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ROLE

CHAIR OF THE CITIZENS ACTION COMMITTEE OF ZEALANDIA

A year ago you were elected to a three-year term as Chair of the Citizens Action Committee of Zealandia, the poorest municipality of the city of Urbana. You have been swept into this office after losing the last election for mayor of Urbana to the current mayor, after a bitter fight. You were energized to take this position because you can continue to fight for a fair deal for the community where you have lived all your life.

In the last mayoral election, you were outraged by the unethical involvement of the members of the water truck industry that went out of their way to stop delivering water to those families that were not part of the current mayor's political party. From stories that you have heard and knowledge that you have, the water trucks refused to deliver water to those families that were part of your political party!

By virtue of your role in the community, you have received an invitation from the Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation of the State of Oknevia, to be a member of the multi-stakeholder group to assess the mayor's proposal to develop a program to create incentives for people to build toilets in their houses and construct piped water systems in selected sites with money coming from the proposed community savings and loan associations.

While you believe that clean water and toilets in houses is a critical need, you want strong assurance that funds will indeed be used for this purpose. But having lived in Zealandia all your life, you know that funds to help the poor rarely get to the poor. You are convinced that to move Zealandia out of poverty, what needs to be done is to utilize the new community savings and loan association for developing housing for low and middle-income families. Old structures in run down neighborhoods need to be torn down and new commercial and recreational development sites need to be built.

You wonder whether the owner/manager of the water trucks will support the mayor's plan...for if people can have clean water near their houses, they will not need to buy water from these water trucks...

You are committed to finding a way to help women to be part of making decisions about where these community taps are to be located..after all, it is the women who spend most of their waking hours collecting water for their households. And there must be an agreement among both men and women on how these community water taps are to be maintained, and repaired.

You feel strongest when you are in groups. You like meeting and speaking in large and small groups. You are convincing by virtue of your ability to speak passionately. You encourage everyone to speak their minds and explore many options before decisions are made. You interact effectively with multiple stakeholders, as you listen and remain non-judgmental. You want to

put yourself in the 'other person's shoes' and see the issues from their perspective. You have gone so far as to join the women waiting at night for the water trucks and in disguise, ride in one of these trucks just to experience the difficulties women encounter.

You are highly regarded by everyone in the community. You are ready to be a strong advocate on issues and make yourself available to groups looking for leadership. You are especially appreciated by the women within the families. You are calm when challenged but you can verbally attack and stand up to any one who attempts to talk over you. You will not have your voice be silenced.

You have been the historical enemy of the mayor. The mayor knows that you have information about the collusion between the mayor and the owner of the water trucks. You understand that the current owner of the water truck company is an old high school classmate and a very close personal friend of the mayor. In the past election that you lost to the mayor, you discovered that there are those who feel that this relationship is bordering on being scandalous. But no one would come forward to go public with these claims. You have been careful to keep those names at hand. You have a very troubled relationship with the Director of Women Advancing Through Education and Resistance (W.A.T.E.R.). You want her as an ally because you recognize the importance of this relationship if you ever hope to advance in a political career.

You have little resource power to give or to take. But you do have legitimate power in that you speak for a significant population within Zealandia and you have been popularly elected in that role. You know the people who live there. You know their history. You know their families. You know the suffering that they have gone through but you also know their strength. You have expertise in organizing and in being able to speak on behalf of your constituency. Where you need help is in ensuring that the political leaders create a fair and transparent process in allocating the funding for clean water and toilets so that the poor of Zealandia will benefit from this new program. You also need allies to mobilize women in the community to take an active part in making decisions about this program. And you hope to gain support for the idea of using the CSLA for building low-cost housing.