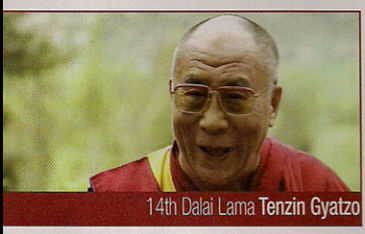


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United We Stand Divided We Fall

by Bernadette Trujillo-Vadurro

Over the past few years, we've taken to dividing ourselves into two groups—Democrats or Republicans. It's sad that in a country that's always been known for celebrating (or at least allowing for) diversity, we've let our differences tear us apart. So much so, that we refuse to engage in any dialogue that does not reinforce our own way of thinking.

In reality, our country needs us to be what we are first and foremost—Americans. We must care enough about our country to put divisive views aside and become fully educated, informed and politically involved. Patriotism means that we are willing to honestly face the issues that are threatening the very core of our country. If we don't, we may very well lose everything.

As citizens of the most powerful country on earth we have a responsibility to understand and examine all of the problems challenging us today. America's Conscience helps readers do just that by taking a look at the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our continued heavy reliance on foreign oil, the current energy crisis, and the economic consequences to our nation as well as our failing healthcare and troubled public education systems for the past several decades now.

Sure, it is difficult to understand every topic in today's political world, but what you can do is place your focus on the top three issues that are most closely affecting you and become an expert on them. A great benefit to knowing the issues, especially in the coming months, is that it will make it much easier to choose the right political leaders among us.

The most essential thing you'll need in your mission to become an informed American are the cold, hard facts—and to get the facts, you'll want to find an objective news source that presents all of the points of view on the many hot-button issues we are facing. This simply isn't as easy as you may think. In America's corporately owned and controlled news world where ratings are more important than reality we often get tabloid nonsense instead of truthful information. More often than not we get only sound bites and snippets of news without the appropriate context. Add to this fact that a majority of news programs have blatant biases in favor of one point of view over the other and it becomes increasingly hard to judge the quality of the information.

Many Americans feel helpless and hopeless: like there's nothing you can do as a regular citizen to make a difference in our political environment.

But that's just not the case. Here are seven action steps to help you get better educated, informed and active.

- 1. Recognize that five corporations own 80% of America's media and three corporations own 74% of all radio stations.** If you want to get a good picture of foreign politics check out other news sources such as the BBC. Look for sources that are independent and free of advertising dollars.
- 2. Subscribe to a variety of online newspapers and blogs.** Check off only the subjects of interest and ask that they be delivered to you electronically. I tend to trust newspapers more than television or radio commentators only because I believe people are more honest when they have to put it in writing.
- 3. Continue to read publications like PERFORMANCE Magazine** that take non-partisan position and share human capital intellectual growth content that empowers you to be objective and rational in your positions and views.
- 4. If you listen to talk show radio, make sure to listen to both conservative and progressive hosts alike.** You will be amazed at what you can learn, but be sure and take it all with a "grain of salt."
- 5. Stay in frequent touch with your senate and congressional representatives.** Ask questions and don't be shy about sharing your concerns with them. You can do this by calling, emailing or sending a snail mail letter or postcard. I find that most of them will respond in a timely manner.
- 6. Join an organized activist group that shares your concerns.** These groups can alert you to political events and activities. Your combined voices can make a difference for your concern.



- 7. Listen to what others with different opinions have to say.** Don't be afraid to have open, honest conversations with people who don't always believe or agree with the same things as you.
- 8. Make sure that you, your family and friends are registered to vote** and that your voter registration is current and up-to-date. Finally get out and vote. Contrary to what some people believe—every vote does matter.

Aside from helping you feel like you are making a difference, these action steps remind us that our government is supposed to be by and for the American people. We are a diverse nation, and that gives us an opportunity to come up with innovative and creative solutions to our challenges.

We must work together to find the best possible solutions and positive healthy choices for our country. Make a commitment to get informed and involved. This simple commitment followed by action will make a huge difference for future generations of Americans.

Bernadette Trujillo-Vadurro is an award winning businessperson, a professional speaker and a passionate community leader. She was recently named one of the top 10 Latina Entrepreneurs in the United States. Bernadette is the President of Speakers Live and the co-author of two books Motivational Leaders, Strategies and Wisdom from America's Top Professional Motivators and The Service Path. Bernadette's newest book America's Conscience: Facing Threats to Democracy, the Middle Class and Our World is a finalist in the 2007 New Mexico Book Awards. She has been featured in many articles and is on the covers of Personal Excellence the Sun News.



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