

Rob Cipriano

What Is a Hero

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What is a hero? Who are the people we make heroes? Why do we need heroes? What happens when a hero falls? Why do we need heroes?

A hero is someone who "we" determine to have demonstrated behaviors and decisions that are ethically and emotionally worthy of our awe. We see in them something we think is not in us. Given similar conditions, we "think" we might not make the same moves and decisions they do, so we place them in an elevated place in society or in our minds. What is a hero? Someone who inspires us by their example. Someone who moves us emotionally to connect with them at some level in order for us to develop a connection with them. We may want to idolize them or place them in high personal regard. We may want to connect with them in a personal way by focusing on them to garner their strength or will-power. We may also desire to possess them in order to gain hero status by way of a kindred association.

So, what is it specifically that a hero does that creates awe in us? What makes us pick one over another? What is it about our hero that makes us stand-up and take note and then admire, adore or try to emulate them? In many cases, it is their accomplishments. We have been granted access to their triumphant consummations of acts and deeds which, we believe, are beyond our own capacities. For example, a great football player achieves astounding record breaking feats, and we immediately determine that they possess a greatness, that we bestowed upon them. They are a god. They are superior in all ways due to the fact that they threw the ball further or ran faster than all before them. We develop awe and a form of respect for their accomplishments. Their achievements become the new "super hero" standard to measure against. What about Princess Diane, the people's princess? The world adored her in her rise from a rather simple country girl to a world recognized and cherished symbol of goodness. We connected with her, no matter who we were, because she connected with us in an awe inspiring way. Like a fairy tale, her journey to marry Prince Charles and become a Princess disclosed to us that it was indeed possible to live a fairy tale life. What did we garner from this example? That we connect with a hero because a hero connects with us. Even though they have done that which, we think, is beyond us, they connect with us. It would seem to be paradoxical, but for some reason, it is not.

What else does a hero do to attain our admiration? Many times, they overcome a tragedy or survive a horrendous calamity. A sickness or a heinous accident that would have desolated the average person, seems to have intensified the heroes determination and intrepidity. We gaze upon this person in absolute astonishment and want to reward them with our love and respect for their triumph over tragedy. Their actions tell us that it is possible to overcome whatever comes our way. They connect with us personally by surviving and thriving.

Since the beginning of time many of our heroes were warriors who over-powered those who would try to harm or take from us the things that we cherished. A strong defender of us as a society or culture gets hero status. Our great military soldiers who sacrifice everything to defend our borders, or cultures or our freedoms are indeed heroes to us. He or she places their very lives on the line in order that our way of life is protected from the influences or domination of others who wish to bring evil to us. Our armed forces are a classification of joint heroes. We automatically bestow heroic honors to those who fight for us.

However, very often a single person will emerge from the joint heroes to be elevated to hero. He or she has demonstrated such courage and honor that they grab the attention of a grateful society. We call them hero and we are compelled to connect with them. Many times, this hero does not understand why they are being exalted merely for doing what they believed and thought was correct and right. They did not think at the moments or during the episode, "if I do this, I will be loved and adored forever". They simply did what was in them. They placed other people's wellbeing before and above their own. Thank God above for this hero, because our freedoms are dependent upon these few.

We have seen many heroes emerge over the past centuries. These people show us that there are indeed choices involved in the process of living a respectable life. Recently, we watched a pilot, Sully Sullenberger, land a U.S. Airways flight in the Hudson River in New York City that was disabled after hitting a flock of Canadian geese. He was called a national hero after all 155 of the passengers and crew survived. What choices did he make at that moment that resulted in such a joyful end to what could have been a disaster? He decided and made the personal choice to place every single person's life on that plane at the highest regard. He elected to also protect the tens of thousands of lives that may have perished if the flight had crashed into midtown Manhattan. He did what needed to be done when it needed to be done without even an inch of doubt. I am sure Sully did not think about the press conference later that afternoon.

Still yet another type of hero as emerged. The passengers on Flight 13 in PA on 911 decided to take action in the face of an inevitable ending, and take over the terrorist who were evil-bend upon death and destruction. Where did these men and women gather their strength to do this remarkably brave thing? I would suggest, that they gathered unity courage. They looked into each other's eyes and "connected" with each other. They saw in themselves an uncommon valor through a banded bravery. In the end "we" saw them as modern day heroes ...

What have we learned so far? There are different types of heroes. Heroes that, by example show us that anything is possible. Heroes that by their decisions, demonstrate a courage that is not common in the average populace and we see a hero that finds

strength to overcome adversity and thrive. We have seen heroes that connect and unify when their unification is needed to stop or to mitigate the amount of death and destruction that is blatantly obvious to occur.

I have witnessed in recent months a little girl named Angelina who has and still to this very minute, demonstrate's such courage and heroic strength while she fights a vicious cancer. She is only ten years old and her will to "push through" and, to be an example of strength and the "right stuff" has personally connected with me. As I fight my battle to live, I connect with her. So, being a hero is about connecting with people. It is about being connected with and connecting with others, most of whom, we never meet. It is about placing the safety, health, welfare and protection of others first and foremost in your decision, or better yet, a hero is one that does not make the decision but rather just acts in protection of people.

Heroes come in many ages shapes and sizes. Many of our heroes are everyday folks like you and me. It is the mother who chooses to stand up and protect her children with courage and inner strength when the cards are stack against her. She works around the clock to provide for their health growth and protection. When her pain is so agonizing that she can't walk another step, she gathers yet more strength in order that the children are well.

There is the hero child who stands up for a disabled child in a play ground and does not permit the challenged wee one to be hurt. There is the school bus driver who protects their children passengers against any invader. There is the father who faces an invader into a home and places his life before all. There is parent who adopts a child who has been abused and patiently holds their hand as they navigate childhood. There is the mother or father of a veteran who's taken his or her own life who finds the strength to help other parents who face similar tragedies.

Each of these heroes and many more garner from within themselves the unimaginable fortitude to change the lives of other with absolute sacrifice and unmitigated determination.

I have been blessed to witness such heroism time after time in my life. I have seen how people respond to heroes and also seen how heroes have been attacked. What makes some people attack a hero? What brings out rage in certain people against our heroes?

I would conclude that when certain individuals are faced with the heroic act of others they might generate a fierce furnace of hatred because they have not yet demonstrated within themselves a similar response. They, without self awareness, project outward their own feeling of incapability of responding heroically. The hate is so severe that it spills out towards the hero and is filled with spitting venom. A disturbing portion of our society has morphed from a culture of raising up our extraordinary to a society/culture of bringing them down. The thought is "I can't be like him or her, so they must not be for real ... or ... they are hiding something". The thought process is that we are all lost and useless and so the one who stands out must be a fake. This is a sad commentary of where some of our culture has landed.

I know a man who demonstrated such heroic deeds his entire life. He literally has saved tens of thousands of lives with his humanitarian work. A few years back he was attacked viciously by a helpless hidden diabolical and reprehensible man who sought nothing more than attention for his attacking of my friend. It seemed unreal that someone so noble could be bombarded so relentlessly with such deception and slander. As the years passed, I understood more about the nature of the attack and the attacker.

It is a shame that some people find that their only recognition in life is a narcissistic attack upon others whose purpose it to provide relief, aid and help for those in need. Since, the true hero, as we learned earlier, does not set out to be recognized, nor do they seek adoration for their actions, the attacks may seem bizarre at best. Forgiveness seems to be the first line of action by the hero, which, by perfect chance, it already built into their DNA.

I will continue to write more on our heroes in hopes that we return as a society to a place where we hold them high and learn how to, ourselves morph into a humanityhero -- AllHumanity!

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