

I must face my fear...

How to make some sense of the rapidly growing extremes and extremists. A president who promised to make changes in Washington but from here it seems he is captured by big money, big corporations. He gave unimaginable amounts of money to the banks — who had the best year in history last year — and six million American people (one, maybe two million families) have no other income than foodstamps. We thought the president would get *out* of the wars that went badly, but instead he is getting more into wars. His domestic priority was health care. We don't know yet what is going to survive extremely ugly performances in both Houses of Congress but it seems quite possible that what 'reform' we get will make things worse for us. All that confusion about a Bill that won't go into effect until 2014? The broken economy is obviously the major issue of almost everyone down here. The 'stimulus' package allowed more nurses and teachers to keep their jobs. Nice, of course, but it doesn't do anything for an awful lot of people who've lost jobs, many millions. And from what little I hear about what large numbers of people are talking about, it is safe to say that all the movements are to the extremes of racism, sexism, all the isms you can think of.

That moving to extremes is a worldwide phenomenon.

And all of it against the background of global warming, climate change. We, in this country, deny that there is anything going on, but this winter is full of extremes. Extreme cold, extreme dry, extreme storms. All the phenomena the scientists told us would happen. The meeting of almost two hundred nations, sponsored by the United Nations, in Copenhagen last month was a lot of emotion outside the hall and bland nothing inside. At the end of the day, as we now say, we agreed to do nothing until another time,

Here, locally, what is very different is the weather — weather on this island has always been very local — and the sudden appearance of a vine that spreads like wildfire. I don't know who the vine is; I have no name for it. It looks superficially like another vine that has been here for a long, long time; it has a Hawaiian name which translates, stink vine. But just a close look makes clear that the new vine grows is not stink vine, it grows much faster, is more aggressive, spreads over large areas of open ground looking like ground cover. Our weather is different also, long periods of no rain at all (which used to be rare in all seasons, but certainly in winter) and very short periods, a weekend, of enormous downpours. The last rain we had was now three weeks ago, 20 inches in 30 hours. Before that four weeks of almost no rain at all. Today, at noon, the temperature

was 86°F (30° C). I checked my diaries of the last five years: we never had so little rain and such high temperatures at this time of year.

In this country it is difficult to talk about climate change, because a majority thinks nothing unusual is happening. Very few people seem to be concerned about burning oil and coal to make the electricity we cannot do without. Around here people buy huge SUVs and monster trucks because they are cheap now.

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This is my theory. What if we, all of us humans, 'know' deep in our Collective Subconscious, as C. G. Jung called it, that something dire is happening. We're all scared. For the first eight years of this century this was government policy: "Be afraid, be very afraid." We were told to be afraid of terrorists. Today we are afraid of not having enough money to pay the mortgage or buy enough food. In other countries people are afraid of other things. But 'being afraid' seems to be a global phenomenon.

As a psychologist I know that scared humans do extreme things.

This is what I do about being afraid:

I must not fear.

Fear is the mind-killer.

Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me.

And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path.

Where the fear has gone there will be nothing.

Only I will remain.

The Litany of Fear, Bene Geserit rite, from *DUNE*, by Frank Herbert, © 1965

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