them to the realities of various kinds of leaders, including good as well as toxic and evil leaders.



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