



Conditioning, *something to think about*

We have been conditioned over the past few decades to believe that 'bullying' and nastiness and 'dictatorial' politics equals leadership.

It does not.

If it did, our kids would be receiving a better education, the unemployment rate for young black male Chicagoans would be lower, our neighborhoods would be safer, our business sector would be thriving, we'd have increased parity in City contracting and investment in our community would be more than just another new Whole Foods, Mariano's or Save-A-Lot.

Effective leadership, as most of you know and have experienced in your own lives, while being strong can still be less 'in your face' and more collaborative, less confrontational and more about problem solving, less dictatorial and more delegatorial and inclusive. Less dismissive and more empathetic to the plight of everyday people. Less 'politician' and more 'public servant'.

But we've been conditioned to miss this.

We've also been conditioned to hold our fingers to the wind to determine who might win a given race, and then to 'jump on board' regardless of whether the perceived front-runner will address our community's issues or not – or even worse could exacerbate the issues plaguing our community.

How else do you explain the naked 'selling out' by those that profess to be stalwarts in the fight for progress, the fight for community.... But then again, we've always had those folks around, and yet, it did not break the civil rights, voting rights and other movements.

We've also been conditioned to be risk-adverse, sticking with what we have, when clearly it isn't working and knowing that to address the complexity of the issues our community is grappling with, requires taking bold action – that the status quo is not working; so why would we stick with it?

Our leaders, from businessmen to preachers to heads of community organizations have been conditioned to be overly cautious, to be quiet... less the flow of whatever funding or favors they are getting is cut-off - a contract denied, a land request to build an adjacent parking lot buried, a grant reduced, an invitation to the big house lost in the mail – and although these concerns can be real – at what cost to your community, at what cost to your own principles, at what cost to our future...

Something to think about.

