

The "Me-Too" movement has focused our attention on the plight of women, a heritage as old as human culture. But as a woman, I find reasons to praise good American men, most of whom do the right thing but get little recognition for it.

In rereading John F. Kennedy's Portraits in Courage, written more than a half century ago, we see that even in the worst of times, good men (and women, not in this book) do the right thing despite paying terribly for doing so.

A most recent example is that three New York City police officers paid for an accused shoplifter's groceries rather than arrest her. One cannot help but think of Les Misérables, a 19th century French novel about a man who steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving sister and her children. He is arrested and sent to prison for 20 years of hard labor.

These New York cops had compassion for a woman with food in her bag who had been apprehended by Security guards in an up-scale market. She would not have gone to prison for two decades, but the police saw her as needy and desperate. They paid for her food, and were praised by the Chief of their department who said the officers are among the "kind-hearted cops who quietly do good deeds for New Yorkers in need." It is too rare that police get praise. There are more good ones than bad ones.

Most American men today do not beat their wives, and are outraged by those who do. Most American men do not support trafficking in underage girls, and even a billionaire with a stable of lawyers and powerful friends (Jeffrey Epstein, now dead) would not get off with a minor sentence this time, as he did a few years ago, with the help of a Florida US Attorney who is now Trump's Secretary of Labor. The abused teen-agers were never consulted in this weak sentence.

A man who should be better known as a profile in courage who probably saved the world from a nuclear war was the commander of a Soviet nuclear submarine off the coast of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. At the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet submarine commander Vasili Arkhipov had the power to decide whether or not World War III would begin. Despite threats from the KGB agent aboard, he refused to launch a nuclear missile attack that would have begun World War III. He was punished by his government, and his heroic action was not acknowledged until decades later. He did what was right, and was not rewarded for it: profile in courage.

The only consequence faced by American politicians who do what's right is that they usually lose the next election. Nonetheless, for people in government, this is a punishment. We have such an example today in a Republican: Justin Amash, Michigan congressman, who actually read the entire Mueller Report, unlike most of his fellow Republican congressmen. He has met with his constituents and has addressed his Republican conference and urged them to read the report, which leaves him little choice but to urge impeachment.

Amash is one of the Tea Party Republicans who find mainstream Republicans too liberal. There is little in his political values with which I can agree, but I am filled with admiration for his profile in courage in defying President Trump, and paying the price for doing the right thing. His colleagues have cringed in cowardice, unwilling to face the vicious Presidential "tweets," threatening them as "losers." Amash is no longer a Republican. He will lose his seat in the next election either to a compliant Trump apologist or to a Democrat.

He is now in the company of a number of very good American men, for whom honor is more important than success. Former Republican intellectuals, such as George Will and Max Boot, have taken the heat from Republicans for deserting the Trump party. But they have won the admiration of all of us who value American democratic institutions and support profiles in courage.

682 words

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