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Editorial Musings

Dr. Kendra Gaines, Editor-in-Chief, IJHC

The primary concern of the *Journal* is always health. So it may come as some surprise to see the word “politics” on this editorial page. Do not be concerned; I am not venturing into that swamp of disagreement and all-too-often hostility. Nonetheless, politics is undeniably connected to health, as I have seen for myself on numerous occasions.

One occasion in particular stays with me. A few years ago, a neighbor of mine would swing by occasionally to collect bamboo from my bamboo garden. He was a clever man and liked to use the discarded bamboo in creative ways in his own garden. But one day he appeared looking absolutely dreadful. He was grey in the face, bent over, and anything but cheerful. I was immediately concerned and asked what had happened.

“I’ve been listening to the news,” he responded, “and it’s terrible!”

I asked him how long he had been listening and was appalled when he told me, “Six hours.”

“Six hours, just today?” I demanded.

“Yes, of course, because there’s so much going on and I need to be informed.”

I “informed” him that it’s one thing to be informed, and quite another to devote so much time to the news—by which he meant politics—that he was making himself ill. I asked him what his intense devotion to the news had accomplished. Had anything changed? Had any of the multiple problems been resolved? Of course not! So why, I wanted to know, was he making himself sick over something that he could neither control nor change? That stopped him cold. But he began to think, as I could see, and I hoped for the best as he gathered up his bamboo and departed for home.

Two weeks later he returned, this time looking cheery, pink-cheeked, and lively. “Thank you!” he said. “I thought about what you told me, and then I looked in the mirror and saw what I had allowed the news to do to me. No more. Now I monitor my news and take in only what I can handle. And I feel so much better! My wife said to thank you, too.”

These fraught days I am seeing a number of friends distressing themselves over politics. It dominates the news and demands attention, even when the news of the day is not especially important. Those who give it the attention it demands often stop sleeping well, begin to feel nervous and stressed all the time, and upset their entire physical and emotional systems. But to what avail? Politics goes on, the world turns, and these people make themselves ill over something they cannot control. This makes no sense.

Despite what goes on in the world, it is our duty and responsibility to ourselves, and therefore to those we love, to continue to care for ourselves. As the airlines so frequently tell us, put on your own seatbelt *before* you tend to the seatbelts of others. If you do not take care of yourself first, you will not be able to take care of others. If the current politics seems to require you to take action, then take *constructive* action: write letters, join a local political group, march in demonstrations that may be held locally. But do not allow yourself to be sucked in by all the

negativity. This too shall pass, but your own good health will remain, only if you make a point of taking care of it.

Bio:

Dr. Kendra Gaines received her doctorate in English Literature from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. She taught at Northwestern, as well as University of Michigan, before moving to Tucson. At the University of Arizona, she served for 16 years as Senior Tutor and Instructional Specialist in, first, the Department of English, and then at the UA's Writing Skills Improvement Program. Dr. Gaines has taught at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base for almost 30 years, teaching for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Chapman University, Park University, and Pima College. Dr. Gaines teaches online as well. She is completing her seventeenth-year teaching both English and Philosophy courses for Colorado Technical University. She has also been teaching online for Park University, work which has included several blended (both online and in person) courses and is a full Professor of English at Akamai University.

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