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Jared Kushner's Loyalty to the Patriarchy

Like many I don't know much about Jared Kushner, who remains somewhat of a mystery. A quiet, behind-the-scenes guy who has been called extremely loyal to his family, the thing I can say about Kushner as a woman and fellow American is that his decisions display an immaturity, dependency, and complete lack of wisdom.

Kushner proved his family 'loyalty' during the much-discussed criminal prosecution of his father, Charles, who pleaded guilty to 18 charges, including retaliating against family members who testified against him by setting up his sister's husband in a sex scandal, having it secretly filmed, and then sending the tape to his sister. Kushner defended him publicly and visited every weekend while he was in prison.

Kushner has experience in defending what is not defensible, and doing it within quite a dysfunctional family. He now exhibits this behavior with his father-in-law, as it seems there is nothing President Trump could do to earn the disapproval of Kushner. Like a good-ol'-boys-club, Kushner's supposed loyalty to the terrible decisions of his father and father-in-law is a microcosm of loyalty to the destructive patriarchal values that are leading us to the brink of a collapse.

Part of patriarchal values is the inability to take responsibility for oneself and one's action, and thus, the inability to make transformational changes. Once considered the attributes of a "real man," this behavior is now seen by increasing numbers of people as extreme weakness and cowardice, and as a sickness that can barely be described.

Propping someone up in a state of sickness and misery is not true loyalty. I practice Nichiren Buddhism, which teaches that true loyalty involves reprimanding parents, rulers,

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etc, who are acting in destructive ways out compassion for their well-being. It also teaches that all can change and transform themselves.

Trump's choices speak of bottomless loss in his own spirit. The "most powerful man in the world" stands as a stark example of failure, of not understanding his role or what life is about. He has a responsibility to more than he understands.

It is not compassionate to applaud and support such profound loss. It is not loyalty. It's not wise.

Women who do not support patriarchal values find ourselves living outside of them in a large way – though often surrounded at present – within the deeper part of our lives. We see the world in the ways it can be, like a double vision to every scene, and we seek to grow because we know it will liberate us. Men who oppose patriarchal values in many of its forms have a similar experience in this life, as we all watch a destructive force that cannot see its own misery and does not seem to believe in its ability to really live.

Kushner may have all the trappings of success – wealth, power, "a beautiful wife" – but he has truly not learned how to stand on his own. He follows others' astoundingly poor decisions seemingly without thinking. As such, he walks a path of deep failure. His 'loyalty' is actually a betrayal of those closest to him. He betrays them by not even seeking to help them live a life of maturity, wisdom, courage, compassion, or self-responsibility. His betrayal likely stems from the fact that he also does not understand his own life or its possibility, simply following a path that leads to absolute ruin in the deepest sense.

What does it mean to be wise? What does it mean to actually succeed in this great thing called life? In the recent past, Kushner and Trump's material success and acquisition of power were something that many aspired to. Now, it's like a great mirror is shining on what it means to live one's life for such things alone. In these patriarchal measurements of success, something profound has been left out of the calculations. You can be a material success and fail at life. You can be powerful and completely ignorant, destructive and lost. You can mistake betrayal for loyalty. You can be an enemy of life itself.

Kushner is not wise, but he can be. In a non-patriarchal view, of course he can be. It would involve him thinking for himself and living in a way that is truly loyal to life: the life in himself, his family, and the world. He may decide that money and power – these things he can't take with him when he dies alone as we all do – are worth more than growth. He may decide to follow the path of his father and father-in-law, who are old yet have not learned a fundamental lesson of maturity and wisdom: self-reflection. Or he may

choose to remember something deeper about life and strive to actualize that. As with everyone, the opportunity for growth lies in his hands.