May we arise from the deluge of discouragement to save democracy

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I’m overwhelmed and discouraged—deluged by 205,000+ COVID-19 deaths, more police killings of African Americans, media covering violent extremists more than peaceful protestors, Ruth Bader Ginsberg’s death creating a vacancy on the Supreme Court, devastation from flames of West Coast wildfires, flooding and winds from one hurricane after another, and a President unwilling to commit to a peaceful transition of power.

Uncertainty generated by the nation’s leader on the election tops them all. His debunking voting by mail raises questions about who owns voting machines and what tampering in-person voters may face. More media need to ask about that.

Who owns the three companies that have a monopoly on voting machines? What is the record of errors in elections from these private vendors? Does a member of the President’s family hold a trademark for machines? Why are the companies so secretive? What’s the potential for Russian, Chinese or even U.S. tampering and hacking? Do these machines have a paper trail?

While Washington votes by mail, most states rely on voting machines, voter registration systems and election reporting tools from these companies. Some in the computer security industry have voiced concern since voting machines were adopted after the 2000 punch-card fiasco in Florida.

Compounding that, as our leader talks of the election being rigged, he asks state legislatures to “free” electors from their commitment to reflect the popular vote.

We need to keep asking questions and urge media to ask questions that do more than chase the latest tweet. After 20,000+ lies, might talk of a rigged election be true? Do post office changes deflect media from asking other questions?

We must not let confusion discourage some to think their vote won’t count.

Democracy takes work—persistent work, perseverance in challenging corruption, propaganda, power grabbers and those wanting one-party rule.

Was it ever this bad? I remember Communist baiting in Congress, assassination of leaders, water cannons used as weapons to disperse protestors, devastating disasters, election corruption, protests of unjust wars, and racist exclusion and oppression.

Has democracy ever been so overtly threatened? Yes, all around the world. Those who don’t want a dictator to divert attention from the widening wealth gap know they must rise out of their despair and act, using their unique insights and skills to improve the community, society and world.

This issue’s stories are examples of how people are doing that:

• A woman arranges to translate ballots for refugees and immigrants.

• A history professor records the influence of black pastors on the West Coast.

• A Hispanic group supports businesses, celebrates their culture and opens doors.

• The NAACP continues more than a century of challenges, uniting people to identify and undo systemic racism.

• Naturopathic doctor encourages people to find health and renewal in nature.

• 350 Spokane lists 12 steps of action, believing its possible to halt climate change.

• A mother’s struggles motivate her to form a nonprofit to mentor youth at risk.

• Frustrated by the wildfires in the region, many set in motion the organizations geared to engage in the recovery efforts.

• The news stories, ads and the calendar also share opportunities for involvement.

Listing that content, I sighed. I’m not alone. I’m overwhelmed by so many being concerned—people with a history of taking action that brings change.

May we be encouraged and renewed by the caring and calls for justice in live-stream sermons, Zoom meetings, webinar forums, Facebook posts, email exchanges, personal conversations, newpaper-radio-TV news and feet moving on streets.

Yes, vote. Then continue to act, raise voices and walk humbly, walk on and on and on—faithful, hopeful and resilient.

Mary Stamp

Editor