

# WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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### Taking It Personally

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When tragedy strikes, it is common for us to be connected to someone who is the victim of such an event. We often hear the phrase “six points of separation.” It is meant to describe how we are connected to one another through relatives, acquaintances, or colleagues who know someone who knows someone who knows someone – only six persons away. Frankly, the separation is often much closer than six persons away.

When the devastating earthquake hit the northern region of Japan a few days ago, family members and friends were scrambling to hear from their loved ones. Like me, many of us are six points or less of separation from someone who lives or was visiting in Japan. As the looming radiation crisis unfolds, we watch the lives of our world neighbors change forever. At the same time, we realize that our reliance on nuclear power is much closer to home than we thought. Considering the long range impact, it is impossible not to take it personally.

This is the case for many who have close connections with family or friends in Egypt and Libya. As the citizens of those countries challenge the abusive power of long term dictatorships, we watch with hope that they will find a way to a new future of self-determination and peace. This week, it was especially disturbing to watch the tragic turmoil in Libya. Bombs and missiles do not differentiate between military forces and innocent people, who are the victims, primarily at the hands of their own leadership, but some at the hands of foreign forces including the United States. As we engage in this attack, it is hard not to take it personally.

Appropriately, these world events are the topic of daily concern and regular media attention. They are truly distressing situations. However, there are many other justice issues that are impacting members of our human family.

Most of us know someone who has lost their job or their home due to greed on the part of our corrupt financial systems. Most of us are aware of the injustice of family violence occurring right in our neighborhood. Most of us have benefitted from the labor of immigrant farm workers. Many of us are at least six points of separation from someone who is suffering as the results of addiction, rendering them hungry and homeless. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are all part of institutionalized racism that is alive and well in this country. We have to take all forms of social justice personally.

In this Witness for Justice opinion editorial, we regularly raise issues where injustice is occurring. We receive responses from those who agree and disagree with our perspective. Thank you for engaging us in thoughtful and respectful dialogue on these issues. However, we will not engage in hostile discussions that attack the character of our writers. In all cases, there is no way other than to take it personally.

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