When they were powerful…

The original quote by army commander Ian Hamilton over a century ago was: 'When women were powerful, before they put themselves on the pedestal'. This was at the time women were campaigning for the vote. It was the time of the Suffragettes and Suffragists. For Hamilton and others, the way women were behaving was actually reducing their power, not increasing it; and where they worked incredibly effectively behind the scenes to bring about change, standing up on the public forum was undermining their effectiveness and impact. This is not to say men like Hamilton were not behind reform, they just did not see it happening as it was. There are no doubt many arguments one could put forward for their reasoning but it's a quote worth reflecting on in more general terms… Before we do though, who were you more afraid of: a dad who would invariably inflict corporal punishment for misdemeanours or that look/raised eyebrow from mom which said, 'I'm not speaking again'? Back to our quote:

When they were powerful, before they put themselves on the pedestal.

Our experiences of people on pedestals are politicians, activists and others with a strong message they want to impart. In various parts of the world, in recent years, there have been elections which many felt were divisive and that the dominant voice has not been the voice of the masses. Apart from underlying issues with how democracy works, this suggests that those on the pedestals are powerful, but what of the many individuals working for the good of the masses quietly and outside of the limelight?

Loud voices are dominant in the here and now, and for the short period – relatively speaking – that they're in that position, but I can't help thinking that those working quietly behind the scenes, often against mainstream views, have a far greater and long-term impact. In some ways, we need the noisy pedestal shouters to provide a cover, a safeguard for the change-effecters to do their work. Had the talks between Israel and Oman received more publicity, where would relations be today? Further ahead? Abandoned?

The 1990 discussions behind Nelson Mandela coming to power in South Africa and peace being declared in Northern Ireland both took place without the general public knowing. In fact, it seemed watching the news as though relations couldn't have been worse at the time. Similarly, the recent amnesty in Sudan, has happened behind closed doors. No doubt, there are other factors at play which bring people together but there has to be at least a willingness to talk and find some common ground on which to start building. Think of that little mustard seed finding some fertile soil before it becomes the huge tree it does.

From this

to this

More personally, consider reactions when you've been angry and loud compared with responding quietly and/or walking away. Which achieved the most satisfactorily? In which did you feel more in control?

Finally, a fall from the pedestal can be far more painful … perhaps some connection with pride coming before a fall?

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