

Bullying at Jarlanbah

“... when I asked another Jarlanbah resident what was the one thing he would be glad to be away from if he left, he said community bullies! This is seldom articulated but is a very widespread problem, exacerbated in part because people are ‘trying to get along’ and in some respects are willing to play ‘happy families’.

One of the difficulties of most communities is that there are no criteria for membership. Anybody can live there, including bullies, and nobody can make them leave. When dealing with certain personalities – those who are abusive or have deep emotional problems but think there is nothing wrong with them – mediation and conflict resolution rarely succeed for they are mere band-aids. Even restraining orders from Courts don’t faze them, for essentially these people are attention-seekers and think they are right.

For these types of people (and they are to be found in most if not all communities,) eco-villages must be some kind of heaven because they can get away with behaviour that would not be tolerated in the outside world. Unlike workplace bullies from whom you can at least escape in after-work hours, the real challenge in communities is that you have to live amongst these people —drive past their houses, run into them at the letter boxes or a community gathering.

The psycho-social trauma they can inflict on those they target is astonishing. Things are never helped by the community rescuers who as in the outside world empower bullies even in subtle ways by feeling sorry for them or making excuses for their behaviour.

The notion that bullies are our own “disowned selves” —that is they are acting out parts of our selves that we try and ignore or repress— is sometimes bandied about and you always hear someone piping up with: ‘It’s just your (the victim’s) karma’. Anything rather than stand up to them.”

Mary Garden, “Leaving Utopia”, *International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 2006).

http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol2/vol2_no2_Garden.htm

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