

In LOVE with Humanity

re-Membering the GOOD within ourselves,
by remembering the GOOD lived by others



*... a tribute to some of humanity's greatest
Heroes; 153 men & women who have chosen, via
their brave words &/or noble deeds, to reflect the
deeper Greatness residing within us all*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication



NOTE: This work is Purpose-fully non-copyrighted, and may therefore be copied, reprinted, forwarded &/or gifted onward in whatever ways any of its readers deem fit. That having been said, the author would also like to remind anyone so doing that he has no claim of legal ownership over the images used herein. Of equal importance, it is the author's intent that -- just as they have been given to all for free herein, so too should these entries be freely given onward to others; fully profitless to the giver; without any additional costs or conditions attached for the recipients thereof ... ***Thank you.***

“There are two kinds of heroes: those who shine in the face of great adversity – who perform amazing feats in difficult situations, and those who live among us – who do their work unceremoniously; unnoticed by many, and yet making a difference in the lives of others anyway. Heroes are often nothing more than ordinary people who perform extraordinary acts, and the mark of those heroes is not the result of their actions, but the simple fact that they have chosen to willingly serve others &/or their cause. Indeed, even if they completely fail in their attempts, the purity of their intention and the durability of their determination still shines on for others to follow. As such, their glory lives not in their success, but alone in the selflessness and the courage of their sacrifices.” ~ inspired by Susilo Yudhoyono

*“Heroes are made by the paths they choose,
not by the powers with which they are graced.”
~ Brodi Ashton*



Introduction: What makes a Hero...

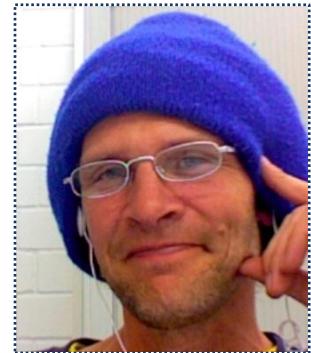
It is oh so easy in this day & age to succumb to society's all too prevalent inundations of fear and negativity; all too easy for us to focus on what is broken in our politics, what is wrong with our neighborhoods, or what is seemingly dangerous in our surroundings. Indeed, it seems that no matter which way we turn, our mass media outlets are overflowing with stories about strangers who are committing acts of greed or violence, politicians who are engaged in corruption or war-mongering, and religious leaders who are dripping in judgmental condemnation while wearing glossy cloaks bedecked with ignorance and hypocrisy. In essence, everywhere we turn it is all too easy to find examples of how we are *not* to behave – how we are *not* to conduct our private affairs, how we are *not* to deal with our everyday challenges, how we are *not* to treat the others who cross our path.

And that is why I felt this record was an important one to compile – a compendium of short tributes honoring many of my personal heroes – a tome that serves to remind all its readers of three very important (and all too rarely remembered) **facts: 01)** that we are members of an innately noble species; that there have always been men & women amongst us who shined a Great Light – who provided a glimpse of the brilliant beacon of courageous selflessness that resides within us all ... **02)** that it is not necessary for us to do “great things” to become truly Great; that the less famous “everyday heroes” who sacrificed for others in their own “smaller” ways were just as worthy (and indeed, are ultimately just as important) as their more well-known compatriots ... and **03)** that as such it remains patently true that we can all do exactly the same; *we can all become Heroes* in our own right, if we but choose to sacrifice our desires and replace them with selfless deeds of Caring; and if we but dismiss our fears and replace them with brave acts of Love.

Amen ... Let it be so!

Scaughdt

(January 2018)



P.S. As you read along, it will prove helpful to *remain mindful* of the following:

***A)** The Heroes listed herein are not all of the people I find to be heroic – not by a long shot. While it is true that some of our more commonly accepted “moral leaders” (like Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela) were left out purposefully (the former for her abandonment of the poor and allegiance with the wicked, and the latter for ultimately advocating violence as a means to peace), other Noble Souls (like Hildegard von Bingen, Mother Meera, Shane Claiborne, Jamila Afghani, Craig Ferguson, etc) have been left out not for lack of merit, but solely because I chose to limit the work to 153 Heroes, and had already established this pantheon's current membership before thinking of them.

***B)** The Heroes herein are not listed in any particular order (neither by amount of received fame, nor perceived purity of cause, nor noted worth of effort), but rather solely pseudo-alphabetically.

***C)** It is even more important to realize that I do *not* support all of the beliefs, all of the words, all of the actions, or all of the choices these men & women have made over the course of their entire lives – only the beliefs, words, actions, and choices described herein. For example, in the case of Gary Yourofsky, we are to emulate his resolute passion in defending the innocent, not the off-putting aggressiveness with which he often does so – in the case of Jimmy Carter, we are to champion his moral forthrightness and selfless dignity, not his belief in Jesus Christ as the only Son of God – in the case of the Dalai Lama, we are to respect his ability to show compassion towards his enemies, not honor his decision to deny that compassion to the animals he eats – in the case of Thich Nhat Hahn, we are to laud him boldly standing for peace in a time of war, not his subsequent choice to encourage passive meditation over active protest (etc etc etc).

***D)** Finally – and most importantly of all, this tome is meant not to be a source of introspection, but a source of inspiration – it is not meant to inspire you to merely read about these men & women, but rather was created to inspire you to go forth into your own lives and find ways to emulate their Caring, re-enliven their resolve, and re-enact their Kindness.

A Hall of Heroes ...

(Table of Contents)

Hero #001) <i>Hank Aaron</i>	... page 009	Hero #038) <i>Leonardo da Vinci</i>	... page 048
Hero #002) <i>Edward Abbey</i>	... page 010	Hero #039) <i>Dalai Lama</i>	... page 049
Hero #003) <i>Arnold Abbott</i>	... page 011	Hero #040) <i>Dan Dewey</i>	... page 050
Hero #004) <i>Jane Addams</i>	... page 012	Hero #041) <i>Albert Einstein</i>	... page 051
Hero #005) <i>Albert Schweitzer</i>	... page 013	Hero #042) <i>elderlies</i>	... page 052
Hero #006) <i>American Horse</i>	... page 014	Hero #043) <i>Rami Elhanan</i>	... page 053
Hero #007) <i>Amma</i>	... page 015	Hero #044) <i>Jonathan Elias</i>	... page 054
Hero #008) <i>the A.L.F.</i>	... page 016	Hero #045) <i>Epictetus</i>	... page 055
Hero #009) <i>Anthony Cymerys</i>	... page 018	Hero #046) <i>R. W. Emerson</i>	... page 056
Hero #010) <i>Arthur Ashe</i>	... page 019	Hero #047) <i>Robin Emmons</i>	... page 057
Hero #011) <i>James Aspey</i>	... page 020	Hero #048) <i>Ron Finley</i>	... page 058
Hero #012) <i>Aung San Suu Kyi</i>	... page 021	Hero #049) <i>Matthew Fox</i>	... page 059
Hero #013) <i>Uri Avnery</i>	... page 022	Hero #050) <i>Francis of Assisi</i>	... page 060
Hero #014) <i>J. S. Bach</i>	... page 023	Hero #051) <i>Anne Frank</i>	... page 061
Hero #015) <i>Bagel Jesus</i>	... page 024	Hero #052) <i>Viktor Frankl</i>	... page 062
Hero #016) <i>Bai Fang Li</i>	... page 025	Hero #053) <i>Sherri Franklin</i>	... page 063
Hero #017) <i>Banksy</i>	... page 026	Hero #054) <i>Elizabeth Fry</i>	... page 064
Hero #018) <i>Coleman Barks</i>	... page 027	Hero #055) <i>Buckminster Fuller</i>	... page 065
Hero #019) <i>Moazzam Begg</i>	... page 028	Hero #056) <i>Peter Gabriel</i>	... page 066
Hero #020) <i>Thomas Berry</i>	... page 029	Hero #057) <i>Galileo Galilei</i>	... page 067
Hero #021) <i>Steven Biko</i>	... page 030	Hero #058) <i>Mahatma Gandhi</i>	... page 068
Hero #022) <i>Black Elk</i>	... page 031	Hero #059) <i>W. L. Garrison</i>	... page 069
Hero #023) <i>Bloom County</i>	... page 032	Hero #060) <i>Kahlil Gibran</i>	... page 070
Hero #024) <i>Joel Boujassey</i>	... page 033	Hero #061) <i>Jabbar Gibson</i>	... page 071
Hero #025) <i>G. Buddha</i>	... page 034	Hero #062) <i>J. W. Goethe</i>	... page 072
Hero #026) <i>John Butler</i>	... page 035	Hero #063) <i>"Hero"</i>	... page 073
Hero #027) <i>Ruby Bridges</i>	... page 036	Hero #064) <i>C. Hitchens</i>	... page 074
Hero #028) <i>Georges Bwelle</i>	... page 039	Hero #065) <i>Barry Horne</i>	... page 076
Hero #029) <i>Calvin & Hobbes</i>	... page 038	Hero #066) <i>Chungliang Huang</i>	... page 078
Hero #030) <i>Jimmy Carter</i>	... page 039	Hero #067) <i>Jabbawockeez</i>	... page 079
Hero #031) <i>Edith Cavell</i>	... page 040	Hero #068) <i>Jesus Christ</i>	... page 080
Hero #032) <i>children</i>	... page 041	Hero #069) <i>Jill Phipps</i>	... page 082
Hero #033) <i>Pema Chodron</i>	... page 042	Hero #070) <i>Carl Jung</i>	... page 083
Hero #034) <i>Noam Chomsky</i>	... page 043	Hero #071) <i>Colin Kaepernick</i>	... page 084
Hero #035) <i>Paulo Coelho</i>	... page 044	Hero #072) <i>Thomas Keating</i>	... page 086
Hero #036) <i>Megan Coffee</i>	... page 045	Hero #073) <i>Helen Keller</i>	... page 087
Hero #037) <i>Rachel Corrie</i>	... page 046	Hero #074) <i>Bacha Khan</i>	... page 088

Hero #075) <i>Antia Krajnc</i>	... page 089	Hero #115) <i>Bayard Rustin</i>	... page 132
Hero #076) <i>J. Krishnamurti</i>	... page 090	Hero #116) <i>Monica Rutger</i>	... page 133
Hero #077) <i>Fred Lansford</i>	... page 091	Hero #117) <i>Carl Sagan</i>	... page 134
Hero #078) <i>Lao Tsu</i>	... page 092	Hero #118) <i>Irena Sendler</i>	... page 135
Hero #079) <i>Diane Latiker</i>	... page 093	Hero #119) <i>Michael Servetus</i>	... page 136
Hero #080) <i>Allan Law</i>	... page 094	Hero #120) <i>G. B. Shaw</i>	... page 137
Hero #081) <i>Liu Yuhua</i>	... page 095	Hero #121) <i>Simon & Garfunkel</i>	... page 138
Hero #082) <i>Malala Yousafzai</i>	... page 096	Hero #122) <i>Clive S. Smith</i>	... page 139
Hero #083) <i>Martin Luther King</i>	... page 098	Hero #123) <i>Socrates</i>	... page 140
Hero #084) <i>M*A*S*H</i>	... page 099	Hero #124) <i>Rudolph Steiner</i>	... page 141
Hero #085) <i>Rosie Mashale</i>	... page 100	Hero #125) <i>Stevie Wonder</i>	... page 142
Hero #086) <i>Iqbal Masih</i>	... page 101	Hero #126) <i>Tom Stoppard</i>	... page 143
Hero #087) <i>Naoto Matsumara</i>	... page 102	Hero #127) <i>Gino Strada</i>	... page 144
Hero #088) <i>Thomas Merton</i>	... page 104	Hero #128) <i>Chiune Sugihara</i>	... page 145
Hero #089) <i>A. A. Milne</i>	... page 105	Hero #129) <i>Brian Swimme</i>	... page 146
Hero #090) <i>Monty Python</i>	... page 106	Hero #130) <i>Tank Man</i>	... page 147
Hero #091) <i>Morrie Schwartz</i>	... page 107	Hero #131) <i>R. Tagore</i>	... page 148
Hero #092) <i>Muhammad Ali</i>	... page 108	Hero #132) <i>Nikolai Tesla</i>	... page 150
Hero #093) <i>Jorge Munoz</i>	... page 109	Hero #133) <i>Thich Nhat Hanh</i>	... page 151
Hero #094) <i>Dikembe Mutombo</i>	... page 110	Hero #134) <i>H. D. Thoreau</i>	... page 152
Hero #095) <i>Richard Nares</i>	... page 111	Hero #135) <i>Leo Tolstoy</i>	... page 153
Hero #096) <i>Kakenya Ntaiya</i>	... page 112	Hero #136) <i>Harriet Tubman</i>	... page 154
Hero #097) <i>“Oh Brother ...”</i>	... page 113	Hero #137) <i>Will Tuttle</i>	... page 155
Hero #098) <i>Ken O’Keefe</i>	... page 114	Hero #138) <i>Underworld</i>	... page 156
Hero #099) <i>Thomas Paine</i>	... page 115	Hero #139) <i>Vegan Sidekick</i>	... page 157
Hero #100) <i>Pancho Stierle</i>	... page 116	Hero #140) (ethical) <i>vegans</i>	... page 158
Hero #101) <i>Jadav Payeng</i>	... page 117	Hero #140a) <i>Donald Watson</i>	... page 164
Hero #102) <i>Peace Artist</i>	... page 118	Hero #141) <i>Vivekananda</i>	... page 165
Hero #103) <i>Peace Pilgrim</i>	... page 120	Hero #142) <i>Karim Wasfi</i>	... page 166
Hero #104) <i>John Pilger</i>	... page 121	Hero #143) <i>Paul Watson</i>	... page 167
Hero #105) <i>Brad Pitt</i>	... page 122	Hero #144) <i>Alan Watts</i>	... page 168
Hero #106) <i>Chad Pregnacke</i>	... page 123	Hero #145) <i>Steve Wheen</i>	... page 169
Hero #107) <i>Ram Dass</i>	... page 124	Hero #146) <i>Elie Wiesel</i>	... page 170
Hero #108) <i>Robert Redford</i>	... page 125	Hero #147) <i>Jim Withers</i>	... page 171
Hero #109) <i>Tom Regan</i>	... page 126	Hero #148) <i>Yoda (muppet)</i>	... page 172
Hero #110) <i>Don Ritchie</i>	... page 127	Hero #149) <i>P. Yogananda</i>	... page 173
Hero #111) <i>Stephen Ritz</i>	... page 128	Hero #150) <i>Gary Yourofsky</i>	... page 174
Hero #112) <i>Fred Rogers</i>	... page 129	Hero #151) <i>Howard Zinn</i>	... page 176
Hero #113) <i>J. Rumi</i>	... page 130	Hero #152) <i>Zoroaster</i>	... page 177
Hero #114) <i>Walter Russell</i>	... page 131	Hero #153) <i>YOU!</i>	... page 178

“To be a hero may mean nothing more than this: to stand in the face of the status quo, to steadfastly stand in the face of an otherwise easy collapse into the madness of a shockingly selfish world -- and choose to illuminate a different way.” ~ via Mike Alsford

Hero #001: Hank Aaron

Henry “Hank” Aaron is a retired Major League Baseball player who held the record for career home runs for 33 years, and who still holds several other MLB offensive records – all of which he accomplished while receiving persistent hate mail, frequent racist insults, and regular threats of assassination. The resilience, dignity, and grace Aaron displayed under such trying conditions were an inspiration to many while he was playing, and remain an inspiration to many to this day.

Appropriately, Aaron’s personal hero was and remains Martin Luther King Jr. -- a man who, Aaron said, “could walk with kings and talk with presidents. He wasn’t for lootings and bombings and fights, and yet he wasn’t afraid of violence” ...

Just as importantly, in addition to being a rare and gifted athlete, Hank Aaron was a noble humanitarian and a true gentleman. Indeed, for the entirety of his life away from the game of baseball, he has devoted countless hours to helping others, especially children and the less fortunate.



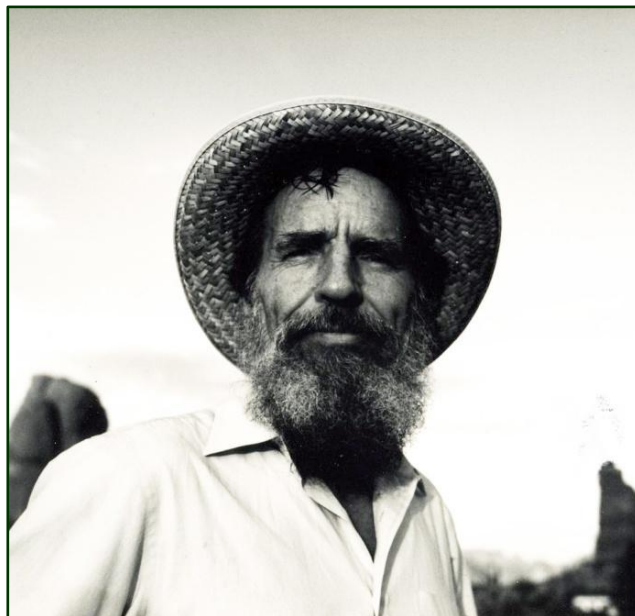
Hero #002: Edward Abbey

Born in 1927, Abbey was a controversial American author and essayist noted for his advocacy of the environment, his criticism of public land policies, and his radical political views. His best-known works include the novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which has been cited as an inspiration behind the founding of several proactive environmental groups (including Earth First, the Earth Liberation Front & Greenpeace), and well as the creation of the word “monkeywrenching” – a term referring to any act of sabotage, activism, or law-breaking done to preserve wilderness areas and/or natural ecosystems.

An amusing anecdote has Abbey serving two years in the military (into which he was drafted), during which time he received two promotions due to his excellent labors, and then two demotions (and an honorable discharge) due to his knack for opposing the asinities of authority. Upon receiving his honorable discharge papers, Abbey sent them back to the department with the words “Return to Sender” written thereupon. The FBI took note of this stunt, and opened a file on Abbey; a file they added to regularly for the rest of his life. Towards the latter parts of his life, after learning of the FBI’s interest in his activities, Abbey was heard to say, “I’d be insulted if they weren’t watching me.”

While often accused of being an “eco-terrorist”, Abbey staunchly refuted such claims, noting that he was merely advocating tactics designed to defend against the acts of terrorism he felt were being committed by United States government and other major corporations against the environment and all living beings living therein.

“Society is like a stew; if you don't stir it up every once in a while a layer of scum floats to the top ... I write in a deliberately provocative and outrageous manner because I like to startle people. I hope to wake people up ... Freedom begins between the ears ... What we need now are heroes and heroines, about a million of them. One brave deed is worth a thousand books. Sentiment without action is the ruin of the Soul,” ~ via Edward Abbey



Hero #003: Arnold Abbott

In 1991, in honor of his late wife, Arnold Abbott started the “Love Thy Neighbor Fund,” an organization which continues the work they often did together – feeding the homeless. In spite of this most-noble cause – and in spite of the fact that he is now (as of January 2018) in his early 90’s, Arnold has been arrested a number of times for violating U.S. laws that make feeding homeless people in public a crime.

And yet Arnold Abbott remains undaunted, calmly stating after his 2014 arrest (an incident that appropriately sparked world-wide outrage and drew international attention to the plight of the homeless in the United States) that, “I don’t have the slightest fear of being arrested. [I will continue to serve the homeless] as long as there is breath in my body.”



Ever-undeterred by their arrests, Mr. Abbot and his co-workers are always back at work the following Wednesdays, preparing the next round of meals to give out later those evenings. Since 1991, his foundation has served over 1400 homeless people a week, and continues doing so even to this very day.

“I spent 50 years of my life fighting for civil rights. I went down to Mississippi and had Ku Klux Klan people to contend with down there, so I'm not the least bit worried about the Fort Lauderdale police department ... The only thing I am concerned about is that there would be nobody to feed the homeless, which is what I do ... And I will not stop doing it.” ~ Arnold Abbott



Hero #004: Jane Addams

Jane Addams, known as the “mother” of social work, was an American pioneer settlement activist, social worker, sociologist, author, and leader in both the women's suffrage and world peace movements. Addams also helped America focus on and address issues that were of concern to most mothers, including the developmental needs of children and the general quality of public health.

Impressively, in 1889 Addams also co-founded Hull House – a settlement community that opened its doors to newly arrived European immigrants, and in 1920 she became a co-founder of the ACLU. For her dedication to the causes of justice, peace, and equality, Addams became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

“True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice ... The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all and incorporated into our common lives ... In the unceasing ebb and flow of justice and oppression we must all dig channels as best we may, that at propitious moments some of the swelling tide might be conducted to the more barren places of life ... Action is indeed the sole medium of expression for all ethics.” ~ via Jane Addams

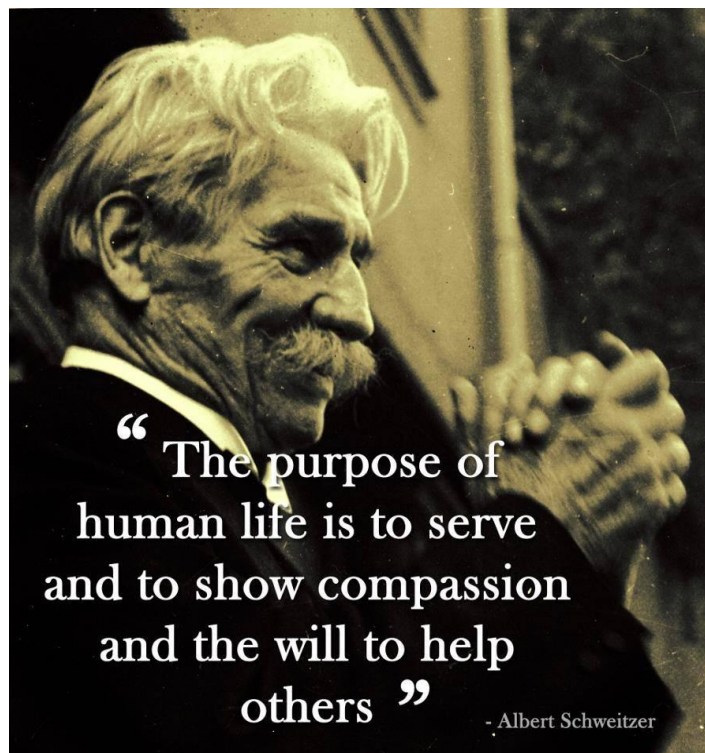


Hero #005: Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer was a philosopher, a doctor, and a scientist (also a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, though that award has lost most of its luster of late) who dedicated the vast majority of his life to selflessly serving humanity. His work transcended national allegiances and his theology transcended religious dogma. He was a model example of how powerfully we can live once the shackles of our cultural norms, our political alliances, and our religious doctrines are set aside in favor of a simple, raw, active and unconditional Caring for others.

Schweitzer received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of “Reverence for Life”, a reverence that he himself expressed in many ways, but most famously by founding and sustaining the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Gabon (then French Equatorial Africa) in central Africa ... From 1952 until his death he also worked against nuclear tests and nuclear weapons with Albert Einstein, Otto Hahn and Bertrand Russell. In 1957, Schweitzer was one of the founders of The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, and on April 23rd of that year made his “Declaration of Conscience” speech -- broadcast to the world over Radio Oslo -- pleading for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.

“Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace ... Just as the wave cannot exist for itself, but is ever a part of the heaving surface of the ocean, so must I never live my life for itself, but always in the experience which is going on around me ... A man is truly ethical only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist, and shrinks from injuring anything that lives ... You must give some time to your fellow men. Even if it's a little thing, do something for others - something for which you get no pay except for the privilege of doing it ... Just as the sun makes ice melt, so too does kindness cause misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate ... A man does not have to be an angel to be a saint.” ~ Albert Schweitzer



Hero #006: American Horse

Dale “Happy” American Horse Jr. is a Native American (Lakota Sioux) activist who gained notoriety by being one of the first Dakota Access Pipeline protestors (known as Water Protectors) to engage in an act of open civil disobedience for that cause ...

On August 31, 2016, after people from all over the United States had gathered in southern North Dakota to support the Standing Rock Sioux and their fight against Energy Transfer Partners (who were trying to build a pipeline through unceded Indian lands, including through and under burial grounds and other Lakota Sioux sacred sites), Dale “Happy” American Horse chained himself to a backhoe at an active pipeline construction site. For the next six hours, police could not remove him from the digger, and construction was completely halted for the day. American Horse remained peaceful yet resolute for the duration of his nonviolent action, mostly remaining silent, and yet regularly chanting “Mni Wiconi” – the main rallying cry for the Water Protectors – a Lakota phrase which means “Water is Life.”

In the end, he was removed and charged with criminal trespass, obstructing government, and resisting arrest. Also in the end, a combination of massive police brutality and political corruption saw the pipeline completed some eight months later – but not before that same police brutality and that same governmental corruption were exposed for all to see; and not before hundreds of thousands of people all over the world were inspired to join the fight against Native American discrimination, pipeline construction projects, and the fossil fuel industry in general.

*“All this just for clean water. Why does it have to come down to this?”
~ Dale “Happy” American Horse*



Hero #007: Amma

Born Sudhamani Idamannel in September of 1953, Amma is a Hindu spiritual leader and healing presence ...

After her formal education ended at the age of nine, she began to take care of her younger siblings and the family domestic work full-time. As part of her chores, Amma would gather food scraps from neighbors to give to her family's cows and goats, through which she was confronted with the intense poverty and dramatic suffering of others in her world. Amma was moved by their despair, and it didn't take long for her to start bringing these people not only food & clothing from her own home, but also solace in the form of spontaneous, heartfelt hugs. Her family, which was not wealthy, scolded and punished her for these deeds of Kindness, and yet she continued to do so anyway -- and continues to do so even to this very day.

Amma has been bringing peace to the distressed by gently hugging them ever since, receiving hundreds of visitors nearly every day since the late 1970's -- giving each one of them a warm, sincere embrace, one after the other, until all have been loved. Some days she does this nonstop for up to 20 hours. The organization that has built up around her large following estimates that she has soothed the troubles of more than 33 million people in this way over the past 30+ years.

“A continuous stream of Love flows from me to all of creation ... The privilege of a doctor is to treat patients. In the same way, my privilege is to console those who are suffering ... Attempting to change the world completely is like trying to straighten the curly tail of a dog, and yet by affecting individuals, we can make changes in our society and, through it, in the world. We cannot change it completely, and yet we can make changes. The conflict in individual minds is responsible for war. So if we can touch people peacefully, we can touch the world and bring peace.” ~ via Amma



Hero #008: Animal Liberation Front activists

The Animal Liberation Front (A.L.F.) is an international, underground, leaderless resistance organization that engages in direct action (both legal & illegal) in pursuit of animal liberation. Activists see themselves as a modern-day Underground Railroad, physically removing animals from laboratories and farms, secretly videotaping animal abuse & acts of animal cruelty, destroying animal-incarceration facilities, arranging safe houses & veterinary care for liberated animals, and operating sanctuaries where liberated animals subsequently live. Critics have compared A.L.F. activists to terrorists, and yet the movement is openly & officially a non-violent one. Indeed, according to the A.L.F.'s own code, only liberation-acts where all reasonable precautions are taken not to harm any sentient lives (human and non-human alike) may be claimed as A.L.F. actions. American A.L.F. activist Rod Coronado summed it up as follows: “One thing that I know that separates us from the people we are constantly accused of being -- that is, terrorists or violent criminals -- is the fact that we have harmed no one.”

The roots of the A.L.F. trace all the way back to August of 1974, when Ronnie Lee and Cliff Goodman were arrested for taking part in a raid on Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies in Bicester. The two were sentenced to three years in prison, during which Lee went on the movement's first hunger strike to obtain vegan food and clothing therein. Both were paroled after 12 months, with Lee emerging in the spring of 1976 more motivated than ever for the cause, gathering together activist friends and a few dozen new recruits -- and the Animal Liberation Front was born. Currently active in over 40 countries, A.L.F. cells operate clandestinely, consisting of either small groups of friends or lone individuals, making them extremely difficult for authorities to monitor. Their short-term goal is to save as many animals as possible and directly disrupt any & all practices of animal abuse. Their long-term aim is to end all animal suffering by forcing animal abuse companies completely out of business. Activists are careful to note that the animals they remove from laboratories or farms are “liberated”, not stolen -- for the simple reason that they were never rightfully owned by their tormentors in the first place.

“Perhaps the easiest method of helping us to accomplish our mission is to help the world's masses emotionally connect with the animals they often unknowingly abuse for food, clothing, and ‘product safety’ by comparing them to the domestic companions they already love. Many of today's animal rights activists have made this connection after seeing animal rights protests, reading about direct actions, or any other method with which our objectives have been relayed. Sometimes an epiphany comes months after previously ignoring animal rights rhetoric or noise while they are quietly watching a pigeon in the street ... So please plant the seed of thought in someone else's brain today that animals are sentient, and that they experience pain & fear the same way as you or I ... More and more, as time passes, our message of Peace & Justice & Freedom will be realized ... We don't need to convince everyone that animals are not commodities and that animals are not property -- a significant minority of people will be enough. And after this critical mass finally embraces the concept of Respect & Fairness & Compassion of which we are reminding them, and after this concept is around & in the open for a few years, it will become fluidly an idea accepted by the majority as well – at which point the animals will finally be free.” ~ via A.L.F.

“The A.L.F. cannot be smashed, nor can it cannot be effectively infiltrated, nor can it be stopped, if for no other reason than you, each and every one of you: you are the A.L.F.” ~ Robin Webb (A.L.F. member)

“This is the customary time when the defendant expresses regret for the crimes they ostensibly committed, so allow me to do so now, because I am not without my regrets ... I am here today to be sentenced for my participation in releasing mink from 6 fur farms. I regret it was only 6 -- I am also here today to be sentenced for my participation in the freeing of 8,000 mink from those farms. I regret it was only 8,000 -- It is my understanding of those 6 farms, only 2 of them have since shut down. I regret it was only 2 -- More than anything, I regret my restraint, because whatever damage we did to those businesses, if those farms were left standing, and if one animal was left behind, then it wasn't enough.

I don't wish to validate this proceeding by begging for mercy or appealing to the conscience of the court, because I know if this system had a conscience I would not be here, and in my place would be all the butchers, vivisectioners, and fur farmers of the world. Just as I will remain unbowed before this court -- who would see me imprisoned for an act of conscience -- I will also deny the fur farmers in the room the pleasure of seeing me bow down before them. To those people here whose sheds I may have visited in 1997, let me tell you directly for the first time, it was a pleasure to raid your farms and to free those animals you held captive. It is to those animals I answer to, not you or this court. I will forever mark those nights on your property as the most rewarding experience of my life. And to those farmers or other savages who may read my words in the future and smile at my fate, just remember: We have put more of you in bankruptcy than you have put liberators in prison.

Let me thank everyone in the courtroom who came to support me today. It is my last wish before prison that each of you drive to a nearby fur farm tonight, tear down its fence and open every cage. That is all.” ~ Peter Young (statement made to the court at his 2005 sentencing hearing)



Hero #009: Anthony Cymerys

Anthony Cymerys, every Wednesday -- at the age of 82, brings his chair, his clippers and a car battery (to power those clippers) to a local park in Hartford, Connecticut. He then “sets up shop” and gives free haircuts to the homeless -- never accepting any money for his work; only “charging” a hug for every haircut.

It just goes to show you, every single one of us -- regardless of our wealth or our schedule or our social status -- can become a “Saint” to those in need. Indeed, even if we have only but a little to Give, we exude great love when choosing to give it anyway. This is why there is no such thing as a “small” selfless deed of Kindness. Every single one of them is significant -- every single one of them gently shakes the world.



Hero #010: Arthur Ashe

Born in 1943, Arthur Ashe was an American professional tennis player and social activist. Over the course of his career he won three Grand Slam singles titles, dozens of other tournaments, and peaked at #2 in the ATP computer rankings in May of 1976. An African American, Ashe was the first black player selected to the United States Davis Cup team and the only black man ever to win the singles title at Wimbledon, the US Open, and the Australian Open ... 1972 proved to be an especially momentous year for Ashe, when he was denied a visa by the South African government, and was thus kept out of that year's South African Open. Ashe used this slight to publicize South Africa's apartheid policies, and he publicly called for South Africa to be expelled from the professional tennis circuit. He was also arrested on January 11, 1985, for protesting outside the Embassy of South Africa in Washington, D.C. during an anti-apartheid rally, and was arrested on another occasion again on September 9, 1992, outside the White House for protesting the then harsh crackdown on Haitian refugees.

In 1979, Ashe suffered a heart attack, which surprised the public in view of his high level of fitness as an athlete. As a consequence, his condition drew attention to the hereditary aspect of heart disease. He thereafter underwent a quadruple bypass operation and was on the verge of making his return to professional tennis when he developed chest pains while training. He continued to experience discomfort, retired from tennis in 1980, and eventually underwent a second heart surgery in 1983 to correct the previous one. It was presumably during this second operation that Ashe contracted the IV virus via one of his blood transfusions -- a condition that was not discovered until five years afterward in 1988. Ashe publicly announced his illness in 1992, and began working to educate others about HIV & AIDS. He founded the Arthur Ashe Foundation for the Defeat of AIDS and the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health before his death from AIDS-related pneumonia on February 6, 1993.

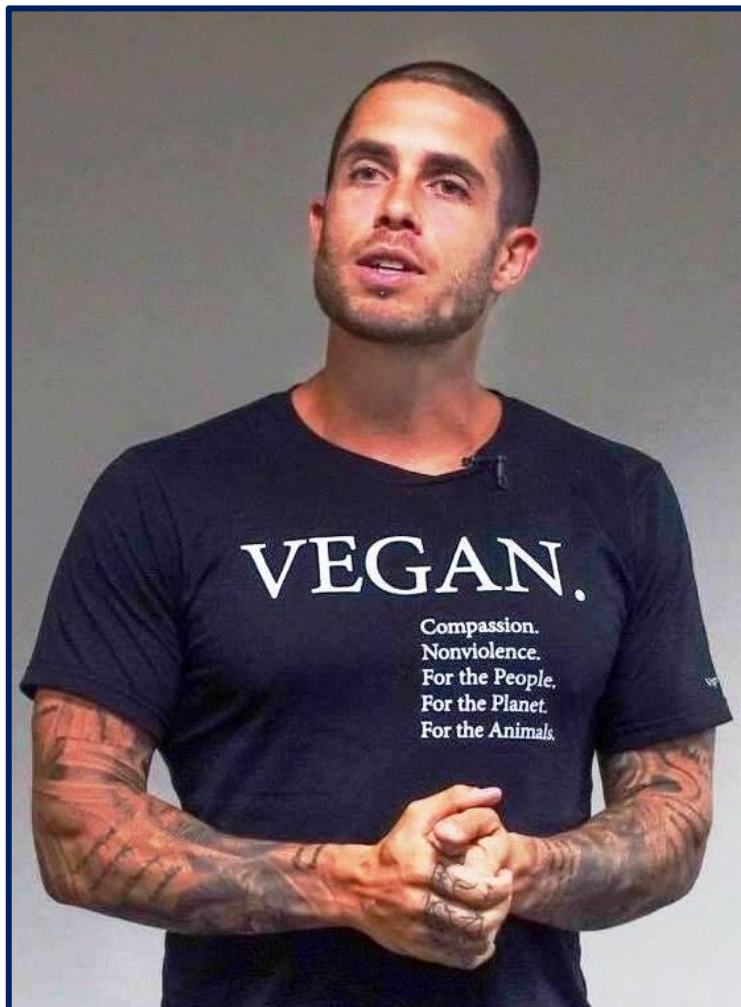
"I know I could never forgive myself if I elected to live without humane purpose, without trying to help the poor and unfortunate, without recognizing that the purest joy in life comes with trying to help others ... I wanted to indulge and explore my love of humanity and especially my concern for persons less fortunate than myself ... From what we get, we can make a living; and yet what we give is what makes a life ... True heroism is remarkably sober and undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost ... Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can ... Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is more important than the outcome ... You've got to get to the stage in life where simply going for it is more important than winning or losing ... We must reach out our hand in friendship and dignity -- both to those who would befriend us as well as to those who would be our enemy." ~ Arthur Ashe



Hero #011: James Aspey

In January 2014, James Aspey – an animal activist from Australia -- pledged not to speak for 365 days, hoping that, via his voicelessness, he could draw attention to the plight of the millions of animals on the planet raised for human consumption – animals who were (and still are) being mostly ignored; animals who were (and still are) suffering terribly; animals who were (and still are) essentially voiceless as well. He also hoped his year of quietude would encourage others to change their relationship with animals by adopting a diet free of suffering; to adopt a plant-based vegan ethic, and thereby live in harmony with a precept he thought most people already believed anyway -- namely, that all animals deserve to live free of unnecessary suffering and death.

And so for an entire year while the world spoke around him, James Aspey remained silent on behalf of animals. He ultimately fulfilled his 365 day mission, and his story went viral in January 2015. He thereafter gained massive prominence for his inspirational speeches, YouTube videos, and vegan lifestyle vlogging, and he now travels the world, speaking to thousands of people about his message of justice and compassion via veganism. He always does so for free, and he always does so with humility; ever making a point to be respectful, polite and understanding to his listeners, all while remaining firm in his pro-vegan, anti-cruelty stance. James appears to be eternally positive, and remains undaunted in his quest to see that all the world's beings are treated with the respect and the love they all deserve. As such, James Aspey is not only a true gentleman, but a truly valiant champion for the innocent and the oppressed.



“The reason I took a vow of silence was to raise awareness for the voiceless victims of this planet ... We all say we love animals, and we all are against animal cruelty, and yet at the same time many of us pay other people to enslave, mutilate, and slaughter animals. And it’s not for any necessity; it’s not because we need to for our health. It’s just because we like the way their bodies taste ... I am deeply passionate about helping these animals, the most oppressed victims of all time, achieve what they rightfully deserve – justice and respect.”
~ via James Aspey

Hero #012: Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Burmese diplomat, author, and peace activist. She is the leader of the National League for Democracy, which she formed in Burma with the help of several retired army officials after the failed 1988 military junta in that country ... In the subsequent 1990 elections, her party (the NLD) won 81% of the seats in Parliament, and yet the results were nullified, as the military refused to hand over power. Not surprisingly, Suu Kyi had already been detained under house arrest before the elections even commenced. She remained under house arrest for almost 15 years thereafter (even though she could have left the country at any time and returned to England to be with her ailing husband – who had been repeatedly denied an entry visa), and thereby became one of the world's most controversial – and most prominent – political prisoners.

Undeterred by her unjust imprisonment, her party steadily gained more & more political influence, and in the 2015 elections won a landslide victory -- taking 86% of the seats in the Assembly of the Union. Although she was prohibited from becoming the President due to a clause in the Burmese Constitution (her late husband and children are foreign citizens), she assumed the newly created position of State Counsellor, embodying a role similar to a Prime Minister or other head of government. For her dignified perseverance in the face of such overwhelming odds, Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

“The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear ... You should never let your fears prevent you from doing what you know is right ... Within any system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day -- fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. A most insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant or futile the small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity. It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of ‘might is right’ to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear. Yet even under the most crushing state machinery courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man.” ~ Aung San Suu Kyi

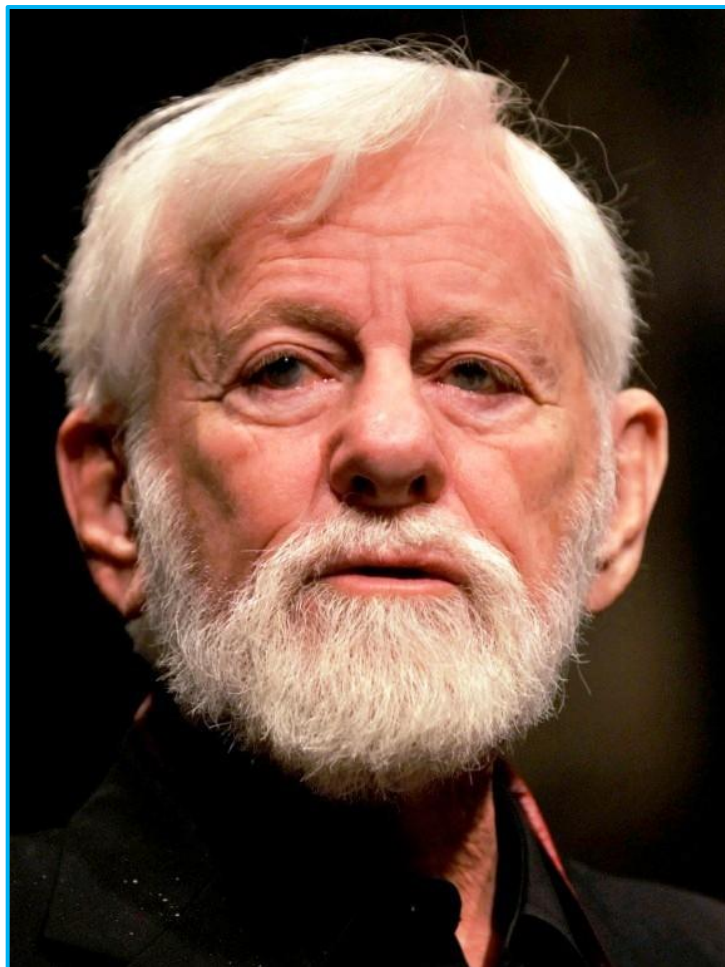


Hero #013: Uri Avnery

Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer who is famous for crossing the lines during the Siege of Beirut to meet with Yassir Arafat on July 3, 1982 -- the first time the Palestinian leader ever met with an Israeli ... Avnery is also the author of several books about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including *1948: A Soldier's Tale*, *the Bloody Road to Jerusalem* (2008); *Israel's Vicious Circle* (2008); and *My Friend, the Enemy* (1986).

In late 1975, Avnery was among the founders of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Shortly after the group's founding, Avnery was assaulted and stabbed several times. Undaunted, he later turned to left-wing peace activism and founded Gush Shalom – a movement dedicated towards convincing the Israeli public that peaceful reconciliation is the proper path to take in dealing with the people of Palestine ... He is also a secularist and strongly opposed to the Orthodox influence in religious and political life. In 2001, Avnery and his wife Rachel Avnery were honored with the Right Livelihood Award, sometimes called the "Alternative Nobel Prize", "for their unwavering conviction, in the midst of great violence, that peace can only be achieved through justice and reconciliation."

"You have to fight for the soul of your people, you have to fight for the souls of millions of people on both sides, to overcome the legacy of this struggle [between Palestine and Israel] and thereby create a readiness for peace ... Violence [in Palestine] is a symptom; the occupation is the disease - a mortal disease for everybody concerned, the occupied and the occupiers alike. Therefore, the first responsibility is to put an end to the occupation." ~ Uri Avnery



Hero #014: Johann Sebastian Bach

Born in 1685, Bach became one of the most famous composers & musicians of the Baroque period. He enriched established German styles through his skill in counterpoint, harmonic organization, and original adaptations of rhythm, form, and texture. To this day, his music is revered for its intellectual depth, technical command, and artistic beauty.

Ironically, while Bach is now consistently regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time, and while he was highly respected as an organist throughout Europe during his lifetime, he was not widely recognized as a great writer of music until many years after his death -- with Mozart, Chopin & Mendelssohn counted among his admirers; and with Beethoven being so moved after hearing Bach's work that he described him as "the original father of harmony".

"Harmony is next to godliness ... There's nothing remarkable about it. All one has to do is hit the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself ... God's gift to his creatures is a Joy worthy of their destiny." ~ J. S. Bach



Hero #015: Bagel Jesus

It is not the “magnificent” or the “awesome” or the “incredible” deeds of Kindness that will save us, but rather a massive coming together of thousands of Loving acts “small” and “unassuming” and seemingly “insignificant” ... So, the question has now shifted. Instead of asking yourself when you will discover your vocation or find your purpose, it is time to ask yourself what can you do to help save Humanity with your life right now? What tiny act(s) of Goodness will you show the world today?



Hero #016: Bai Fang Li

In 1987, Mr. Li retired from his pedicab driving job and returned to his village, where he saw many children working in the fields because they couldn't afford education. At that time he was already 74 years old, and yet he decided to go back to his job anyway. And he did so until 2001, often working long shifts (sometimes 24 hours at a stretch), just so he could make enough money to pay the main installment for the children's school fees. He obtained a cheap accommodation close to the railway and would often wait 24 hours a day for customers, eating simple food and wearing only second-hand clothes. At the age of 90 he paid his last installment to the local school and finally retired -- again. In 2005, he passed on peacefully at the age of 93.

“A hero is somebody who is selfless; who is generous in spirit; who just tries to give back as much as possible and to help people. A hero to me is someone who serves people and who really deeply cares.” ~ Debi Mazar



Hero #017: Banksy

Banksy is a pseudonymous United Kingdom-based graffiti artist & political activist. The stencils that he (or she) sprinkles throughout the urban landscape frequently feature striking and humorous images (occasionally combined with clever slogans) that often reflect anti-war, anti-capitalist &/or anti-establishment themes. Banksy beautifies & re-inspires her (or his) world for free -- refusing to sell photographs or reproductions of his street art.

“The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people violating laws or breaking the rules but by people obeying laws and following the rules.” ~ Banksy

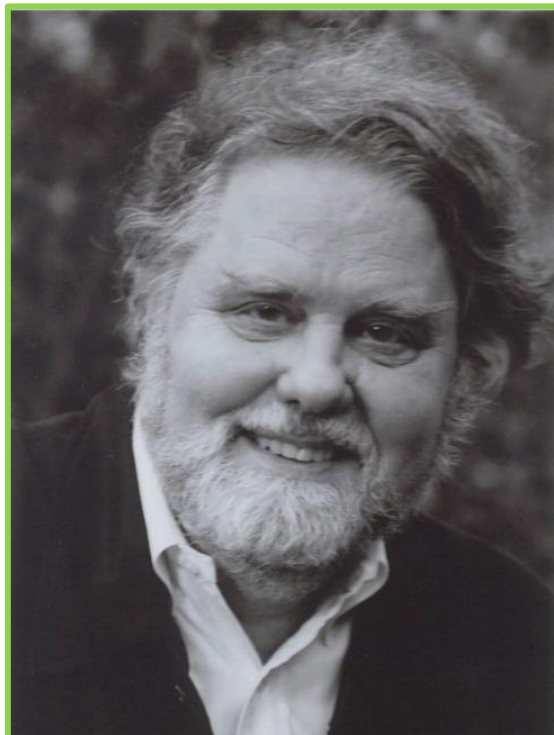
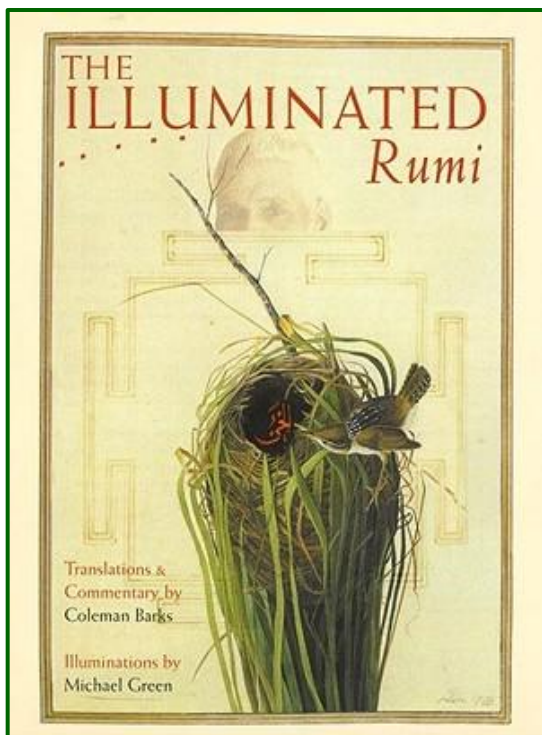


Hero #018: Coleman Barks

Born in 1937, Coleman Barks is an American poet and former professor of literature at the University of Georgia. Although he neither speaks nor reads Persian, he is nonetheless renowned as a truly brilliant interpreter of Rumi, one of the more renowned Sufi poets of 13th century Persia ... Barks makes frequent international appearances and is well known throughout the Middle East, and even received an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Tehran in 2006. Barks' efforts have significantly contributed to the strong modern following of Rumi in the English-speaking world, and the ideas of Sufism have crossed many previously untraversed cultural boundaries over the past several decades in no small part due to his works.

Quite remarkably, Barks bases his paraphrases entirely on other English translations of Rumi, including the renderings of John Moyne and Reynold Nicholson. In addition, while the original Persian poetry of Rumi is heavily rhymed and metered, Barks uses primarily free verse in his interpretations. In some instances, he will even skip or mix lines and metaphors from different poems to co-generate new, uniquely inspired 'translations' ... Despite such unorthodox methods, it can hardly be disputed that Barks' personal renditions of Rumi's poems capture the brilliance of the original author in ways that most of his contemporary translators simply cannot match. As one Rumi aficionado so aptly put it, "Barks seems connected to Rumi in ways that others simply cannot comprehend ... He simply 'gets it!'"

*"The minute I heard my first love story,
I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was.
Lovers don't finally meet somewhere,
for in truth they are in each other all along."
~ Rumi (via Coleman Barks)*



Hero #019: Moazzam Begg

Moazzam Begg is a British Pakistani who was held in extrajudicial detention by the U.S. government for nearly three years -- first in the infamous Bagram Internment Facility in Afghanistan, and later in the equally infamous Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba. In the former prison, Begg was abused by guards and witnessed two detainees beaten to death by prison guards; a claim later substantiated by a 2005 U.S. military investigation. After he was transferred to Guantanamo Bay, public outcry over the illegitimate detention of British nationals persuaded the UK government to finally intervene on their behalf, and U.S. President Bush finally had Begg released – appropriately without charge -- in January of 2005 ... After his release, Begg became a media commentator on issues pertaining to current international anti-terror measures, toured as a speaker exposing the insidiousness of Guantanamo Bay and other detention facilities, and co-authored a book, along with several newspaper and magazine articles.

“I understood why the Americans felt they needed to question me. But I’ve never understood how they could have detained me for years.” ~ Moazzam Begg

“Some heroes are invited to Buckingham Palace where honors are heaped upon them. Moazzam Begg, on the other hand, can expect to be hounded by people with power for the rest of his life. The Bush administration’s PR machine is still intent on proving he is an Islamic extremist. On his return to the UK, the government took his passport, based solely on what little false information the U.S. military tortured out of him. And yet, as is so often the case, Bush and Blair are wrong. Moazzam is an extremist all right - he believes passionately in charity and justice for all. In 2001, he wanted to help the destitute in Afghanistan. Before 9/11, this would have been seen as admirable. Instead, it earned him a cage in Bagram. He then spent almost two years in Guantanamo, where I first met him, in an isolation cell the size of your toilet. And yet even there he lived his belief and made friends with his guards, so that those taught to despise him ended up sharing their e-mail addresses with him when he left. Moazzam to this day refuses to hate even those who tortured him.” ~ via Clive S. Smith



Hero #020: Thomas Berry

Thomas Berry was a cultural historian and ecotheologian (although “cosmologist” and “geologian” – or “Earth scholar” – were his preferred descriptors). Among advocates of “ecospirituality”, he is famous for proposing the idea that a deep understanding of the history and functioning of the evolving Universe is a necessary inspiration and guide for our own effective functioning as individuals and as a species ... Berry believed that humanity, after generations spent in self-glorification and despoiling the world, is poised to embrace a new role as a vital part of a larger, interdependent “communion of subjects” on Earth and indeed throughout the Universe. He did note that the transformation of humanity’s priorities will not come easily, first requiring what he called “the great work” — the title of his last major book — in four institutional realms: the political and legal order; the economic and industrial world; education; and religion.

After receiving his doctorate in history from The Catholic University of America, Berry then studied Chinese language and Chinese culture in China, as well as Sanskrit for his study of India and the religious traditions of that country. He later published a book on the religions of India and one on Buddhism, and then assisted in an educational program for the T'boli tribal peoples of South Cotabato (a province of the island of Mindanao in the Philippines), taught the cultural history of India and China at universities in New Jersey and New York, and then became the director of the graduate program in the History of Religions at Fordham University (1966–1979). Thereafter he founded and directed the Riverdale Center of Religious Research in Riverdale, New York. He also studied Native American cultures and shamanism. From his academic beginnings as a historian of world cultures and religions, Berry developed into a historian of the Earth and its evolutionary processes. Thus it was that he appropriately described himself as a “geologian”. In 1995, Berry nominally retired to Greensboro, North Carolina, though he continued to write, lecture, and receive friends at his home until his passing in 2009.

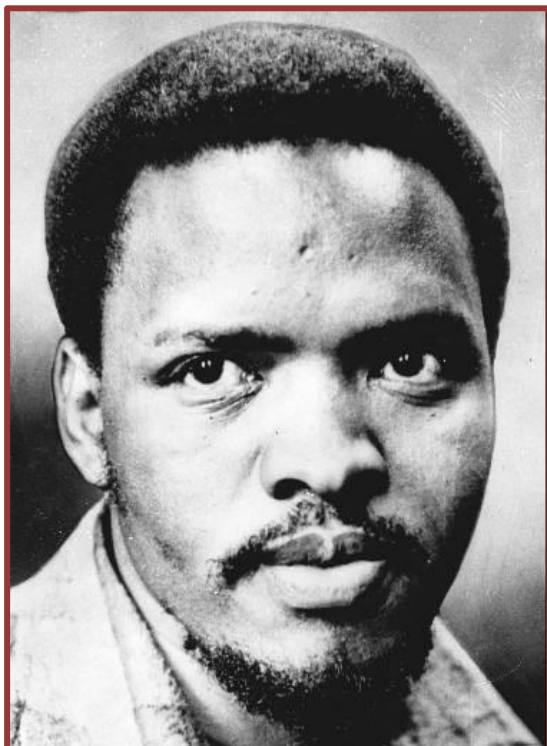


“The universe is composed of subjects to be communed with, not objects to be exploited. Everything has its own voice. Thunder and lightning and stars and planets, flowers, birds, animals, trees, -- all these have voices, and they constitute a community of existence that is profoundly interrelated ... As such, we will either go into the future as a single sacred community, or we will all perish in the desert ... Our human role is to be that being in whom the universe reflects on and celebrates itself and its numinous origin in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.” ~ Thomas Berry

Hero #021: Steven Biko

Born in 1946, Steven Biko was an anti-apartheid activist in South Africa. Early on he became a popular student leader and founded the Black Consciousness Movement, which empowered and mobilized much of the urban black population. He was famous for his slogan “Black is beautiful”, which he described as meaning: “You are okay just as you are. Choose to look upon yourself as a human being.” Later, Biko became a key figure in The Durban Moment, and he was banned by the apartheid government in February of 1973, meaning that he was not allowed to speak to more than one person at a time, nor speak in public, that he was restricted to the King William's Town magisterial district, and that he could not write publicly or speak with the media. It was also forbidden for anyone else to quote anything he said, including speeches or even simple conversations. In spite of this repression, Biko played a significant role in organizing the protests which culminated in the Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976. In the aftermath of that protest, which was met with a heavy hand by security forces, government authorities began to target Biko further.

On August 18 of 1977, Biko was arrested at a police roadblock under the Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967 and cruelly interrogated for twenty-two hours -- repeatedly tortured & beaten until he suffered a major head injury and fell into a coma. Several weeks later (on September 11, 1977), police loaded him into the back of a Land Rover, naked and restrained in manacles, and drove him roughly 700 miles to a prison in Pretoria with hospital facilities. At that time, he was nearly dead due his previous mistreatments, and he did indeed die shortly after arriving in Pretoria the next day. Unsurprisingly, the police claimed Biko's death was the result of an extended hunger strike, and yet a subsequent autopsy clearly revealed that he ultimately succumbed to a brain hemorrhage from the massive head injuries he had sustained during his incarceration and its multiple “interrogations” ... Because of his high profile, news of Biko's death spread quickly, publicizing the repressive nature of the apartheid government, and greatly assisting the movement that eventually succeeded in bringing down that repressive government. His funeral was attended by over 10,000 people, including numerous ambassadors and other diplomats from the United States and Western Europe.

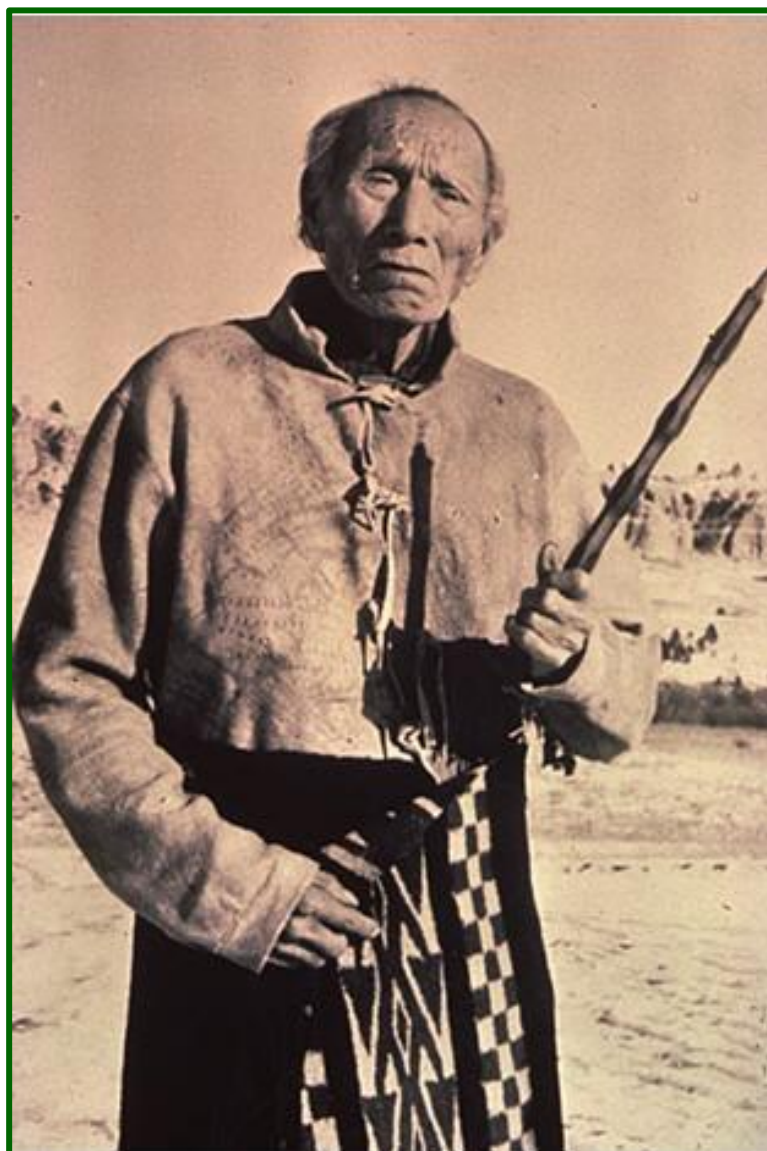


“The greatest weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed ... It is better to die for an idea that will live, than to live for an idea that will die.” ~ Steven Biko

Hero #022: Black Elk

Heháka Sápa (Black Elk) was a famous Oglala Lakota medicine man and *heyoka* who lived in the present-day United States, primarily on land currently known as South Dakota ... While many historians and anthropologists remain intrigued by Black Elk's profound visions &/or his portrayal of the Sioux way of life, it was his tendency towards gently sharing his wisdom and his regular displays of noble courage that I personally admire. At the massacre of Wounded Knee (1890), Black Elk repeatedly charged U.S. soldiers to rescue the wounded, and later in life, he created and organized a unique Indian show – not to glorify warfare or traditional expressions of “bravery” – but rather to teach others about Lakota culture and sacred rituals. In essence, in a time of great division, Black Elk saw the world as one; in a time of shameful violence, he knew that Peace was the only aim worth embodying.

“It is good to have a reminder of death before us, for it helps us to understand the impermanence of life on this earth, and this understanding may aid us in preparing for our own death ... Grown men must learn from very little children, for the hearts of the very young are pure, and, therefore the Great Spirit shows them many things which older people have long since forgotten.” ~ via Black Elk

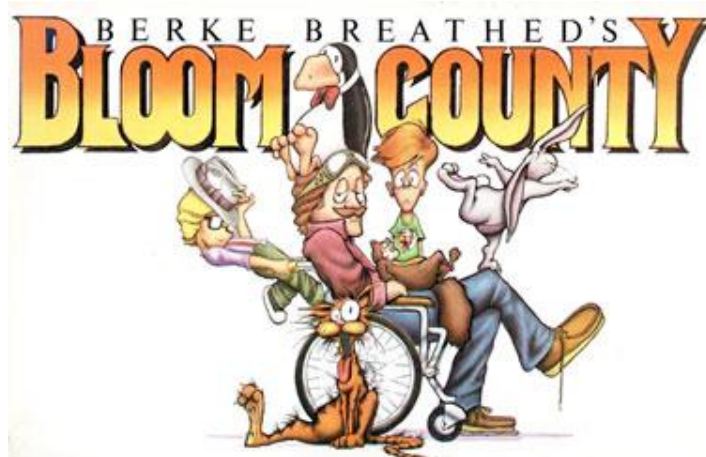


Hero #023: Berkeley Breathed (“Bloom County”)

Born in 1957, Breathed is an American cartoonist, children's book author & illustrator, screenwriter, and animal rights supporter. He is best known for his truly brilliant comic strip *Bloom County*, which ran from 1980 to 1989, and often both cleverly & poignantly exposed or illuminated controversial sociopolitical issues as understood (or as not so well understood) by his cast of fanciful characters -- most famously Opus, a large-nosed penguin, whose naiveté and endless optimism made him a fan favorite.

Breathed first became published when he was hired part-time as an editorial cartoonist for the Austin American-Statesmen, though this job was short-lived, as he was fired after one of his cartoons caused outrage. While seemingly a setback at the time, this dismissal can now be seen as a foreshadow of Breathed becoming one of the great & insightful artistic provocateurs of his generation.

“It's never too late to have a happy childhood.” ~ Berkeley Breathed



Hero #024: Joel Boujassy

Joel Boujassy was a French political/anti-political activist who worked for and with We Are Change Paris. More important than his dedicated protest work, however, was the simple yet profound way he gave to others. His humble yet courageous way of Kind Being was a model for us all.

*“I like to eat organic,
and I love organic information
for my brain as well”
~ Joel Boujassy*



Hero #025: Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha, also known as Siddhārtha Gautama (or simply the Buddha) was a sage on whose teachings the religion of Buddhism was founded. Born in the Shakya republic in the Himalayan foothills, he is believed to have lived and taught mostly in eastern India sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE ...

The word Buddha means “awakened one” or “enlightened one.” In most Buddhist traditions, Siddhartha Gautama is regarded as the Supreme Buddha. By tradition, he was originally destined by birth to the life of a prince, and his father (King Śuddhodana) -- wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from all religious teachings and from any knowledge of human suffering. And yet even though it was ensured that he was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures note that Siddhartha intuited clearly that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal, and at the age of 29, he left his palace to immerse himself in everyday society -- where he was said to have witnessed (among many other things) the sufferings &/or hardships represented by an old man, a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic monk. The first three of these sightings depressed him greatly, and inspired him to initially strive to overcome aging, sickness, and death by living the life of an ascetic himself. And yet Gautama eventually felt unsatisfied by the practice and moved on to become a student of yoga. And yet despite achieving high levels of meditative consciousness, he was once more unsatisfied, and moved on to become “enlightened” (i.e. to come to comprehend “The 4 Noble Truths”) and discover what Buddhists call the Middle Way (or “The 8-fold Path”) — the active practice of conscious empowerment that led him know the bliss of personal liberation (also known as “Nirvana”); a way of Being that is equally removed from the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial ... Thereafter, for the remaining 45 years of his life, Buddha is said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to servants to monks to murderers. According to tradition, he emphasized active ethics and humble understanding. He questioned everyday notions of divinity and salvation; teaching that there is no intermediary between mankind and the Divine; that Nirvana is available in every moment to all those who are willing to actively immerse themselves in the Oneness that surrounds them.

“Hatred does not cease in this world by hating, but by not hating; this is an eternal truth ... The thought manifests as the word; the word manifests as the deed; The deed develops into habit; and habit hardens into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care, and let it spring from Love ... If you knew what I know about the power of giving, you would not let a single meal pass without sharing it in some way ... The Way is not in the sky. The Way is in the heart ... Better than a thousand hollow words, is the one word that



brings another peace ... Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity ... There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth: not going all the way, and not starting ... However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act on upon them?”
~ Gautama Buddha

Hero #026: John Butler

Born April 1st in 1975, John Butler is an Australian American award-winning singer, multi-instrumentalist musician, songwriter, producer, and social activist. He is the front man for the John Butler Trio, a roots and jam band, and is an open advocate for peace, environmental protection, and global harmony; actively supporting The Wilderness Society, the Save Ningaloo Reef campaign, and the "Save The Kimberley" campaign -- a group that protests the BHP Billiton corporation's involvement with the proposed James Price Point gas industrial complex in Western Australia's beautiful, pristine Kimberley region.

Despite his immense (and well justified) success, John has remained humble and caring though it all; sharing his Love for the Earth and all Her inhabitants in every piece of music he composes and every song he sings or plays.

"I still cared about everything I cared about, but I don't know how to write another song about another greedy asshole ruining our planet. I had already done that. So I started writing about the damage of war and the destruction of the environment. And yet as you drill down deeper, as you move closer to the core of the heart, there are so many great stories to be had which aren't literally talking about a specific problem." ~ John Butler



Hero #027: Ruby Bridges

As a six-year-old, Ruby Bridges famously became the first African American child to desegregate an all-white elementary school in the South. When the 1st grader walked to William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans on November 14, 1960 -- surrounded by a team of U.S. Marshals, she was met by a vicious mob shouting and throwing objects at her. One of the federal marshals, Charles Burks, who served on her escort team, recalls Bridges' courage in the face of such hatred: "For a little girl six years old going into a strange school with four strange deputy marshals, a place she had never been before, she showed a lot of courage. She never cried. She didn't whimper ... We were all very proud of her" ... Once Ruby entered the school, she discovered that it was devoid of children, because they had all been removed by their parents. Indeed, the only teacher willing to have Ruby as a student was Barbara Henry, who had recently moved to New Orleans from Boston. Ruby was essentially



taught by herself for her first year at the school due to the white parents' refusal to have their children share a classroom with a black child. Despite daily harassment (which required the federal marshals to continue escorting her to school for months), threats towards her family, and her father's job loss due to his family's role in school integration, Ruby persisted in attending school. Her resilience bore great fruit shortly thereafter, as the following year the mobs were gone, and more African American students joined her at the school. As such, the U.S. school integration effort was in no small part a success due to Ruby Bridges' inspiring courage and devout perseverance.

"You must never be fearful about what you are doing when you know what you are doing is Right ... Each and every one of us is born with a clean heart. Our babies know nothing about hate or racism. But soon they begin to learn – and only from us. We keep racism alive. We pass it on to our children ... Racism is a grown-up disease, and we should stop using our children to spread it." ~ Ruby Bridges



Hero #028: Georges Bwelle

For 21 years, Georges Bwelle watched his ill father slip in and out of consciousness while traveling to and from hospitals ill-equipped to help him. There were no neurosurgeons at all in his native land of Cameroon at that time, so Georges spent years escorting his father to overcrowded clinics and hospitals, getting whatever treatment they could get. Sadly, the situation hasn't changed much since Bwelle's father passed away in 2002. According to the World Health Organization, there is only one doctor for every 5,000 people in Cameroon (compared to the United States, which has one doctor for every 413 people). And even if they can get to see a physician, many Cameroonians can't afford it. Two out of five people in the country live below the poverty line, and nearly three-quarters of the country's health-care spending is private. Seeing his father and so many others suffering, Georges Bwelle became determined to do something about it – so he became a doctor himself, ultimately working as a vascular surgeon in Yaounde's Central Hospital. And he also started a nonprofit organization that travels into rural areas on weekends to provide free medical care to residents there who would otherwise not be able to access it or afford it. Since 2008, he and his group of volunteers have treated & cared for nearly 32,000 people.

Almost every Friday, he and up to 30 people jam into vans, tie medical supplies to the roofs of their vehicles, and travel across rough terrain to visit villages in need. When they arrive, after reveling with villagers in a joyous welcome celebration, the team begins meeting with patients -- about 500 each trip. In the evenings, the team performs simple surgeries with local anesthesia. Operations are usually done in a schoolhouse, town hall or private home; after each procedure, patients get up and walk to the recovery area to make way for the next person. In this manner, Georges Bwelle and his team have performed over 700 free surgeries in 2013 alone.

In addition to holding these weekend clinics and working as a hospital surgeon, Bwelle also works nights at private medical clinics around Yaounde. It's this second job, he said, that funds about 60% of his nonprofit; the rest is covered by private donations. "I'm not sure when he sleeps," said Katie O'Malley, a second-year medical student from Drexel University in Philadelphia and a volunteer with Bwelle's group. "He is always either at the hospital or trying to make money for the organization so he can go on his campaigns."

"I am so happy when I am doing this work, and I often think about my father when I am doing it ... To make people laugh, to reduce the pain, that's why I'm doing this." ~ Georges Bwelle



Hero #029: Calvin & Hobbes (Bill Watterson)

Calvin & Hobbes is a daily comic strip (syndicated from 1985 to 1995) by American cartoonist Bill Watterson. It follows the humorous – and often brilliantly insightful -- antics of Calvin, a precocious six-year-old boy, and Hobbes, his stuffed-yet-sardonic tiger. The pair is named after John Calvin, a 16th-century French reformist theologian, and Thomas Hobbes, a 17th-century English political philosopher. Though it chose to avoid mentioning specific political figures or current events, the strip frequently and deeply explored broad issues like environmentalism, public education, philosophical quandaries, the flaws of opinion polls, and the inanity of war.

“The torture of a bad conscience is the Hell of a living Soul ... So let us never cease to do the utmost for others -- and let us never despair of the apparent smallness of our accomplishments.” ~ via John Calvin

“It can never be that war shall preserve life, and peace destroy it ... As such, the first and fundamental law of Nature is to seek peace -- and then to follow it ... Hell is this Truth seen too late” ~ via Thomas Hobbes

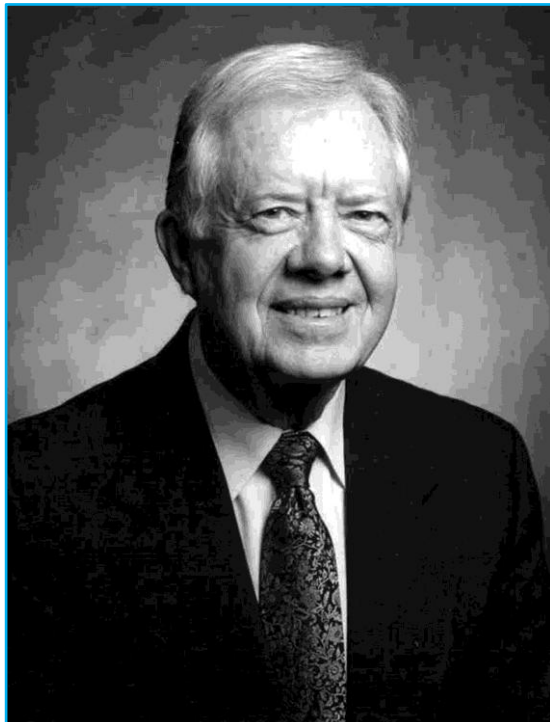


Hero #030: Jimmy Carter

James Earl “Jimmy” Carter Jr. served as the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. Carter has remained active in public life during his post-presidency, and in 2002 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, among other things for his work in co-founding the Carter Center ... While many to this day consider Carter to have been an ineffective President at best, his four year term contained more than his fair share of enormously courageous successes – among them his stark opposition of the death penalty, his championing of women’s rights, his support for same sex marriage, his pardon of all Vietnam War conscientious objectors, the formulation of the Department of Energy and the Department of Education, the facilitation of the Camp David Accords between Israel & Egypt, the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties, and the establishment of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Even more importantly, his is the only U.S. presidency to this day to have never militarily engaged an enemy ... While unpopular to much of America at the end of his term (and unpopular to most of his corrupt political colleagues during the rest of it), Carter presided over a presidency that strengthened the social fabric of the United States, furthered the progressive evolution of civil liberties, and enhanced the growth of world peace ...

Just as importantly, after leaving the White House, Carter set up the Carter Center in 1982 as his base for advancing human rights. In the many years since, he has traveled extensively to conduct peace negotiations, observe elections, and advance disease prevention in developing nations. He is also considered a founding figure in the Habitat for Humanity project that provides housing for the indigent and the downtrodden. He also remains a staunch critic of America’s ongoing wars-for-profit, Israel’s occupation of Palestine, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* that has allowed corporations and millionaires to essentially take over control of the U.S. Congress – going so far as to publicly state the now obvious truth that the United States is “no longer a functioning democracy” ... In essence, although his presidency received quite the mixed reception, his peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts since leaving office have made Carter renowned by many as the most successful (and by far most noble) ex-President in American history.

“We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other’s children ... In order for us human beings to commit ourselves personally to the inhumanity of war, we find it necessary first to dehumanize our opponents, which is in itself a violation of the beliefs of all religions. Once we characterize our adversaries as beyond the scope of God’s mercy and grace, their lives lose all value. We deny personal responsibility when we plant land-mines and, days or years later, a stranger to us — often a child — is crippled or killed. From a great distance, we launch bombs or missiles with almost total impunity, and never want to know the number or identity of the victims ... To be true to ourselves, we must first choose to be true to others.” ~ via Jimmy Carter

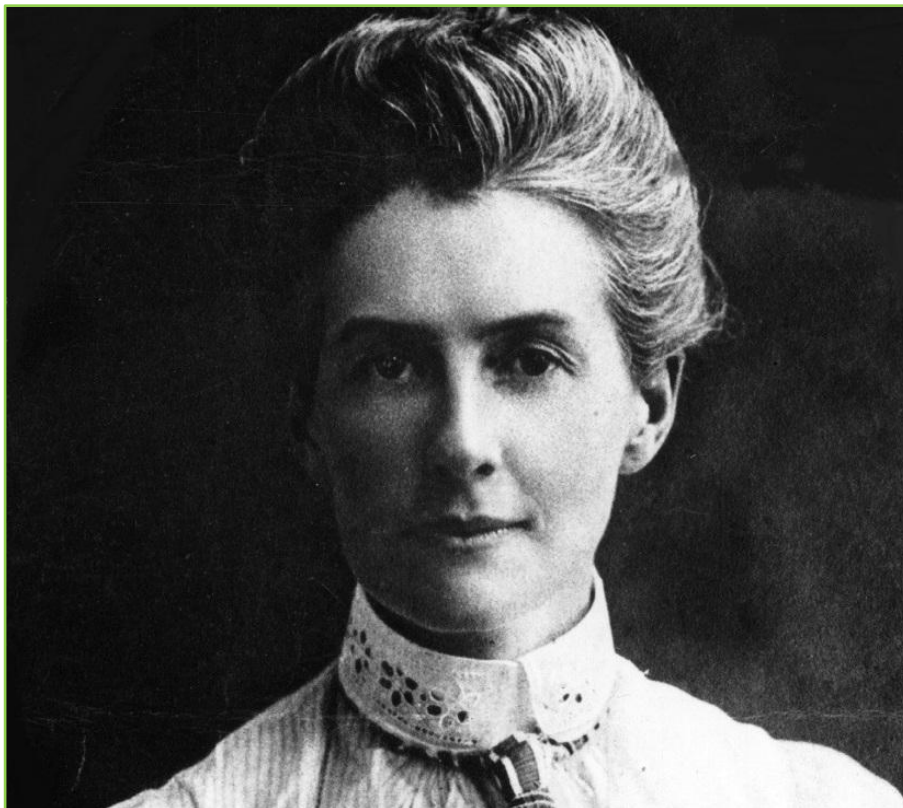


Hero #031: Edith Cavell

Edith Louisa Cavell was a British nurse who is celebrated for saving the lives of soldiers in WWI (from both sides, without discrimination, saying “I can’t stop while there are lives to be saved”) and for helping some 200 Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium. For the latter act of bravery, she was arrested, accused of treason, found guilty by court-martial, and sentenced to death. Despite a loud international cry for mercy, she was indeed shot & killed by a German firing squad ...

In November of 1914, after the German occupation of Brussels, Cavell began sheltering British soldiers and funneling them out of occupied Belgium to the neutral Netherlands. Wounded British and French soldiers as well as Belgian and French civilians of military age were hidden from the Germans and provided with false papers and conducted by various guides to the houses of Cavell, Louis Séverin, and others in Brussels; where their hosts would furnish them with money to reach the Dutch frontier. This placed Cavell in direct violation of German military law. Over time, German authorities became increasingly suspicious of the nurse's actions, suspicions which were further fuelled by her blatant outspokenness about the war.

She was finally arrested on the 3rd of August 1915, and charged with harboring Allied soldiers. She was held in Saint-Gilles prison for ten weeks, the last two of which were spent in solitary confinement. She made three depositions to the German police, each time openly admitting that she had been instrumental in conveying about 60 British and 15 French soldiers, as well as about 100 French and Belgian civilians of military age, to the frontier and had sheltered most of them in her house. This brazen admission was more than enough for her conviction and she died by firing squad shortly thereafter. Resolute until the end, it was noted that on the eve of her execution she made the beautiful statement that “patriotism is not enough; I must have no hate in my heart.”

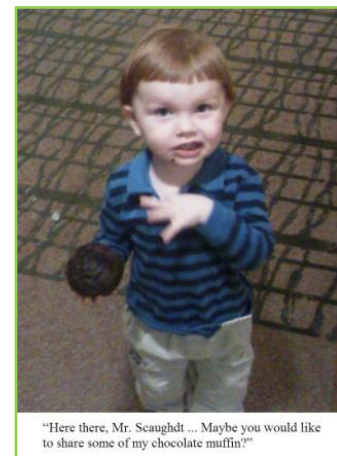


Hero #032: children (i.e. toddlers)

In the Bible (Matthew 18:3), Jesus supposedly makes the bold (and at first ponder, slightly bizarre) claim that, “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” I mention this verse here because the word commonly translated as “children” therein is actually the Greek word *paidia* (Gk #3813), which means not “any young person between the ages of birth and puberty” -- as many commonly understand the term to mean biologically, or “any young person below the age of self responsibility” -- as most cultures understand the term to mean legally. No, when we look at how this word was most commonly used when the Gospel of Matthew was written, we discover that -- at least at that time -- *paidia* actually meant “a very young child”, or “a toddler” (or in some cases, even “an infant”) ... And it is *these* “children” I choose to honor now. I choose to honor them for being able to know Calm in any storm ...



... and I choose to honor them for thinking way outside the box ...



... and I choose to honor them for knowing what it means to really share, to really forgive, to really care, and to really Love.

So, if anyone out there reading this has forgotten what your True Self resembles -- if anyone has forgotten what your true potential is & what your real Purpose looks like in everyday life, simply spend a few minutes watching, or listening to, or chatting with any small child. As you do so, you will not be able to help but remember to the awesome Human(e) Being you were, reawakened to the incredible Human(e) being you still are, and realize the amazing Human(e) Being you could become again.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Love is what makes you smile even when you’re really tired.” ~ Terri (age 4)

“Love is what’s in the room at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen.” ~ Bobby (age 7)

“If you want to learn to Love better, you need to start with a friend you hate.” ~ Nikka (age 6)

P.S. The little man pictured above was one of the wondrous "little mystics" with whom I had the honor of working at Little Adventures Children's Center in Park City (Utah) back in the winter of 2008/09 ... This guy in particular taught me more in those five months about Love & Peace & Happiness than any self-help book I ever read ... Thanks again, Aiden!

Hero #033: Pema Chödrön

Born Deirdre Blomfield-Brown on July 14, 1936, Pema Chodron is a notable American figure in Tibetan Buddhism. A humble, gentle & peaceful follower of the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, she is an ordained Buddhist nun, a teacher in the Shambhala Buddhist lineage, and the author of numerous books -- including *No Time to Lose*, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*, *Tonglen: The Path of Transformation*, and *Practicing Peace in Times of War*.

“The truth you believe and cling to makes you unavailable to hear anything new ... There's a reason you can learn from everything: you have basic wisdom, basic intelligence, and basic goodness ... If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, become our teachers ... When you begin to touch your heart or let your heart be touched, you begin to discover that it's bottomless, that it doesn't have any resolution, that this heart is huge, vast, and limitless. You begin to discover how much warmth and gentleness is there within you.” ~ Pema Chödrön



Hero #034: Noam Chomsky

Avram Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, philosopher, social critic, and political activist. Sometimes described as “the father of modern linguistics,” Chomsky is also a major figure in analytic philosophy and one of the founders of the field of cognitive science (the study of the mind, focusing on intelligence and behavior). He is the author of over 100 books on topics such as language, war, politics, and mass media ...

Chomsky was an outspoken opponent of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, which he (quite correctly) saw as an act of American imperialism. During this time he was arrested multiple times for his peace activism and was placed on President Nixon's “Enemies List.” Following his retirement from active teaching, he has continued his vocal political activism, remaining a leading critic of current U.S. foreign policy (especially the War on Terror, along with America’s close ties with Saudi Arabia and other theocratic dictatorships), neoliberalism, U.S. systemic racism, contemporary state capitalism (often via an open support for the Occupy Movement), the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the corrupted mainstream news media. He also remains prominent exposé and critic of U.S. imperialism; believing (again, quite correctly) that the fundamental principle directing the foreign policy of the United States is the establishment of “open societies” that are economically and politically controlled by the United States. He argues that the U.S. seeks to suppress any movements within these countries that are not compliant with U.S. interests and thereby ensure that U.S.-friendly governments remain in power. He frequently reminds his listeners that officially sanctioned historical accounts of U.S. and British imperialism have been consistently whitewashed in order to present them as having been born in benevolent motives – mostly via either the spread of “democracy” or, in older instances, Christianity. Highly critical of these accounts, he regularly seeks to correct them.

“Instead of citizens, neoliberal democracy produces consumers. Instead of communities, it produces shopping malls. The net result is an atomized society of disengaged individuals who feel demoralized and socially powerless. In sum, neoliberalism is the immediate and foremost enemy of genuine participatory democracy, not just in the United States but across the planet.” ~ Noam Chomsky

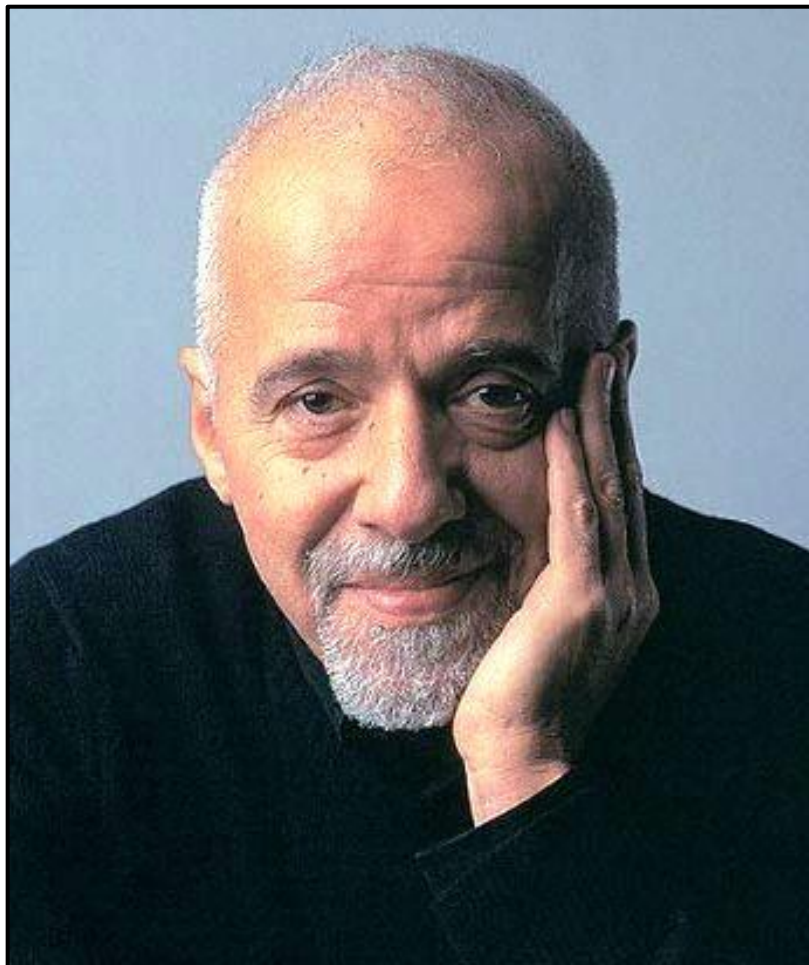
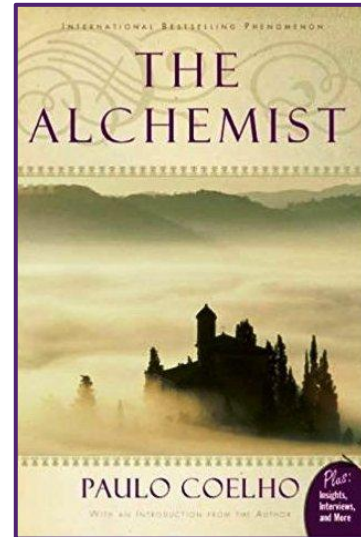
“Everyone’s worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there’s really an easy way to do so: simply stop participating in it ... If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world ... Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so.” ~ Noam Chomsky



Hero #035: Paulo Coelho (“The Alchemist”)

I'm not really a huge fan of his other works (at least the few I have read), and I don't really know where he personally stands on the issues that I hold most dear (namely -- radical Kindness, spiritual freedom from religious dogma & animal rights). I also don't really recommend books as a general rule, **and yet** when it comes to LOVE, Paulo's book *The Alchemist* is a small container of pure genius, and I certainly do support it wholeheartedly ...

“Love is an untamed force. When we try to control it, it destroys us. When we try to imprison it, it enslaves us. When we try to understand it, it leaves us feeling lost and confused ... We can never judge the lives of others, because each person knows only their own pain and renunciation. It's one thing to feel that you are on the right path, but it's another to think that yours is the only path ... No matter what he does, every person on earth plays a central role in the history of the world ... You will never be able to escape from your heart. So it's better to listen to what it has to say.” ~ Paulo Coelho



Hero #036: Megan Coffee

Megan Coffee is a doctor and nonprofit director who began working in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake there that left hundreds of thousands dead and many more injured. She works there without pay and raises money to support the free medical services she provides ...

Haiti, a Caribbean country that shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic to its east, was hit by ruinous earthquake in 2010. In a country like Haiti, getting prompt and adequate medical care is a rare opportunity for many. As such, when thousands of patients were thrown together after the devastating earthquake, the danger of epidemics like tuberculosis was great. There was an urgent need specialists in infectious diseases, and so Megan Coffee, a Harvard & Oxford-educated infectious disease specialist, gave up her research position at Cal-Berkeley and headed to Haiti to help. That was over seven years ago, and Megan Coffee is still working there today.



Hero #037: Rachel Corrie

Rachel Corrie was an American peace activist and active member of a pro-Palestinian-liberation group called the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). She was killed by an Israeli Defense Forces armored bulldozer while trying to stop it from destroying the private residences of several Palestinians in Rafah, a southern region of the Gaza Strip ...

Rachel had gone to Gaza as part of her senior-year college assignment to connect her home-town with Rafah in a sister cities project. While there, she joined with International Solidarity Movement (ISM) activists in efforts to prevent the Israeli army's demolition of Palestinian homes. Tragically, less than two months after her arrival (on March 16, 2003), Rachel was killed during an Israeli military operation after a three-hour confrontation between eight ISM activists and Israeli soldiers operating two armored bulldozers ... While pro-Israeli eyewitnesses say that the bulldozer operator could not see Rachel and ran over her by accident, other witnesses noted that Rachel's entire torso was up over the blade of the dozer, that her face was only a few meters away from the operator, and that she was waving her arms and shouting through a bullhorn at him just before she was crushed. As ISM activist Richard Pursell testified, "They began demolishing one house and we called out to them and went into the house, so they backed down. During the entire confrontation they knew who we were and what we were doing. There were eight of us and we were simply standing in their way and shouting. Suddenly, they turned to a house they had started to demolish before, and I saw Rachel standing in the way of the front bulldozer" ... Both human-rights activists and Palestinians also said that the demolitions had also been accompanied by gunfire from Israeli snipers. The director of Rafah's hospital, Dr. Ali Moussa added that 240 Palestinians, including 78 children, had been killed since the Al-Aqsa Intifada began in 2001, "Every night there is shooting at houses in which children are sleeping, without any provocations from Palestinians." The United Nations has admitted that 582 Rafah homes have been demolished and 721 damaged, with 5,305 people thereby made homeless.

"There used to be a middle class here – recently. We also get reports that in the past, Gazan flower shipments to Europe were delayed for two weeks at the Erez crossing for security inspections. You can imagine the value of two-week-old cut flowers in the European market, so that market dried up. And then the bulldozers come and take out people's vegetable farms and gardens. What is left for people? Tell me if you can think of anything. I can't ... If you talk about the cycle of violence, or mention "an eye for an eye," you would be perpetuating the idea that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a balanced conflict, instead of what it actually is: a largely unarmed people pitted against the fourth most powerful military in the world" ~ Rachel Corrie

"I look forward to seeing more and more people willing to resist the direction the world is moving in, a direction where our personal experiences are irrelevant, that we are defective, that our communities are not important, that we are powerless, that our future is determined, and that the highest level of humanity is expressed through what we choose to buy at the mall ... We are all born and someday we'll all die, most likely to some degree alone. And yet what if our aloneness isn't a tragedy? What if our aloneness is what allows us to speak the truth without being afraid? What if our aloneness is what allows us to adventure – to experience the world as a dynamic presence – as a changeable, interactive thing?" ~ Rachel Corrie



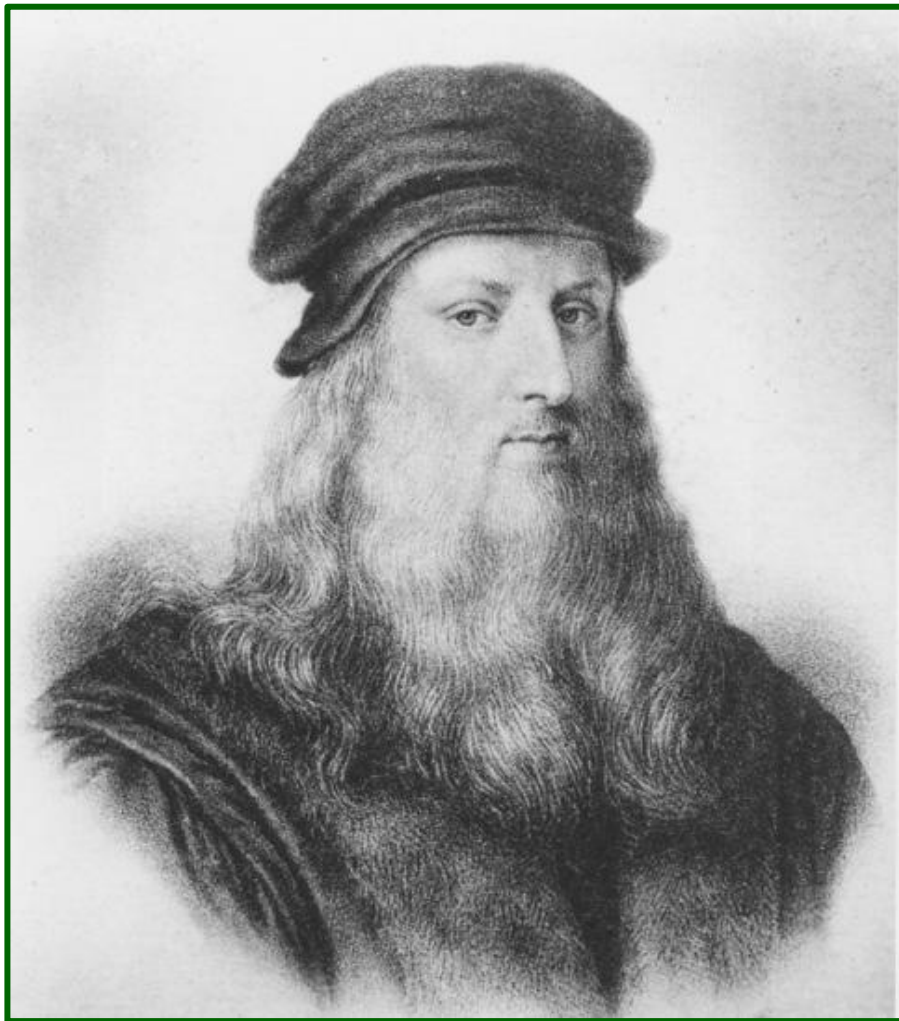


GETTY IMAGES

Hero #038: Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci was an Italian polymath whose areas of interest included invention, painting, sculpting, architecture, music, mathematics, engineering, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, history, and cartography. He has been variously called the father of both paleontology and architecture, and is widely considered one of the greatest painters of all time. Credited with inventing the parachute and the helicopter – as well as conceptualizing solar power, the calculator, and the airplane, Leonardo epitomized the Renaissance humanist ideal. Many historians and scholars regard Leonardo as the prime exemplar of the “Universal Genius” -- an individual of unquenchable curiosity and feverishly inventive imagination. According to art historian Helen Gardner, the scope and depth of his interests were without precedent in recorded history. He also happened to be a man of advanced compassion, as evidenced by his ethical vegetarianism (what many today would call veganism), and his penchant for buying caged birds in order to release them.

“It has long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sit back and let things happen to them. They go out and happen to things ... My body will not be a tomb for other creatures. I have from an early age abjured the use of meat, and the time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men ... Nothing strengthens the authority of the status quo as much as silence ... Being willing is not enough; we must do.” ~ via Leonardo da Vinci



Hero #039: the Dalai Lama ..

Say what you will about this jovial little Tibetan man, there can be no doubt that the strength of his Compassion is beyond reproach. Anyone who can repeatedly & openly & sincerely forgive those who continue to torture his friends is without a doubt a shining example of what we can one day become as a species, as well as how each & every one of us can choose to *be* today.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“All the world's major religious traditions carry the same basic central message -- the message of Love, the message of Compassion, the message of Forgiveness. The important thing, of course, is not to merely revere these values, but to actively embody them in our daily lives -- for us to be Kind whenever possible, remembering that it is always possible; for us to deeply remember that, regarding the practice of Love, our enemies are our greatest teachers ... As such, my religion is quite simple; my religion is Compassion and Kindness.”

~ inspired by the Dalai Lama



Hero #040: Dan Dewey

Dan Dewey's simple-yet-amazing story of charity began when his father, after beating Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2002, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2005, and began chemotherapy treatment at Pontiac's St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital shortly thereafter. Dan started buying coffee for his dad while he went through those treatments, and before leaving, Dan would ask everyone else in the room if they wanted anything. People warmed up to his gentle sincerity pretty quickly and started placing their orders, whereupon Dan would then head to a local coffee shop, make the sometimes very large order, stack all the drinks one upon the other, and deliver them to the patients and staff at the Hospital. After eight weeks of this, Dan's father beat his cancer and was discharged from the cancer ward, and yet Dan decided to just kept bringing everyone coffee.

And that's how he started making "Dan's Coffee Run" two times a week, delivering on average 90 cups of coffee, hot chocolate, and tea to the patients and staff of St. Joseph's Cancer Center, the Rose Cancer Center, and CARE House of Oakland County (which advocates for abused children). He does this out of the goodness of his heart -- and he does it every single week of every single year, having missed only one week of deliveries since 2006.

"Their smiles are all I need to keep showing up." ~ Dan Dewey



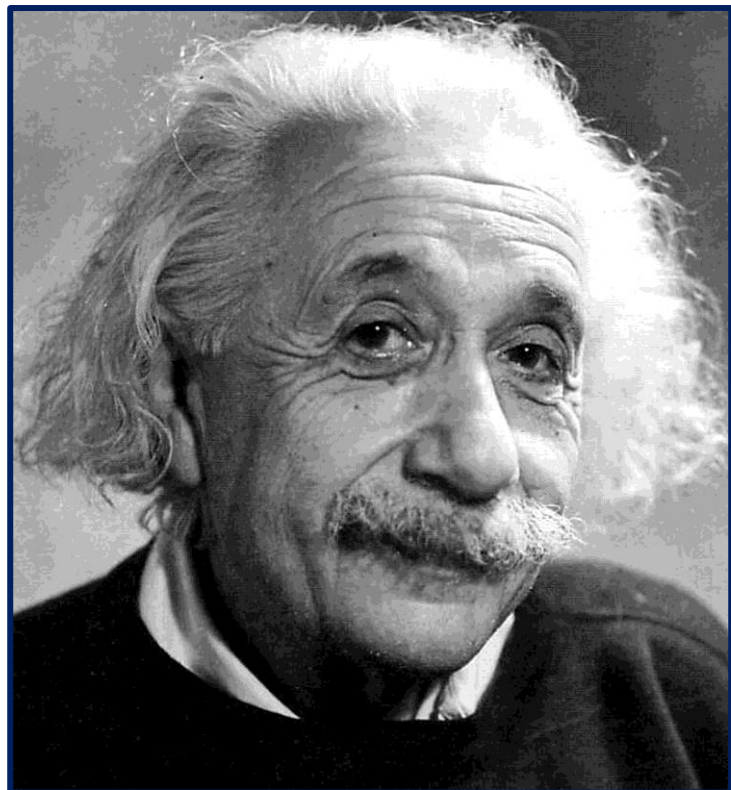
Hero #041: Albert Einstein

Born in 1879, Einstein was a German-born theoretical physicist. He developed the general theory of relativity (one of the two major pillars of modern physics), and was pivotal in establishing quantum theory (the other pillar) as well. While best known in popular culture for his mass–energy equivalence formula $E = mc^2$ (which has been dubbed “the world's most famous equation”), Einstein was also a public proponent of peace and a champion of civil rights. Regarding the former, he signed the Russell–Einstein Manifesto (which, co-signed by British philosopher Bertrand Russell, highlighted the dangers of nuclear weapons) and he publicly called for an end to all war, correctly stating that “War cannot be humanized. It can only be eliminated”, along with the more infamous: “How despicable and ignoble war is; I would rather be torn to shreds than be a part of so base an action. It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder.”

Regarding his support of civil rights, Einstein actively advocated racial co-appreciation. He joined the NAACP in Princeton, and openly noted that racism was “America's worst disease” ... In 1937, when Einstein learned famed black opera singer, Marian Anderson was turned away from a Princeton inn because of her race, he invited her to stay at his home, which she did. Two years later, when she was barred from singing at the DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., she instead gave a free concert at the Lincoln Memorial in front of 75,000 people, after which she again stayed with Einstein in his domicile ...

On the 17th of April in 1955, Einstein experienced internal bleeding caused by the rupture of an abdominal aortic aneurysm. Once at Princeton Hospital, he refused surgery, saying: “It is tasteless to prolong life artificially. I have done my share, it is time to go. I will do so elegantly.” He died early the next morning at the age of 76.

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing ... The most important human endeavor is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life ... Our task must be to free ourselves from our prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the entirety of nature ... The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but rather because of those who look on and do nothing.”
~ Albert Einstein



Hero #042: elderlies

It has been said that “the best classroom in the world can be found at the feet of an elderly person.” And while I’m not so sure about the use of the word “best” in this proverb (After all, the classroom at the feet of a young child is at least equally ripe with perspective & wisdom -- *if* you can get him or her to sit still long enough to share them), there is great Truth herein nonetheless. Of course, it can be difficult to know who qualifies as an “elderly” -- as the requirements for this title are based more in culture than biology, and thus shift somewhat radically depending upon where one happens to be.

Know then that by “elderly” I do *not* necessarily mean someone with gray hair or anyone over the age of 65; know that by “elderly” I do *not* necessarily mean an honored member of any particular church or political party; and know that by “elderly” I do *not* necessarily mean a person who happens to be nearing the very end of their physical life ... No, these qualities have little bearing on Hero-status -- at least as far as I am concerned. What *does* qualify for me is a radiant Wisdom that comes from personal experience; what *does* qualify is a commensurate level of humility that always accompanies such Wisdom, and what *does* qualify is a gentle willingness to share that Wisdom with any & all who happen to ask of it.

So feel free to seek out such an Elder in your community. Rest assured, they are there in droves; our neighborhoods' forgotten Sages & neglected Cronos. They are right there -- fully unhidden; sitting peacefully behind their desks -- or in their living rooms, or their retirement homes, or their classrooms, or their assisted living facilities, or their restaurant booths ... They are sitting there Peace-fully; waiting patiently to be asked about how their lives unfolded, about the adventures they had & the dreams they neglected; about their greatest joys & their deepest sorrows -- about the Wisdoms they have learned & the Lessons they have lived; Wisdoms & Lessons that they just might be ready to pass on to you.

So feel free to seek your community's “elderlies” today ... Seek them ... Find them ... Approach them ... Ask them ... and then LISTEN to what they have to say!

“Old age is a wonderful disguise.” ~ Katherine Applegate



Hero #043: Rami Elhanan

Rami Elhanan, the son of a Holocaust survivor, is an Israeli peace activist who lost his daughter to a terrorist suicide bomber when she was just 14. And yet instead of allowing his incredible tragedy to entrench hatred for his enemies, Rami did something remarkable – he and his wife joined Bereaved Families for Peace, an organization which brings together Israelis and Palestinians who have lost loved ones to their conflict (including the relatives of suicide bombers). This group protests for peace, they have given thousands of lectures in schools, they have established a hotline whereby Israelis can call and talk to Palestinians (and vice versa -- enabling well over 500,000 such conversations to take place to date), and they even donate blood for the victims of “the other side” (stating calmly to their critics and detractors that “it is far less painful to donate blood to the needy than to spill it unnecessarily as though it was water”) ... Rami is still regularly persecuted in Israel for his amazing sense of compassion and his courageous willingness to speak a most relevant Truth – namely, that all lives are sacred, and that the only way to peace is by choosing to act peace-fully.

So much more could be said about this wonderful man and this wonderful organization, and yet I will allow the words of Rami Elhanan say what needs to be said ...

“When someone murders your 14 year old daughter, the one and only thing you have in your head is unlimited anger and an urge for revenge that is stronger than death. This is a natural feeling, it's only human. Most people feel that way, it's understandable, it's clear and it's predictable. However, we are human beings and have a head on our shoulders, and inside that head we have a brain, and when the first madness of anger passes, you begin to ask yourself penetrating questions: If I kill someone in revenge, will that bring my baby back to me? If I cause someone else pain, will that ease my own pain? And the answer to both these questions is absolutely 'No' ... Thereafter, during a slow and difficult and painful process, you gradually reach the other road – the road of peace, and you try to understand: What occurred here? What can drive someone to such anger and despair as to be willing to blow himself up together with little girls? And most importantly: What can you, personally, do to prevent this intolerable suffering from happening others? ... This is the message that, together, my Palestinian brothers and sisters here beside me, we are putting across. And we, the bereaved families of both sides, together from the depth of our mutual pain, are saying to you today: Our blood is the same red color, our suffering is identical, and all of us have the exact same bitter tears. So, if we, who have paid the highest price possible, can carry on a dialog, then everyone can! ... There is no moral difference between the Israeli soldier at a checkpoint who prevents a Palestinian woman who is having a baby from going through, causing her to lose her baby, and the man who killed my daughter. Just as my daughter was a victim of the Israeli occupation, so was the bomber ... The only way forward is to talk to one another, to understand one another's point of view – and to make concessions – to make Peace.”

~ via Rami Elhanan



Hero #044: Jonathan Elias

Born in 1956, Elias is a U.S. composer and record producer (including the groundbreakingly brilliant album *Union* from Yes in 1991). While he began composing music at the age of 12, and while he is best known for his movie soundtracks and award-winning advertising music, he has been deservedly most lauded for his stunningly inspirational album “The Prayer Cycle” ... Released in 1999, this collaboration of musical genius is a nine-part contemporary choral symphony sung in twelve languages (including Hebrew, Latin, Swahili and Urdu) by a diverse collection of stunning vocalists, including Alanis Morissette, Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Ofra Haza, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Salif Keita, and Yungchen Lhamo of Tibet.

Elias is also heavily involved with project Peace on Earth, a company founded for the promotion and attainment of world peace.

“Music can do things that nothing else can ... It goes places where politics cannot. It opens your heart where things cannot. It opens your mind, it opens your Soul, where many things cannot ... I think it's an important time for people to feel something cross-cultural and to feel something that can open one's Heart.” ~ Jonathan Elias

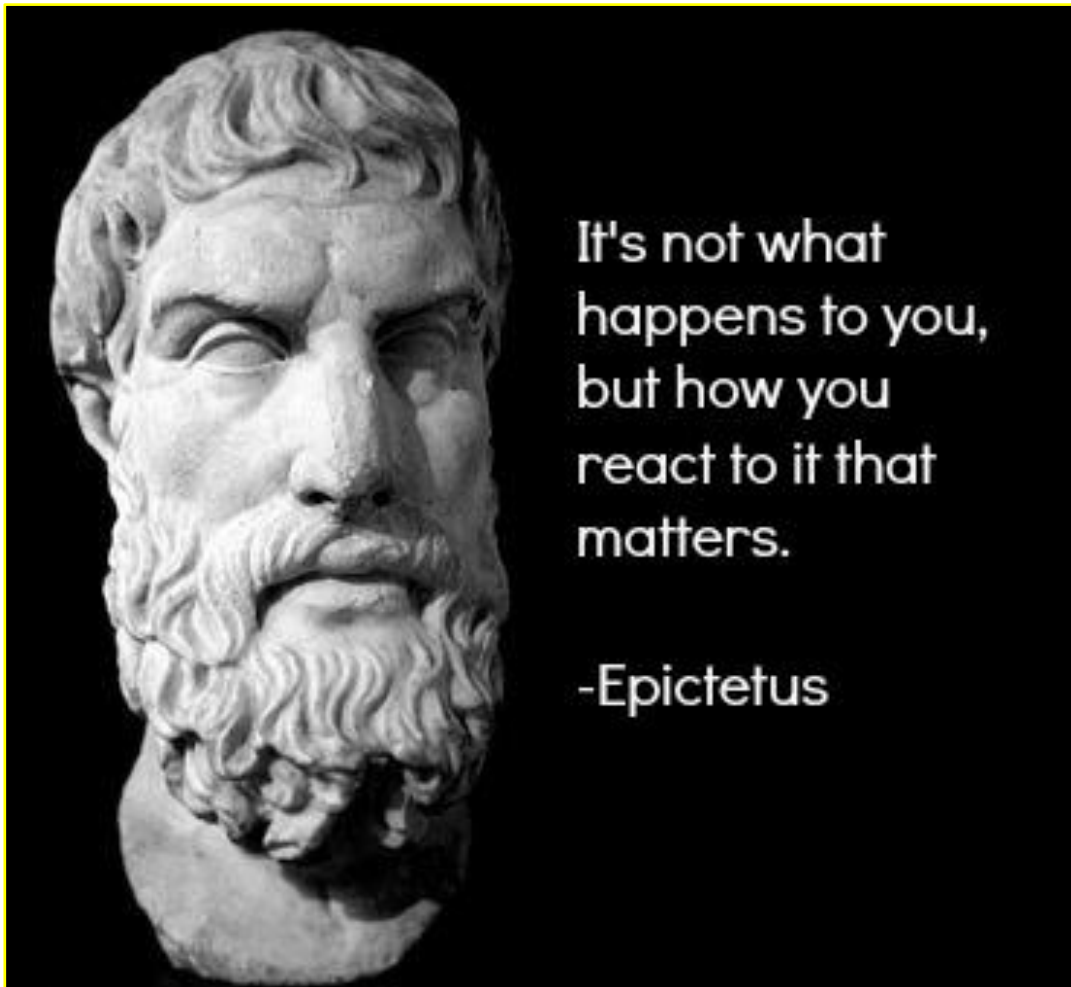


Hero #045: Epictetus

Born a slave around 55 AD, Epictetus acquired a passion for philosophy early in life, and – originally with the permission of his wealthy owner – studied Stoic philosophy; later becoming a Greek sage and revered Stoic philosopher. He lived a life of deep simplicity and had few material possessions, and taught that philosophy is a practical way of life, not merely a theoretical discipline.

To Epictetus, all external events are determined by fate; that is to say, everything that happens – either to us or for us – is essentially beyond our control. As such, he stated that we should accept whatever happens to us calmly *and then choose how we actively respond* thereto; believing that “good” and “bad” do not hinge upon the content of a particular happenstance, but rather that they are both crafted by us and our chosen reactions to our lives’ circumstances ... Epictetus also believed in an active conquest of Good over “evil”; that evil is everything selfish or hurtful or irrational, and that Goodness is the innate harmony of reasoned kindness that erases such discord.

“First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do ... If thy brother wrongs thee, remember not so much his wrong-doing, but more than ever that he is thy brother ... It is not he who reviles or strikes you who insults you, but your opinion that these things are insulting ... To accuse others for one's own misfortunes is a sign of want of education. To accuse oneself shows that one's education has begun. To accuse neither oneself nor others shows that one's education is complete.” ~ Epictetus

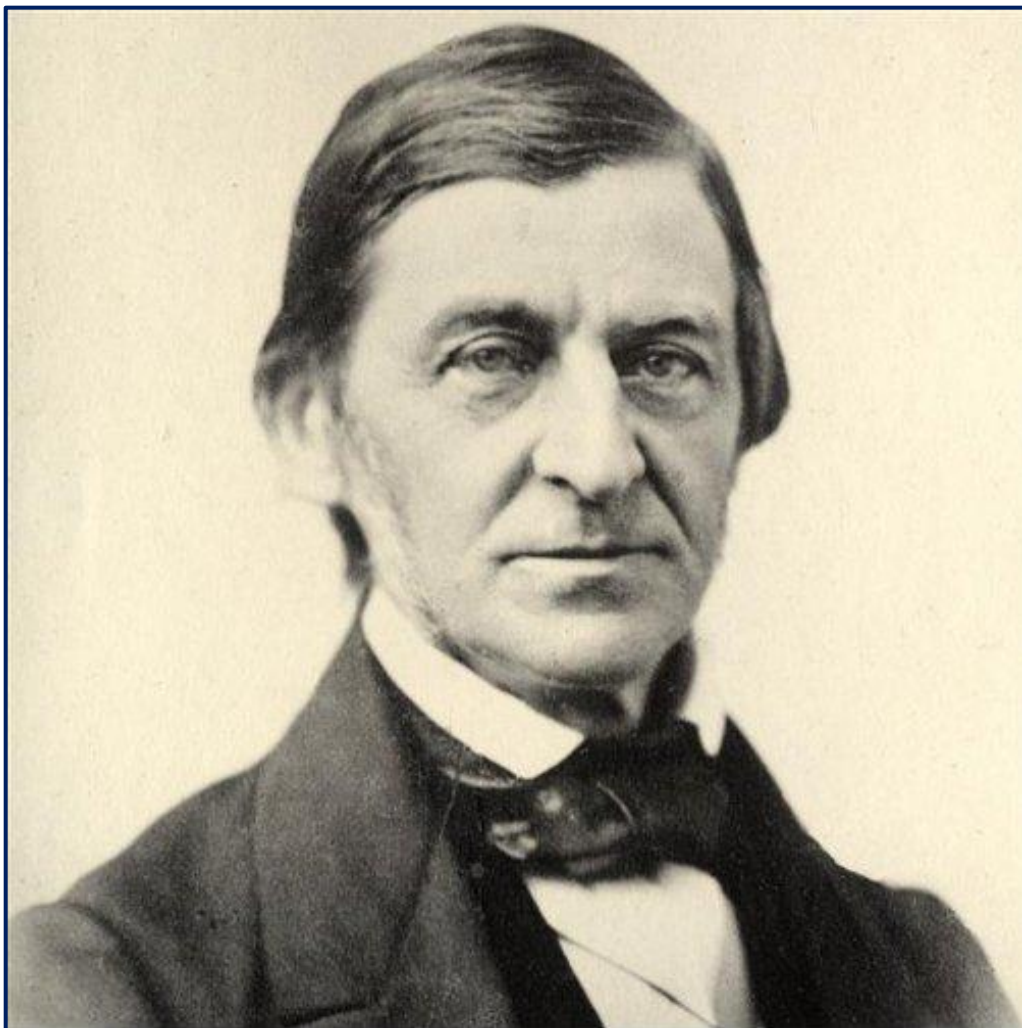


Hero #046: Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist and poet who – among many other achievements -- essentially founded transcendentalism (a belief system that primarily suggests **01**) that the divine -- or “God” -- is suffused within the entirety of Nature, **02**) that reality can therefore be best understood by studying Nature, and **03**) that an individual may live in either of two states -- the busy, “divided,” and “degenerate” state where he does not thrive but instead but identifies with his occupation vs. the “right” and “elevated” state of being where he consciously acts as being at one with all of humanity, indeed, with all sentient kind) ...

In addition, Emerson had the courage and the temerity to publicly challenge the conservative religious institutions of his day – a choice which led to him being soundly denounced by many. Later in his life he again became unpopular for his outspoken support for the abolition of slavery, stating at one point, “We must either get rid of slavery, or we must get rid of freedom.”

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail :: It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person, ‘Always do what you are afraid to do’ ... Finish each day and be done with it ... Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your past nonsense ... The hero is no braver than the ordinary man; he is merely brave for five minutes longer.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



Hero #047: Robin Emmons

In 2008, after her brother became ill due to a diet heavy in canned and sugary foods, Robin Emmons began donating produce from her garden to the facility where he was being treated -- and saw his health improve dramatically as a result. Looking anew thereafter at her own community, she had the impression that hundreds of other people were suffering as well from health problems caused by poor diets -- and it turned out she was right. A study from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte confirmed her impressions, showing that more than 72,000 low-income city residents, most of them minorities, effectively lived in “food deserts” -- areas without ready access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

It was at this point that Robin decide to do something to help -- quitting her corporate job, digging up her entire backyard, and turning it into a garden for those in need. Since that first year, with the current help of over 200 volunteers who tend her 9 acres of crops, she has grown and distributed more than 26,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables for area residents. She strives to make her food as affordable as possible (either donating items or selling them for about half their normal cost in the average grocery store). Customers are able to use food stamps to purchase everything she sells, which include seeds and seedlings -- enabling others to grow their own food themselves.

“It was an injustice. ... Healthy food is a basic human right ... I had a small garden, so I thought, 'Well, I'll just put in some extra rows', and I simply began making weekly deliveries of whatever was coming up.” ~ Robin Emmons



Hero #048: Ron Finley

Ron Finley is a Los Angeles-based activist and proponent of urban gardening; perhaps best known for giving a widely viewed 2013 TED talk on guerilla gardening ...

Finley had success in his first career, as a fashion designer whose clothes were in Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus and Saks. And yet after a recession hit he was out of work. He decided to take a gardening class – and then he decided to start growing the vegetables he got tired of driving 45 minutes to find. So he planted a small vegetable garden in the median strip between his front sidewalk and the street -- an exceptionally creative, cost-effective, and simple solution, yes, and yet also an act of spirited rebellion that led to a run-in with the authorities. When he was later told by the city to stop gardening on “their property”, instead of getting scared, Finley got inspired, and soon his “Gangsta Gardener” persona grew -- along with the garden in the median strip in front of his house, *and* the much larger garden he planted inside his empty backyard swimming pool. He started a petition with fellow green activists, demanding the right to garden and grow food in his neighborhood, and the city eventually backed off. Soon thereafter, he turned his newfound passion into the Ron Finley Project, a gardening training facility that has since turned into a mission: to bring urban gardening not only to South Los Angeles, but to urban centers all over the world.

“In my neighborhood I can get alcohol faster than I can get an organic banana. Why are communities of color designed like that? Some places, you can be at a dialysis center and look down the street and see another dialysis center. You can’t tell me that’s not by design. Why aren’t you telling me how to get healthy? This is so much bigger than just the food ... It ain’t about food; it’s about food justice. If you aren’t eating healthy, nutritious, vibrant food, how’s anything in your life gonna grow?” ~ Ron Finley

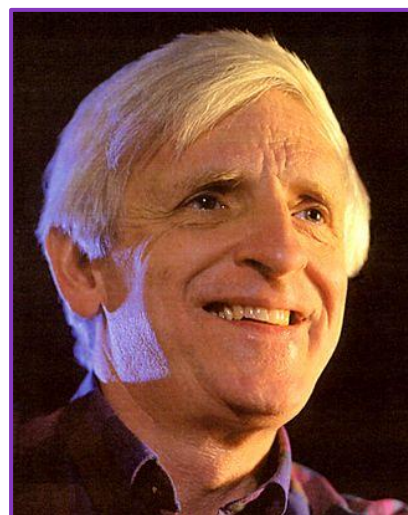


Hero #049: Matthew Fox

Born in 1940, Matthew Fox is an American Episcopal priest and theologian. Formerly a member of the Dominican Order within the Roman Catholic Church, Fox was an early and influential proponent of a movement that came to be known as “Creation Spirituality”, a theology that considers itself to be “green”, emphasizing a holy relationship between humankind and nature -- where the protection & conservation of the Earth & all its inhabitants is considered a Sacred Calling and a direct expression of God's will. It draws its inspirations from the mystical philosophies of such medieval Catholic visionaries as Hildegard of Bingen, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa, as well as the wisdom traditions of the ancient Christian scriptures. Creation Spirituality is also strongly aligned with the ecological movements of the late 20th century (including conservationism & animal rights) and embraces numerous spiritual traditions from around the world -- including Buddhism, Judaism, Sufism, and Native American spirituality ... Typical of many truly Great men & women, Fox's teachings have frequently brought him into direct conflict with conventional traditions & their authority figures -- in his case, most often those of the Roman Catholic Church ...

Among Fox's most controversial teachings is a belief in “Original Blessing”, a concept that directly & fully contradicted the Roman Catholic doctrine of “original sin”. Fox's other teachings also were considered “too feminist” or “too ecology-centered” or too accepting of homosexuality to harmonize with current Catholic dogma ... It was no small surprise then, when in 1983, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who would later become Pope Benedict XVI) ordered a panel of priests and theologians to perform a two-year review of Fox's writings. After the initial findings sided with Fox's interpretations of the scriptures, Ratzinger rejected them and ordered a second review (which was never undertaken). Five years later, Fox boldly wrote a public letter to Cardinal Ratzinger entitled “Is the Catholic Church Today a Dysfunctional Family?” – the contents of which were widely disseminated by the National Catholic Reporter. Soon afterwards Cardinal Ratzinger issued an order forbidding Fox to teach or lecture for a year. Fox openly disobeyed this edict (of course) and in 1993, he was expelled from the Dominican Order for “disobedience”, effectively ending his relationship with the Catholic Church ... Fox was subsequently accepted into the far more liberal Episcopal Church, and continues to lecture, write and publish books to this day.

“I don't think that fundamentalism has anything to do with Jesus Christ. Fundamentalists call themselves Christians, but if that's Christian, count me out. That kind of fundamentalism is built on fear and greed ... Creation is all things and us. It is us in relationship with all things. And by 'all things', I mean ALL THINGS -- the ones we see and the ones we do not; the whirling galaxies and the wild suns, the black holes and the microorganisms, the trees and the stars, the fish and the whales - the molten lava and the towering snow-capped mountains, the children we give birth to and their children, and theirs, and theirs ... To connect with the great river we all need a path down to its banks, but once we get down there, we understand that there's only one river ... A civilization built on dualism and war within and between persons, one that puts its most creative minds and its best engineers to sadistic work building more and more destructive weapons, is no civilization at all. It needs a radical transformation from the heart outwards. It needs to outgrow and outlaw war just as in the last century it outlawed slavery. The human race has outgrown war, but it hardly knows it yet ... What is within most moment of compassion is not feelings of pity but feelings of togetherness ... The only way to learn compassion is through your heart.” ~ Matthew Fox

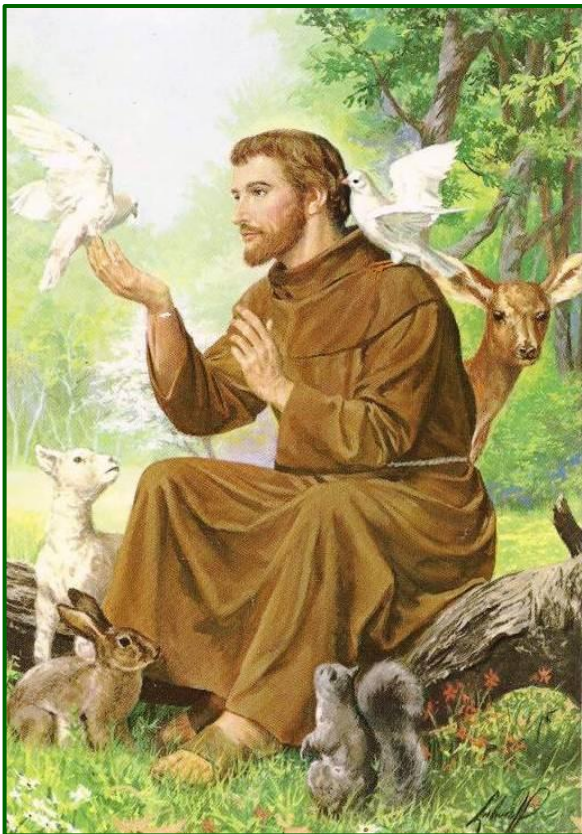


Hero #050: St. Francis of Assisi

Born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone in 1181 (but given the nickname “Francesco”), Francis -- despite never being ordained to the Catholic priesthood -- remains one of the most honored religious figures in history. He is currently known as the patron saint of both animals and the environment ...

Entering the world as the son of a wealthy silk merchant, Francis originally enjoyed the superficial lifestyle known to many of the privileged young men of his day. And yet despite this upbringing, Francis showed a penchant for humility & charity from an early age; traits that began to fully blossom after an encounter he had while selling his father's silks in the streets. The tale is told that after noticing a poor man begging for food, Francis ran after him and frantically gave him everything he had in his pockets -- and this, despite receiving great ridicule from his wealthy friends who were watching nearby ... Over the next several years, Francis steadily lost his taste for the material life of luxury, and steadily gained an appreciation for a deeper life filled with things “spiritual”. On a pilgrimage to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at St. Peter's Basilica, and the experience so moved him that he chose at that time to live a life of austere poverty. Francis then returned home, began preaching the virtues of material renunciation, humble generosity, and gentle kindness in the streets, and soon thereafter amassed a modest following.

Francis chose never to be ordained a priest and he and his spiritual companions lived a simple life as “lesser brothers” in the deserted lazaret house of Rivo Torto near Assisi, though they spent much of their time wandering through the mountainous districts of Umbria, ever cheerful and full of song ... Francis believed that nature itself was a mirror of the Divine, and he therefore most sincerely spoke of all creatures as his “brothers and sisters”. Francis' preaching to ordinary folk was unusual since he had no official license from the Vatican to do so. In 1209 he composed a simple, primary rule for all his followers: “To embody the teachings of Jesus Christ and to actively walk in his footsteps.”



“We should preach the Gospel at all times -- using words only when necessary ... It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching ... No one is to be called an enemy, all are your benefactors ... Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance ... While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart ... Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved as to Love ... Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow Love ... For it is in giving that we receive.”

~ St. Francis of Assisi

Hero #051: Anne Frank

Anne Frank was a German-born diarist who -- after the posthumous publication of her *Diary of a Young Girl* (originally entitled *The Secret Annex*) -- became one of the most discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust. In her diary, Anne documented her life from 1942 to 1944, the years she and her family spent hiding from the Nazis during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. It is still one of the world's most widely known books, and has been the basis for several plays and films ...

Though she was born in Germany, Anne lived most of her life in or near Amsterdam, having moved there with her family at the age of four when the Nazis gained control of her homeland. By May of 1940, when Anne was 11, the Franks became trapped in Amsterdam by the German occupation of the Netherlands. As the persecution of the Jewish population there increased in July of 1942, the family went into hiding in several concealed rooms located in the building where Anne's father had worked. Four employees of the business were the only ones who knew of the family's whereabouts. They secretly provided for the family's needs, and were the only contact the Franks had with the outside world for the entirety of their two-year stay. Anne had received her diary from her father shortly beforehand, and made regular entries therein until the family was finally arrested by the Gestapo in August of 1944. Following that arrest, the Franks were transported to various concentration camps, including Auschwitz, where Anne (who had just reached the age of 15) became one of the youngest people spared from the gas chambers. Finally, during the latter months of 1944, Anne and her sister were transferred from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where they subsequently died (probably of typhus) a few months later.

Frank's father, the only survivor of the family, returned to Amsterdam after the war and found that Anne's diary had been saved by one of the family's original helpers, Miep Gies. The diary was then published in Dutch in 1947, in German & French in 1950, in English in 1952, and has since been translated into over 60 other languages as well ... After receiving a humanitarian award from the Anne Frank Foundation in 1994, Nelson Mandela addressed a crowd in Johannesburg and said that he had read Anne Frank's diary while in prison and that he had "derived much encouragement from it."

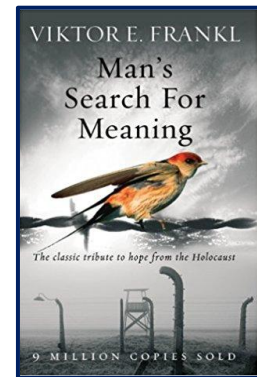
"It's really a wonder that I haven't lost all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to realize. And yet I keep them still, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart ... Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness ... How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world ... Just look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness ... In the end, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit."

~ Anne Frank



Hero #052: Viktor Frankl

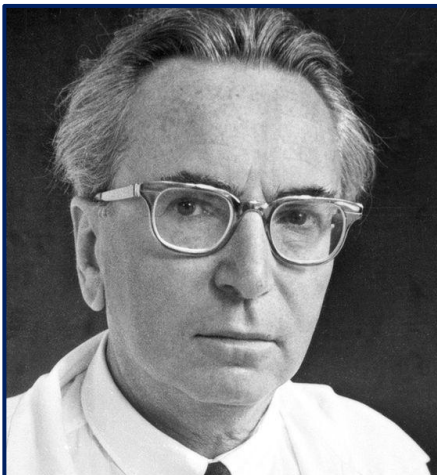
Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, as well as a WWII Holocaust survivor. Frankl was also the founder of logotherapy, what many call the “Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy,” and what has proven to be the pinnacle of western psychological thought and practice to date. His best-selling book *Man's Search for Meaning* (originally published in 1946 as *Nevertheless, Say "Yes" to Life*) chronicles his experiences as a concentration camp inmate, which led him to discover the importance of us all finding meaning in all the moments of our existence, especially the most uncomfortable, painful, or even brutal ones.



In 1942, Frankl was deported to the Nazi Theresienstadt Ghetto, where he at first worked as a general practitioner in a clinic. When his skills in psychiatry were noticed, he was assigned to a psychiatric ward, and shortly thereafter organized a unit to help camp newcomers to overcome their shock and grief. In October of 1944, Frankl was transported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was processed, and then later moved to Kaufering, where he spent five months working as a slave laborer. In March of 1945, he was transported to the so-called rest camp at Türkheim, where he worked as a physician until April of that year, when the camp was liberated by American soldiers.

After enduring the suffering in these camps, Frankl concluded from both personal witnessing and personal experience that even in the most absurd, painful, &/or dehumanizing situations, life is full of potential meaning; that suffering can be made meaningful by will alone; and thereby that a deep-seated peace can result thereafter. This conclusion served as a basis for his development of logotherapy, which Frankl had briefly described before World War II, saying, “What is to give light must endure burning.” In essence, Frankl had rediscovered a Great Truth – namely, that people are primarily driven by a need “to find meaning” in their lives, and that it is this sense of meaning that enables people to not only overcome painful experiences, but to use them to empower the effectuation of a far greater – and a far more peace-inducing – Good.

“For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that Love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which Man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of Man is through Love ... For it is between stimulus and response there is a space. And in that space is our power to choose our response. And in that response lies both our reawakening and our freedom ... Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it. For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment – namely, the meaning that person chooses to give that moment ... For in the end everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way ... Ultimately, then, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked.” ~ via Victor Frankl



Hero #053: Sherri Franklin

Sherri Franklin was pouring her lifelong passion for animals into volunteer work at the San Francisco Humane Society. It was highly rewarding work, and yet sadly, she noticed a problem that is common at many animal shelters -- older dogs were being passed over in favor of the shelter's younger dogs and puppies. And so Sherri Franklin one day started being the change she wanted to see – she started saving those older dogs herself – she started *Muttville*, a non-profit that rescues, cares for, and finds loving homes for older dogs.

At Muttville, the dogs roam cage-free in large rooms filled with big beds and couches. The organization also has developed a network of more than 100 foster families, allowing more dogs to be placed into loving homes. She also cares for dogs who are terminally ill, calling the service Fospice. “That's hospice and foster mixed together,” she said. “Every once in a while, we get dogs that have a terminal or untreatable disease. Muttville stays committed to every dog that comes here. We find them homes with great families, and we cover the cost of palliative care for sick dogs until they pass away.”

Sherri Franklin saw a need and decided to step up and do something about it, and because of her selfless caring, over 5000 elderly dogs have received or are receiving the love and tenderness and companionship that all dogs -- indeed, that all animals -- so richly deserve.

“I’ve always had a soft spot for the dogs that were considered un-adoptable due to their age or health issues. After a while, I realized that I could probably be doing more, so I started fostering these dogs and finding them permanent homes ... It’s not about the quantity of time you have with your animal. It really is about the quality of time you spend with them ... Older dogs have so much to teach us. I’ve learned from them to live in the moment and to be present (because you can’t not be present when they’re around) and to find joy in the smallest of things. They also have soulfulness and softness that’s truly special.” ~ via Sherri Franklin



Hero #054: Elizabeth Fry

Elizabeth Fry was an English prison reformer, social reformer, homeless advocate, and philanthropist. She was a major driving force behind new legislation to make the treatment of prisoners more humane, and has sometimes been referred to as the “angel of prisons” ...

Prompted by a family friend, Fry visited Newgate Prison in 1813, and was absolutely horrified with what she saw there. And yet instead of turning her back on the squalor or judging the inmates as being “only criminals,” Fry returned the very next day with food and clothes for them. Deeply moved by the experience, she started regularly visiting the prison, and eventually funded a prison school for the children who had been imprisoned with their mothers. She also began a system of supervision during her visits, and required the women to sew and read while she was there. In 1817 she helped found the Association for the Reformation of the Female Prisoners in Newgate, an organization which provided sewing and knitting materials so that the prisoners might be able to earn money for themselves once they were released from prison. The success of this altruistic venture led to the creation of the British Ladies' Society for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners in 1821, which proved to be the first nationwide women's organization in Britain. Fry also promoted the idea of rehabilitation instead of harsh punishment for inmates; a proposal which was eventually adopted by the city authorities in London, as well as by many other lawmakers and prisons. She was often known to spend the night in the prisons she visited, and regularly invited nobility to join her to see the horrible conditions for themselves.

Fry also successfully campaigned for the welfare of prisoners who were being transported from one confinement to the next. As it turns out, the women of Newgate Prison were often carried through the streets of London in open wagons, often in chains, huddled together with their few possessions while they were pelted with rotten food and filth by the people of the city. In response to this egregious indignity, Fry persuaded the Governor of Newgate Prison to send the women in closed carriages, and thereafter visited prison ships and persuaded their captains to implement systems to ensure that each woman would at least get a share of food and water on any long journey. Later she arranged for each woman to be given scraps of material and sewing tools so that they could use the long journey to make quilts and have something to sell when they reached their destination. All in all, Fry visited 106 transport ships and helped 12,000 convicts, and her work helped to start an ultimately successful movement for the abolition of transportation.



Finally, aside from her work reforming the prison system, Elizabeth Fry also helped the homeless and actively campaigned for the abolition of both the death penalty and slavery.

“When thee builds a prison, thee had better build with the thought ever in thy mind that thee and thy children may occupy the cells ... It is an honor to appear on the side of the afflicted.” ~ Elizabeth Fry

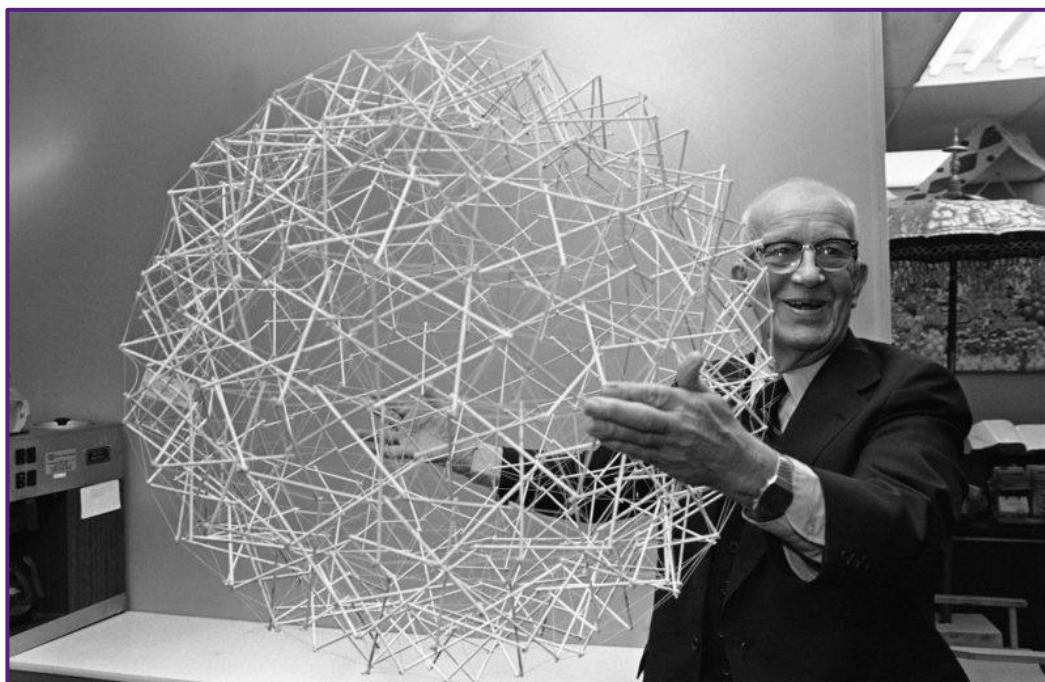
Hero #055: Buckminster Fuller

Richard Buckminster Fuller was an American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, and inventor. Fuller published more than 30 books, coining terms such as “Spaceship Earth” and “synergetic.” He also developed numerous inventions, mainly architectural designs, and popularized the widely known geodesic dome ...

In 1927, at age 32, in a remarkable response to the darkest period of his life (in which he lost a daughter to polio, lost his job, headed towards bankruptcy, took to drink, and was considering suicide in order to allow his family to have access to his life insurance policy), Fuller decided on a noble path instead of a despondent one, stating that he would dedicate himself to making the rest of his life “an experiment, performed to determine how much a single individual [could] contribute to changing the world and benefiting all of humanity.” Thereafter, he resolved to think independently, which included a commitment to “the search for the principles governing the universe and help advance the evolution of humanity in accordance with them... finding ways of doing more with less to the end that all people everywhere can have more and more.”

Thereafter, Fuller also became an early environmental activist, and proved to be a pioneer in thinking globally; exploring principles of energy and material efficiency in the fields of architecture, engineering, and design. He was concerned about sustainability, including the feasibility of human survival under the existing socio-economic system, and yet remained optimistic about humanity's future. He knew that the accumulation of relevant knowledge, combined with the quantities of major recyclable resources that had already been extracted from the Earth, has long since already attained a critical level, such that competition for necessities is now essentially unnecessary. For Fuller, cooperation had completely replaced competition as the optimum survival strategy – if not the only survival strategy -- for all humankind.

“Selfishness is unnecessary and henceforth unrationalizable ... You do not belong to you. You belong to the Universe. Your significance will remain forever obscure to you, but you may assume that you are fulfilling your role if you apply yourself to converting your experiences to the highest advantage of others.” ~ Buckminster Fuller



Hero #056: Peter Gabriel

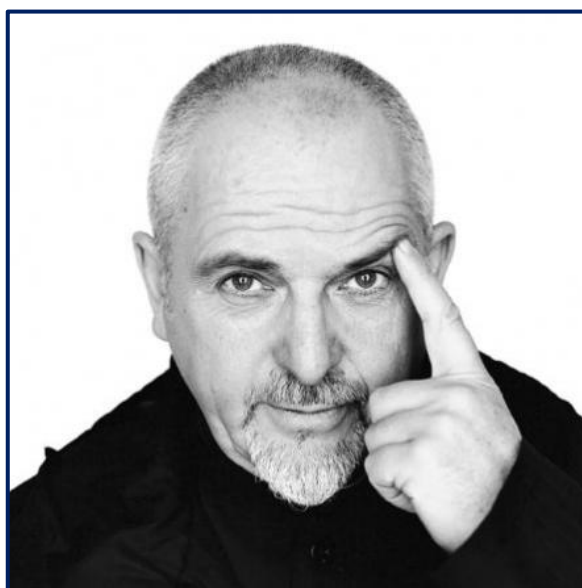
Born in February of 1950, Peter Brian Gabriel is an English singer-songwriter, musician, and humanitarian activist who rose to fame as the lead vocalist and flautist of the progressive rock band Genesis. After leaving Genesis, Gabriel went on to a successful solo career. His 1986 album, *So*, is his most commercially successful venture, selling five million copies in America, and the album's biggest hit, "Sledgehammer", won a record nine MTV Awards at the 1987 MTV Video Music Awards. "Sledgehammer" remains the most played music video in the history of MTV. In addition, his soundtrack for Scorsese's movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*, entitled "Passion" (album cover pictured), remains the most beautifully inspired album I have ever heard.



More important than his immense musical accomplishments, Gabriel has been a champion of world music for much of his career. He co-founded the WOMAD festival in 1982, and has continued to focus on producing and promoting the indigenous music of 3rd World nations through his Real World Records label.

Most importantly of all, Gabriel has been actively involved in numerous humanitarian efforts throughout his life. In 1980, he released the anti-apartheid single "Biko". He has also participated in several human rights benefit concerts, including Amnesty International's *Human Rights Now!* tour in 1988, and in 1992 he co-founded the WITNESS human rights organization. Gabriel also co-founded "The Elders" -- a pro-active, independent, international collection of global leaders -- launched by Nelson Mandela in 2007 -- working towards the realization of world peace and human rights for all. In recognition of his many years of human rights activism, Gabriel received the Man of Peace award from the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in 2006, and then again in 2008.

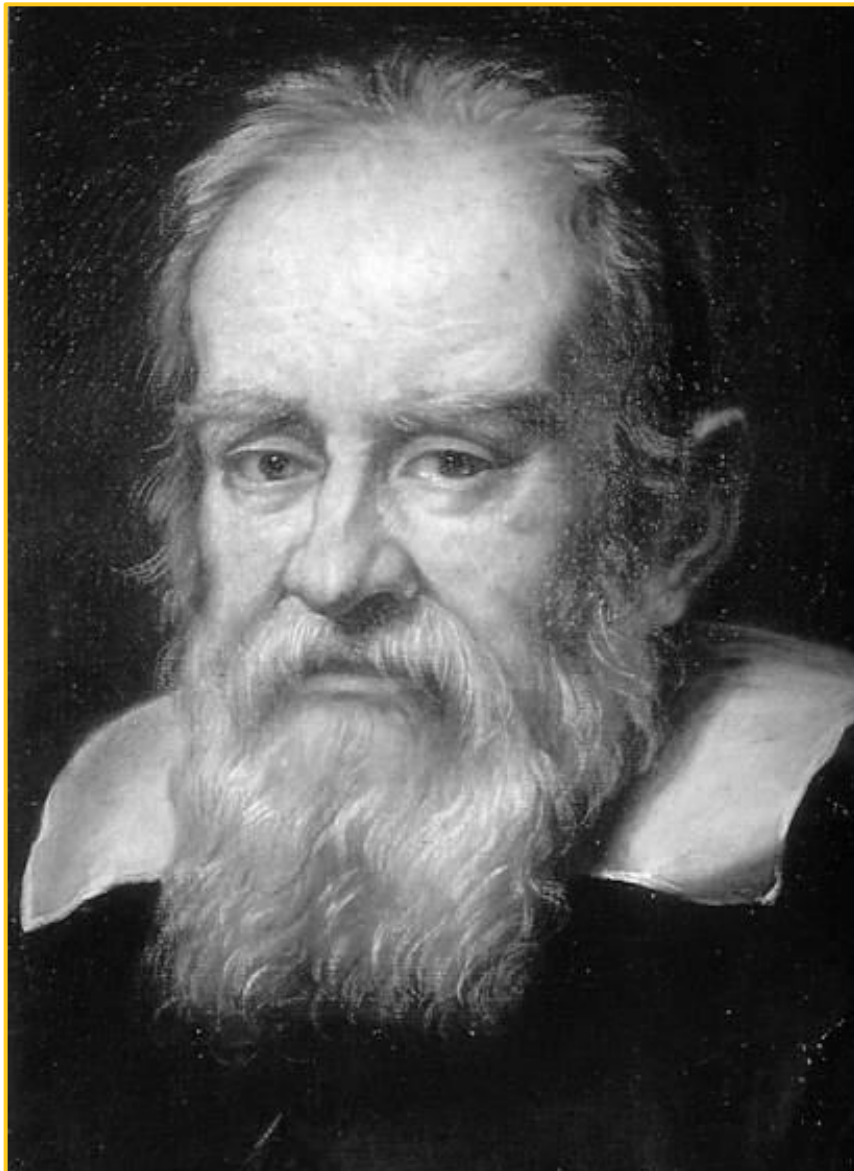
*"From the pain, comes the dream ...
From the dream, comes the vision ...
From the vision, comes the people ...
From the people, comes the power ...
From this power comes the change."*
~ Peter Gabriel



Hero #057: Galileo Galilei

Galileo Galilei -- a 15th & 16th century astronomer, physicist, philosopher, and mathematician -- proved to be a central figure in humanity's transition from natural philosophy to modern science. His courageous championing of heliocentrism and Copernicanism was controversial during his lifetime -- to say the least, meeting with strong opposition from both religious leaders and fellow astronomers. The matter was investigated by the Roman Inquisition in 1615, which concluded that heliocentrism was "foolish and absurd in philosophy, and formally heretical -- since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture." And yet Galileo remain undeterred, and later defended his views in *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, a work which appeared to attack Pope Urban VIII. As a consequence, he was tried by the Inquisition, found "vehemently suspect of heresy", and forced to spend the rest of his life under house arrest ... According to historians, after being forced to recant his theory that the Earth moved around the Sun, Galileo audibly uttered the rebellious phrase, "And yet it moves."

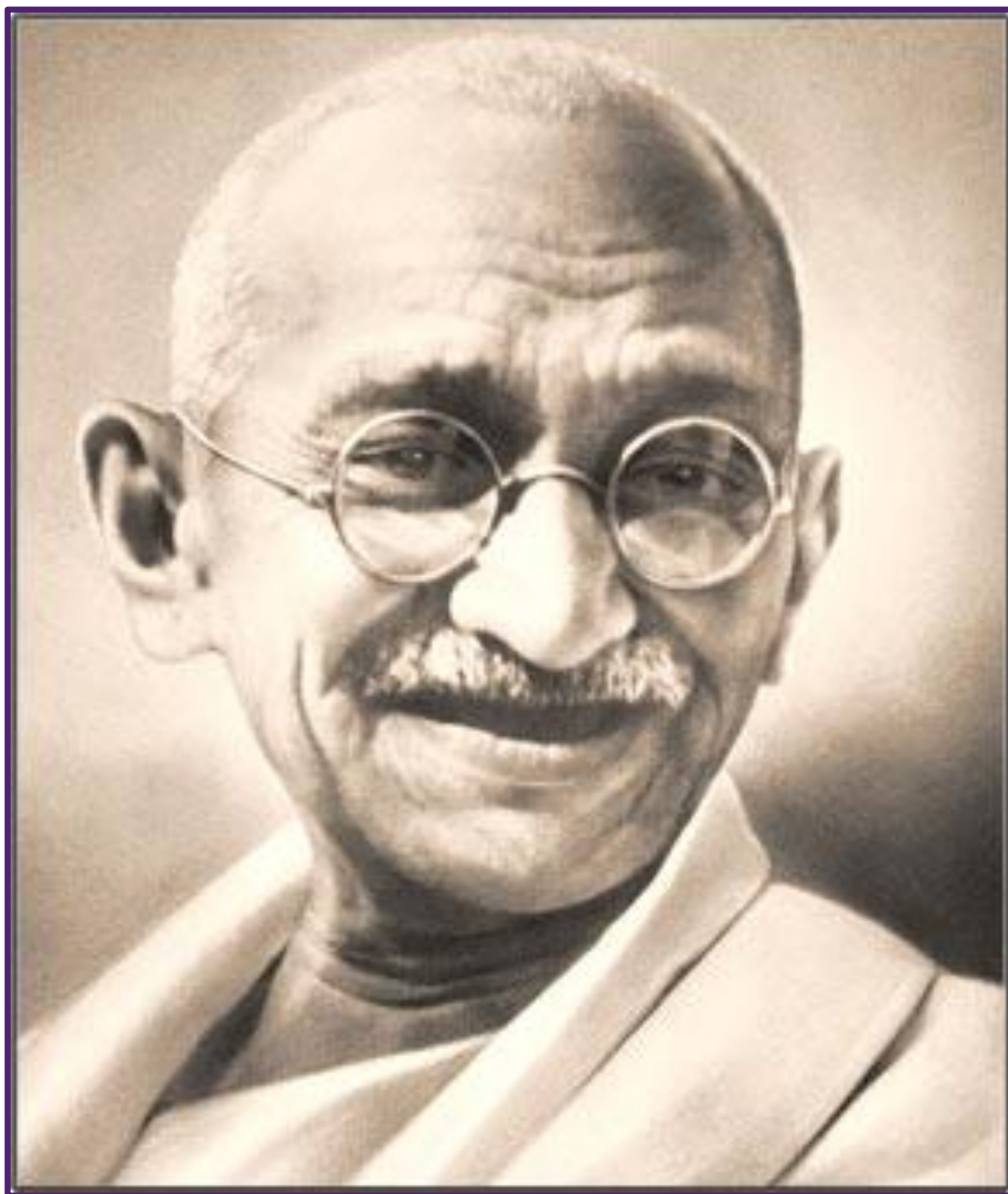
"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use ... You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself." ~ Galileo



Hero #058: Mahatma Gandhi

As far as Gandhi is concerned, no explanation is really necessary. He was simply one of the greatest human Talk-Walkers of all time; willing to give his entire life (and in the end literally giving his entire life) to the causes of Justice & Freedom & Love. May we all do our own small-yet-significant parts in keeping his Great Legacy alive.

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent ... An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind ... Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony – and all harmonious ... We must be the change we wish to see in the world, and we must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become tainted ... The weak can never sincerely forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong ... Where there is Love there is life ... And remember, the Good Man is the friend of all living things.” ~ M. Gandhi

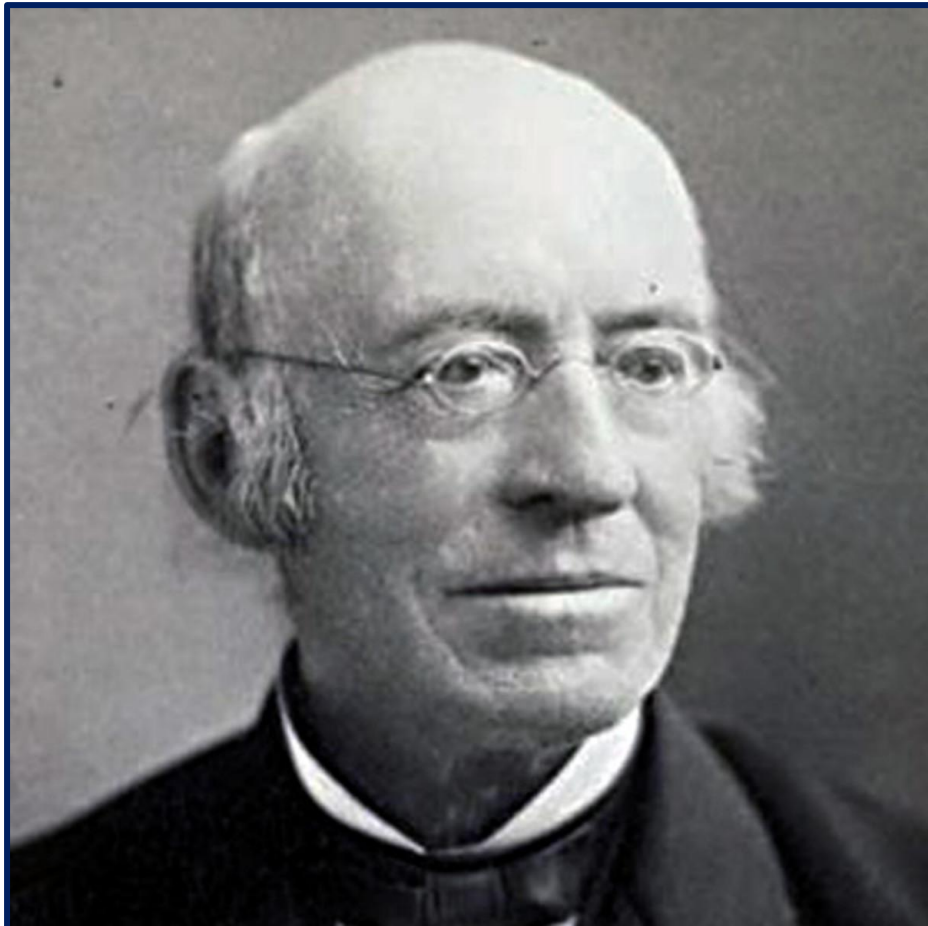


Hero #059: William Lloyd Garrison

William Lloyd Garrison was a prominent American abolitionist, suffragist, and social reformer. He is best known as the editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, which he co-founded in 1831, and published in Massachusetts until slavery was ultimately abolished by Constitutional amendment. He was one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and he persistently and publicly promoted the “immediate and complete emancipation” of all slaves in the United States, stressing the use of “moral suasion,” non-violence, and civil disobedience.

Garrison also later emerged as a leading advocate of women's rights, and in the 1870's became a prominent voice for the woman suffrage movement ... Garrison's outspoken views repeatedly put him in danger. Besides his imprisonment in Baltimore and the price placed on his head by the State of Georgia, he was also the object of public denouncement and frequent death threats. Despite it all, however, he remained undeterred in his quest to see that justice was done and the freedom could ring true for all.

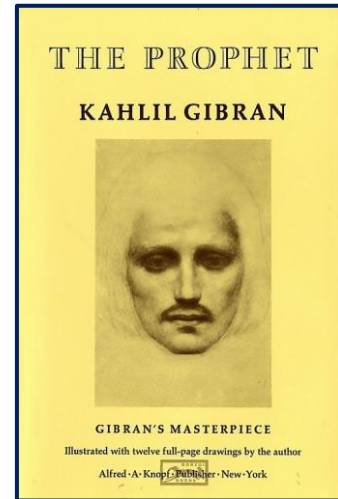
“I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or write, with moderation. No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the pit into which it has fallen, and yet urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — and I will be heard!” ~ William Lloyd Garrison



Hero #060: Kahlil Gibran

Born in January of 1883, Kahlil Gibran was a Lebanese artist, poet, and writer who, at least in the Arab world, is still regarded as a literary giant and political rebel. His romantic style was at the heart of a renaissance in modern Arabic literature, especially prose poetry, and he is still celebrated as a literary hero in Lebanon to this day.

Many of Gibran's writings (including his brilliant book *The Prophet*) deal with Christianity, especially related to the topic of unconditional, spiritual Love. And yet his mysticism is actually a convergence of several different religious influences: Christianity, Islam, Sufism, Judaism, and theosophy, as exemplified in the following quote: "You are my brother and I love you. I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, when you kneel in your church, and when you pray in your synagogue. You and I are sons of one faith — the Spirit."



"Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens ... Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh, and too selfish to seek other than itself ... Indeed, keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children ... Truth is a deep kindness that teaches us to be content in our everyday life, and share with the people the same happiness ... You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." ~ Kahlil Gibran

"Safeguarding the rights of others is the most noble and beautiful end of a human being ... The reality of the other person lies not in what he reveals to you, but what he cannot reveal to you. Therefore, if you would understand him, listen not to what he says, but rather to what he does not say ... Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls ... Love possesses not nor will it be possessed, for Love is sufficient unto Love ... Spare me the political events and power struggles. As a whole, Earth is my homeland, and all its men are my fellow countrymen." ~ Kahlil Gibran

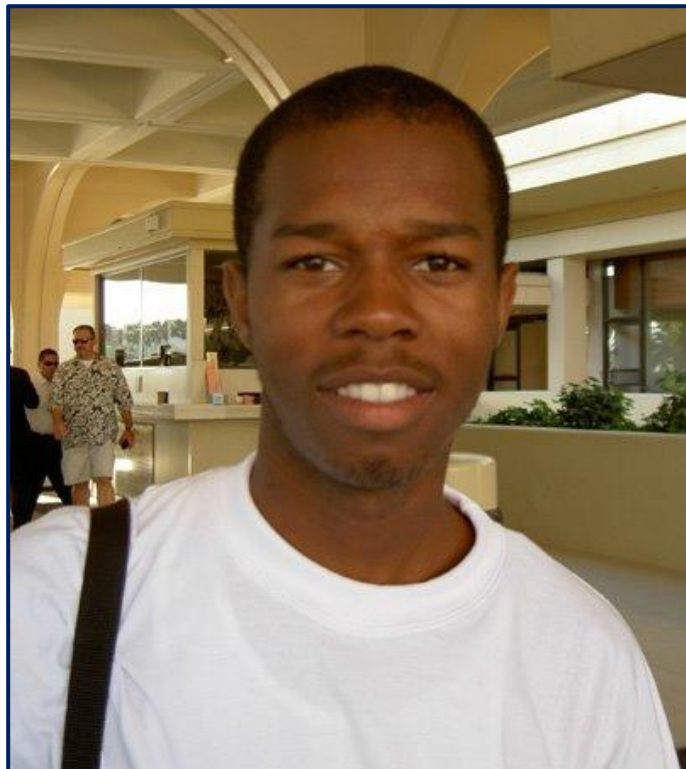
Hero #061: Jabbar Gibson

As Hurricane Katrina barreled toward the coast, sixteen year old Jabbar Gibson and a friend decided to hunker down in a motel down the street from his home in the dilapidated Fischer public housing complex. The rain and wind were so fierce that the windows blew out as they huddled inside ... The next morning, things were already pretty bad even before he and his neighbors starting hearing reports about the breach in the levees on the other side of the Mississippi River. Slowly but surely, nearby neighborhoods — the Ninth Ward, Bywater, Mid-City — were all being swallowed by floodwater. After two days without power or food, and no assurances that anyone would come help them, Gibson and a small group of friends started thinking of ways to escape.

Eventually, they found about a dozen yellow school buses parked in a barn, with keys hanging on a door inside an unlocked office. They checked the numbers on the keys and matched them to the buses. It took about a half hour to find a bus that would start. It just so happened that Orleans Parish school bus No. 0232 had been left behind with a full tank of gas. “I learned how to [drive the bus] right then and there,” Gibson said, a smile creasing his face. A handful of other friends and neighbors managed to get buses running as well, and they all headed back to Fischer to help others who’d been stranded. After his rescue mission received the green light from a local police officer (“Just get behind the wheel – and don’t stop”), Jabbar ended up transporting over 70 people to safety, driving them all the way to the Houston Astrodome, where his was the very first bus to arrive.



Even with little space to spare, Gibson ended up stopping several times along the way to pick up others who needed a ride. “I just couldn’t leave them behind,” he said ... Many passengers were in emotional and mental distress from the previous few days. Others were sick or disabled and in need of immediate medical attention. At least two were pregnant. All of them were saved by the selfless courage of Jabbar Gibson.

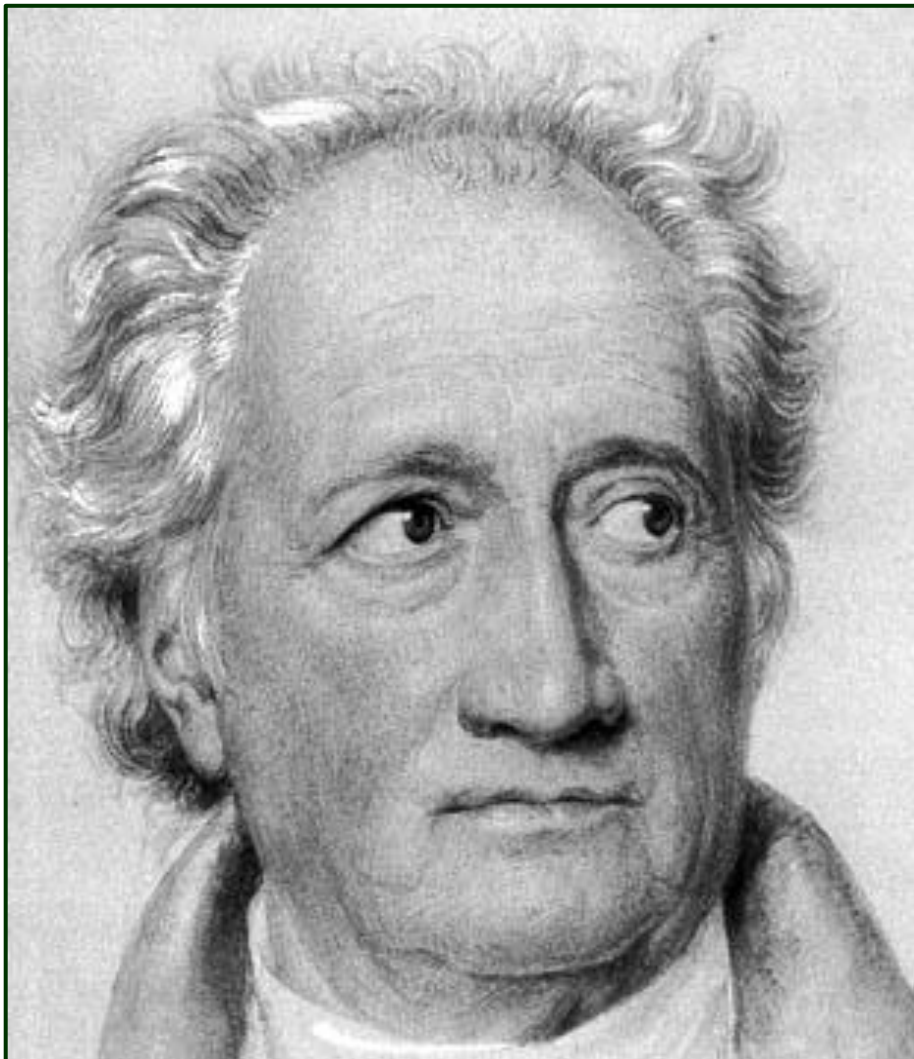


Hero #062: Goethe

Born in 1749, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a German writer and poet. His body of work includes both epic and lyric poetry written in a variety of styles, as well as several works of prose -- including verse dramas; memoirs; an autobiography; literary and aesthetic criticisms; treatises on botany, anatomy, and color; and four novels.

To say that Goethe was well-respected would be a gross understatement. There are frequent references to Goethe's writings throughout the works of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hesse, Mann, Freud, and Jung. Ralph Waldo Emerson even went so far as to select Goethe as one of six "representative men" in his work of the same name, along with Plato, Napoleon, and Shakespeare. Goethe's poems were also set to music throughout the 18th & 19th centuries by a number of famous composers, including Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Gounod, Wagner, Wolf, and Mahler.

"From our first breath to our last we are under the constraint of circumstances. And yet we still possess the greatest of all freedoms, the power of developing our innermost selves in harmony with the moral order of the universe ... Let him not be troubled by what seems absurd, but concentrate his energies to the creation of what is good. He must not demolish, but build ... Nothing is worth more than this day ... Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." ~ J. W. Goethe



Hero #063: “Hero”

Hero is a Chinese film which was directed by Zhang Yimou and written by Li Feng, Zhang Yimou, and Wang Bin. Starring Jet Li as the nameless protagonist, the film is based on the story of Jing Ke's assassination attempt on the King of Qin in 227 BC ... *Hero* was first released in China in October of 2002, and quickly became the highest-grossing motion picture in Chinese film history. Miramax Films owned the American market distribution rights, but delayed the release of the film for nearly two years. It was finally presented by Quentin Tarantino to American theaters on August, 27 of 2004. Fascinatingly, despite the film receiving extremely favorable reviews (scoring 95% at Rotten Tomatoes and an 85 at Metacritic, indicating “universal acclaim”), many critics completely missed the fundamental point of the film; seeing it only as a brilliantly displayed martial arts film, instead of the moral masterpiece it actually remains. Richard Corliss of *Time* went so far afield as to errantly note that the film “employs unparalleled visual splendor to show why men must make war to secure the peace and how warriors may find their true destiny as lovers,” and Michael Wilmington of the *Chicago Tribune* downgraded its enormous display of ethics, loyalty, and self-sacrifice by lauding it as a mere “action movie for the ages.” Many other critics somehow fully missed the true impact of the plot as well (that ultimately the only way to true honor and real social change comes via non-violent self sacrifice) and went so far as to criticize it as being a film that justifies ruthless authoritarianism ... To his great credit, Roger Ebert saw the majestic depth of the film’s message, stating that, “A film like *Hero* demonstrates how the martial arts genre transcends action and violence and moves into poetry, ballet, and philosophy. It is violent only incidentally. What matters is not the manner of death, but the manner of dying: In a society that takes a Zen approach to swordplay and death, one might win by losing. There is an ancient martial arts strategy in which one lures the opponent closer to throw him off balance, and yields to his thrusts in order to mislead him. This strategy works with words as well as swords. One might even defeat an opponent by dying -- not in the act of killing him, but as a move in a larger game.”



“In the first stage, man and sword become interchangeable. Here, even a blade of grass can be used as a lethal weapon. In the next stage, the sword resides not in the hand, but in the heart. Here, even without a weapon the warrior can slay his enemy from a hundred paces. Finally, the ultimate ideal is realized when the sword disappears altogether. Here, the warrior embraces all around him. The desire to kill is gone – and only peace remains.” ~ Hero



Hero #064: Christopher Hitchens

Born in 1949, Christopher Eric Hitchens was a British-American author, debater, and journalist. Hitchens contributed articles & commentaries to a number of esteemed publications, including *New Statesman*, *The Nation*, *The Atlantic*, and *Vanity Fair*. He was also the author, co-author, editor and co-editor of over thirty books, including five collections of essays, and concentrated on a range of subjects, including politics, literature, and religion. Known for his contrarian stance on a number of issues, he courageously (and somewhat ruthlessly) dismantled the embedded hypocrisies, unethics & misdeeds of such public figures as Mother Teresa, Bill Clinton, Henry Kissinger, and Pope Benedict XVI.

While he undeniably began his professional life as what many would call a member of “the far left” (due to his full & open denouncement of the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, racism and the economic fascism of “the unaccountable corporation” -- from which, by the way, we are all still suffering mightily to this day), his numerous well-written (and ideologically flawed) editorials in support of the Iraq War later in his career caused some to label him a neoconservative. In essence, Hitchens was a man who stood completely behind his beliefs -- and he had the gumption to do so publicly, as well as eloquently. During the 2008 elections, the accuracy of Hitchens' criticisms of the main party candidates were most diverse -- with him calling McCain “senile” (a bold overstatement), labeling Sarah Palin “absurd” (an obvious accuracy), and calling Obama “greatly overrated” (in retrospect, an astounding understatement). Hitchens also actively supported drug policy reform and called for the abolition of the “War on Drugs”, which he accurately described as an “authoritarian war” during a debate with William F. Buckley. Finally, and in my humble opinion most significantly, Hitchens was a public critic of religion and a self-proclaimed anti-theist -- noting that, while an atheist could not believe in God and yet might wish it were so, an anti-theist is actually thankful that there is not enough evidence to support religious dogma at all. Like Hitchens, other anti-theists -- while not condemning spiritual belief per se -- are indeed of the opinion that willingly worshiping a personal, judgmental Godhead is tantamount to actively supporting -- indeed, actively championing -- a patently unjust “celestial dictatorship” ... Not surprisingly, when Hitchens was once asked by readers of *The Independent* (a periodical based in London) what he considered to be the “axes of evil”, he replied “Christianity, Judaism, Islam – the three leading monotheisms.”

Hitchens' book entitled *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (which has sold over 500,000 worldwide since its initial release) was published in 2007, and almost overnight tuned Hitchens into one of the major champions of the “New Atheism” movement. During subsequent book-signing tours, Hitchens accepted many invitations from religious leaders (among them Frank Turek, Tariq Ramadan, Jay Richards, David Wolpe, Alister McGrath, Tim Rutten, Rabbi Schmuley Boteach, David Berlinski, Douglas Wilson, William Lane Craig, Marvin Olasky, Dennis Prager, John Lennox, Tony Blair, Ann Widdecombe, Archbishop Onaiyekan, Dinesh D'Souza,



and Reverend Al Sharpton) who wished to debate him on the subject. After personally watching Hitchens often brilliantly & always eloquently dissect opponent after opponent in almost every one of these highly entertaining affairs, it is quite safe for me to say that almost every one of these “verbal enemies” must have at least partially regretted their initial requests thereafter.

After an intense bout with cancer, Christopher Hitchens died in December of 2011 at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Admirably, he wrote a book-length work (entitled *Mortality*, published in September of 2012) about this final illness, in which he both bravely & humbly documented how he dealt with his intense illness, his chronic pain, and his journey towards death.

"I have been called arrogant myself in my time, and hope to earn the title again, but to claim that I am privy to the secrets of the Universe and its Creator - that is beyond even my conceit." ~ Christopher Hitchens

"Human decency is not derived from religion. It precedes it ... [Anti-theists] believe with certainty that an ethical life can be lived without religion. And we know for a fact that the corollary holds true - that religion has caused innumerate people not just to conduct themselves no better than others, but to award themselves permission to behave in ways that would make even a brothel-keeper or an ethnic cleanser raise an eyebrow ... Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience." ~ Christopher Hitchens



P.S. I think it prudent to point out that I do NOT agree with most of Hitchens political beliefs (especially his pro-war stances), nor do I condone his sometimes unkind manner in dealing with others. He qualifies as a Hero in my book because he stood up against tyranny -- in this case the tyranny that is organized religion (most specifically the religions that are Christianity & Islam), and he did so with vigor, bravery, and no small amount of self-sacrifice.

Hero #065: Barry Horne

Barry Horne was an English animal rights activist who literally gave his life for the cause ... Horne first came to public attention in 1988, when he tried to rescue Rocky, a bottlenose dolphin who had been kept in a small concrete pool for almost 20 years at Marineland in Lancashire. Horne and four other activists planned to move the dolphin from his pool to the nearby ocean, and yet aborted their nighttime rescue after realizing that the logistics of the mission were beyond them. Undaunted by their initial failure, Horne and his compatriots continued with their mission to free Rocky, and in 1989 launched a campaign that picketed the dolphinarium, handed out leaflets to tourists, organized rallies, and lobbied the local council. The subsequent loss of ticket sales caused the management of Marineland to agree to sell the dolphin (for a sum that was subsequently raised with the help of a number of animal charities). As a result, Rocky was first transferred to an 80-acre lagoon reserve in the Caicos Islands, and then ultimately released, where within days he was seen swimming with a pod of wild dolphins. Peter Hughes of the University of Sunderland cites Horne's campaign as an example of how the active promotion of animal rights created a paradigm shift in the UK, and claimed that as a result there are now no captive dolphins in the England whatsoever.

Buoyed by this success, Horne ramped up his efforts to liberate the innocent. In 1990, together with Keith Mann and Danny Attwood, he was part of a small Animal Liberation Front (ALF) cell that raided Interfauna, a British company in Cambridge that supplies laboratory animals to vivisectionists. The activists entered the area where Interfauna caged their animals by punching holes in the roof, and then saved 82 beagle puppies and 26 rabbits from lives of immense pain & suffering. A vet who was an ALF supporter removed the tattoos from the dogs' ears, and they were then dispersed to new homes across the UK.

At this point Horne went primarily solo and began to ramp up the intensity of his actions, causing the authorities to monitor him quite closely. He knew they were doing so, of course, and he knew he would one day be caught, and yet he saw animal rights activism as a war against a truly vile oppressor, and he was willing to become a casualty therein. He was eventually arrested in July of 1996 and charged with planting two small incendiary devices in the Broadmead shopping centre in Bristol. While in jail for these offenses, Horne began what would end up being a series of long hunger strikes designed to effectuate the end of vivisection in England – a tactic that was not without success ...

His first hunger strike (in early 1997) lasted for 35 days. It pressured the Labour Party into publicly promising that they were “committed to a reduction and an eventual end to vivisection,” and it inspired a number of animal rights activists to liberate many hundreds of cats, beagles, and rabbits from abusive facilities throughout the UK ...

Horne's second hunger strike (in the late summer of that same year) lasted for 46 days, and sparked yet another increase in animal liberation actions -- including protests in London, in Southampton, at The Hague, in Cleveland (Ohio), and at Umea University in Sweden. 400 people also marched on Shamrock Farm (a primate holding facility), 300 more blockaded Wickham Laboratories, and Labour Party offices were picketed. In addition, a Newchurch guinea pig farm was raided and over 600 guinea pigs were freed ...

Despite these successes, however, it was Horne's third hunger strike (while serving his final, 18-year sentence for ALF-related arsons) that gained both himself and his cause worldwide notoriety, bringing the issue of animal experimentation to the forefront of British politics, and inspiring activists around the world to once again ramp up their liberation actions, as well as threaten more massive disruptions should he die. It was at this time, in December of 1998, that Barry Horne engaged in a 68-day hunger strike – one that left him with permanent kidney damage and failing eyesight, and one that ultimately led to his death of liver failure three years later -- during yet another final hunger strike for the animals.

“It is always easier to see the reasons why we cannot succeed; always easier to shrug our shoulders and believe the best we can do is offer meek token gestures ... And yet we should never be afraid to succeed or believe we can succeed ... With this hunger strike I am saying to the government of this country that we want it all and that we will accept nothing less than success. And how can we possibly ask for less? For to do so is to condemn thousands of animals to a life of suffering and premature death ... The fight is not for us, not for our personal wants and needs. Rather, it is for every animal that has ever suffered and died in vivisection labs, and for every animal that will suffer and die in those same labs unless we end this evil now. The souls of the tortured dead cry out for justice, while the cry of the living is for their freedom. We can create that justice, and we can deliver that freedom. The animals have no one but us. We must not fail them.” ~ via Barry Horne



Hero #066: Chungliang "Al" Huang

A notable philosopher, dancer, performing artist, and internationally acclaimed Taiji master & educator, Chungliang has received a number of impressive accolades (including the Gold Medal Award, China's most prestigious award in the field of education) and collaborated with more than a few of the most highly regarded scholars of modern times -- among them Alan Watts, Joseph Campbell, and John Blofeld. His way of being flows as peacefully as his lithe body, and his laugh rains down indiscriminately upon everyone around him, just as warm as the beliefs he enlivens.

“Begin each day by harmonizing your body and your mind and your spirit with nature ... just as if your body were swimming downstream, effortlessly being carried along ... Learn to open yourself ... Open your arms, open your mind, and then open your heart. Relax and breathe. You will find your horizons expanding, your vision improving . . . Enjoy this open-arm, open-mind, open-heart position ... Play your body like a bamboo flute. Lift it up to the wind, it plays itself ... Avoid overworking to fill yourself with muscles, ideas and stale information ... To know the Universe, simply take the ‘S’ out of ‘cosmic’!” ~ Chungliang Huang



Hero #067: The Jabbawockeez

Founded in 2003, Jabbawockeez is a multi-member, hip-hop dance group best known for being the winners of the first season of America's Best Dance Crew. Their unique style has them often dancing as ONE while synchronizing their movements to the specific words and rhythms of the music being played. In keeping with this tradition of symbolically revering the adage “the whole is more than the sum of its parts”, the crew does not have a set leader, and choreographs their performances -- as well as their musical accompaniments and design choices -- as a collective unit.



*“All that is important is this one moment in movement.
Make the moment important, vital, and worth living.
Do not let it slip away unnoticed and unused.”*

~ Martha Graham

Hero #068: Jesus of Nazareth

Born in all probability sometime in or around 5 B.C., Jesus of Nazareth (originally “Yeshua” in Aramaic -- commonly known these days as “Jesus Christ”), is regarded by the Christian church and its adherents as the only Son of God. Of course, while anyone with even an ounce of real humility must admit that this belief *might* indeed be true, in **no way** does this belief serve as a justification for Jesus' being designated as a “Hero” in this series. Indeed, I think it is easy for believer & non-believer alike to see that there is nothing particularly heroic at all about being forced by one's very nature to fulfill a predestined set of prophecies while groveling at the “feet” of a celestial “father” who was more tyrant than teacher; and more despot than daddy. (In the Bible, Jesus is seen to call the Essence that many call God “Abba”, an Aramaic word which meant the warmer, more intimate “daddy”)

No, while it *might* indeed be the case that the Christian church got it right with regards to who Jesus was and what he came to demand of humanity, within the very texts of the Bible itself there is another equally-valid way to view his teachings -- another equally-valid way to interpret his deeds, and another equally-valid way to honor his life and enliven his cause. And, in a most delicious twist of irony, that alternative Way is not only proscribed by Jesus himself, but also more often than not directly contradicts the dogmatic ideology of the very church that worships him to this day. And it is this other Way -- *if* it is indeed more akin to the Truth of the man in question -- that has Jesus qualifying as a “Hero” herein.

You see, to be a true Hero, one must either champion selfless Kindness in the face of enmity, or pure Freedom in the face of tyranny. And it is my own humble opinion that Jesus qualifies on both counts. Feel free to consider the following:

*While the Christian church would have us believe that Jesus must be actively worshiped as an actual Godhead (or one-third of one Godhead) in order to avoid eternal damnation (see Romans 3:21-25 & 5:8-9 et al), Jesus himself repeatedly & sternly denied this claim throughout his ministry -- actively refusing to be made king in [John 6:15](#), and very clearly stating that he himself was *not* to be worshiped at all (see [Mark 10:18](#), [John 5:41](#), [John 12:44](#), et al). This abdication of adoration & power evidenced a level of humility that was truly heroic.

*While the Christian church would have us believe that Jesus performed miracles and was therefore “above” or better than us “mere humans”, Jesus himself preached with a very different tone; reminding us all that we too are Sons & Daughters of the Divine -- that we too can Love just as he Loved, that we too can serve just as he served, that we too can fight injustice just as he fought injustice (see [John 15:12](#) & [John 14:12](#) et al). And he also repeatedly shared his opinion that his “miracles” did not come from him at all, but rather were born from the sincere faith of the ones who had been healed (see [Matthew 9:22](#), [Mark 5:34](#), [Mark 10:52](#), [Luke 17:19](#) et al). This championing of the still-quite-unpopular concept of self-emancipation evidenced a courage that was equally heroic.



*While the Christian church would have us believe that Jesus was betrayed by Judas, condemned unjustly by Pontius Pilate, and then crucified according to the will of God, there is another interpretation of the scriptures that gives *far* more honor to Jesus. Indeed, *if* it is important to read the Gospels in a way that erases all apparent hypocrisies & contradictions, there *is* a way to do so -- and this way blossoms to the fore and becomes beautifully clear as soon as we choose to realize that in all probability Jesus -- with the help of Judas, Joseph of Arimathea, Pontius Pilate and a few others -- purposefully planned, organized, and carried out his own crucifixion, and that he did so as an act of pure, selfless Love for all of humanity ... He did so to set aside the eloquent words that had up to that point been either ignored or misinterpreted, and fully “walk his talk” -- showing through his actions The Way of Joy-full self-sacrifice he was trying (up to that point without success) to relay. It is possibly for this reason, that he called out loudly “[Father, why have you forsaken me?](#)” from the cross, as this utterance is actually a quoting of the very first verse of the [22nd Psalm](#) -- a Psalm that everyone attending his crucifixion would have known quite well -- a Psalm that is not a lament or a bemoaning of tortured fate at all, but is rather a loud and triumphant call of gratitude; an unabashed professing of an unconditional Love of God no matter how hard things get. Indeed, if we read the [22nd Psalm](#) in its entirety, we can clearly see that it in many ways it mirrors the crucifixion that took place that very day. And when we realize as well that Jesus knew that Psalm by heart well before that dramatic day, we can begin to understand that his “end” was anything but random, that it was anything but a betrayal, and that it had very little to do with “God’s will”. Indeed, it begins to become clear that Jesus was so committed to showing humanity The Way of Selfless Love that he arranged his own crucifixion to prove his point. And it was this willing taking on of such immense pain -- this conscious confrontation with the greatest of all human fears -- this pre-planned and self-orchestrated submission to brutality -- that embodied the very heart of heroism.

*Finally, while the Christian church would have us believe that worshiping Jesus as our “personal Lord & Savior” will grant those doing so admission into an eternal paradise after we die, Jesus made it exceedingly clear that *his* “[Good News](#)” had absolutely nothing to do with such a self-centered reward. Instead, Jesus taught that **A)** *his* “[Kingdom of Heaven](#)” was always right here & now -- in this very present moment -- available to every sentient being in every minute of his or her or its life (see [Luke 17:20-21](#)) ... and that **B)** our “entrance” into this state of perfect Bliss was accomplished only by having the humility and the courage to actively Care either for those we least wished to give our Love, or those who “least deserving” the same (see [Matthew 10:7](#) + [Matthew 24:12-14](#) + every single one of Jesus’ Biblical parables).

And so I ask you, what greater tyranny could he have crushed - - reminding us all that Heaven is already “[at hand](#)” in every moment of our precious lives? And I ask you, what greater freedom could he have provided -- by (ironically) denouncing the very religious dogma that still shackles the Love & Decency of so many believers today? Indeed -- in-Deed -- what greater Hero could any of us ever hope to be?



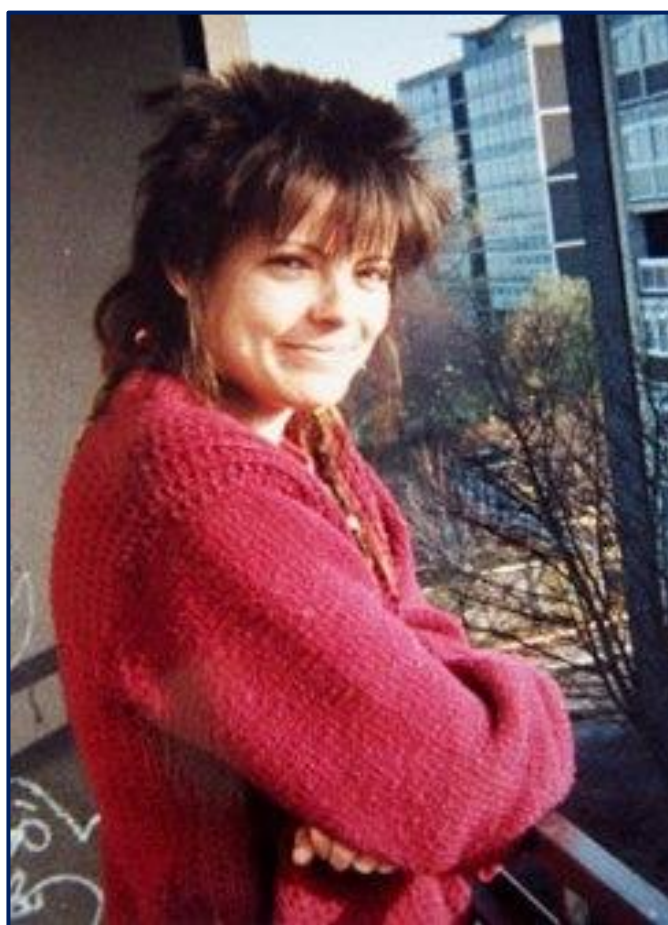
“The Kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed ... For, in fact, the Kingdom of God is already within and all around you! ... If you bring forth what is inside you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is inside you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you ... You received without payment; Give without payment ... But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is Doing, let your alms be Done in secret ... Whoever becomes humble like a child is the greatest in the Kingdom ... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be Children of your Father in Heaven; for He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the Good, and sends rain on the Righteous and on the unrighteous ... You judge by human standards. I judge no one ... Blessed are the Peacemakers ... I have said these things to you that my Joy may be In You, and that your Joy may be complete.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 17:20-21 & Thomas 70, Matthew 10:8 & 6:3-4 & 18:4, Matthew 5:44-47 & John 8:15, Matthew 5:9 & John 15:11)

Hero #069: Jill Phipps

Born in 1964, Jill Phipps became a British animal rights activist at the early age of 11, when she joined her mother's active campaigning against the fur trade. After herself adopting a plant-based diet, Phipps persuaded the rest of her family to join her. By her late teens she had joined the Eastern Animal Liberation League, a group affiliated to the Animal Liberation Front. Thereafter, a local campaign in Coventry supported by Phipps and her mother succeeded in closing down a local fur shop and a local fur farm as well.

Jill continued actively advocating the rights of animals even after the birth of her son (who she raised as a single mother), and later -- in January of 1995 (one month before her death), she walked almost 100 miles from Coventry to Westminster to protest the use of Coventry Airport for the export of veal calves.

And so it was that on February 1st of 1995, Phipps was one of 35 protesters at that airport, and she was one of ten protesters who broke through police lines and tried to bring a lorry carrying veal calves to a halt by sitting in the road. The lorry refused to stop, and Phipps was crushed to death beneath the lorry's wheels. Veal calf exports from Coventry Airport ended months later, and the level of protest after Jill's ultimate sacrifice was so extreme that several local councils and a local harbor board banned live exports from their localities as well.



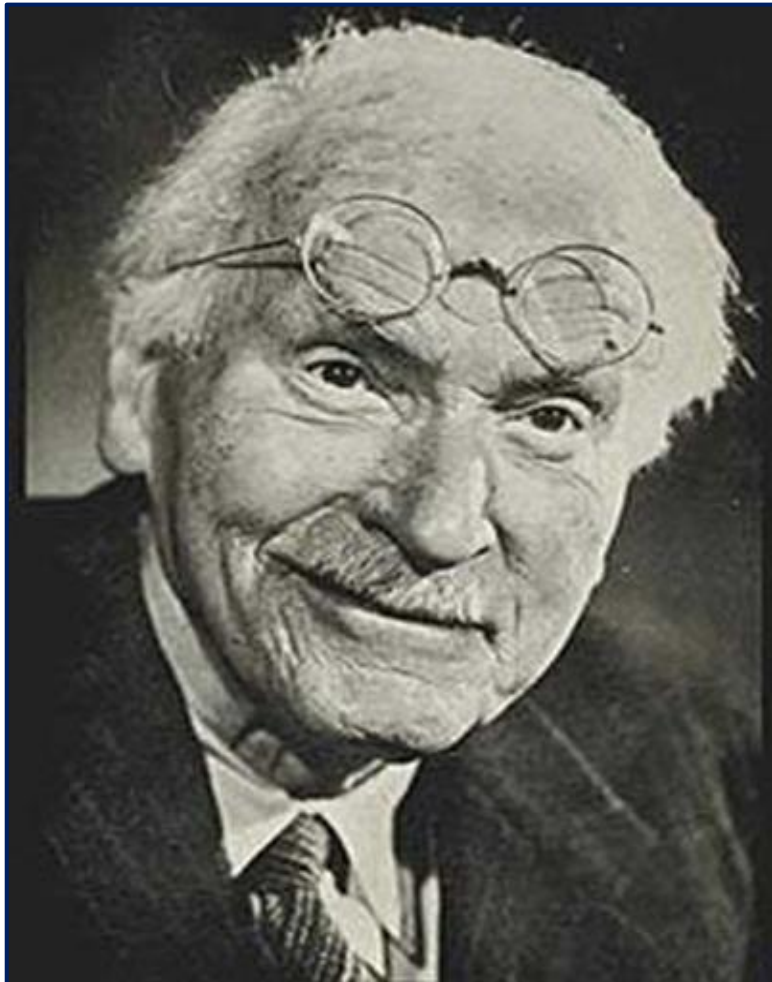
“The best way I can illustrate [Jill] is to recount a little story that she recorded in her diaries. She was out in the Swanswell Park when she came across a man throwing stones at the swans there. She dived into action and stopped him but he still continued to lurk around the park. She rang the police - not surprisingly, they did nothing. What Jill did next goes to the heart of what I want to convey about her -- she went home and got a baseball bat and went back to the park where she carried out a 3 hour vigil. Here she was this slim-built dread-locked punky princess patrolling up and down the pond, alone in the dark, armed with a baseball bat, protecting the swans.” ~ via John Curtin

Hero #070: Carl Jung

Born in 1875, Carl Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who founded analytical psychology. Jung proposed and developed some of the best known & most profound concepts -- including extraversion & introversion, synchronicity, innate archetypal understanding, and the collective unconscious. His work has proven to be quite influential in the fields of psychiatry, religion, philosophy, archeology, anthropology and literature.

Jung's work on himself and his patients convinced him that life has a “spiritual” purpose -- or a design that must come to transcend mere material goals. Our main task, he believed, is to discover and then fulfill this innate, selfless potential. Based on his study of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Taoism, and other traditions, Jung believed that this journey of transformation, which he called “individuation”, is at the mystical heart of all religions. It is a journey to rediscover -- and then reanimate -- one's True Self, thereby simultaneously encountering and re-enlivening the essence that many have named “God” or “the Divine.”

“Where real Love rules, there is no will to power, and where power predominates, Love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other ... As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of our existence is to rekindle a light in the darkness of our being ... Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to a fuller understanding of ourselves ... It all depends on how we choose to look at things, not on how they objectively are ... [Indeed], we cannot change anything unless we first accept it as it is. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses.” ~ Carl G. Jung



Hero #071: Colin Kaepernick

Colin Kaepernick became the San Francisco 49ers' starting quarterback in the middle of the 2012 season and remained the team's starter for the rest of that season; leading the team all the way to their first Super Bowl appearance since 1994. The following year, his first full season as a starter, Kaepernick then helped the 49ers reach the NFC Championship Game. And yet Colin Kaepernick is not here today to be lauded for his athletic accomplishments, but rather for the fact that he had the courage and the integrity to sacrifice his budding career for a greater cause ...

In 2016, Kaepernick became a national figure after he began protesting the systemic racial injustice that plagues the United States; doing so by refusing to stand for the playing of the United States national anthem before the start of games. His actions prompted a wide variety of responses, including inspiring dozens of other pro athletes (both in the NFL and in other American sports leagues) to protest as well, and even many members of the U.S. armed forces to support those protests. And yet, unsurprisingly, Colin's bravery did not come without cost (the receiving of regular death threats being not the least of which), as no team chose to hire him after the 2016 season, and this despite the fact that he remains – both per his statistics as well his winning resume -- one of the better quarterbacks available.*

Interestingly enough, in the weeks and months following his original protests, Kaepernick's jersey became the top-seller on the NFL's official website, even while a fan poll taken on that same site voted Kaepernick the NFL's most disliked player. Again unsurprisingly, this poll was highly polarized based on the race of its respondents, ironically providing yet another piece of evidence soundly proving Kaepernick's claim.

Later that year, Kaepernick vowed to donate \$1 million of his salary to “organizations working in oppressed communities” (a promise he has since fulfilled), and thereafter went several steps further by actually getting directly involved in the African-American community first-hand, hosting a “Know Your Rights Camp” in cities around the country to inspire youth to transcend violence and to teach them how to effectively and peacefully interact with police officers.





“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies laying in the street while the people who put them there are getting paid leave and getting away with murder ... I’m going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me this is something that has to change. When there’s significant change and I feel like that flag represents what it’s supposed to represent, this country is representing people the way that it’s supposed to, then I’ll stand ... I’m going to speak the truth when I’m asked about it. This isn’t for publicity or anything like that. This is for people that don’t have the voice. And this is for people that are being oppressed and need to have equal opportunities to be successful. To provide for families and not live in unjust circumstances.” ~ via Colin Kaepernick

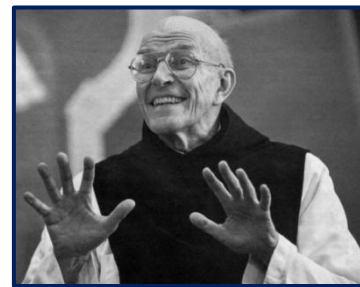
*“Approximately 90 men are currently employed as quarterbacks in the NFL, as either starters or reserves, and Colin Kaepernick is better—indisputably, undeniably, flat-out better—than at least 70 of them. He is still, to this day, one of the most gifted quarterbacks on earth. And yet he has been locked out of the game he loves—blackballed—because of one simple gesture: He knelt during the playing of our national anthem. And he did it for a clear reason, one that has been lost in the yearlong storm that followed. He did it to protest systemic oppression and, more specifically, as he said repeatedly at the time, police brutality toward black people.” ~ GQ magazine



Hero #072: Thomas Keating

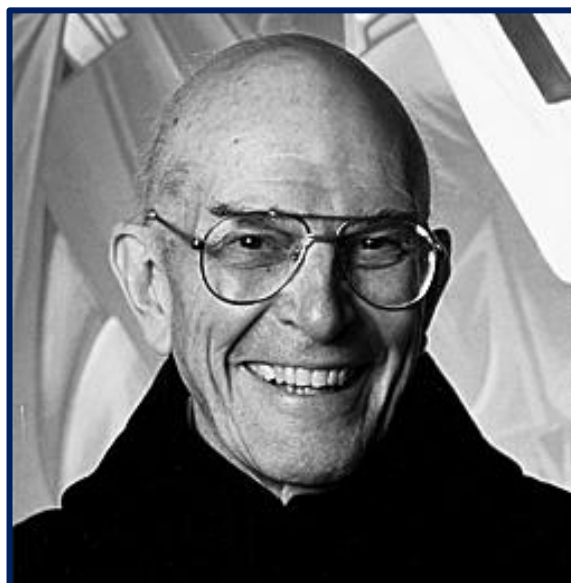
Born in 1923, Keating is a Trappist monk known as one of primary architects of the Centering Prayer, a contemporary method of melding the mind with the Divine ... His interest in contemplative prayer began during his freshman year at Yale University, when he became aware of the writings of early Christian mystics. Prompted by these studies and time spent in prayer and meditation, he experienced a profound realization that, at the very least on a deep spiritual level, the Scriptures call for people to form both a very practical and a very personal relationship with what many call “God.” Thereafter, during his term as abbot at St. Joseph's Abbey in the 60's & 70's -- and in response to then fresh reforms of Vatican II, he invited spiritual teachers from the East to his monastery. As a result of this exposure to Eastern spiritual traditions, Keating was inspired to help develop the modern form of Christian contemplative prayer called Centering Prayer.

Also since the reforms of Vatican II, Keating has been a core participant in and supporter of interreligious dialogue. He helped found the Snowmass Interreligious Conference, which had its first meeting in the fall of 1983 and continues to meet each spring to this day. Each year the conference invites “deep practitioners” from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, and Islamic traditions to compare philosophies, connect spiritually, and clarify religious commonalities between faiths. One result has been to distill several profound points of agreement shared by all the world's religious faiths.



Perhaps the biggest testament to Thomas Keating's dedication to selfless service is his choice to -- somewhat ironically, and quite self-sacrificially -- live a busy, public life instead of the quiet, monastic one for which he entered the monastery.

“The more we know about nature, the more we know about the mind of God ... If we refuse to think of anything except what we are doing or the person that we are with, we develop the habit of being present to the present moment. In a way, the present moment becomes as sacred as being in church ... [Prayer is the world in which] our private, self-made worlds come to an end; a new world appears within and around us and the seemingly impossible becomes an everyday experience.” ~ Thomas Keating

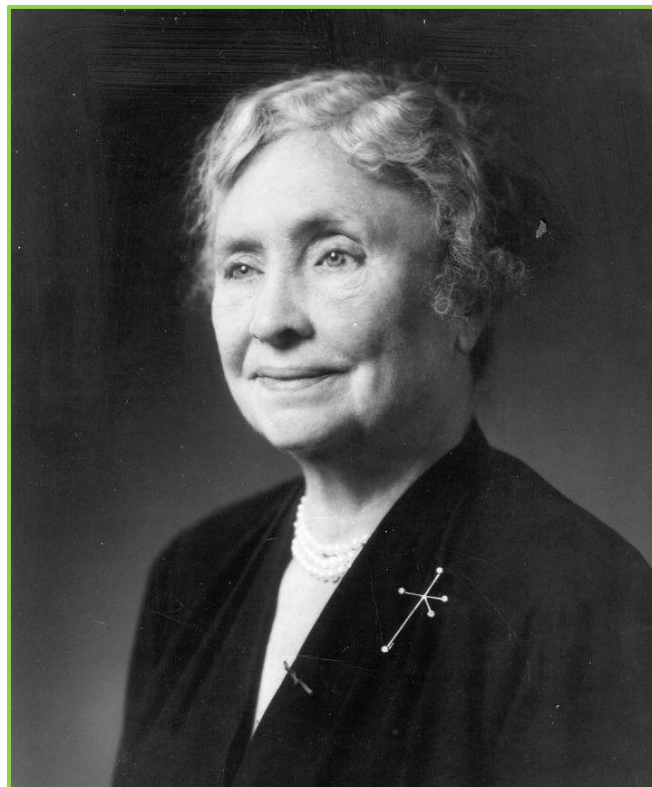


Hero #073: Helen Keller

Helen Adams Keller was an American author, political activist, and lecturer. She was the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, and proved to the world that deaf people could all learn to communicate and thrive in the hearing world. She also taught that deaf people are even capable of doing things that supposedly only hearing people can do, as she was able to enjoy music by feeling the beat, and was able to have a strong connection with animals through her sense of touch ... Determined to communicate with others as conventionally as possible, Keller actually learned to vocalize her words, and spent much of her life giving speeches and lectures on aspects of her life – doing so in 25 different countries. She also learned to “hear” others’ words by reading their lips with her hands, and became proficient at using braille and reading sign language with her hands.

A prolific writer, Keller was well-traveled and outspoken in her convictions. A member of the Socialist Party of America and the Industrial Workers of the World, she actively and courageously campaigned for women's suffrage, labor rights, fertility rights, antimilitarism, and a host of other similar causes – including and especially the rights of the disabled. In 1920, she also helped to found the American Civil Liberties Union ... In closing, even though Helen Keller was delayed in picking up language, it is an extreme understatement to say that this did not stop her from having both a beautiful & a powerful voice.

“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble ... Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all ... Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it ... Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose ... So be of good cheer. Do not think of today's failures, but of the success that may come tomorrow. You have set yourselves a difficult task, but you will succeed if you persevere; and you will find a joy in overcoming obstacles. Remember, no effort that we make to attain something beautiful is ever lost.” ~ via Helen Keller



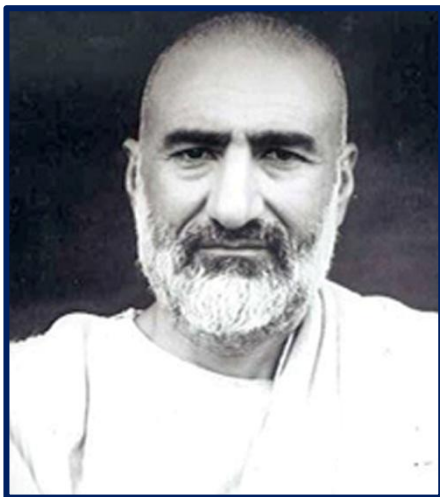
Hero #074: Bacha Khan

Bāchā Khān (born Khān Abdul Ghaffār Khān) was a political leader, a spiritual leader, and an independence activist against British colonial rule in India. He was known as a lifelong pacifist, a secular Muslim who staunchly opposed any and all religious divisions, and a devout advocate of nonviolent opposition to social injustice. While he faced much opposition and personal difficulties, Bacha Khan worked tirelessly to organize and raise the consciousness of his fellow Pushtuns. As a case in point, between 1915 and 1918 Khan visited over 500 villages in all part of the settled districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Indeed, it was in this frenzied activity in the name of peace that he came to be known as *Bacha Khan* (or “King of Chiefs”).

A close friend of Mahatma Gandhi, Khan founded the nonviolent resistant group *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement in 1929, the success of which triggered a harsh crackdown by the British Raj, with the *Khudai* suffering some of the most severe repression of the entire Indian independence movement ... On the 23rd of April in 1930, Bacha Khan was arrested during protests arising out of the Salt Satyagraha. An unarmed crowd of *Khudai Khidmatgar* had gathered in Peshawar's Kissa Khwani (or “Storytellers”) Bazaar, and the British ordered troops to open fire on them, killing an estimated 200-250 people. Despite the ruthless carnage, the *Khudai* members acted in accord with their training in non-violence under Bacha Khan, boldly and peacefully facing bullets as the troops fired on them. As a consequence, two entire platoons of the British Garhwal Rifles Regiment disobeyed their orders and refused to fire on the non-violent crowd, even though they knew the punishment for such disobedience would be severe (indeed, all of them were later court-martialed and received heavy punishments, some life imprisonment).

Khan strongly opposed the All-India Muslim League's demand for the partition of India. After the partition passed anyway, Khan pledged allegiance to Pakistan, and yet remained politically active and was frequently arrested by the Pakistani government between 1948 and 1956. Khan also spent much of the 1960's and 1970's either in jail or in exile due to his social justice activism, and died under house arrest in 1988.

Bacha Khan was also a champion of women's rights, and became a hero of most in a society dominated by violence and injustice. Even many of his enemies, notwithstanding his liberal views, were moved by his unswerving faith, his obvious bravery, and his moral fortitude. Throughout his life, he never lost faith in his non-violent methods or in the compatibility of Islam, nonviolence, and peace.



“Today’s world is traveling in some strange direction. You see that the world is going toward destruction and violence. And the specialty of violence is to create hatred among people and to create fear. I am a believer in nonviolence and I say that no peace or tranquility will descend upon the people of the world until nonviolence is practiced, because nonviolence is love and it stirs courage in people.” ~ Bacha Khan

Hero #075: Anita Krajnc

Anita Krajnc is an author and co-founder of the animal rights group Toronto Pig Save. Anita holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Toronto (her doctoral thesis was based on the role of scientific knowledge and public education in building international environmental regimes) and she has been Assistant Professor at Queen's University ... She gained much of her recognition from the fallout of events that took place on June 23, 2015 – when Anita was charged with criminal mischief for giving water to pigs in a transport truck on its way to Fearman's slaughterhouse (near Toronto, Canada) ... Thereafter, on September 9th, she was again charged with criminal mischief (again, for giving water to dehydrated pigs who had been abused, who were terrified, and who were about to be ruthlessly slaughtered) – a charge that carried the potential penalty of 10 years in prison ... On October 14th of that same year, Anita appeared in court and was read the charges against her, with the court telling her that under Canadian law pigs are considered personal property and can be transported without food and water for 36 hours. Anita responded by stating that she would refuse to pay any fine and that she was willing to suffer imprisonment in the name of compassion and justice. Anita was then released on bail and continued to protest the unfathomable cruelty that hundreds of thousands of young pigs endure both during and after their transport to slaughterhouses ... On October 4th of the following year (2016), Anita was again arrested – this time on charges of obstructing the police – after a truck heading to a slaughterhouse overturned and a number of pigs (many of them injured) briefly gained their freedom. Police at the scene had taped off the street to assist the slaughterhouse in capturing and “disposing of them” (i.e. murdering them, as they could no longer be legally “processed” by the slaughterhouse after the accident). Anita ignored their instructions and tried to help the pigs anyway ... Ultimately, her case came to trial, and – with much well-deserved fanfare – Anita was found not guilty on May 4th of 2017 .



She continues to protest against animal abuse – and continues to show Kindness & Compassion to all animals in need – to this very day.



“Being active in the struggle against the extreme animal, environmental and human exploitation pockmarking the world, helps dissolve one’s depression. Change happens when we create grassroots, mass-based, democratic movements with shared leadership that show solidarity across species as well as across borders. Let’s keep building this global compassionate movement until it encompasses everyone!” ~ Anita Krajnc



Hero #076: Krishnamurti

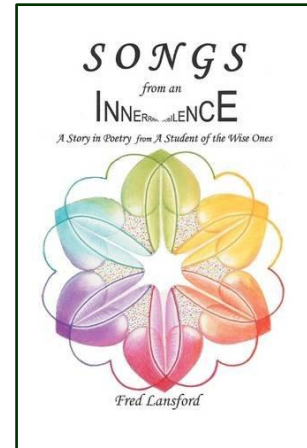
After being “discovered” in 1909 at the age of 14 by Charles Leadbeater, Jiddu Krishnamurti was soon adopted into the Theosophical Society and actively groomed to be the next “World Teacher” -- a Christ-like figure intended to bring about a mass global enlightenment. Krishnamurti ultimately disowned this concept and left the organization entirely, thereafter claiming no allegiance to any specific nationality, religion or philosophy; becoming a sort of “Inner Peace missionary”, and spending the rest of his life traveling the world and speaking to large audiences, small groups, and individuals about the need for a revolution in the psyche within ... Imagine that: being offered a real & tangible Messiah-ship -- a veritable kingdom of respect & power & fame -- and turning it down to humbly share a message of equality & liberation & empowerment instead ... How wonderful in-deed!

“It is no measure of health to be considered 'well adjusted' in a profoundly sick society ... Violence is not merely harming another. It is violence when we use a sharp word, when we make a gesture to brush away a person, when we obey another out of fear. As such, violence isn't merely butchery in the name of God, in the name of society, or in the name of justice. Violence is much more subtle, much deeper, and we must inquire into the very depths thereof in all our dealings with others ... We must remember that freedom and Love go together; that Love is not a reaction. If I love you because you love me, that is a mere trade; a thing to be bought in the market. It is not Love. To Love is not to ask anything in return; to not even to feel that you are giving something; to open yourself completely to the other. And it is only such a Love that can know real freedom.” ~ inspired by J. Krishnamurti



Hero #077: Fred Lansford

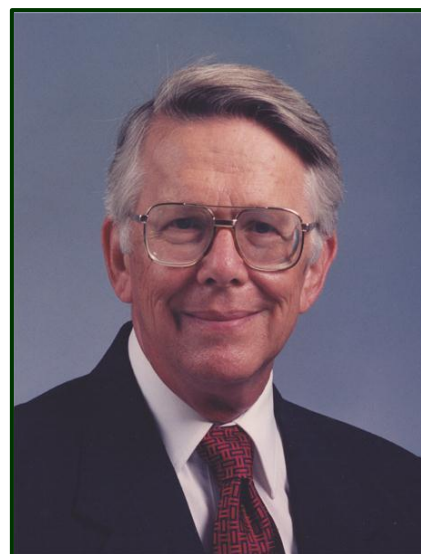
Born in July of 1926, Fred moved with his parents to the Chattanooga (Tennessee) area in 1937, and lived there until his peaceful passing in October of 2013. Fred became an Eagle Scout by age 13, served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific in World War II, received his BBA degree from University of Chattanooga in 1949, saw active duty during the Korean War as a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve, obtained his Doctorate in Medicine from The University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Memphis in 1956, and received additional training at Erlanger Hospital where he later taught as an associate clinical professor in Family Medicine. He was board certified by the American Academy of Family Physicians and was a member of the active staff of East Ridge Hospital, Erlanger Hospital, Parkridge Hospital, and Memorial Hospital. He practiced Family Medicine in the Chattanooga area for 43 years, and was a member of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society, the Tennessee Medical Association, the American Medical Association, the Chattanooga Chapter of the Tennessee Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Family Physicians. And in May of 2009, he published a book of poetry entitled *Songs from an Inner Silence* (pictured); a truly brilliant work that was edited and re-released in 2012.



Of course, while they are indeed quite impressive, these aforementioned accomplishments fully pale in comparison to Fred's greatest triumph -- for Fred truly mastered the art of being a man of gentle Compassion. Far before his peaceful end, Fred Lansford transcended his life's trials & turmoils and became a true Human(e) Being.

Now I admit that I was not privy to the days of his youth, and I also readily accede that I know nothing of the probable missteps of his middle years. And yet despite what was surely a life as varied & challenging as each of our own, I do indeed know -- and will indeed unabashedly attest -- that in his later years, Fred Lansford was a paragon of Honesty & Integrity; a man who always maintained a powerful presence of calm Grace; and a friend who seemed to know no alternative but to provide all he encountered with a gentle caress and a Kind word.

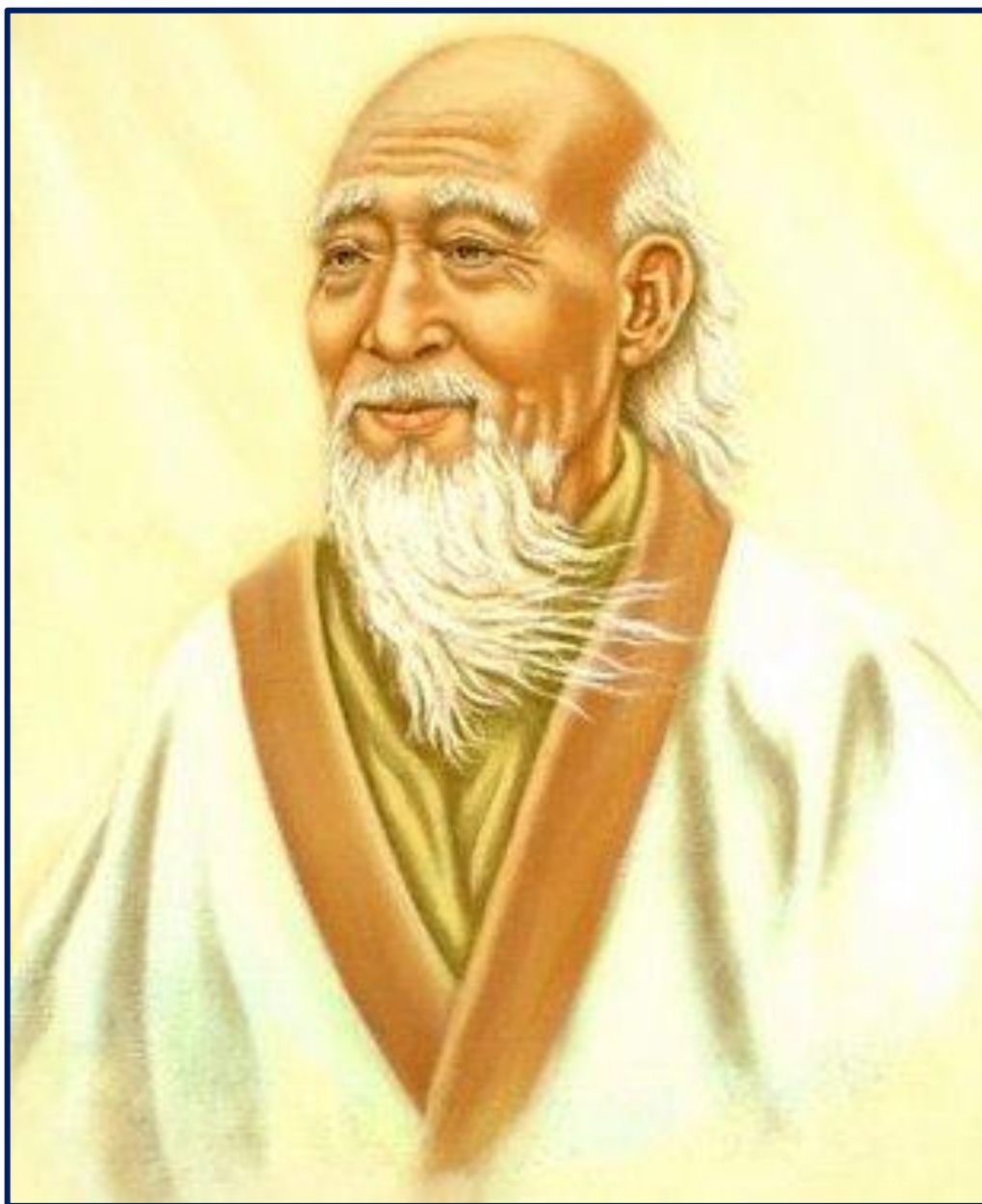
“As you climb a high hill and look back to the valley from whence you came, which of your footsteps along the way would you hold in a measure of judgment above the others? ... Would you say the steps that carried you forth at your beginning were of lesser importance than those by which you now arrive? Neither should you judge you your brothers when they stumble with eagerness, or limp with pain; whether they be presently walking on a high hill or ambling through a darkened valley. For they too, have climbed mountains; and their pathways would merge with all others, ere any reach their destination ... There is only one ocean and only one Love. It is only our thoughts that divide them.” ~ via Fred Lansford



Hero #078: Lao Tsu

A possible contemporary of Confucius, Lao Tsu was a legendary philosopher and poet of ancient China. He is best known as the reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the founder of Taoism, and a master of Peace & peaceful living. Throughout history, his reputation and writings have been embraced by various anti-authoritarian, pro-freedom movements.

“Do not use force against the World, for that which is forced is likely to return ... Where armies settle, Nature offers nothing but briars & thorns. Things that gain a place by force will only flourish briefly and then fade away ... If a person seems wicked, do not cast him away ... Requite his injury with your Kindness. Do not cast him away. Cast away his wickedness.” ~ Lao Tsu (Tao Te Ching 30:1-3+ & 62:6-12)



Hero #079: Diane Latiker

Diane Latiker, a mother of eight and grandmother to 13, has lived in Roseland -- one of Chicago's most violent neighborhoods -- for 24 years. Back in 2003, after repeatedly witnessing gang-related violence that was threatening the well-being of her own children, Diane decided to respond to the danger in a most unconventional -- and to this day most effective -- manner: instead of locking her doors and pulling the blinds; instead of hiding from the aggression that was all around her, Diane Latiker chose to do exactly the opposite. She chose to reach out ... She invited the neighborhood's youth into her living room. She made them meals. She helped them with homework. She asked them about their fears and their dreams. She became a 24-hour a day safe haven from Roseland's drugs and gang violence -- even for gang members themselves. "It doesn't matter where they come from, what they've done," Latiker said. "We've had six gangs in my living room at one time. ... But that was the safe place. And you know what? They respected that ... They say I'm a nut because I let kids into my home who I didn't even know, but I know them now" ... As she began to see the positive change she was making in many of the young people who visited her home, Diane quit her day job to focus on caring for them full-time. She set up tutoring sessions with teachers and retired educators. She provided job interview training and opportunities to play football, basketball, and soccer. She and a handful of volunteers also started taking the youth on field trips to museums, movies, skating rinks, water parks, and professional sports games. To put extra money into the program, she sold many of her family's belongings, including their television. To make room for a computer station for the youth, she gave away her dining room set.

Since first opening her home in 2003, Diane Latiker has gotten to know more than 1500 young people in this way, a way that has turned into a nonprofit community program she now calls *Kids Off the Block*. "We call it The KOB Youth Community Center, and we invite everyone -- all of the youth in the community -- to come," she said. The Center now has well over 300 members from Roseland, and every day 30 to 50 young people show up there for tutoring, counseling or activities such as sports, drama, dance, or music ... Through her efforts, Diane Latiker has proven without a shadow of a doubt that there is a light of Goodness within every person, and that open acts of Kindness actually work -- especially when they are given to those people who mainstream society have shunned or rejected or denigrated or scorned.

"Our young people need help. All of them are not gang-bangers. All of them are not dropouts. But the ones that are, they need our help. Somehow or another, something ain't right here. And why don't we take a minute and ask them about it?"

~ Diane Latiker

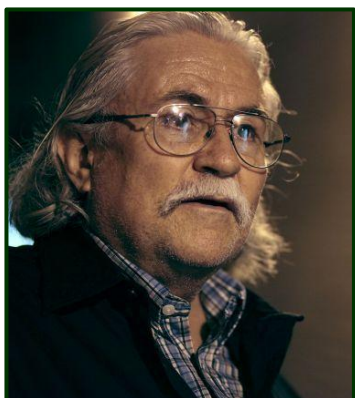


Hero #080: Allan Law

As usual, Allan Law had worked a late night, and had pulled into the parking lot of an Edina church for a quick nap before heading back to work. He was snoozing soundly there when a rap on his window woke him and he found himself staring up at a police officer. The officer checked Law's driver's license and asked why he was sleeping in a parking lot just a few miles from his Edina home. Law, a captivating storyteller, explained his current vocation: delivering sandwiches to the homeless and hungry in the Twin Cities. And the officer exclaimed, "Oh, you're the sandwich man!" ... It turns out the officer was familiar with Law's story because he knew someone who was part of a church group that helped make sandwiches for Law's non-profit organization, Minneapolis Recreation Development Inc., which makes sandwich deliveries to the homeless every night of the year except Thanksgiving and Christmas. That's right, since retiring in 1999 as a Minneapolis schoolteacher, Law spends his time handing out sandwiches to the downtrodden. In fact, every year he gives out over 500,000 sandwiches, 5000 pair of socks, and 50,000 bus tokens, along with 1000's of mittens, lots of baby formula, hundreds of blankets, and even money for medical co-pays -- all of it funded by Law's retirement pension and donations from the public. He stops at shelters. He stops under bridges. He heads into neighborhoods that most people only speak in hushed tones. And yet it doesn't matter to Law where he has to go, because his life has become all about helping anyone who needs help.



And Law is not only incredibly generous, but exceedingly humble as well. "I've always been against publicity. I wanted to spend my life helping people without any recognition" – fittingly uttered by a man who didn't want to accept a McKnight Foundation Human Service award in person because he didn't want to leave the people he helps, even for one day. This is a man who has been recognized by three presidents and received countless awards, including the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Gold Medallion presented at the U.S. Supreme Court – a case where Law did travel to Washington D.C. to accept the award, and yet returned without accepting his invitation to visit the White House -- because he wanted to get back to the people he helps in Minneapolis. Amazingly, aside from Thanksgivings and Christmases, the only other days Law has missed delivering his sandwiches over the years were those in March of 2013 -- when he was having surgery for prostate cancer. And even then he snuck out of the rehabilitation center where he was recovering to deliver sandwiches while wearing his nightgown, slippers, and a turtleneck.



Law's apartment houses 17 freezers for sandwiches and has no bed, seeing as no bed is necessary – seeing as how he never spends a night at home. It turns out he doesn't wake up to do good; he stays *awake* to do good; helping people full time and sleeping in his spare time. "When you see a need you fill it," he says. "It's true that if I had accepted more publicity 40 years ago we would probably have a facility someplace. And yet I would never be there. I'd still be on the street helping people."

Hero #081: Liu Yihua

77-year-old Liu Yihua has owned a shoe polish stall at the junction of Shuang Hua Road in Chengdu for many years, and he lives extra frugally so that he can afford to care for his 9 adopted stray dogs. He says he has to spend several hundred dollars a month to feed them, and is therefore reluctant to spend money on himself.

*“You don't have to be an angel to be a saint.”
~ Albert Schweitzer*

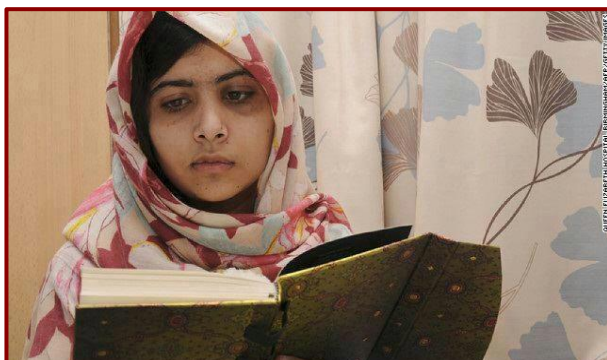


Hero #082: Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially related to the education of women and children in northwest Pakistan, where the local Taliban has at times banned girls from attending school ... Inspired in no small part by the humanitarian work of her father, Malala began writing a public blog in 2009 (when she was only 11) detailing her life during the Taliban occupation of Swat. The following summer a New York Times journalist made a documentary about her, and she was subsequently nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize ... As she became more popular, the dangers facing Malala increased. Death threats against her were published in newspapers and slipped under her door. She also received threats on Facebook (where she was an active user), and fake profiles were created under her name. When none of these attempts silenced her, a Taliban spokesman says they were "forced" to act. In a meeting held in the summer of 2012, Taliban leaders unanimously agreed to have her killed ...

And so it was that in late 2012, Malala was severely injured by a Taliban gunman who had attempted to assassinate her. The murder attempt sparked a national and international outpouring of support for Malala. Protests against the shooting were held in several Pakistani cities the day after the attack, and over 2 million people signed the Right to Education campaign's petition -- which eventually led to the ratification of the first Right to Education Bill in Pakistan. To their credit, a group of fifty leading Muslim clerics in Pakistan also issued a *fatwā* against those who had tried to kill Malala.

After recovering from her wounds, Malala became a prominent education activist, creating the Malala Fund -- a non-profit pro-education organization, and co-authored *I am Malala*, an international bestseller. In 2013, she also met with then U.S. President Obama, where she directly (and correctly) confronted him on his immoral use of drone strikes against Pakistan ... In 2014, she was announced as the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to receive an education. Aged 17 at the time, she became the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. In October of that year, after receiving the World Children's Prize in Sweden, she announced a donation of \$50,000 to help rebuild 65 schools destroyed by Israel in Gaza. Later, on her 18th birthday (July 12, 2015), Malala officially opened a school for Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.



Gets shot in the face for wanting an education.
Wakes from coma. Gets right back to reading.

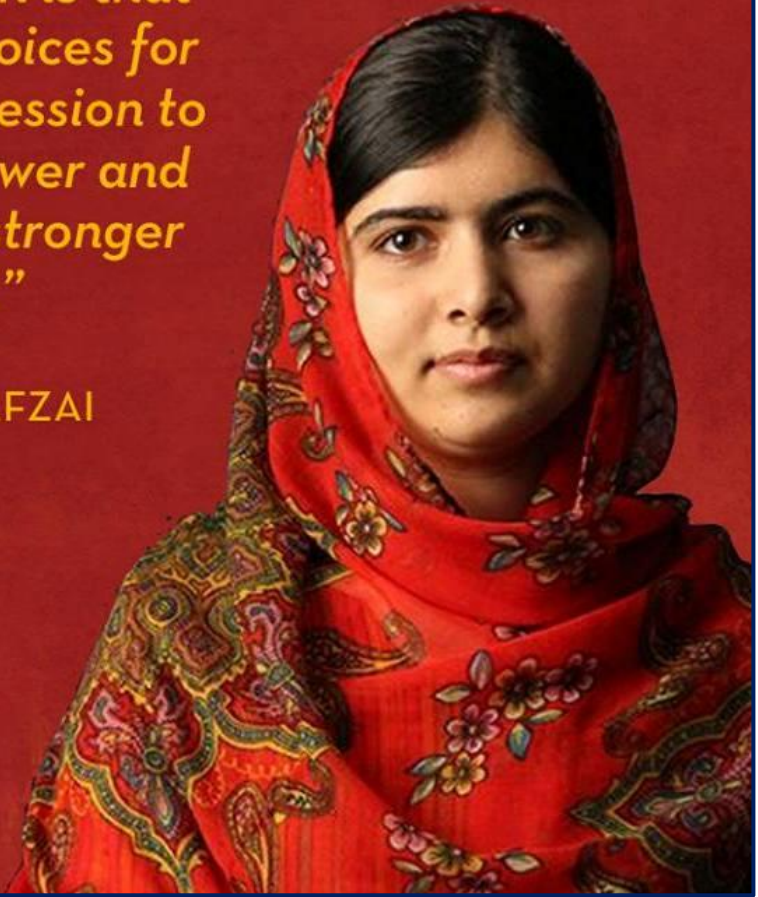
Malala 1 - Taliban 0

"The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born ... I am not against anyone, neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I'm here to speak up for the right of education for every child. I want education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all terrorists and extremists."

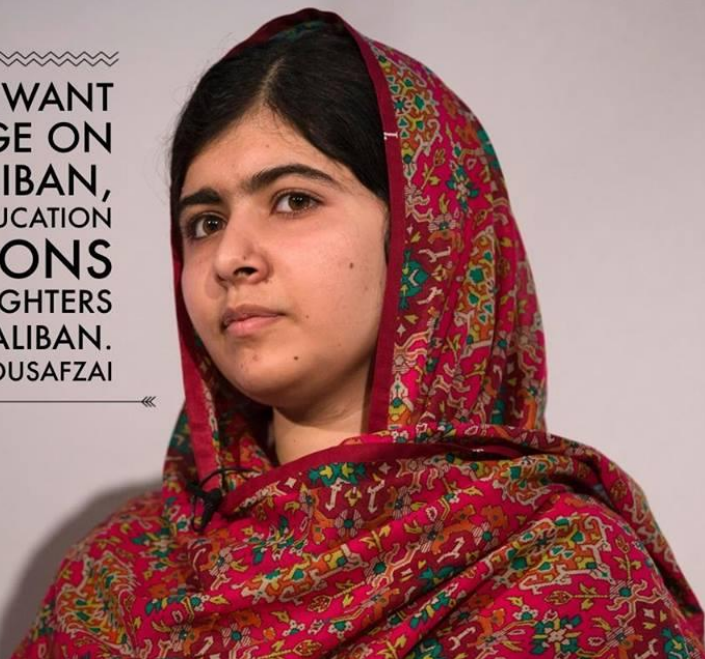
~ Malala Yousafzai

“My birthday wish is that we all raise our voices for those under oppression to show our own power and that courage is stronger than fear.”

MALALA YOUSAFZAI



~~~~~  
I DON'T WANT  
REVENGE ON  
THE TALIBAN,  
I WANT EDUCATION  
**FOR SONS**  
AND DAUGHTERS  
OF THE TALIBAN.  
-MALALA YOUSAFZAI

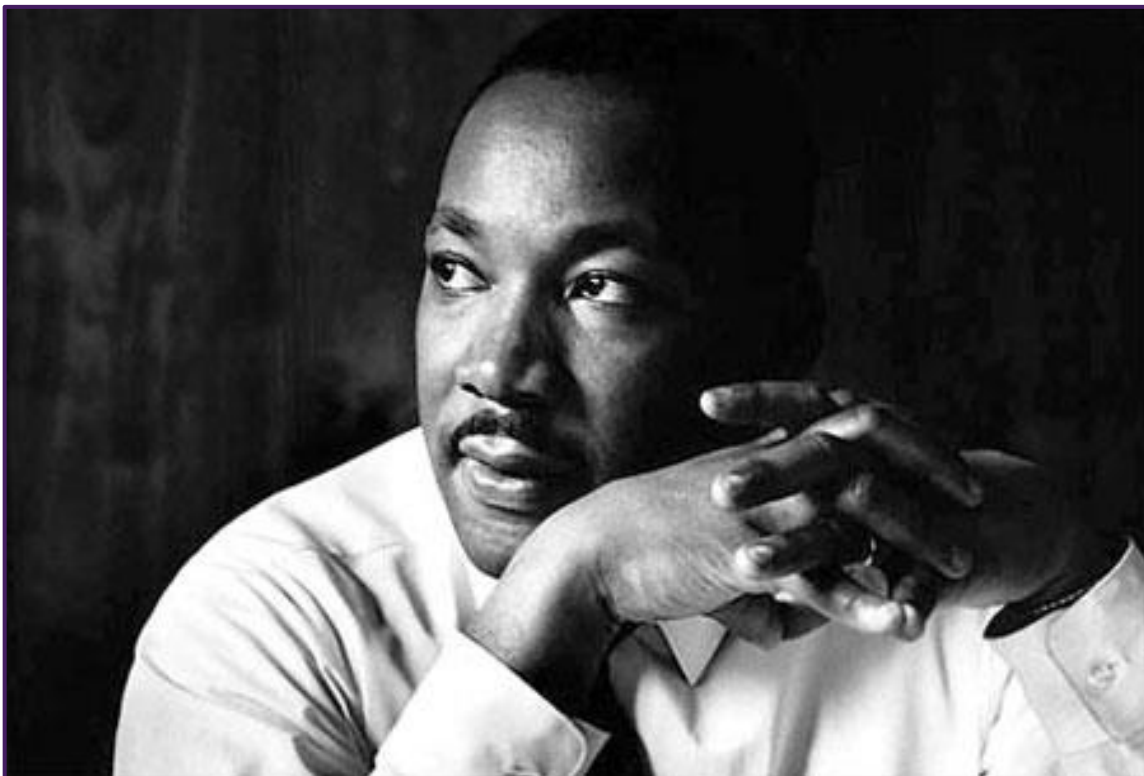




## *Hero #083: Martin Luther King Jr.*

Did you know that on the day of his assassination, Martin Luther King engaged in a pillow fight in his motel room? It makes me smile to think about him smiling; and it also makes me wonder what more I can do to honor this Great Man -- what more I can do in my life right now to defeat the forces of callousness & tyranny & injustice that still confine & torture so many, and that still threaten to confine & torture so many more.

*“Almost always, it has been the bold and dedicated minority that has made the world better ... It is true that every one of us can be great because every one of us can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace; a soul generated by Love ... Indeed, you have not started truly living until you can rise above the narrow confines of your individualistic concerns to serve the broader concerns of all beings ... He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it ... Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that ... Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love ... Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him ... Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness ... Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you currently doing for others? ... The time is always right to do the right thing.” ~ inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.*



## Hero #084: M\*A\*S\*H

*M\*A\*S\*H* was a 1972–1983 American television series developed by Larry Gelbart. The series, which was produced with 20th Century Fox Television for CBS – and which remains one of the highest-rated shows in U.S. television history, follows a team of doctors and support staff stationed at the “4077<sup>th</sup> Mobile Army Surgical Hospital” in South Korea during the Korean War ... While essentially considered a comedy, the writing took on more of a moralistic tone as the show developed. Airing on network primetime while the Vietnam War was still going on, the show's discourse -- under the cover of comedy -- questioned, mocked, and even lambasted America's immoral, often war-hungry role in international politics.

*“I'm sick of hearing about the wounded. What about all the thousands of wonderful guys who are fighting this war without any of the credit or the glory that always goes to those lucky few who just happen to get shot?”*

*~ Frank Burns, M\*A\*S\*H*

*“War isn't Hell. War is war, and Hell is Hell – and between the two, war is a lot worse.”*

*~ Hawkeye, M\*A\*S\*H*





## *Hero #085: Rosie Mashale*

When Rosie Mashale moved to Khayelitsha in Cape Town (South Africa's largest township) she was alarmed to see children regularly scavenging for food in the trash dump near her home. So one day in 1989, she invited some of them into her home. "I just called them in. We sang rhymes, I gave them bread and something to drink -- and that was the birth of the daycare center." She continued to offer free care for local children for the next 10 years, and after a decade of doing so, she was thinking about retiring for good. And yet her plans changed again in 2000 when she found a young child abandoned on her doorstep. And when she took the boy to the police, he couldn't provide them with his own name, and so Rosie was told that she should care for him. And that is exactly what she did ... Word quickly spread, of course, and soon afterwards another child was left at her doorstep. And she took that child in as well. And then she got a call from a maternity hospital, asking her to pick up two abandoned babies -- and she did that too. By the end of the year, "Mama Rosie" was caring for 67 children, all in her own home ... Since then, her orphanage -- called *Baphumelele*, which translates to "we have transcended" -- has blossomed into a multi-faceted charitable organization (including a school that educates over 230 children) that takes up an entire block in Khayelitsha, and that has ended up over the years caring for more than 5000 orphaned, abandoned, &/or sick children.

*"I support change, innovation, and human advancement. I am strongly committed to a humanitarian cause and social improvement. I wish to contribute something of value to the world, or at least to my community." ~ Rosie Mashale*





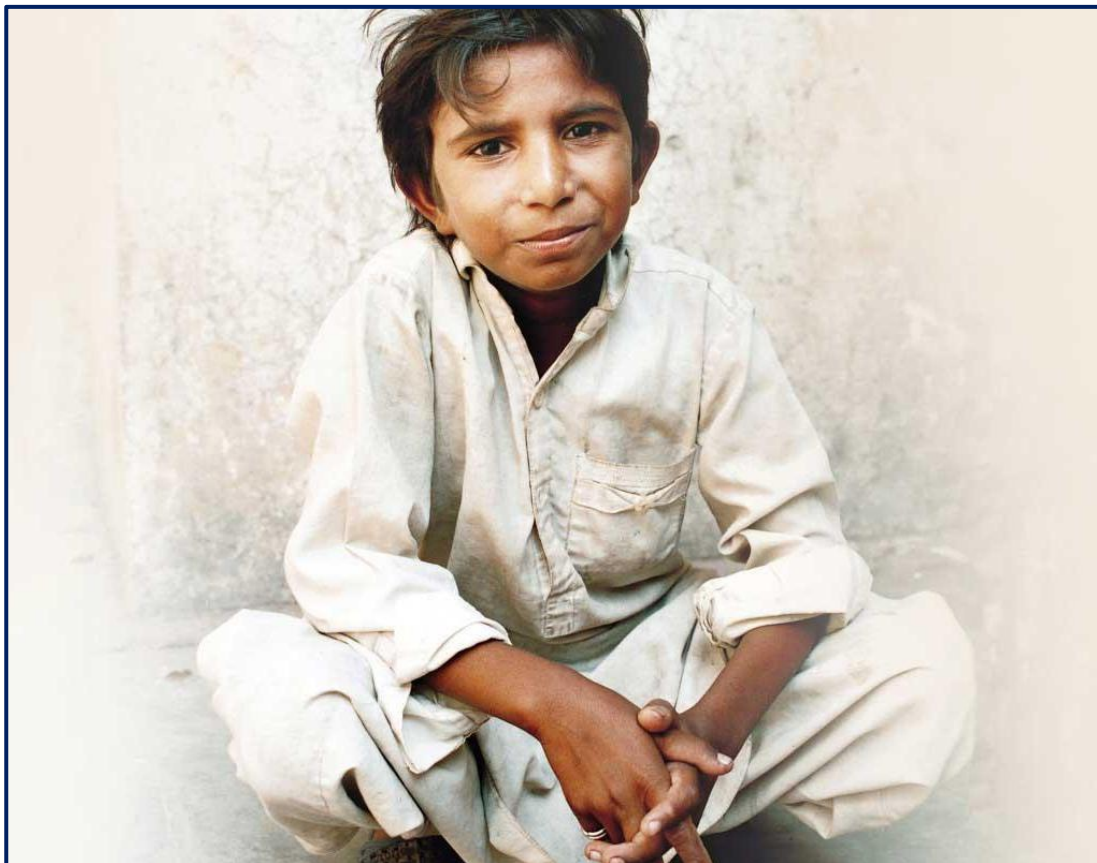
## *Hero #086: Iqbal Masih*

Iqbal Masih was born in 1983 in Muridke, a commercial city outside of Lahore in Pakistan. When he was just four year old, Iqbal's family borrowed 600 rupees (less than \$6.00) from a local employer who owned a carpet weaving business. In return, Iqbal was required to work as a carpet weaver until the debt was paid off. Every day, he would rise before dawn and make his way along dark country roads to the factory, where he and most of the other children were tightly bound with chains to prevent their escape. He would work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, with only one 30-minute break. Even though he was paid 3 cents a day towards the loan, the amount due on the loan continued to increase. This dire situation persisted for the next 6 years ...

Then, at the age of 10, after learning that bonded labor had been declared illegal by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Iqbal escaped. And yet his freedom was short-lived. He was caught by the police and returned to his “employer”, who told the police to tie him upside down if he tried to escape again. Undaunted, Iqbal indeed escaped a second time – only this time he found his way to the Bonded Labour Liberation Front School, a refuge for former child slaves, where he quickly completed a four-year education in only two years.

Thereafter, most remarkably, instead of using his hard-won education for purely personal gain, Iqbal dedicated the rest of his life to helping over 3,000 Pakistani child-slaves to escape to freedom, and began making speeches throughout the world about the vile child slave-labor trade. Iqbal's courage and selflessness inspired the creation of organizations such as Free The Children, a Canada-based charity, and the Iqbal Masih Shaheed Children Foundation, which has founded over 20 schools in Pakistan.

*“Children should pens in their hands, not tools.” ~ Iqbal Masih*



## *Hero #087: Naoto Matsumura*

The catastrophic events that occurred at Fukushima in March of 2011 marked a dramatic turning point in the life of former rice farmer Naoto Matsumura. The Tōhoku earthquake and its subsequent tsunami knocked out the power supply and cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, causing three of its four reactors to go into meltdown and leak massive amounts of radiation into the surrounding area. The government immediately ordered an emergency evacuation of the local population. As a result, tens of thousands of people hurriedly left their homes. Of course, thinking they would return soon, they also left their companion animals behind. And yet there was to be no returning, and so from that point onward, the ‘other’ life of Naoto Matsumura began ...

You see, after hearing the hydrogen explosions at the nuclear plant (only eight miles away from his home), Naoto and his parents had attempted to evacuate. And yet they were first turned away by a relative who feared they had been radioactively contaminated, and then by a nearby shelter because it was already full. So, having no other alternative, the Matsumaras simply returned to their home. Naoto’s parents left a month later to stay with his sister, and yet there was no room for his animals at her place, and so he decided to stay and care for them ... It didn’t take long for Naoto to realize that hundreds of nearby families had left behind their animals, and he gradually started caring for more & ore of them as well -- cows, pigs, cats, dogs, and even an ostrich (the sole survivor of a flock of 30 birds) from all throughout Tomioka; all left behind by owners who were initially told the evacuation would be temporary.

Of course, staying behind meant exposing himself to radiation and the government warned him of the risks, and yet Naoto remain unfazed, calmly saying that “they told me that I wouldn’t get sick for 30 or 40 years, and I’ll most likely be dead [of old age] by then anyway.” Tests now show that his body is “completely contaminated,” and yet he has no regrets ... Currently fifty-eight years old, Matsumura deeply loves the animals he cares for; assuring freedom to the independent ones, and loving care to all others who wish to live with him. He spends six to seven hours a day feeding as many as possible with supplies donated by support groups. He uses a solar panel to power his computer and cell phone and a kerosene heater and charcoal heated table to keep warm during the colder months.

*“From then on, I fed all the cats and dogs every day ... Everywhere I went there was always barking. Like 'we're thirsty' or 'we don't have any food' so I just kept making the rounds.” ~ Naoto Matsumura*









## *Hero #088: Thomas Merton ..*

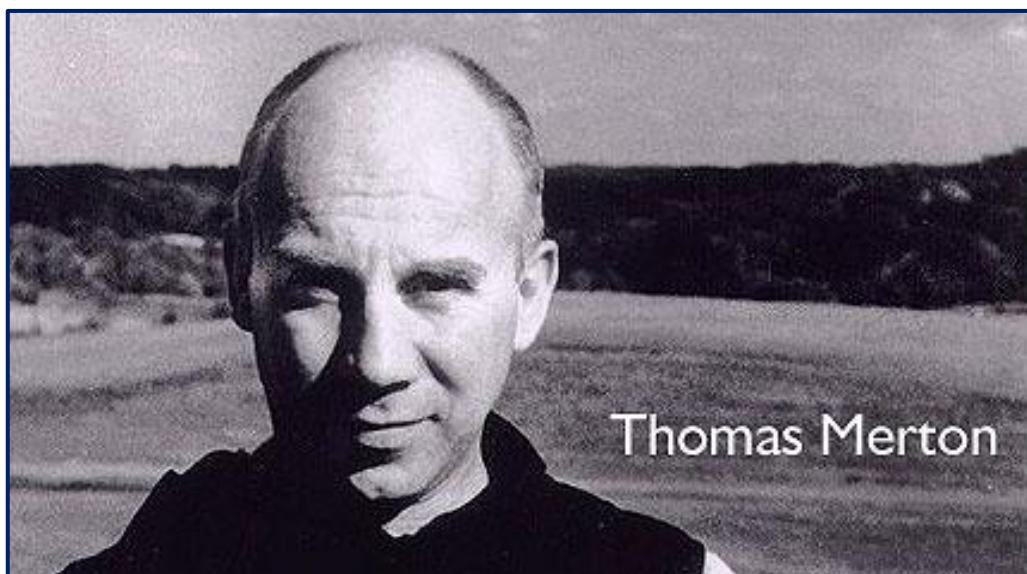
Born in 1915, Thomas Merton was an American Trappist monk, writer, mystic, poet, social activist, and student of comparative religion. He wrote more than 70 books (including his bestselling autobiography *Seven Storey Mountain*, published in 1948) over the course of his life, mostly on spirituality, social justice, and a form of pacifism that was quiet but staunch ...

By the 1960's, Merton had already arrived at a belief system that warmly encompassed all of humanity, and he became concerned about the world in general and its most pressing social issues, such as peace, racial tolerance, and social equality. He had by this time developed what can only be termed a “personal radicalism” – a belief system which had transcended his own personal religious ideology; one that was rooted above all in a non-violence that was as active as it was unconditional.

Merton was perhaps most interested in — and, of all of the Eastern traditions, wrote the most about — the concepts and tenants of Zen. Having studied the Desert Fathers and other Christian mystics as part of his monastic past, Merton had already developed an intimate understanding of what it was those men sought and to a degree what they experienced in their seeking. As such, it was perhaps easier for him than most to uncover the many parallels between the language of these Christian mystics and the language of the Zen philosophers.

Merton was also an avid champion of interfaith understanding, pioneering dialogue with prominent Asian spiritual figures. Walking his talk, he personally engaged in meaningful correspondence with prominent religious leaders from various other faiths, including the Dalai Lama, the Japanese writer D.T. Suzuki, and the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

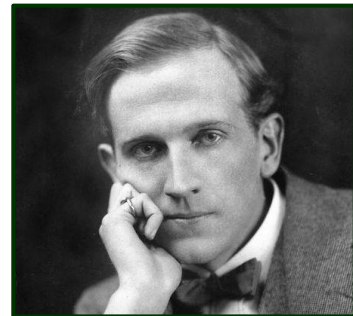
*“I am against war, against violent revolution, for peaceful settlement of differences, for nonviolent but nevertheless radical changes ... The truth that many people never understand, until it is too late, is that the more you try to avoid suffering the more you suffer, because insignificant things begin to torture you in proportion to your fear of being hurt ... A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for ... The beginning of Love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image ... To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell ... Love seeks one thing only: the good of the one loved. It leaves all the other secondary effects to take care of themselves. Love, therefore, is its own reward.” ~ Thomas Merton*



## Hero #089: A. A. Milne

Alan Alexander Milne was an English author, best known for his books about the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh. Even before the huge success of Pooh overshadowed all his previous work, Milne was a well-regarded writer (primarily as a playwright). Even more notably, after fighting in WWI in the British Army, Milne wrote a scathing denunciation of war titled *Peace with Honour* (1934). He retracted these views somewhat a few years later, when he re-enlisted and served in WWII in the British Home Guard – a domestic station that probably made it easier for him to rationalize the horrors of warfare he already knew so well ...

Interestingly enough, the success of his children's books was to become a source of considerable annoyance to Milne, whose self-avowed aim was to write whatever he pleased and who had, until then, found a ready audience for each literary change of direction he had made previously ... Also intriguing is the fact that his Pooh books ended up causing a rift between Milne and his son Christopher (the source of inspiration for Pooh's best friend, Christopher Robin), inspiring the two men to remain estranged for the better part of three decades ... And yet most importantly of all, despite all these moral vacillations, familial traumas, and personal disappointments, Milne's children's books remain a profoundly instructive testament to a deeper Goodness that resides within us all – waiting to be recognized, and waiting to be set free upon others; friends and strangers alike.



*“Love is taking a few steps backward — maybe even more — to give way to the happiness of the person you Love ... Just because an animal is large [or mean or greedy or dishonest], it doesn't mean he doesn't want kindness ... A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the difference ... You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.” ~ Winnie the Pooh*

*“Always remember: You're much braver than you believe, and much stronger than you seem.” ~ (Christopher Robin to Winnie the Pooh)*



## Hero #090: Monty Python

Monty Python was a British comedy troupe primarily composed of six men -- Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin. -- who conceived, wrote, and performed the sketch comedy show *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, which first aired on the BBC in 1969. Their skits uniquely combined brilliant comedic timing, insightful wit, audacious storytelling, and scathing social commentary – a combination which allowed “The Python Phenomenon” to branch out into more diverse venues, including stage shows, films, albums, books, and musicals. Indeed, the Pythons' influence on comedy was so far ranging and so profound that many have compared the same to the Beatles' influence on music ...

Their second film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* – a spoof of the legend of King Arthur, was a raging success, and yet it was their third movie, *The Life of Brian* – a parody on the life of Jesus Christ, that proved to be their most impressive work. The brilliance of the comedy in the latter aside, there are several reasons why it proved to be a monumental achievement. First and foremost, *The Life of Brian* had the courage and the resolve to challenge the religious cultural

norms of its day – norms that were still incredibly conservative at the time; norms which led 39 local authorities in Great Britain to either directly or indirectly ban its showing (Ireland & Norway banned it altogether, though the filmmakers used such close-mindedness to their advantage, with posters in Sweden reading “So funny, it was banned in Norway!”) ... In addition, despite the Monty Python crew all sharing a patent distrust of organized religion, they respectfully decided not to mock Jesus or any of his teachings in the film. (In all fairness, they frankly admitted afterwards that they could not think of anything legitimate to make fun of about him in the first place) ... Finally, they then went on to insightfully write & film a biting satire about the incredulity and hypocrisy of the followers of someone who had been mistaken for the “Messiah” (much like Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed in the Bible, ironically – see [Mark 10:18](#), [John 6:15](#) et al), but who actually had no desire to be followed as such.



*“I think that the real religion is about the understanding that if we can only still our egos for a few seconds, we might have a chance of experiencing something that is divine in nature. But in order to do that, we have to slice away at our egos and try to get them down to a manageable size ... So real religion is about reducing our egos, whereas all the churches are interested in is egotistical activities, like getting as many members and raising as much money and becoming as important and high-profile and influential as possible. All of which are egotistical attitudes. So how can you have an egotistical organization trying to teach a non-egotistical ideal? It makes no sense, unless you regard religion as crowd control, which I think most organized religion is — crowd control.” ~ John Cleese*



*“Too many people confuse being serious with being solemn ... He who laughs most, learns best.” ~ John Cleese*



## *Hero #091: Morrie Schwartz*

Morris “Morrie” Schwartz was an author and a sociology professor at Brandeis University. The subject of the best-selling book *Tuesdays with Morrie* (written by Mitch Albom), Morrie epitomized what it can mean to be a human being – via the joy with which he danced, via the earnestness with which he treated others, and via the grace and the dignity with which he faced his own death.

*“So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things ... How absurd it is that we individualize ourselves with our fences and hoarded possessions ... It's never too late to ask yourself if you really are the person you want to be, and if not, who you do want to be ... So after you have wept and grieved for your physical losses, it's time to cherish the functions and the life you have left ... Learn how to live and you'll know how to die; learn how to die, and you'll know how to live ... The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love, and thereby how to let love come in ... The best way to deal with life is to live in a fully conscious, fully compassionate, fully loving way. Don't wait until you're on your deathbed to recognize that this is the only way to truly live.” ~ via Morrie Schwartz*



## *Hero #092: Muhammad Ali*

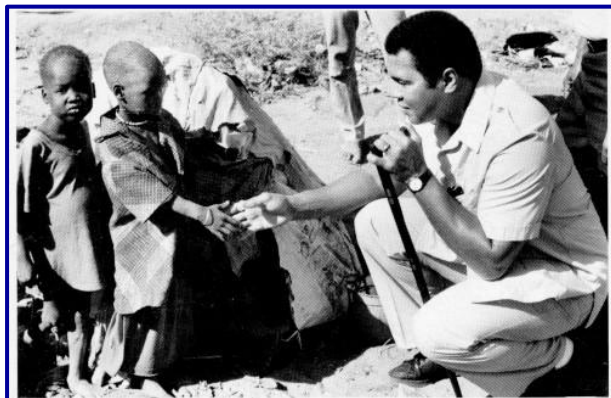
Born Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. in January of 1942, Ali is an American former professional boxer, generally considered among the greatest heavyweights in the sport's history. A controversial and polarizing figure during his early career, Ali is today widely regarded as much for the values he exemplified outside the boxing ring as he is revered for the immense skills he displayed inside it ...

At a time when most fighters let their managers do the talking, Ali thrived in the spotlight, where he was sometimes provocative, frequently outlandish, and always entertaining. He controlled most press conferences and interviews, and spoke freely about issues unrelated to boxing. Ali was an outspoken opponent of both racial inequality and the Vietnam War, and though he was drafted to fight in the latter, he refused to enter the armed forces. His status as a conscientious objector was at first denied, and he was stripped of his heavyweight title, lost his passport, and was denied the right to box in every state of the union. This unjust suspension lasted for four years -- the prime years of his athletic career -- as his case slowly worked its way through the appeals process of the farce that was (and still remains) the American "justice system" ... And yet this period of his life was anything but wasted, as Ali used the hiatus to speak out at colleges and universities across the country, openly criticizing the administration's war on Vietnam and advocating for racial justice. During this time, Ali's courage and unwavering principle inspired Martin Luther King, Jr. (who had previously been reluctant to address the Vietnam War for fear of alienating the Johnson Administration's support of the civil rights agenda) to voice his own opposition to the war as well ... In 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction in a unanimous 8-0 ruling, and his boxing career recommenced. After later retiring from boxing in 1981, Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome in 1984, a disease common to those suffering head trauma from activities such as boxing. Despite the progressively degenerative nature of his condition, Ali continued to be a public representative for peace and justice; traveling to Iraq in 1991 in an attempt to negotiate the release of American hostages, and to Afghanistan in 2002 as an official "U.N. Messenger of Peace."

*"Ali's actions changed my standard of what constituted an athlete's greatness. Possessing a killer jump shot or the ability to stop on a dime was no longer enough. What were you doing for the liberation of your people? What were you doing to help your country live up to the covenant of its founding principles?"*

*~ new York Times columnist William Rhodes*

*"There are more pleasant things to do than beat up people ... To be able to give away riches is mandatory if you wish to possess them. This is the only way that you will be truly rich ... Wars of nations are fought to change maps. But wars of poverty are*



*fought to map change ... Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths ... Friendship is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything ... I wish people would love everybody else the way they love me. It would be a better world." ~ Muhammad Ali*

## *Hero #093: Jorge Munoz*

Originally an illegal immigrant, Jorge is the founder of the *An Angel in Queens Foundation*, a non-profit organization that delivers free home-cooked meals to the poor in Queens, New York ...

In 2004, Muñoz began his Labor of Love, initially collecting food from local businesses and handing out meals to underprivileged people three nights a week. As time passed by, his mother and sister and some friends joined him in his endeavor, and he began offering food to the needy on a daily basis -- dinner seven nights a week and breakfast every Sunday morning.

Jorge uses donations and over half of his own salary as a school bus driver to support his selflessness. Since starting this humbling work, it is estimated that Munoz has fed well over 150,000 meals to the hungry people in his community.

*"I know these people are waiting for me, and I am concerned about them. You have to see their smiles, man. That's the way I get paid."* ~ Jorge Munoz





## *Hero #094: Dikembe Mutombo*

Born June of 1966, Dikembe Mutombo is a Congolese American ex-NBA professional basketball player. Now retired from professional sports, he has now become even more well-known for his humanitarian work ...

As a 7 ft 2 in, 260-pound center, Dikembe was one of the greatest shot blockers and defensive players of all time, winning the NBA Defensive Player of the Year Award a record-tying four times. He was also an eight-time All-Star in his 18 NBA seasons ... Before turning pro, Mutombo had attended Georgetown University on a USAID scholarship, originally intending to become a doctor. After seeing him on campus, however, John Thompson (then the Georgetown men's basketball coach) recruited Dikembe to play basketball. Though he was raised multilingual (speaking French, Spanish, Portuguese, Tshiluba, Swahili, Lingala and two other Central African dialects), Mutombo spoke almost no English when he arrived at Georgetown. And yet he was a quick study, and -- after persevering in Georgetown's ESL program -- he eventually became proficient in the English language, and graduated in 1991 with bachelor's degrees in both linguistics and diplomacy.

In 1997, while playing and starring for the Atlanta Hawks, Dikembe started the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation -- an organization designed to help improve living conditions in his native Democratic Republic of Congo. One of his first projects (and the one of which he is to this day most proud) was the completion of the 300-bed Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital (named for his mother, who died of a stroke in 1997) on the outskirts of his hometown, the Congolese capital of Kinshasa. Despite a series of construction delays, bureaucratic snafus and difficulties in finding sponsorship (Dikembe ended up funding over half of the \$29 million project himself), the hospital was completed in August of 2006, and has been serving the Congolese citizenry ever since ... On April 13, 2011, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health awarded Dikembe Mutombo the Goodermote Humanitarian Award "for his efforts to reduce polio globally as well as his work improving the health of neglected and under-served populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo" ... In 2012, the Mutombo Foundation, in partnership with Mutombo's alma mater, Georgetown University, began a new initiative, which now aims to provide care for visually impaired children from low-income families in the Washington, D.C. area ... Dikembe is also a longtime supporter of Special Olympics and is currently a member of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors, as well as one of the organization's Global Ambassadors.



*"After spending more than 17 years playing for the NBA, in the summertime I always came back to community service ... God put us here to prepare this place for the next generation. That's our job. Raising children and helping the community, that's preparing for the next generation."*

*~ Dikembe Mutombo*

## *Hero #095: Richard Nares*

Richard Nares lost his son in 2000 to a battle with cancer, and along the way met dozens of families with children fighting a similar fight – families that didn't have the means &/or the support to regularly get their children to treatment centers; single moms forced to take leave from jobs without pay, kids having to ride the bus alone to their chemotherapy appointments, siblings left home alone while their brothers or sisters went to the hospital. Heartbroken by the broken U.S. healthcare system, Nares decided to do something about it; originally heading to Rady Children's Hospital and giving in-need kids and their families rides on his spare time ...

Soon thereafter – when demand for his services began to outstrip his ability to meet them – he started the *Emilio Nares Foundation*, a multi-driver, non-profit organization that provides more than 2500 rides a year for low-income families with children battling cancer. In addition to the free rides, Nares' nonprofit provides support services and assistance to its clientele, many of whom do not speak English. It also provides translation services and an on-site resource center at Rady to help those in need navigate the often-complex insurance systems, pressing legal issues, and complicated medical diagnoses.



*"It's extremely tough these days, not just emotionally, but financially as well. Sometimes, both parents have to either leave their job or cut back severely. Some of them don't have an extra \$10 to pay for cafeteria food ... I didn't even know what a foundation was. But I saw there was a need and I wanted to address that need."* ~ Richard Nares

## *Hero #096: Kakenya Ntaiya*

Despite free primary education being mandated 10 years ago by the Kenyan government, educating girls is still not a priority for the rural Maasai culture. According to the Kenyan government, only 11% of Maasai girls in Kenya finish primary school. In addition, even though the practices of genital mutilation and child marriage are now illegal in Kenya, officials acknowledge that they both still go on, especially in rural tribal areas ... As Kakenya Ntaiya herself was preparing to endure the painful ritual of “female circumcision” in 1993, she developed a plan, negotiating a deal with her father -- threatening to run away from home unless he promised she could finish high school after the ceremony. She knew that once the cutting was complete, she was going to be married off, and her dreams of becoming a teacher were going to be cut off as well ...

Her bold move paid off, with her father upholding his end of the deal. Kakenya was indeed allowed to go to high school, where she excelled; earning a college scholarship in the United States. Her community held a fundraiser to raise money for her airfare, and before she left she promised she would return and help the village.

Over the decade that followed, Kakenya earned her degree, a job at the United Nations, and a doctorate in education. She returned to her village as promised, and opened the first primary school for girls in her village in 2009, the Kakenya Center for Excellence. Today, she is helping more than 150 girls receive the education and opportunities that she had to sacrifice so much to attain. Just 5 years old, the school already ranks among the top in its district, and each year more than 100 girls apply for the 30 spots available in each new class. Parents who enroll their daughters must agree that their children will not be subjected to the pain of genital mutilation or the bondage of early marriage.

*"I came back so girls don't have to negotiate like I did to achieve their dreams. That's why I wake up every morning." ~ Kakenya Ntaiya*





## Hero #097: "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?"

Released in 2000, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* is an adventure comedy film written, produced, edited, and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. Set in rural Mississippi during the Great Depression, the film's story is a modern satire loosely based on Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. It follows the tale of three verbally proficient yet intellectually challenged escaped convicts as they simultaneously (and most metaphorically) run from the authorities while seeking a non-existent buried treasure. Along the way, of course -- just like the rest of us ultimately will, they end up rediscovering what life's real Treasure truly is.

Interestingly enough, at least according to Coen brothers, Tim Blake Nelson (who played Delmar O'Donnell in the film, and who has a degree in Classics from Brown University) was the only person on the entire movie set who had actually read Homer's *Odyssey* in its entirety.

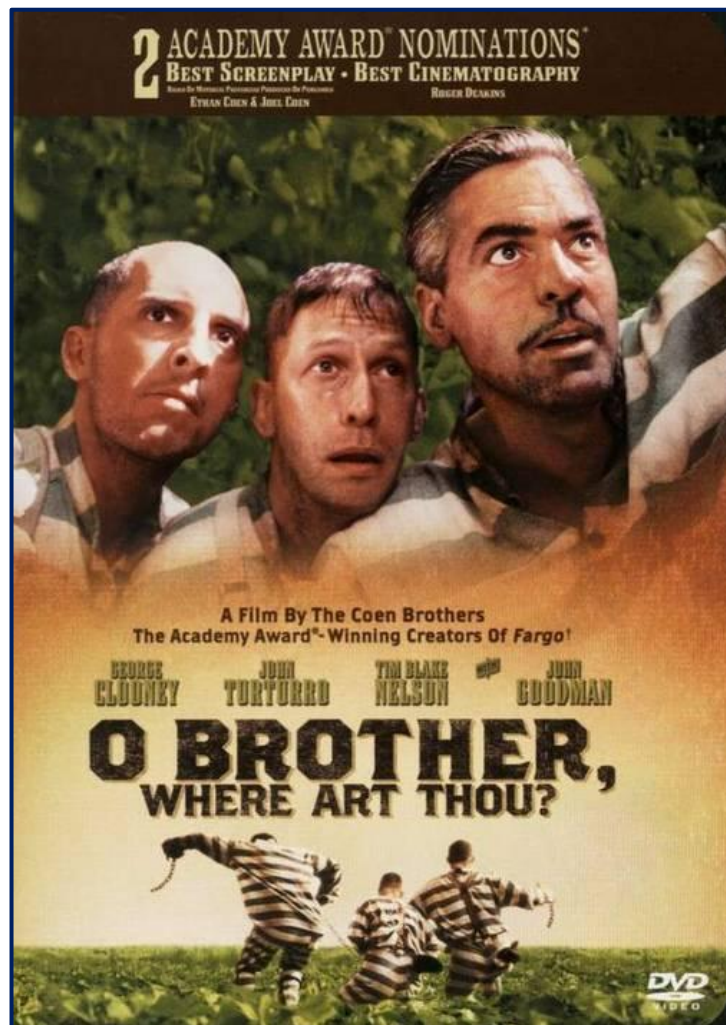
Much of the music used in the film is period folk music, and the truly splendid soundtrack received much-deserved notoriety after the release of the film. The movie was also the first to extensively use digital color correction to give the scenes a sepia-tinted glow.

*"You seek a great fortune,  
and you will find a fortune,  
though it will not be the  
fortune you seek. But first --  
first you must travel a long  
and difficult road; a road  
fraught with peril ...*

*I cannot tell you how long  
this road shall be, but fear  
not the obstacles in your  
path, for Fate has  
vouchsafed your reward.*

*Though the road may  
wind, yea, and though your  
hearts might grow weary,  
still shall ye follow that road,  
even unto your salvation."*

*~ Joel & Ethan Coen*



## *Hero #098: Ken O'Keefe*

Kenneth Nichols O'Keefe is an American-Irish-Palestinian citizen, a peace activist, and a former United States Marine and Gulf War veteran. By his own admission, he was discharged from the U.S. Marines because he “spoke out openly about abuse of power by my 'superiors,' and as a consequence I paid a heavy price. I realized that honor and integrity were virtues which are often punished rather than rewarded and the Marines supplied me with my first serious taste of injustice” ...

In 1996, O'Keefe created a marine conservation social enterprise “to protect and defend the marine environment” in Hawaii. This enterprise conducted ghost net recoveries and rescues of endangered Green Sea Turtles entangled in fishing line. During this time O'Keefe became a pioneer in sea turtle rescues in Hawaii and led a campaign to create a marine sanctuary (Pupukea MLC) on the North Shore of Oahu ... Later, in 1998, he joined an anti-whaling campaign in which he was bloodied when attempting to retrieve a Sea Shepherd Conservation Society boat of which he was a crew member. He remained with Sea Shepherd for a time and was mentored by the great Paul Watson himself, eventually serving as the regional director for the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in Hawaii.

In December of 2002, O'Keefe started the Human Shield to Iraq, a group that intended to “make it politically impossible to bomb” Iraq by placing western civilians as “shields” at non-military locations. About 75 of these activists – including O'Keefe -- traveled over land from London to Baghdad in two double-decker buses. At the time O'Keefe correctly argued that the people of Iraq would suffer the most from a war, even while publicly acknowledging that Hussein was a “violent dictator”. At its height about 300 human shields were in Baghdad, but due to challenges internally – including O'Keefe's eventual deportation from Iraq, the numbers dwindled. In June 2010, O'Keefe continued his humanitarian peacekeeping efforts by being among the passengers who clashed with the Israeli military during the *Mavi Marmara* Gaza flotilla raid. In the course of the clash, O'Keefe was involved in providing initial first aid to a seriously wounded passenger, as well as disarming two Israeli commandos. Afterwards, O'Keefe was among those arrested and detained in Israel ... In October of that same year, O'Keefe joined the “Road to Hope”, a humanitarian aid convoy delivering vital supplies to the occupants of Gaza ... O'Keefe continues to speak out for justice and freedom – especially in the name of those still denied the same – to this very day.



## Hero #099: Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine was an English-born American political activist, philosopher, political theorist, and revolutionary. Considered to be one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Paine authored the two most influential pamphlets at the start of the American Revolution, and was a primary source of inspiration for the rebels in 1776 to declare independence from Great Britain. His ideas reflected the higher ideals of justice, equality, freedom, and transnational human rights ...

Born in Thetford in the English county of Norfolk, Paine migrated to the British American colonies in 1774 with the help of Benjamin Franklin, arriving just in time to participate in the American Revolution. Virtually every rebel read (or listened to a reading of) his powerful pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), a writing which crystallized the rebellious demand for independence from Great Britain. One distinctive idea in *Common Sense* was the reflection of Paine's beliefs regarding the peaceful nature of republics; an early and strong conception of what scholars would come to call “democratic peace theory” ... He also propagated other highly profound ideas, among them, **A**) that “ordinary people” can indeed make sound judgments on major political issues, **B**) that there exists a body of popular wisdom that is readily apparent to anyone & everyone, and **C**) that common sense could be used to refute the false claims of traditional institutions. These ideals empowered the common man and became powerful weapons people used to delegitimize monarchy and overturn prevailing social structures – in essence, paving the way for the potential blossoming of freedom, equality, and democracy.

Paine persisted in being a radical voice in Britain even after the Revolution. In 1792, he issued his *Rights of Man --Combining Principle and Practice*, in which he suggested a representative government with enumerated social programs to remedy the intense poverty of commoners. Radically reduced in price to ensure unprecedented circulation, this pamphlet was sensational in its impact and gave birth to numerous reform movements. An indictment against Paine for seditious libel followed its publication, and government agents followed Paine wherever he went and instigated mobs, hate meetings, and burnings in effigy. Undaunted by these oppressions, a fierce pamphlet war resulted, in which Paine was defended and assailed in dozens of other works. The authorities ultimately chased Paine out of Great Britain, tried him in absentia, and found him guilty. That summer, he answered the sedition and libel charges thus: “If, to expose the fraud and imposition of monarchy ... to promote universal peace, civilization, and commerce, and to break the chains of political superstition, and raise degraded man to his proper rank; if these things be libelous ... then let the name of ‘libeler’ be engraved on my tomb” ... In December of 1793, Paine was arrested and was taken to Luxembourg Prison in Paris. While in prison, he continued to work on his masterpiece *The Age of Reason* (1794). James Monroe used his diplomatic connections to get Paine released in November 1794, whereafter *The Age of Reason* – which championed deism (the belief that the Divine is infused in everything, and directly witnessable within the grandeur of Nature), promoted reason, encouraged free thought, and argued against institutionalized religion (the Christianity of his day in particular) -- again made him notorious, and he was ostracized for his intellectual & moral courage (even in the United States after his return there in 1802) until his death in 1809.

*“Thomas Paine had passed the legendary limit of life. One by one most of his old friends and acquaintances had deserted him. Maligned on every side, execrated, shunned and abhorred – his virtues denounced as vices – his services forgotten – his character blackened, he preserved the poise and balance of his soul. He was a victim of the people, but his convictions remained unshaken. He was still a soldier in the army of freedom, and still tried to enlighten and civilize those who were impatiently waiting for his death. Even those who loved their enemies hated him, their friend – the friend of the whole world – with all their hearts.” ~ Robert Ingersoll*





## *Hero #100: Pancho Stierle*

Francisco ‘Pancho’ Ramos Stierle is a Mexican-born full-time community activist and humanitarian. Known for his easy smile and kind heart, Pancho’s mission is “to live in radical joyous shared servanthood to unify humanity.” He became a known figure of the Occupy movement after being arrested\* while meditating during the dismantling of the Occupy Oakland Camp (pictured below) ... While a doctoral student of astrophysics at the University of California at Berkeley, after realizing that his work was serving one of the institution’s facades to create “safer nuclear weapons,” Pancho resigned from the program and became involved in community organizing. An avid student of Gandhi, Pancho believes that “if we are working for liberation, we better stop paying for war,” and that his energy would be better used encouraging “matching the collective madness with a collective love.” His activism work has focused on issues of human rights, nonviolence, restorative justice, immigration, permaculture, and the development of a gift economy. He has worked with youth and supported families affected by Arizona’s SB1070 law. He is involved in Free Farm, a San Francisco garden distributing vegetables to city-dwellers. He has participated in movements to democratize the University of California system, protect old growth trees, facilitate urban farming, and move past youth violence. Still actively involved in the Occupy Movement, Pancho’s view is that 10 percent of the community’s energy ought to go toward protests, marches, boycotts and civil disobedience, while 90 percent of it should go toward the construction of viable alternatives to the currently rotten system.



*“The more we concentrate on the constructive program, the more we’re going to have food sovereignty and water sovereignty. And we will be ready to make a bonfire of passports and visas and GMO seeds. But first we have to have our own food system, our own justice system, our own restorative system ... If police are stepping up their violence, we need to go and step up our nonviolence ... If you have the riot police coming with tear gas and pepper spray and all their weapons, we have a more powerful weapon, courage and stillness — It’s kindness, it’s compassion, it’s generosity. It’s the small things, but when you add them up it makes a pretty strong army.” ~ Pancho Stierle*

\*Considered a “high profile undocumented protester” by authorities, after his arrest he was turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody rather than being released on bail. A campaign was launched for his release, including a Change.org petition that quickly gathered thousands of signatures ... In a statement from jail, he declared “When the city of Oakland decided to raid Occupy Oakland, it spent around 2 million dollars to do it. On the same day, Oakland closed five public schools. This is the same thing happening across the country. We do not have an economic crisis. We have a crisis of priorities.”

## Hero #101: Jadav Payeng

Padma Shri Jadav Payeng is a Mishing tribe (India) environmental activist, who over the course of several decades planted and tended trees on a sandbar of the river Brahmaputra – single-handedly transforming the once-barren piece of land into a lush forest reserve. The forest, called Molai, now encompasses an area of about 1,360 acres ...

It was 1979 when Payeng, then age 16, encountered a large number of snakes that had died due to excessive heat after floods washed them onto a tree-less sandbar, a mini-tragedy that inspired him to plant 20 bamboo seedlings there shortly thereafter. Over the following 40 years, Jadav frequently returned to the sandbar, always planting trees when he did so.

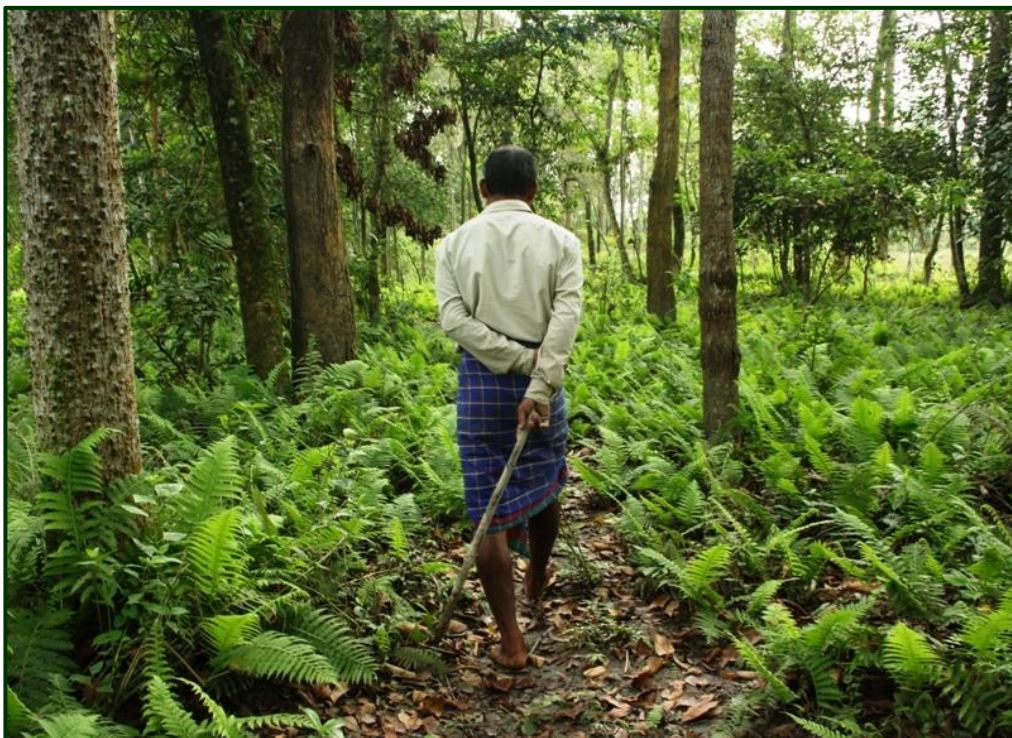


Today his Molai Forest is home to Bengal tigers, Indian rhinoceros, over 100 deer, hundreds of rabbits, dozens of monkeys, and several species of birds, including a large number of vultures. There are now several thousand trees thriving there as well, and Bamboo alone covers an area of over 300 hectares. A herd of around 100 elephants also regularly visits the forest every year and generally stay for around six months



per visit. Having achieved such a grand success, Jadav is aiming to expand his efforts to other sandbars nearby; also turning them from lifeless deserts to rich forests in the process.

*“I asked my elders, what they would do if all of us died one day, like these snakes. They just laughed and smirked -- but I knew I had to make the planet greener.” ~ Jadav Payeng*





## *Hero #102: Peace Artist*

Peace Artist (born Neal Yasami) is an American artist, gymnastics coach, musician, humanitarian, and peace activist. After years of seeking meaning in his own life – after years of wondering what it was that he could do to make the world a more peaceful place, Peace (as he is often called) decided to give up almost everything he owned and set forth to run -- and paint -- across the United States. And that is what he did -- from August of 2011 through July of 2012 he ran over 6000 miles; from the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State through Oregon and down the entire coast of California, across Texas and Arizona and New Mexico, through Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama – and finally ending up in Savannah, Georgia ... He did so alone, he did so without money, he did so pushing his few remaining possessions (mostly art supplies) in a stroller, and he did so for Peace.

He ran when it was time to run, he paused when it was time to pause (engaging hundreds of communities with a multitude of small-yet-selfless acts of service), and he painted when it was time to paint (creating and giving away almost 500 paintings and sketches along the way) ... He bravely set forth into the unknown to make this world a better place – spreading the all-important message of humility and courage and service and kindness; for lack of a better term, spreading the message of Love. And make this world a better place he certainly did. His journey helped ease the burdens of the thousands of people he encountered along the way, and via the Internet\* continues to inspire many thousands more to live more Caring & Peace-filled lives themselves.



*“‘Why are you doing this?’ is the most common question I’m asked. I’ve had lots of answers to that question. The real reason I did this is that I couldn’t think of anything else that made as much sense. I tried to think of the biggest thing that I could do for peace, and this was it. I couldn’t sit back and do nothing ... If I continued to do nothing to stop the wars of the world, the senseless killing and hurting of children, I felt as if I was complicit in the act. I might as well be pulling the trigger.”*

*~ Peace Artist*





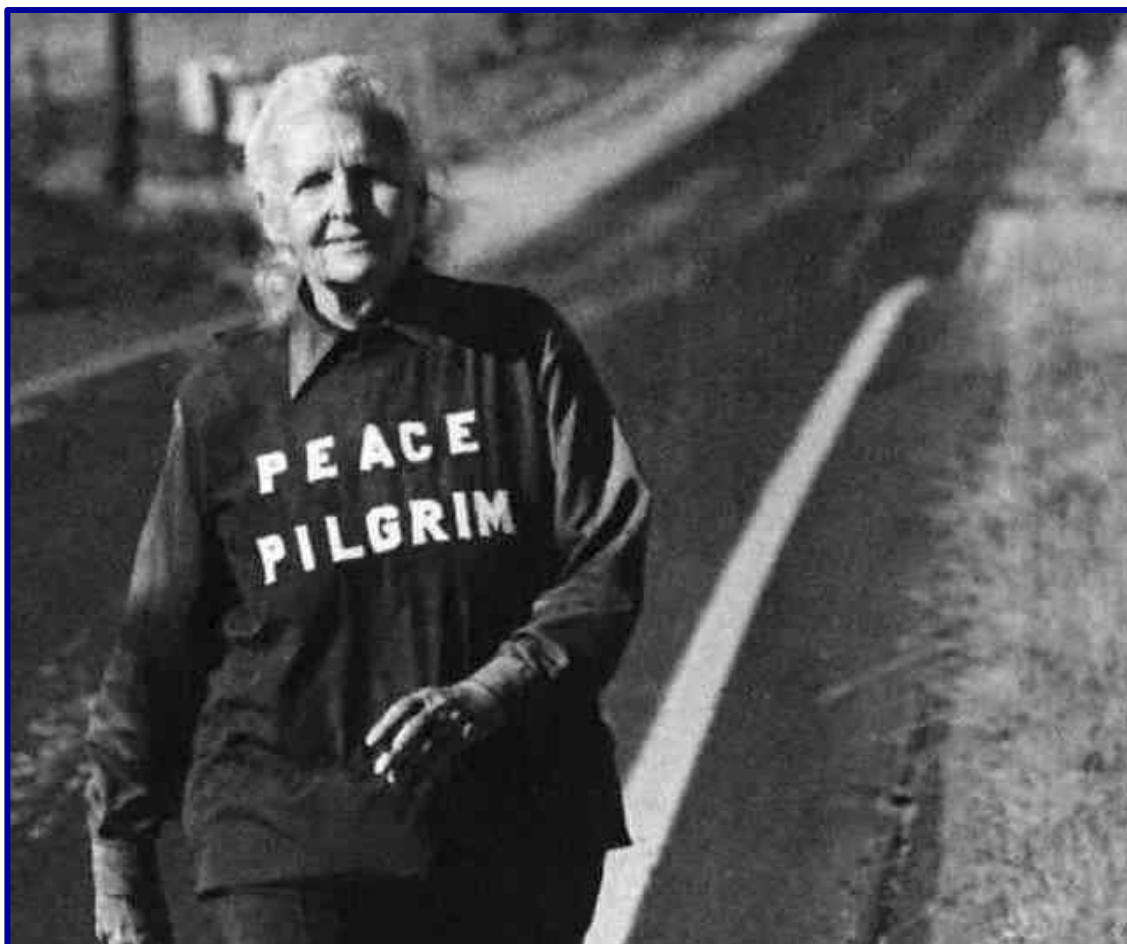
*“It all started with gratitude. It all started when I became completely aware that everything in this life is a gift ... yes, the bad too. I became aware that every experience is just that, an opportunity, a “happening”, an adventure. The only question then became what to do with this life? Having awakened to the possibilities, only one thing seemed right: Love. And from this realization my credo was born: **“This is the way of The Peace Artist – It all begins with Gratitude: Love, Help, Make Art, Make Peace.”** Nothing has changed since then. I haven’t had any extra moments of epiphany, the heavens haven’t opened, and frankly I don’t feel particularly different. And yet I AM different. I have been profoundly different every day since I started to truly Care; Care for those who love me, Care for those who are indifferent, and Care for those who hate me. And since I have begun to do so – since I began to truly and actively Care for a world that has in many ways lost care for itself, I am different ... In those moments I choose to deeply Care, I am what Love is supposed to look like. In those moments when I truly Care – without hope or expectation or worry or self defense -- I become Love itself.” ~ via Peace Artist*

## *Hero #103: Peace Pilgrim*

Peace Pilgrim was a woman who walked thousands of miles for Peace, penniless and home-free. And she did so *for 28 years* (from 1953 to 1981) -- sleeping only where offered shelter and eating only when offered food; always gently sharing the message of radical Kindness; of forgiving our enemies, of caring for strangers, of serving our community, and of building up our friends.

Years ago, when my own species had me feeling a bit lost in despair, she gave me hope for our future ... She gave me hope then; and she gives me hope still.

*“To attain inner peace you must actually give your life, not just your possessions. When you at last give your life - bringing into alignment your beliefs and the way you live then, and only then, can you begin to find real inner peace ... Keep your feet on the ground and your thoughts at lofty heights ... No one can find inner peace except by working, not in a self-centered way, but for the whole human family ... We are all cells in the body of Humanity ... The way of peace is the way of Love. This is the way of peace: Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love ... Pure love is a willingness to give without a thought of receiving anything in return.” ~ Peace Pilgrim*





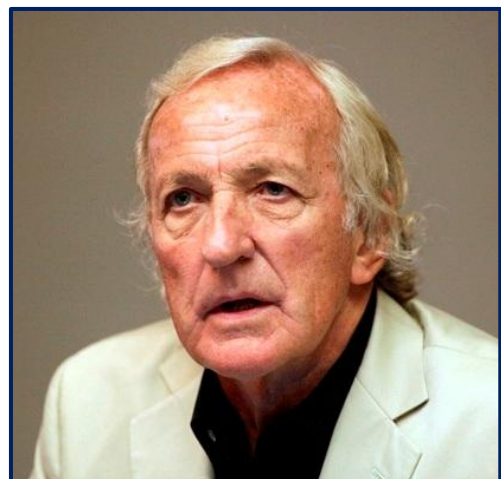
## Hero #104: John Pilger

John Richard Pilger is an Australian journalist (now based in the United Kingdom, where he won Britain's Journalist of the Year Award in both 1967 and 1978) and documentary film maker who has long been a strong critic American, Australian and British foreign policies; all of which he (quite correctly) considers to be driven primarily by an oligarchic imperialist agenda. His career as a documentary film maker began with *The Quiet Mutiny* (1970), made during one of his visits to Vietnam, and has continued with over fifty documentaries since.

In 1979, Pilger and two colleagues (documentary film-maker David Munro and photographer Eric Piper) entered Cambodia in the wake of the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime. They made photographs and reports that became world exclusives. They also produced a documentary, *Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia*, which brought to people's living rooms the suffering of the Cambodian people. During the filming of *Cambodia Year One*, the team were warned that Pilger was on a Khmer Rouge 'death list.' Indeed, in one incident shortly thereafter, they narrowly escaped death by ambush ... Following the showing of *Year Zero*, some \$45 million was raised, unsolicited -- in mostly small donations, including almost £4 million raised by schoolchildren in the UK. These monies funded the first substantial relief effort to Cambodia, including the shipment of life-saving medical supplies, and clothing to replace the black uniforms people had been forced to wear ... Pilger has also long criticized aspects of Australian government policy, particularly what he (again correctly) regards as the systemic racism it inflicts upon the country's indigenous population, and also travelled to East Timor and clandestinely shot a documentary focusing on the brutal Indonesian occupation of East Timor, which began in 1975. The film, entitled *Death of a Nation*, significantly contributed to an international outcry which ultimately led to Indonesian withdrawal from East Timor, and that country's eventual independence in 2000.

But Pilger's influence didn't stop there. His documentary *The War on Democracy* (2007) was Pilger's first film to be released in the cinema. According to Andrew Billen of *The Times*, it proved to be "an unremitting assault on American foreign policy since 1945." The film boldly explores the role of U.S. interventions, overt and covert, in toppling a series of governments in Central and South America; interventions which placed "a succession of favorably disposed bullies in control of America's Latino backyard." Among other things, it exposes the U.S. role in the 1973 overthrow of democratically elected Salvador Allende in Chile, a leader who was then replaced by one of the vilest dictators the world has ever seen – Augusto Pinochet ... Thereafter, during the presidential campaign of Barack Obama in 2008, Pilger courageously (and again, correctly) criticized Obama, accurately predicting both that he was but "a glossy Uncle Tom who would bomb Pakistan" and that his primary theme "was the renewal of America as a dominant, avaricious bully." After Obama was elected and took office in 2009, Pilger avoided pandering to the new leader's popularity, and was one of the few with the temerity to call it like it was; stating that, "In his first 100 days, Obama has excused torture, opposed *habeas corpus* and demanded a far more secret government."

*"The major western democracies are moving towards corporatism. Democracy has become a business plan, with a bottom line for every human activity, every dream, every decency, every hope. The main parliamentary parties are now devoted to the same economic policies — socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor — and the same foreign policy of servility to endless war. This is not democracy. It is to politics what McDonalds is to food ... We are beckoned to see the world through a one-way mirror, as if we are threatened and innocent and the rest of humanity is threatening and wretched ... Our memory is struggling to rescue the truth that human rights were not handed down as privileges from a parliament, or a boardroom, or an institution, but rather that peace is only possible with justice, and with the information that gives us the power to act justly." ~ John Pilger*





## *Hero #105: Brad Pitt*

Born in December of 1963, Brad Pitt is an outstanding American actor -- starring in, among other films, *A River Runs Through It*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Seven*, *12 Monkeys*, "Seven Years in Tibet", "Fight Club", "Spy Game", "Babel", "The Curious Case of *Benjamin Button*", *Moneyball*, and *The Tree of Life*. He is also an accomplished film producer (including *The Departed* & *12 Years a Slave*), and most importantly -- and most impressively -- is a big-hearted humanitarian, a big-tipper, and a big fan of spontaneous acts of Kindness ...

Pitt is known not only for being a father who loves his children (six of them no less -- two with Jolie and four adopted), but also for his humility as well as his charity work for & large donations to several humanitarian organizations, among them: the Make It Right Foundation -- that he founded to build green homes for the victims of Hurricane Katrina (and now also for impoverished members of the Montana Sioux and Assiniboine Native American tribes), the Jolie-Pitt Foundation -- that he co-founded with his wife to help eradicate extreme rural poverty & conserve wildlife (which has donated sizable sums of money to Doctors Without Borders, Global Action for Children, and the U.N. refugee agency helping Pakistanis displaced by fighting between troops and Taliban militants), and the ONE Campaign -- that combats AIDS & poverty in developing countries.

Also, in May of 2007, Pitt and his wife donated \$1 million to three organizations in Chad and the Sudan that were dedicated to helping those people affected by the crisis in the Darfur region ... And as if that wasn't enough, Pitt, along with several others (including Matt Damon & Don Cheadle), helped co-found Not On Our Watch -- an organization that focuses global attention on stopping "mass atrocities."

*"I don't care what I look like; I try to be a good person." ~ Brad Pitt*

*"Our boy's from Vietnam and our daughter's from Ethiopia, and our girl is from Namibia and our son is from Cambodia ... and they're all brothers and sisters." ~ Brad Pitt*



## *Hero #106: Chad Pregracke*

Raised in East Moine, Illinois -- with the Mississippi River practically in his backyard, Chad Pregracke has made it his life's work to clean up that and many other great American waterways. As a teenager, Chad worked as a commercial diver, and as he did so, he began to notice the heaps of debris in and along the banks of his fabled Mississippi -- a river that supplies drinking water to 18 million people in more than 50 U.S. cities.

With persistence, sincerity and a lot of moxie, Pregracke got a small grant in 1997 and spent that summer cleaning a 35-mile stretch of the river by himself. He would transport the trash he collected by boat and then sort it on his parents' lawn to thereafter be recycled. By year's end, he had single-handedly pulled around 45,000 pounds of trash out of the river. It was a dirty job, but Pregracke took it on because he realized that no one else was doing it. "The garbage got into the water one piece at a time," he said. "And that's the only way it was going to come out."

These days removing debris from riverways has become Chad's life mission. Given the moniker "The Rivers' Garbageman," He lives on a barge about nine months out of the year with members of his 12-person crew. Together, they organize community volunteer cleanups along rivers throughout the United States. What began as a solo effort 16 years ago has now grown, and over the years it has been Chad's energy, enthusiasm and dedication that have helped it to do so. To date, about 70,000 volunteers have joined his crusade, helping him collect more than 7 million pounds of garbage from 23 different rivers, including his beloved Mississippi.

*"We are creating a chance for people to go out there and do something positive. Talking is great, but it doesn't do much ... Action is what I'm all about." ~ Chad Pregracke*

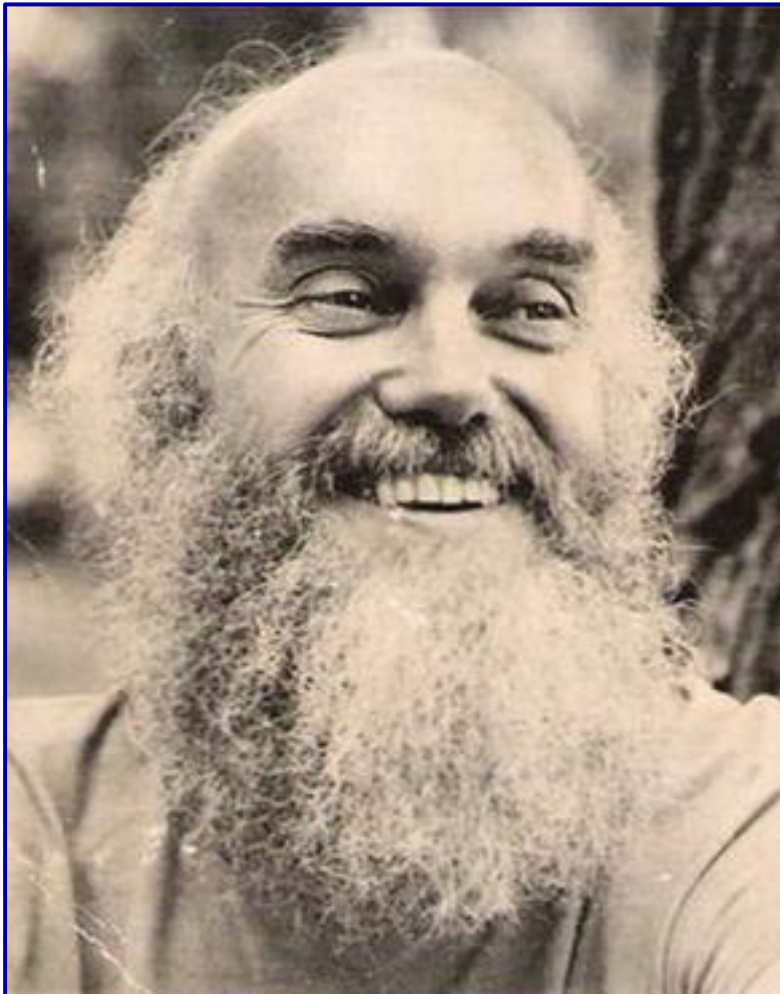


## *Hero #107: Ram Dass*

Ram Dass (born Richard Alpert) is an American spiritual teacher and the author of the 1971 book *Be Here Now*. While he is perhaps best known for his personal and professional associations with Timothy Leary in the early 1960's and for his travels to India thereafter, it is his gentle insight into the human condition that warrants more attention, along with his helping to found the Seva Foundation (best known for its work restoring eyesight to over 3 million blind people suffering from cataract blindness in places like Tibet, Nepal, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and sub-Saharan Africa) and the Hanuman Foundation (focused on the spiritual well-being humanity via improvements in education, media-access, and community service programs).

He also still serves on the faculty of the Metta Institute, where he provides training on compassionate care for the dying ... It is worth noting that over the course of his life since the inception of his foundation in 1974, Ram Dass has given all of his book royalties and profits from teaching to his Foundation and other charitable causes.

*“I’m not interested in being a ‘lover’ -- I’m only interested in being Love ... We are all affecting the world in every moment, whether we mean to or not. Our actions and states of mind matter, because we are so deeply interconnected with it all ... The most important aspect of real Love is not in giving or receiving: it’s in the Being. When I need love from others, or need to give love to others, I’m caught in an unstable situation, and suffering ensues. Being in Love -- rather than giving or taking love, on the other hand, is the only thing that provides real Peace. This being in Love means seeing the Beloved all around me, and then acting accordingly.” ~ via Ram Dass*





## *Hero #108: Robert Redford*

Charles Robert Redford Jr. is an American actor, director, producer, environmentalist, and philanthropist. He is also the founder of the Sundance Film Festival ... Redford is an avid environmentalist and remains a trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council. He is also a staunch supporter of Native American rights, LGBT rights, and the fine arts. He created the Sundance Institute for the discovery and development of independent artists; to bring together artists, scientists and policymakers to discuss and discover new solutions to climate change; and to air environmentally conscious films and television programs.

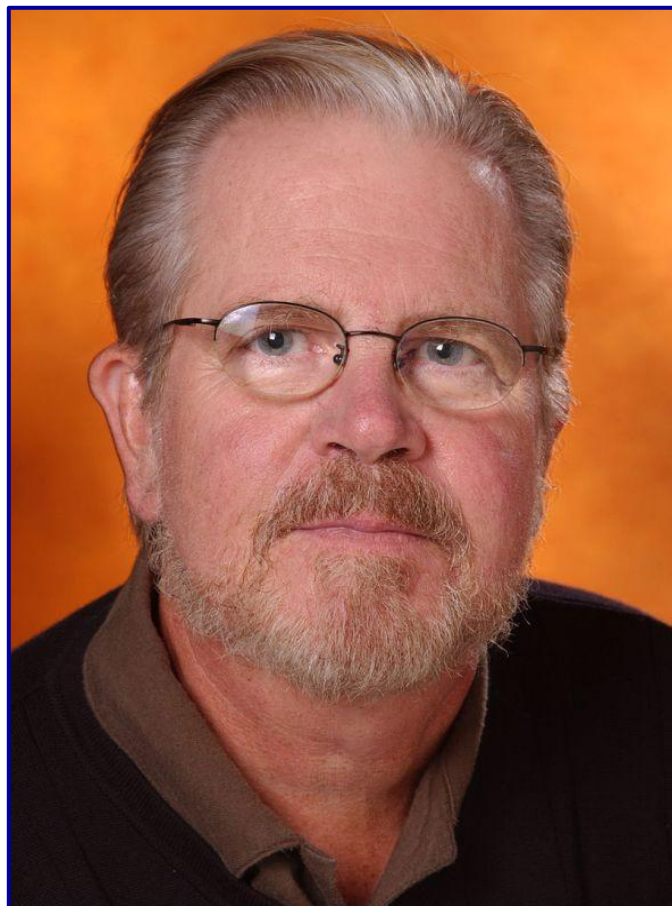
*“The way you really find out about a person’s seriousness about a cause is how long they stay with it when the spotlight gets turned off. You see a lot of celebrities switch gears. They go from the environment to animal rights to obesity or whatever. That is something I don’t have a lot of respect for ... What we are currently living with is the result of human choices, and it can be changed simply by making better, wiser choices ... I have a very low regard for cynics. I think cynicism is the beginning of dying ... Problems can become opportunities when the right people come together ... If you can do more, you should do more ... Have a strong vision about the story you want to tell, and then get out there and tell it.” ~ via Robert Redford*



## *Hero #109: Tom Regan*

Tom Regan was an American animal rights activist and philosopher who specialized in animal rights theory. He was professor emeritus of philosophy at North Carolina State University, where he taught from 1967 until his retirement in 2001. From 1985, he also served with his wife as co-founder and co-president of the Culture and Animals Foundation, a nonprofit organization “committed to fostering the growth of intellectual and artistic endeavors united by a positive concern for animals” ... Regan was the author of numerous books on the philosophy of animal rights, including the quite brilliant *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), one of a handful of studies that have profoundly and significantly influenced the modern animal rights movement. In these, he argued that non-human animals are what he called the “subjects-of-a-life”, just as humans are, and that if we want to ascribe value to all human beings regardless of their ability to be rational agents, then to be consistent, we must similarly ascribe it to sentient non-humans as well.

*“To be 'for animals' is not to be 'against humanity.' To require others to treat animals justly, as their rights require, is not to ask for anything more nor less in their case than in the case of any human to whom just treatment is due. The animal rights movement is a part of, not opposed to, the human rights movement ... We as humans of integrity must be prepared to look honestly at the answer when we ask ourselves: How would we fare psychologically if our slaughterhouses all stood prominently in every town square and their walls were all made of glass? ... Being kind to animals is not enough. Avoiding cruelty is not enough. Housing animals in more comfortable, larger cages is not enough. Whether we exploit animals to eat, to wear, to entertain us, or to learn, the truth of animal rights requires empty cages, not larger cages ... It is not an act of kindness to treat animals respectfully. It is an act of justice.” ~ via Tom Regan*



## *Hero #110: Don Ritchie*

Born in 1925, Don Ritchie was an Australian who, over a 45+ year period of time, officially saved 160 people from suicide (although those close to him claim that number is actually closer to 400) ...

Ritchie resided next to The Gap, a famous cliff in Sydney, Australia, known for multiple suicide attempts. After witnessing several people leap to their deaths there, he began to keep his eye out for potential suicides. Whenever he would see someone suspiciously close to the edge of the cliff, he would simply saunter over to them, make gentle conversation about their troubles, ask them if there was anything he could do to help, and then invite them inside for a cup of tea. With this simple yet brave technique, Don was able to smoothly convince hundreds of people from taking their own lives.

In 2006, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for these rescues, and Don & his wife Moya were also named “Citizens of the Year” for 2010 by Woollahra Council, the local government authority responsible for The Gap. He also received the Local Hero Award for Australia in 2011, with the National Australia Day Council noting: “Don's kind words and invitations into his home in times of trouble have made an enormous difference ... With such simple actions, Don has saved an extraordinary number of lives.”<sup>2</sup>

Don passed away quietly in 2012, at the age of 86.



*“Always remember the power of the simple smile,  
a helping hand, a listening ear and a kind word.”*

*~ Don Ritchie*



## *Hero #111: Stephen Ritz*

Ritz is a South Bronx teacher & administrator who believes that inner city students shouldn't have to leave their urban communities to learn about life or live a full one -- and one of the most effective methods he uses to bring these Truths across is community gardening.

Ritz's extended family of students and community volunteers have grown over 30,000 pounds of vegetables in the Bronx while generating extraordinary academic performance at the same time. His Bronx classroom features an indoor edible wall which routinely generates enough produce to feed 450 students healthy meals, while simultaneously training a young, talented, nationally certified workforce. Ritz's efforts have raised average daily attendance levels in his school from 40% to 93% daily, helped create and fund youth jobs, captured the U.S. EPA Award for transforming mindsets and landscapes in NYC, and helped earn his school the first ever Citywide Award of Excellence from the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health. Stephen attributes these results directly to his students growing vegetables in school. His speech at Columbia University, "From Crack to Cucumbers" resulted in a national following. Recently dubbed "the Pied Piper of Peas" by Lorna Sass, Ritz has just launched Green Bronx Machine to a national audience and has signed on over 5,000 local followers in several months. Ritz was also recently announced as a national Green Apple Education Ambassador for the U.S. Green Building Council, and is working diligently on embedding the concepts of sustainability and environmental justice into American K-12 programming and beyond.

*"Black field, brown field, toxic waste field, battlefield ...  
We're proving in the Bronx that you can grow anywhere."*

*~ Stephen Ritz*



## *Hero #112: Fred Rogers*

Fred Rogers was an American television personality who was most famous for creating, composing the theme music for, and hosting the educational television series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* (1968–2001); a show which allowed the millions of children who watched it to bear witness to – and benefit from – Roger’s honest directness, his grandfatherly kind-heartedness, and his overflowing positivity. Also of note, he never once used his popular platform to proselytize his religious beliefs, and this despite the fact that he was an ordained Presbyterian minister ... Just as importantly, he was also invested heavily away from television various public causes -- including improvements for children’s education, world peace, and veganism (which he knew as “vegetarianism”, openly stating “I don’t want to eat anything that has a mother”).

*“When I say it's you I like, I'm talking about that part of you that knows that life is far more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch -- that deep part of you that allows you to stand for those things without which humankind cannot survive; love that conquers hate, peace that rises triumphant over war, and justice that proves more powerful than greed.” ~ Fred Rogers*

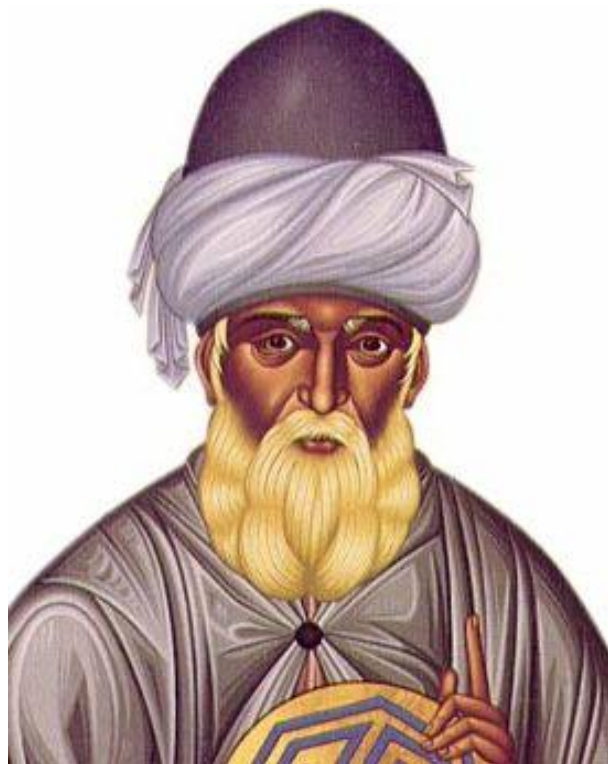


## *Hero #113: Rumi*

Born in late September of 1207, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic. Immensely popular in Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, the United States, and South Asia, Rumi's importance & reverence clearly transcends both national and ethnic borders ...

Rumi, was a philosopher and mystic of Islam, one whose doctrine advocated unlimited tolerance, positive reasoning, selfless goodness, sacrificial charity, and heightened awareness through Love. To him and to his disciples, all the world's religions orbit the same Truth, and -- as his teachings look with the same uncritical eye on Muslim, Jew and Christian alike -- his peaceful wisdom continues to appeal to people of all sects and creeds all over the world ... Rumi was somewhat of a radical, evolutionary thinker, at least in the sense that he believed that the spirit of every human being first devolved away from the Divine at birth & through childhood, and then later re-evolved back toward that same spiritual Source from which every Soul is reborn. He felt that all matter in the Universe obeys this law, and that this cycle of pure-to-profane-to-profound is propelled in every sentient being by an inbuilt urge (which he called "Love") to seek a re-joining with the Peace-full Oneness from which it originally emerged.

*“On the seeker’s path, wise men & fools are one. In his love, brothers & strangers are one. Go on! Drink the wine of the Beloved! In that faith, Muslims and pagans are one ... You’ve heard it said that there is a window that opens from one mind to another. But if there is no wall between two minds, there is no need for fitting a window ... Your task is not to seek Love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” ~ Rumi*



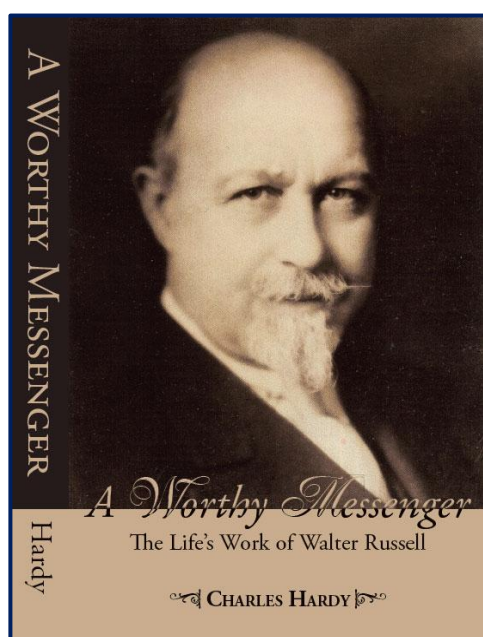
*“It is a question of developing spiritual senses. See beyond phenomena ... An eye is meant to see things. The Soul is here for its own joy. A head has but one use: to Love a true Love ... [So] gamble everything for Love, if you’re a true Human Being. Halfheartedness cannot reach into its majesty ... When you do things from your Soul, you feel a river moving in you, a Joy ... Be source, not result ... Gamble everything for love if you’re a true Human Being. If not, leave this gathering. Half-heartedness cannot reach into majesty ... Load the ship and set out. No one knows for certain whether the vessel will sink or reach the harbor. Cautious people say, "I'll do nothing until I can be sure" ... If you do nothing, you lose. Don't be one of those merchants who won't risk the ocean.” ~ Rumi*



## Hero #114: Walter Russell

Walter Russell was an American painter, sculptor, natural philosopher, author, and builder. While his books and lectures place him firmly in the New Thought Movement, the *New York Herald Tribune* more appropriately labeled him as “the modern Leonardo.” His legacy centers around a unique Cosmogony (or concept of the Universe), having spent many years writing about the nature of humankind’s relationship to the Universal One and the various degrees of consciousness ...

In May of 1921, Russell experienced a revelatory event that he later described in a chapter called “The Story of My Illumining” in the 1950 edition of his Home Study Course, stating that, “During that period, I could perceive all motion,” and that he was freshly “aware of all things.” Later he wrote, “It will be remembered that no one who has ever had [the experience of illumination] has been able to explain it. I deem it my duty to the world to tell of it.” What was revealed to Russell “in the Light” was later the subject matter of *The Divine Iliad*, published in two volumes in 1949 ... The Russell Cosmogony re-explained the relationships between matter and energy, and between electricity and magnetism. It describes the process of Creation, the nature of atomic and stellar systems, the Natural Laws that govern the universe (the Voidance Principle, periodicity of the elements, the Law of Balance, etc.), and man’s relation to God and the Universe as a whole. C. W. Kelsey, an engineer who learned of the Russell Cosmogony in 1930, noted that, “If Russell’s theories are sound, they will be of utmost value, as he shows that there can be but one substance, and that the difference [among the elements] is a dimensional difference and not a difference of substance. In other words, if Russell’s theories are right, transmutation becomes a practical reality.” Russell wrote that “the cardinal error of science” is “shutting the Creator out of his Creation.” Of course, Russell never referred to an anthropomorphic god, but rather wrote that “God is the invisible, motionless, sexless, undivided, and unconditioned white Magnetic Light of Mind” – the energy which centers all things. “God is provable by laboratory methods,” Russell wrote, “The locatable motionless Light which man calls magnetism is the Light which God IS.”



*“The electric energy which motivates us is not within our bodies at all. It is a part of the universal supply which flows through us from the Universal Source with an intensity set by our desires and our will ... As such, mediocrity is self-inflicted – just as genius is self-bestowed ... When our knowing exceeds our sensing, we will no longer be deceived by the illusions of our senses ... You may command nature to the extent only in which you are willing to obey her ... Joy and Peace are the two indicators of balance in a human machine. An inner joyousness, amounting to a peaceful ecstasy, is the normal condition of the genius mind. That inner ecstasy of being is the secret fountain of strength in any man.” ~ via Walter Russell*

## *Hero #115: Bayard Rustin*

Bayard Rustin was an American leader in the social movements for civil rights, peace, and gay rights. He openly championed non-violence as a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League. He also collaborated on the March on Washington Movement in 1941 to press for an end to discrimination in employment. He was a leading activist of the early Civil Rights Movement, helping to initiate a 1947 Freedom Ride to challenge, via civil disobedience, the racial segregation issue related to interstate busing. He recognized Martin Luther King Jr.'s message, and helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to strengthen King's leadership. Rustin promoted the philosophy of nonviolence and the practices of nonviolent resistance, which he had observed while working with Mahatma Gandhi's movement in India, and thereafter helped inform Martin Luther King, Jr. about the patent effectiveness of the same ...

Rustin became a leading strategist of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 to 1968. He was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and he also influenced young activists, such as Tom Kahn and Stokely Carmichael, in organizations such as the Congress on Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee ... Rustin later became head of the AFL-CIO's Philip Randolph Institute, which promoted the integration of formerly all-white unions and promoted the unionization of African Americans. The Institute under Rustin's leadership also advanced *A Freedom Budget for All Americans*, a treatise linking the concepts of racial justice with economic justice. Supported by over 200 prominent civil-rights activists, trade unionists, religious leaders, academics and others, it outlined a plan to eliminate poverty and unemployment in the United States within a ten-year period. During the 1970's and 1980's, Rustin served on many humanitarian missions, including many that aided refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. At the time of his death in 1987, he was on a humanitarian mission in Haiti.



*“If we desire a just society without discrimination, then we must not discriminate against anyone in the process of building that society. If we desire a society that is democratic, then democracy must become a means as well as an end ... The proof that one truly believes is in action ... When an individual is protesting society's refusal to acknowledge his dignity as a human being, his very act of protest confers dignity upon him ... What we need in every bay and community is a group of angelic troublemakers.”*

*~ via Bayard Rustin*

## *Hero #116: Mona Rutger*

Over 20 years ago, Mona Rutger realized that no one in her community was able to care for injured wildlife, so -- alongside her full-time secretarial job – she also became a licensed wildlife rehabilitator ... Originally she envisioned caring for wounded animals as a part-time hobby, thinking she would get a few dozen animals a year. And yet when word spread about her, animals in need started pouring in. Her backyard sanctuary is now a 365-day a year, round-the-clock operation, one which rescues and rehabilitates more than 2500 injured animals every year. Whether it's a bird burned by a power line, a turtle wounded by a car, or a bobcat declawed by an irresponsible would-be wild-pet owner, all are welcome -- and all are loved.

In addition to caring for and rehabbing the animals (over 40,00 since 1990, Rutger estimates, with over 60% of those helped being then successfully released back to the wild), the sanctuary also boasts an indoor education center where tens of thousands of people, many of them schoolchildren, learn about living in harmony with nature and showing animals their due respect. During the summer months, the sanctuary hosts free camps for underprivileged children who are unlikely to be exposed to nature where they live ... Mona's organization depends entirely on private donations. She and her husband have poured their life savings into the endeavor, even refinancing their home to continue the work.

*“Everyone says 'Let nature take its course', and yet 90% of the animals' injuries are human-related. That's not nature; That's us ... We're counting on the children, our world's future adults, to do a better job taking care of the planet than we have in the past. I desperately want them to feel the excitement and the thrill that I find every single day in nature ... Each and every animal we can help makes a difference. They each have an important role to play.” ~ Mona Rutger*



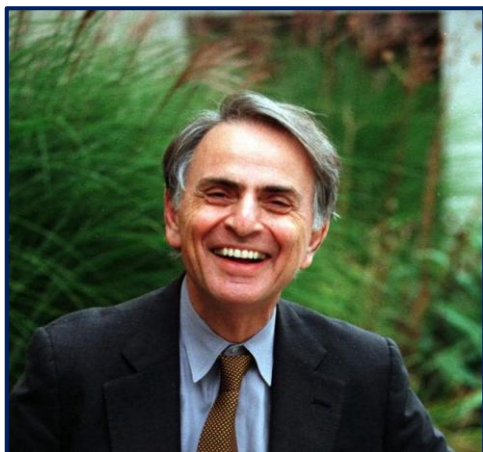


## Hero #117: Carl Sagan

Carl Edward Sagan was an American astronomer, cosmologist, astrophysicist, astrobiologist, author, and science educator. Sagan advocated scientific skeptical inquiry and the scientific method, pioneered exobiology, and promoted the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI). He spent most of his career as a professor of astronomy at Cornell University, where he directed the Laboratory for Planetary Studies. Sagan also assembled the first physical messages sent into space: the Pioneer plaque and the Voyager Golden Record -- universal messages that could potentially be understood by any extraterrestrial intelligence that might find them. In addition, Sagan published more than 600 scientific papers and articles and was author, co-author or editor of more than 20 books, including *The Dragons of Eden*, *Broca's Brain* and *Pale Blue Dot*. He narrated and co-wrote the award-winning 1980 television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, the most widely watched series in the history of American public television. He also wrote the science fiction novel *Contact*, the basis for the 1997 film of the same name. Sagan and his works have received numerous awards and honors, including the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal, the National Academy of Sciences Public Welfare Medal, the Peabody Award, the Hugo Award, the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction (for his book *The Dragons of Eden*), and two Emmy Awards for his work with *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage* ... Sagan believed that the Drake equation suggested that a large number of extraterrestrial civilizations would form, but that the lack of evidence of such civilizations suggests that technological civilizations tend to self-destruct. This stimulated his interest in identifying and publicizing ways that humanity could destroy itself, with the hope of avoiding such a cataclysm.

Though not an atheist himself, Sagan publicly commented on Christianity and the Jefferson Bible, stating, "My long-time view about Christianity is that it represents an amalgam of two seemingly immiscible parts, the religion of Jesus and the religion of Paul. Thomas Jefferson attempted to excise the Pauline parts of the New Testament. There wasn't much left when he was done, but it was an inspiring document."

*"An atheist is someone who is certain that God does not exist, someone who has compelling evidence against the existence of God. I personally know of no such compelling evidence. Because God can be relegated to remote times and places and to ultimate causes, we would have to know a great deal more about the Universe than we do now to be sure that no such God exists. To be certain of the existence of God and to be certain of the nonexistence of God seem to me to be the confident extremes in a subject so riddled with doubt and uncertainty as to inspire very little confidence indeed ... Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. When we recognize our place in an immensity of light-years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the intricacy, beauty, and subtlety of life, then that soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility combined, is surely spiritual. So are our emotions in the presence of great art or music or literature, or acts of exemplary selfless courage such as those of Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both ... Every one of us is, in the cosmic perspective, precious. If a human disagrees with you, let him live. In a hundred billion galaxies, you will not find another like him ... For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through Love." ~ Carl Sagan*



## *Hero #118: Irena Sendler*

As early as 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland, Irena Sendler began aiding Jews. Initially she and her helpers created more than 3000 false documents to help Jewish families avoid detention, and then later organized the smuggling of Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Sendler was a registered nurse, and under the pretext of conducting inspections of sanitary conditions during a typhus outbreak, Sendler and her co-workers visited the Ghetto and smuggled out babies and small children in ambulances and trams, sometimes disguising them as packages. During this time, she and about two dozen other members of the Polish Underground managed to smuggle some 2500 Jewish children out of the Ghetto, and then provided them with false identity documents and housing, saving those children from directly experiencing the horrors of the Holocaust.

In 1943, Sendler was arrested by the Gestapo. They brutally beat her, fracturing both her feet and both her legs in the process. Despite the immense pain & trauma of this torture-session, Irena refused to betray any of her friends or the children they had rescued. She was thereafter sentenced to death by firing squad, but the Underground saved her by bribing German guards on the way to her execution. For the remainder of the war, she lived in hiding, but continued to work for the safety of Jewish children until its end.

*“Every child saved with my help and the help of all the other wonderful secret messengers is the justification of my existence on this earth, and not a title to glory ... I was brought up to believe that a person must be rescued when drowning, regardless of religion and nationality, even if you yourself cannot swim.” ~ Irena Sendler*

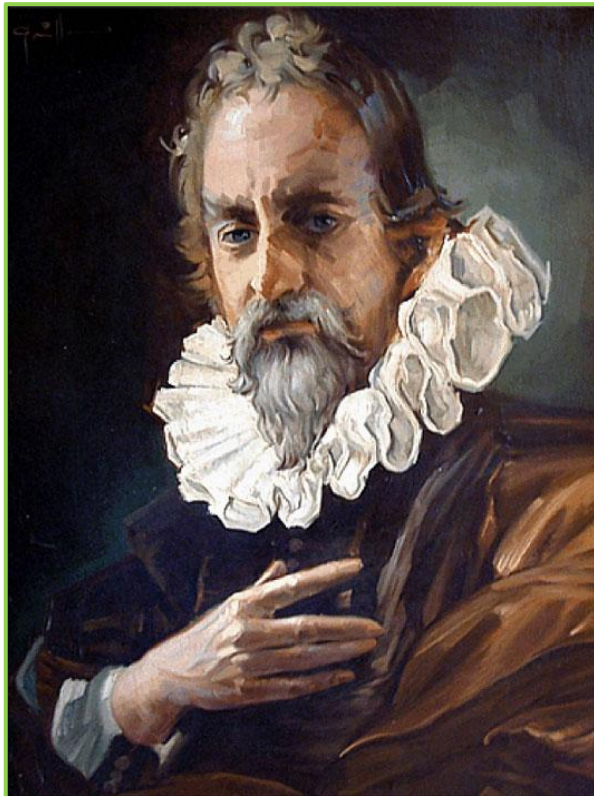


## *Hero #119: Michael Servetus*

Born in 1511, Servetus was a Spanish theologian, physician, cartographer, and Renaissance humanist credited with discovering the correct workings of human pulmonary circulation. He wrote a book outlining his discovery, along with a few avant garde ideas about reforming Christianity (he was openly critical of both the concept of original sin and the church's invented concept of God as Trinity) and his ideas were deemed to be heresy by the Catholic Church. Though he successfully escaped from Spain and the Catholic Inquisition, he was eventually arrested by Swiss authorities under the influence of the Protestant Inquisition ... His capture was somewhat odd, in the sense that he had already successfully escaped the wrath of the Protestant Swiss, and yet returned to Geneva and attended a public sermon by none other than John Calvin. Not surprising, he was arrested immediately following the conclusion of Calvin's service and, under orders from Calvin himself, was incarcerated, tortured, and then burned at the stake on the shores of Lake Geneva – with copies of his book accompanying him on the pyre “for good measure.”

While a tragic loss on its own, the persecution of Servetus did inspire many in the church to speak out more forcefully for reform, and the writings of Servetus (more readily available to the public after his death) eventually served to inspire and lay the foundations for the birth of the Unitarian movement in Poland, Transylvania (now Romania) and England. Indeed, it was the widespread condemnation of the manner of Servetus' execution that inspired and signaled the rise in Europe of the principle of religious tolerance. Spanish scholar Ángel Alcalá, identified the radical search for truth and the right for freedom of conscience as Servetus' main legacies, while Polish-American scholar Marian Hillar, who studied the evolution of freedom of conscience from Servetus to John Locke to Thomas Jefferson and the American Declaration of Independence, noted that, “Historically speaking, Servetus died so that freedom of conscience could become a civil right in modern society.”

*“I will indeed burn, and yet this is but a mere event.” ~ Michael Servetus*



*“Michel Servetus ... contributed to the welfare of humanity by his scientific discoveries, his devotion to the sick and the poor, and the indomitable independence of his intelligence and his conscience ... His convictions were invincible. He made a willing sacrifice of his very life for the cause of the truth.”*

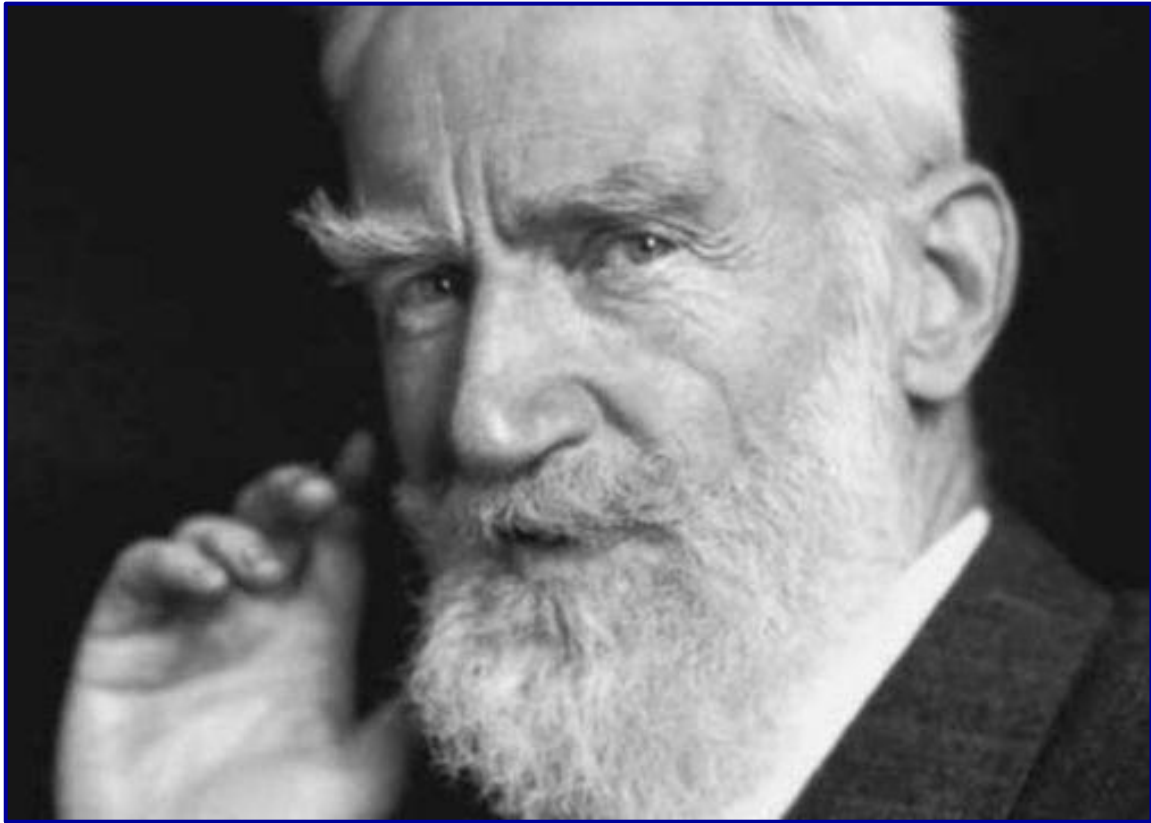
~ inscription on a monument to Servetus, erected in 1908 in the French city of Annemasse, some three miles from the spot where he died.



## *Hero #120: George Bernhard Shaw*

Born in 1856, George Bernhard Shaw was an Irish playwright, essayist, novelist, and short story writer. Nearly all his works & writings address prevailing social problems, doing so most often with a vein of comedy which made their stark themes a bit easier to contemplate. Among the issues upon which Shaw focused were education, animal rights, religion, government, health care, and class privilege ...

Of all the campaigns available to him, Shaw was most intensely disturbed & even angered by the exploitation of the masses, and he became an accomplished verbal defender in the furtherance of such causes, orating regularly for equal rights for men and women, equal rights for animals (what folks called “vegetarianism” in his day; what folks call “veganism” today), the alleviation of abuses of the working class, the rescinding of private ownership of lands that should be public, and the promotion of healthier lifestyles.



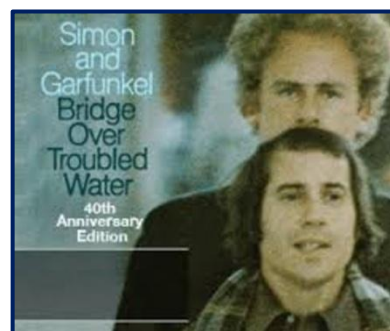
*“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no brief candle to me; it is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” ~ George Bernard Shaw*

## *Hero #121: Simon & Garfunkel*

Both born in 1941, Paul Simon & Art Garfunkel became an American music duo in 1957, though they first rose to fame & adoration in 1965, largely on the strength of the hit single “The Sound of Silence” ... Their music was also featured in the landmark film *The Graduate* in 1967, further propelling them into the limelight.

Their increasingly rocky relationship led to their last album, *Bridge over Troubled Water*, being delayed several times, and as a result of this irreconciled strife the two disbanded in 1970 and went their separate ways. Somehow fittingly, this final album -- possibly despite their disagreements, yet probably because of them -- became their most successful album worldwide, reaching number one in several countries, including the United States ...

Also a fitting metaphor for us all, Simon & Garfunkel have occasionally reunited over the years to perform and sometimes even tour together. Indeed, they have done so at least once in every decade since their 1970 breakup, most famously for 1981's “The Concert in Central Park”, which attracted more than 500,000 people, making it the 7th-most attended concert in the history of music.



*“It's a still life water color, of a now late afternoon,  
As the sun shines through the curtained lace, and shadows wash the room.  
And we sit and drink our coffee; couched in our indifference,  
Like shells upon the shore, you can hear the ocean roar  
In the dangling conversation, and the superficial sighs,  
On the borders of our lives.” ~ Simon & Garfunkel*



## *Hero #122: Clive Stafford Smith*

Clive Stafford Smith is a British civil rights attorney who currently works diligently to dismantle the death penalty in the United States of America. Having helped to overturn death sentences for nearly 300 convicts, he also helped to found both the non-profit Louisiana Capital Assistance Center in New Orleans and the Gulf Region Advocacy Center in Houston. In addition, Smith has represented more than 100 of the detainees held as enemy combatants at the U.S. Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba ...

In August of 2004, Smith returned from the U.S. to live and work in the United Kingdom, where he is currently the Legal Director of the UK branch of *Reprieve*, a global non-profit human rights organization that is also opposed to the death penalty (and that also fights against the vile transgressions that regularly take place in secret prisons). In 2005 he received the Gandhi International Peace Award -- for his efforts, as well as for his ethics.

*“If we become an accomplice to criminal activities by the American government, then we are liable along with it ... I don't understand the idea of compassion fatigue. I mean, would you rather spend your life focused on pointless vengeance or would you rather focus it on compassion? I don't think you can get compassion fatigue, I think compassion is what life's all about ... I think we should use whatever power we have to try to help people who need our help.” ~ via Clive Stafford Smith*

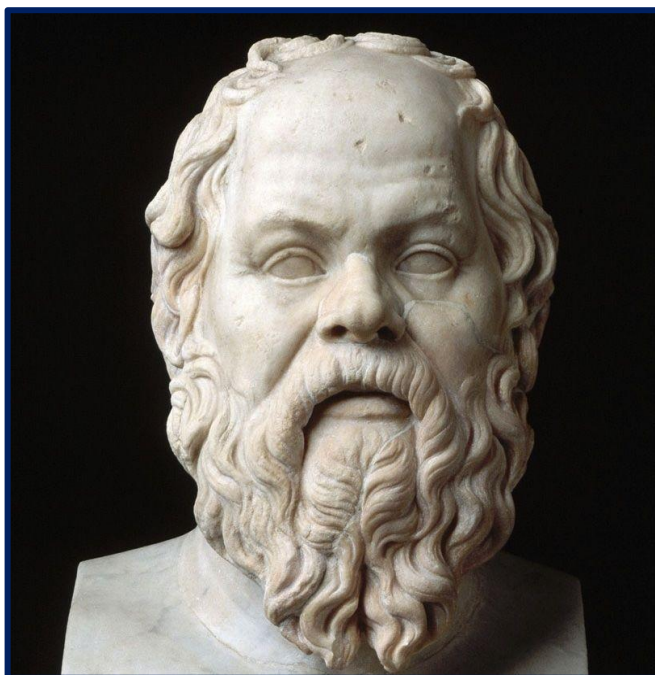




## *Hero #123: Socrates*

Socrates was a Greek philosopher credited with being one of the founders of Western philosophy, as well as with being the very first moral philosopher on record. An enigmatic figure -- with none of his own writings having been discovered to date, Socrates is known chiefly through the accounts of classical writers, particularly his students Plato and Xenophon. Through his portrayal in Plato's dialogues, Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of ethics, especially via the development and use of both Socratic Irony (whereby a questioner feigns ignorance to allow another to open up and more thoroughly expose his or her falsehoods) and the Socratic Method (whereby a series of questions is asked not only to illuminate certain truths, but also to encourage fundamental insight into the issue at hand) ... Socrates lived during the time of the transition from the height of the Athenian hegemony to its decline with the defeat by Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian War. Claiming loyalty to his city, Socrates clashed with the current course of Athenian politics and society, praising Sparta directly and indirectly in various dialogues. One of Socrates' purported offenses was his position as a social and moral critic. Rather than upholding the status quo and accepting the development of what he perceived to be immorality within his region, Socrates questioned the collective notion of "might makes right" that he felt was common in Greece during this period. Plato refers to Socrates as the "gadfly" of the state (as the gadfly stings the horse into action, so Socrates annoyed various well to do Athenians), insofar as he irritated many with considerations of justice and the pursuit of goodness. Indeed, his attempts to improve the Athenians' sense of decency may have been the ultimate cause of his execution.

Socrates made the prominent Athenians he publicly questioned look foolish, naturally leading to accusations of wrongdoing. Socrates defended his gadfly role until his literally bitter end. At his trial, when Socrates was asked to propose his own punishment, he suggested he receive a wage paid by the government and free dinners for the rest of his life, to fairly finance the time he had spent as Athens' benefactor. Needless to say, this answer did not go over well with his persecutors, and Socrates was thrown into prison until his execution could be carried out. Interestingly enough, a viable escape plan for him was organized that would likely have succeeded, and yet Socrates turned down the offer of freedom, choosing instead to willingly die for the cause of justice and truth by ingesting poison in public in the face of his accusers.



*“Let him that would move the world first move himself ... It is not living that matters, but living rightly ... We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not a trait but a habit.” ~ Socrates*

*“One who is injured ought not to return the injury, for on no account can it be right to do an injustice; and it is not right to return an injury, or to do evil to any man, however much we have suffered from him.” ~ Socrates*

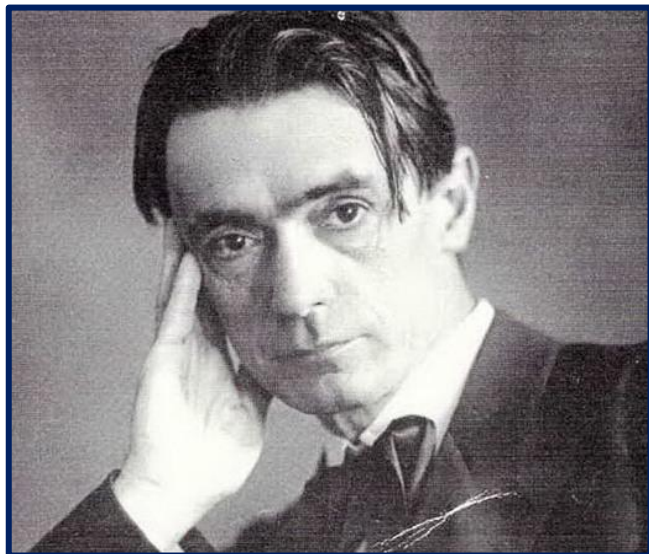
## Hero #124: Rudolph Steiner

Rudolf Steiner was an Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect, and esotericist. He gained initial recognition at the end of the nineteenth century as a literary critic, and yet became truly prominent at the beginning of the twentieth century when he founded the anthroposophic spiritual movement – one that had roots in German idealist philosophy, theosophy, Goethean science, and Rosicrucianism ... In the first phase of this movement Steiner attempted to find a synthesis between science and spirituality, applying the clarity of thinking characteristic of Western philosophy to profound spiritual questions. In its second phase, commencing around 1907, he began working in a variety of artistic media, including drama, the movement arts (developing a new artistic form, eurythmy) and architecture, culminating in the building of the Goetheanum -- a cultural centre designed to house all the arts. In the third and final phase of his work, beginning sometime after World War I, Steiner established various practically applicable social reforms -- including a new educational system (his Waldorf schools), a new system of organic agriculture (biodynamic farming), and a new system of healthcare (anthroposophic medicine).

The National Socialist German Workers Party gained strength in Germany after the First World War. In 1919, a political theorist of this movement, Dietrich Eckart, attacked Steiner and suggested that he was a Jew. Then in 1921, Adolf Hitler himself attacked Steiner on many fronts, including accusations that he was an accomplice of the Jews. Undeterred, that same year Steiner rightfully warned against the disastrous effects it would have for Central Europe if the National Socialists came to power. Unable to guarantee his safety, Steiner's agents cancelled his 1922 lecture tour, and Hitler's failed coup attempt of 1923 inspired Steiner to give up his residence in Berlin, saying that if those responsible for the attempted coup ultimately came to power in Germany, it would no longer be possible for him to remain in the country.

In Steiner's chief book on social reform, *Toward Social Renewal*, he suggested that the cultural, political and economic spheres of society need to work together as consciously cooperating yet independent entities, each with a particular task: political institutions should establish political equality and protect human rights; cultural institutions should nurture the free and unhindered development of science, art, education and religion; and economic institutions should enable producers, distributors, and consumers to cooperate to provide efficiently for all of society's needs.

*“A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each Soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each is living ... Love extends beyond the bounds of family to all human beings and is changed into vivifying, creative, transmuting power ... So may my Soul bloom in Love for all existence ... For it is so that God, having vanished from the world, is reborn in the depths of the human Heart.” ~ via Rudolph Steiner*



## *Hero #125: Stevie Wonder*

Born Stevland Hardaway Morris in May of 1950, Stevie Wonder is an American singer-songwriter who has become one of the most creative and loved musical performers of the 20th century. Blind since shortly after his birth, Wonder signed with Motown's Tamla label at the age of eleven and continued to perform and record for Motown through the early 2010's. Just as importantly (if not more so), he is also noted for his work as an activist for political causes, including his 1980 campaign to make Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a national holiday in the United States. In 2009, Wonder was also named a United Nations Messenger of Peace.



*“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision ... What I'm not confused about is the world needing much more Love; no hate, no prejudice, no bigotry ... more unity, more peace and more understanding ... Period.” ~ Stevie Wonder*





## Hero #126: Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard is a British playwright who has written prolifically for TV, radio, film and stage, finding prominence with plays such as *Arcadia*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, *Professional Foul*, *The Real Thing*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Themes of human rights, censorship, and political freedom pervade his work along with bold explorations of linguistics and philosophy ...

In April of 1967, the opening of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* made Stoppard an overnight success. The work tells the story of Shakespeare's Hamlet from the viewpoint of the two minor-player courtiers mentioned in its title. Its genius rests not only in its structure (with Hamlet playing within Hamlet, ultimately playing within Hamlet again), but also its insightful use of existential themes and brilliant language play. Indeed, it was such a phenomenal piece, that the word "Stoppardian" thereafter became a term one could use to describe works that employ wit and comedy while addressing deeper philosophical concepts ...



More importantly, from 1977 onward Stoppard became personally involved with human rights issues, in particular with the situation of political dissidents in Central and Eastern Europe. In February of that year he visited the Soviet Union and several Eastern European countries with Amnesty International. In June, Stoppard then travelled to Czechoslovakia (then under communist control), where he met dissident playwright and future president Václav Havel, whose writing he still greatly admires to this day. Stoppard then became involved with *Index on Censorship*, Amnesty International, and the Committee Against Psychiatric Abuse, and began writing numerous newspaper articles and letters championing human rights ... In July of 2013, Stoppard was awarded the PEN Pinter Prize for a "determination to tell things as they truly are."

*"I shall have poetry in my life. And adventure. And love, love, love, above all. Love as there has never been in a play. Unbiddable and ungovernable, like a riot in the heart and nothing to be done, come ruin or rapture – remembering that it's no trick loving somebody at their best. Love is loving them at their worst."* ~ Tom Stoppard

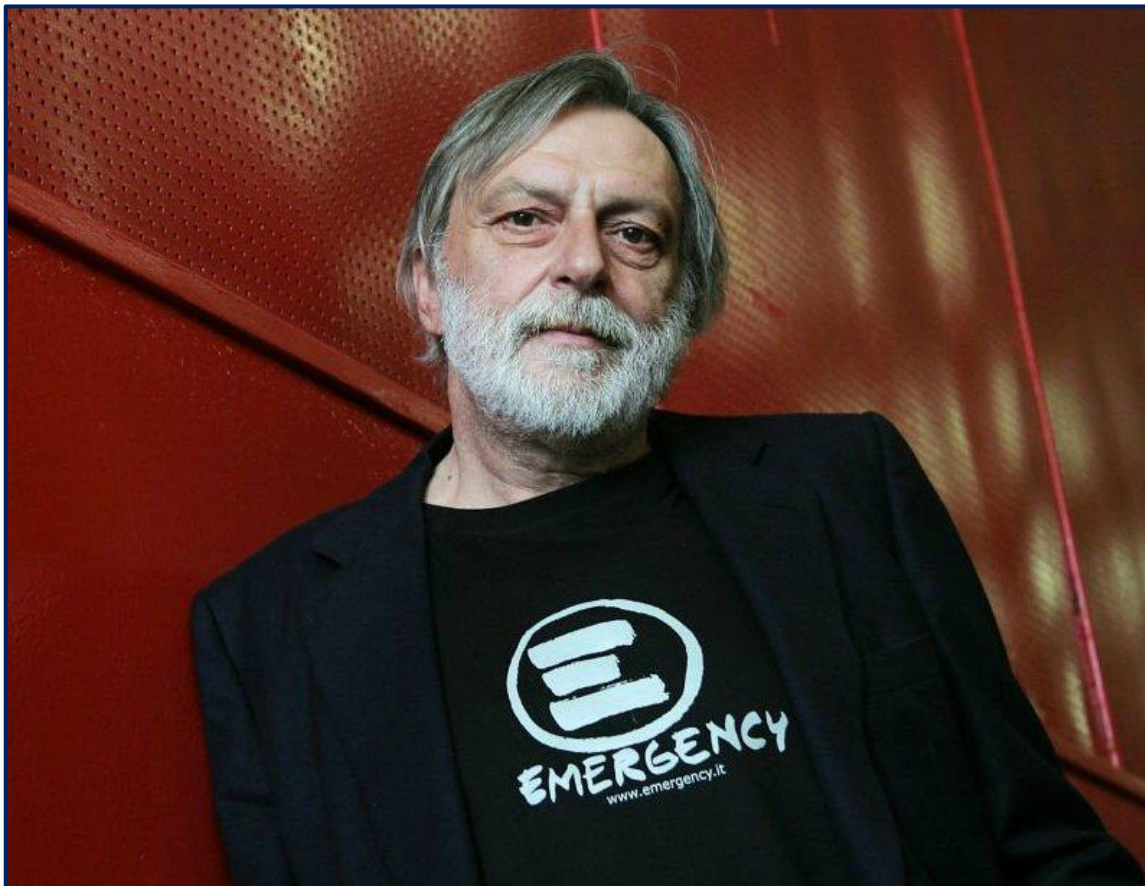


## *Hero #127: Gino Strada*

Gino Strada is an Italian war surgeon and founder of the humanitarian, charity-based NGO *Emergency*. Starting out as a heart-lung transplant surgeon in the 1980's, Gino has always believed that healthcare is a fundamental human right. It was this belief that led him to abandon his posh position in the United States in 1988, and begin working for the Red Cross in the war zones of Pakistan, Ethiopia, Peru, Afghanistan, Somalia and Bosnia. It was also this belief that led him in 1994 to establish *Emergency*, a “small, agile, highly specialized” humanitarian medical organization that would provide free, high-quality medical and surgical treatment to victims of war, land-mines, and poverty.

Since 1994, this organization (currently active in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Italy, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, & Uganda) has worked in 16 countries (almost all of them heavily war-torn) -- building hospitals, manning first aid posts, erecting surgical centers, establishing rehabilitation centers, and setting up & staffing pediatric clinics. To this day, *Emergency* doctors have provided life-saving assistance -- completely free of charge -- to over 8.5 million victims of war; over 90% of them civilians; almost all of them extremely poor.

*“Whoever speaks about ‘humanitarian war’ should be eligible for a long stay in a psychiatric institution. It's complete nonsense. No matter what people say or think, the end result is that 90% of victims are civilians ... War must completely disappear from human civilization, the very same way that slavery must disappear from human civilization. Today the concept of slavery is disturbing. War should disturb us equally ... When you operate on children and teenagers, you ask yourself what the hell do they have to do with war? I mean, they don't even know why a war is fought around them, and they don't even really know who's fighting whom” ~ Gino Strada*



## *Hero #128: Chiune Sugihara*

Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese government official who served as vice consul for the Japanese Empire in Lithuania. During the Second World War, Sugihara risked the lives of himself and his entire family by issuing fake transit visas to thousands of Jews so that they could flee Europe through Japanese territory ... And doing so was no easy task, seeing as how Japan demanded that anyone granted a Japanese visa must already have another visa enabling them to exit Japan to a third country – and very few Lithuanian Jews could procure such a document. So instead of shrugging his shoulders and looking the other way, Chiune decided to do something, and began granting visas on his own authority – writing most of them by hand, and often doing so for 18-hours a day. And he continued to do so every single day, producing an entire month's worth of visas in every one of those days, until he was forced to leave his post shortly before the Japanese Consulate was closed. And even then Chiune didn't stop. According to witnesses, he was still writing visas while in transit from his hotel and even kept writing them after boarding his train at the Kaunas Railway Station, throwing visas into the crowd of desperate refugees out of the train's window even as the train pulled away ... Needless to say, considering both the inferiority of his position in the Japanese Foreign Service, as well as the Japanese culture in general (which places a heavy onus on adhering to rules and authority), this choice was an exceptionally courageous one. And his courage paid off, as those efforts directly saved the lives of at least 6000 men, women, and children.

*“I cannot allow these people to die, people who have come to me for help with death staring them in the eyes. Whatever punishment may be imposed upon me, I choose to follow my conscience ... We should do what is Right because it is Right, and then leave it alone.” ~ Chiune Sugihara*



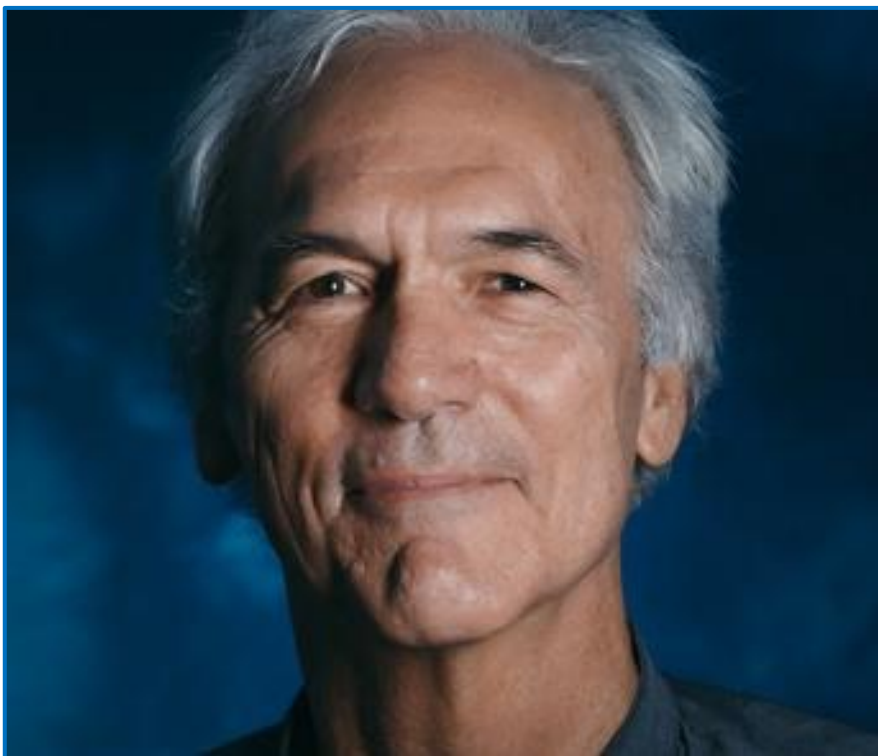


## *Hero #129: Brian Swimme*

Born in 1950, Swimme obtained a PhD in mathematics from the University of Oregon (1978), and is currently a member of the faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, where he teaches evolutionary cosmology to graduate students. He has also authored several books related to the field of cosmogenesis, among them *The Universe is a Green Dragon* and *The Hidden heart of the Cosmos* ...

Though he was a mathematician by training, Swimme far transcended the traditional boundaries of that discipline. Combining human insight with scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology and biology, he offers a science story of humanity's origins, its current place in the cosmos, and its destiny that are far more encompassing and far more noble than current, weather-worn scientific models allow. Swimme believes that humanity's epic journey is much more than a mere collection of historical facts & biological data; that science can and should be every student's guide to a far grander worldview -- a view that includes the interactive presence of morals, meaning, values, and purpose.

*“I have a sense that something amazing is at work ... I think our planet is actually moving into a time of profound harmony and fecundity and peace ... As we humans begin to take seriously the planetary dimension of conscious self-awareness, we will become harmonized versions of natural selection — we will begin to make decisions with the large scale dynamic of the planet in mind ... There are so many things that we care about, that we carry in our hearts, that we want to help. People are suffering. Animals are suffering. So how can we interact in a way that would be helpful? That's my focus. All that I think about is somehow related to that. Just to be responsible and to participate in a process that will deepen joy ... That's my high hope. There can be such a tendency for the individual to focus on 'my enlightenment' and so forth. But it just doesn't seem to be what is really needed right now ... [Let us] reinvent ourselves at the species level, in a way that enables us to live with mutually enhancing relationships —not just with humans but with all beings—so that our activities actually enhance the wellness of the world.” ~ Brian Swimme*



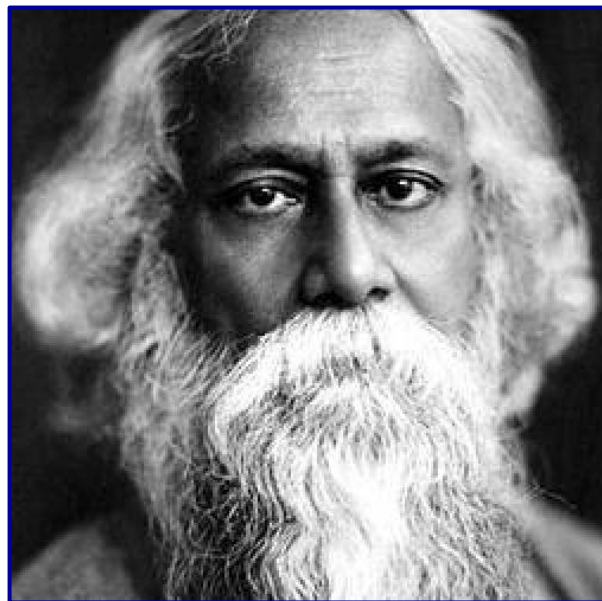
## Hero #130: Rabindranath Tagore

Born in 1861, Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, artist & musician who reshaped Bengali literature and music in the late 1900's & early 1900's. He was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 (primarily for his genius work *Gitanjali: Song of Offerings*), and was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West (and vice versa). Tagore is generally regarded as the most outstanding creative artist of the modern Indian subcontinent, being revered in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan, with the former two countries having adopted two of his compositions as their respective national anthems ...

At age sixteen, Tagore released his first collection of substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhānusiṃha ("Sun Lion") when he was sixteen years old. This work was of such high quality that literary authorities & critics soon thereafter became convinced that they had stumbled up a series of long-lost classics ... A bit later in his life, the British Crown granted Tagore a knighthood in 1915 (though he renounced the same after the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre) and he thereafter became an advocate for desired social reforms -- among them the independence of the Indian subcontinent from British imperialism -- preferring freedom for all, and the dismantling of the Indian caste system and its depraved belief in "untouchability;" preferring a dignity unconditional for all instead.

*"According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of things that exist, is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realizes all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but rather realizing our own selves in it through the expansion of Compassion; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union ... I slept and dreamed that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted – and behold, I came to understand that service was joy." ~ Rabindranath Tagore*

*"He who merely desires to do good knocks at the gate; he who actively loves finds the gate open ... The most important lesson that man can learn from his life is not that there is pain in this world, but that it depends upon him to turn it into good account, that it is possible for him to transmute it into joy... Man's freedom is never in being saved from troubles, but it is the freedom to take trouble for his own good, to make the trouble an element in his joy... that in pain is symbolized the infinite possibility of perfection ... To understand anything is to find in it something which is our own ... And yet this relation of understanding is only partial, whereas the relation of Love is complete. In Love all sense of difference is obliterated and the human soul fulfills its purpose in perfection, transcending the limits of itself ... Therefore Love is the highest bliss that man can attain to, for through it alone he truly knows that he is more than himself, and that he is at one with the All." ~ Rabindranath Tagore*



## Hero #131: Tank Man

“Tank Man” (also known as the “Unknown Protester”) is the nickname of an unidentified man who stood in front of a column of Chinese tanks on June 5, 1989 -- the morning after the Chinese military had ruthlessly suppressed the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 ... As the lead tank maneuvered to pass by the man, he repeatedly shifted his position in order to obstruct the tank's attempted path around him. The courageous incident was filmed and seen worldwide, and inspires millions of people even to this day. More than 28 years after the incident, there is still no reliable information about the identity or fate of the man, or what happened to the tank crew he faced ...

The incident took place at the north edge of Tiananmen Square, along Chang'an Avenue. The man stood in the middle of the wide avenue, directly in the path of a column of approaching tanks. Stuart Franklin, who was on assignment for *TIME* magazine, told the *New York Times*, “At some point, shots were fired and the tanks carried on down the road toward us, leaving Tiananmen Square behind, until blocked by a lone protester.” He wore a white shirt and black trousers, and he held two shopping bags. As the tanks came to a stop, the man gestured towards the tanks with one of the bags. In response, the lead tank attempted to drive around the man, but the man kept stepping into the path of the tank in a bold show of nonviolent resistance. After repeatedly attempting to go around rather than crush the man, the lead tank stopped its engines, and the armored vehicles behind it followed suit.



Having successfully brought the column to a halt, the man climbed onto the hull of the buttoned-up lead tank and, after briefly stopping at the driver's hatch, appeared in video footage to call into various ports in the tank's turret. He then climbed atop the turret and seemed to have a short conversation with a crew member at the gunner's hatch. After ending the conversation, the man descended from the tank. The tank commander briefly emerged from his hatch, and the tanks restarted their engines, ready to continue on. At that point, the man, who was still standing within a meter or two from the side of the lead tank, leapt in front of the vehicle once again and quickly re-established his man-vs-tank standoff.



Shortly thereafter, two anxious onlookers came out and pulled the Tank Man to safety, and the waters of anonymity closed around him once more – but not before his lasting legacy of courage had been ingrained into the hearts and minds of everyone who had witnessed his bravery, as well as everyone who has witnessed it since.

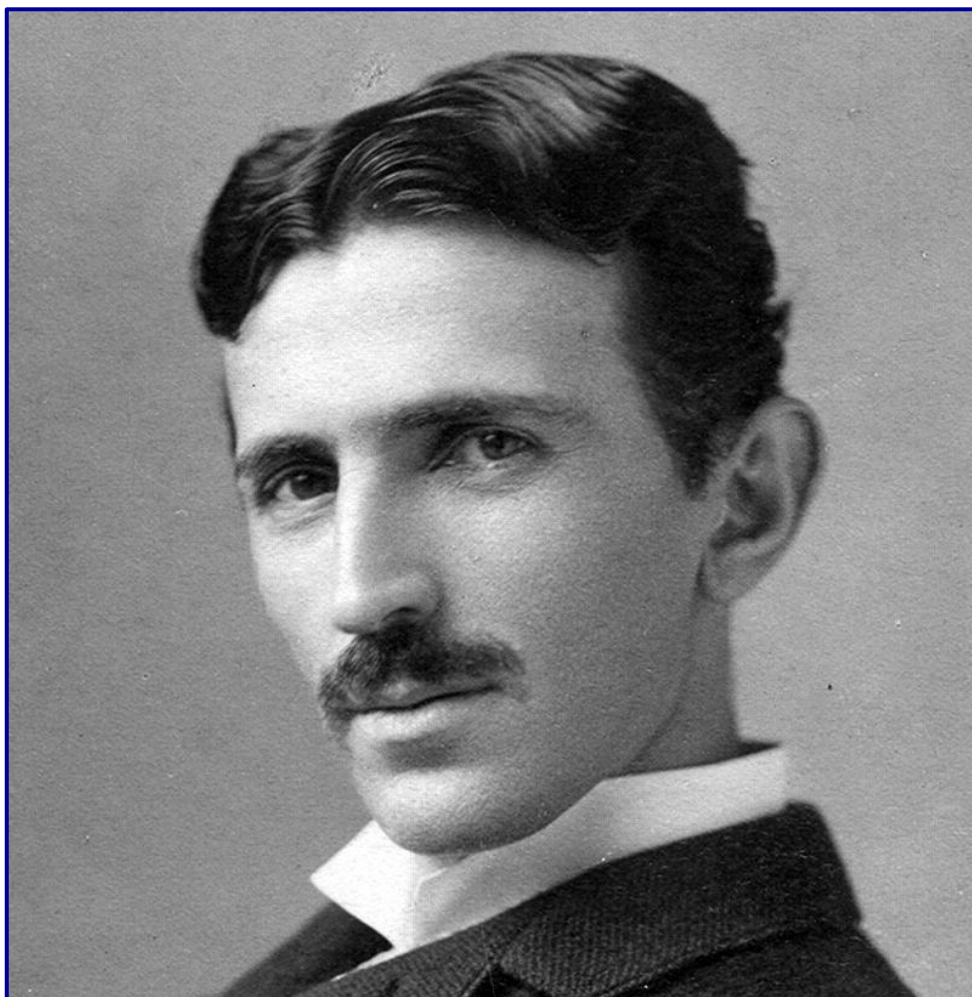


*“The meaning of his moment was instantly decipherable in any tongue, to any age. Even the billions who cannot read and those who have never heard of Mao Zedong could follow what the ‘Tank Man’ did. A small, unexceptional figure in slacks and white shirt, carrying what looks to be his shopping, posts himself before an approaching tank, with a line of 17 more tanks behind it. The tank swerves right; he, to block it, moves left. The tank swerves left; he moves right. Then this anonymous man clambers up onto the vehicle of war and says something to its driver, something which comes down to us as: ‘Why are you here? My city is in chaos because of you.’ One lone Everyman standing up to the machinery of the state, to military force, to all the massed weight of the People’s Republic -- the largest nation in the world, comprising more than 1 billion people – all while its all-powerful leaders remained, as ever, in silent hiding somewhere within the bowels of the Great Hall of the People ... In the unnatural quiet after the Tiananmen Square massacre, with the six-lane streets eerily empty and a burned-out bus along the side of the road, it fell to the Tank Man to serve as the last great defender of the peace; an Unknown Soldier in the long human struggle for human rights.” ~ Pico Iyer*

*“Here’s this guy who is obviously just out shopping, and finally he’s just had enough. I assume he thinks he’s going to die, but he doesn’t care because for whatever reason his statement has become more important than his own life ... If somebody had a way of checking my brain thoughts, this guy probably goes through them every single day. He’s become a part of me.” ~ Jeff Widener, the journalist who took the iconic Tank Man photo*

## *Hero #132: Nikola Tesla*

Nikola Tesla was a Serbian inventor, electrical engineer, physicist, and futurist who is best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system ... Attempting to develop inventions he could patent and market, Tesla conducted a range of experiments with mechanical oscillators & generators, electrical discharge tubes, and early X-ray imaging ... Just as remarkable as his numerous scientific achievements was the selflessness of his work, as well as the resolve which he showed in pursuing the same. It appears that quite a few of his discoveries were stolen by others who profited greatly therefrom, and yet by all indications Tesla never harbored ill-will towards those who did so ... Tesla exuded his highly developed sense of compassion by walking to the park every day in his earlier years to feed the pigeons there, and later by taking to feeding them at the window of his hotel room; even regularly bringing injured ones in to nurse them back to health.



*“I don't care that they stole my idea. I care that they don't have any of their own ... The present is theirs; the future, for which I truly worked, is mine ... What we now need is closer contact and better understanding between individuals and communities all over the Earth, and the elimination of egoism and pride which is always prone to plunging the world into primeval barbarism and strife.” ~ Nikola Tesla*



## Hero #133: Thich Nhat Hanh

Born in 1926, Thich Nhat Hanh (known affectionately by many of his friends & followers as “Thay”) is a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet, and peace activist. He lives in the Plum Village Monastery in the Dordogne region of southern France ...

By the late 1950's, when he was already a Buddhist monk of no small fame, Thay founded Lá Bôi Press, the Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, and the School of Youth for Social Service -- a neutral corps of Buddhist peaceworkers who journeyed into rural areas to establish schools, build healthcare clinics, and help re-build villages ... In 1960, Nhat Hanh went to the U.S. to study comparative religion at Princeton University, and subsequently lectured Buddhism at Columbia University. By then he had gained fluency in French, Chinese, Sanskrit, Pali, Japanese, and English, in addition to his native Vietnamese. In 1963, Thay returned to Vietnam to aid his fellow monks in their non-violent peace efforts. At a Van Hanh Buddhist University meeting in April 1965, students issued a Call for Peace statement, declaring: “It is time for North and South Vietnam to find a way to stop the war and help all Vietnamese people live peacefully and with mutual respect.” Nhat Hanh then returned to the United States in 1966 to lead a symposium in Vietnamese Buddhism at Cornell University and to continue his work for world peace. He had written a letter to Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1965 entitled: “In Search of the Enemy of Man”, and it was during his 1966 stay in the U.S. that he was able to meet with King and urge him to publicly denounce the Vietnam War. A few months later, King gave a famous speech at the Riverside Church in New York City, where he for the first time publicly criticized the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Later that same year (1967) King nominated Nhat Hanh for the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize. In his nomination letter King stated, “I do not personally know of anyone more worthy of [the Nobel Peace Prize] than this gentle monk from Vietnam. His ideas for peace, if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity” ... In 1969, Nhat Hanh was the delegate for the Buddhist Peace Delegation at the Paris Peace talks. After the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973, Thich Nhat Hanh was denied permission to return to Vietnam and he went into exile in France. In 1976-1977, he led efforts to help rescue Vietnamese boat people in the Gulf of Siam ... Since that time, Thay has extensively traveled internationally to give various retreats and talks, has written over 100 books, is still active in a global peace movement that promotes non-violent solutions to conflicts, and has been an active leader in the “Engaged Buddhism” movement (a term coined by him) -- a faction of Buddhism that promotes the individual's active role in creating positive social change. As a means of remaining morally consistent with his noble views on interactive non-violence, Nhat Hanh refrains from consuming any animal products whatsoever.



*“The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive ... There is no enlightenment outside of daily life ... When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our compassion, even if that person says and does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh*



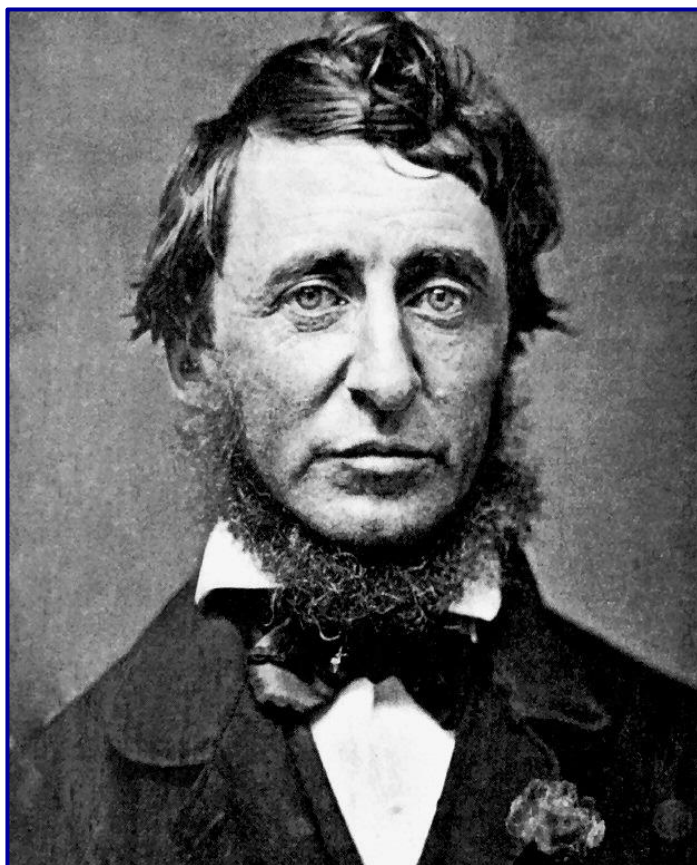
## *Hero #134: Henry David Thoreau*

Born in 1817, Thoreau was an American author, poet, philosopher, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, historian, and leading transcendentalist. His writings on natural history and philosophy anticipated the methods and findings of later-day ecology and environmental history, two current wellsprings of modern-day environmentalism. He is best known for his book *Walden*, a reflection on simple living in natural surroundings -- inspired by his 2 year, 2 month & 2 day foray into austerity; living in a self-built cabin constructed on a plot of wilderness land owned by his friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

*“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” ~ excerpt from Thoreau's Walden*

Thoreau was a lifelong abolitionist, often delivering rousing lectures that denounced the Fugitive Slave Law and/or openly praising the writings of Wendell Phillips or the actions of abolitionists like John Brown. Thoreau was also renowned for his essay *Resistance to Civil Government* (also known as *Civil Disobedience*), an eloquent call for citizens to openly and peacefully disobey the unjust edicts of state authorities, if not to disobey those states themselves. Thoreau's philosophy of civil disobedience later influenced the political thoughts and actions of such notable figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

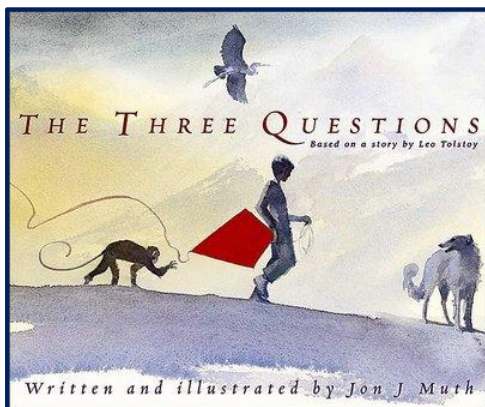
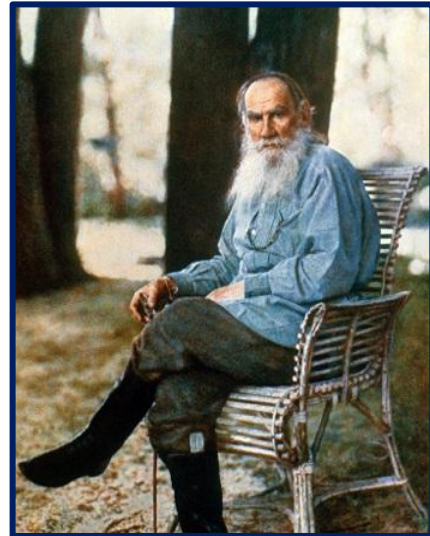
*“A man’s sincere and heartfelt interest in a single bluebird is worth more than a complete but dry list of all the fauna and flora of an entire town ... I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor ... All men are children of one family ... Aim above morality. Be not simply good, be good for something.” ~ Henry David Thoreau*



## Hero #135: Leo Tolstoy

Born in 1828, Tolstoy was a Russian writer, philosopher, and political protagonist. Tolstoy was a master of realistic fiction and is widely considered one of the world's greatest novelists. He is best known for two long novels, *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). Of course, Tolstoy is equally known for his complicated and paradoxical persona as well as for his extreme moralistic and ethical views, which he adopted after a spiritual awakening in the 1870's -- after which he also became noted as a moral thinker and social reformer ... His literal interpretation of the ethical teachings of Jesus, centering on strictly adhering to Jesus' teachings as read in the Matthew's *Sermon on the Mount*, caused him in later life to become a devout Christian anarcho-pacifist -- believing that humans should adhere to the doctrines of self-governance & respect-full peace for all living kind. His ideas on nonviolent resistance had a profound impact on such pivotal twentieth-century figures as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Bevel. Indeed, in 1908, Tolstoy wrote *A Letter to a Hindu*, wherein he outlined his belief in non-violence as the most effective means for India to gain independence from British colonial rule. In 1909, a copy of the letter fell into the hands of Mahatma Gandhi, who was then working as a lawyer in South Africa. Tolstoy's letter moved Gandhi immensely, and led to the two men engaging in further correspondence. Reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* also convinced Gandhi to avoid violence and espouse nonviolent resistance, a debt Gandhi acknowledged in his autobiography, calling Tolstoy "the greatest apostle of non-violence that the present age has produced." Besides non-violent resistance, the two men also shared a common belief in the merits of a cruelty-free, plant-based diet, which happens to be the subject of several of Tolstoy's essays.

*"When you love someone, you love the whole person, just as he or she is, and not as you would like them to be ... Love is life. All, everything that I understand, I understand only because I Love. Everything is, everything exists, only because I Love. Everything is united by it alone ... The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people ... Truth is communicated to men only by deeds of truth ... A man can live and be healthy without killing animals for food; therefore, if he eats meat, he participates in taking animal life merely for the sake of his appetite. And to act so is immoral ... Thus, if a man aspires towards a truly righteous life, his first act must be an abstinence from injuring animals." ~ Leo Tolstoy*

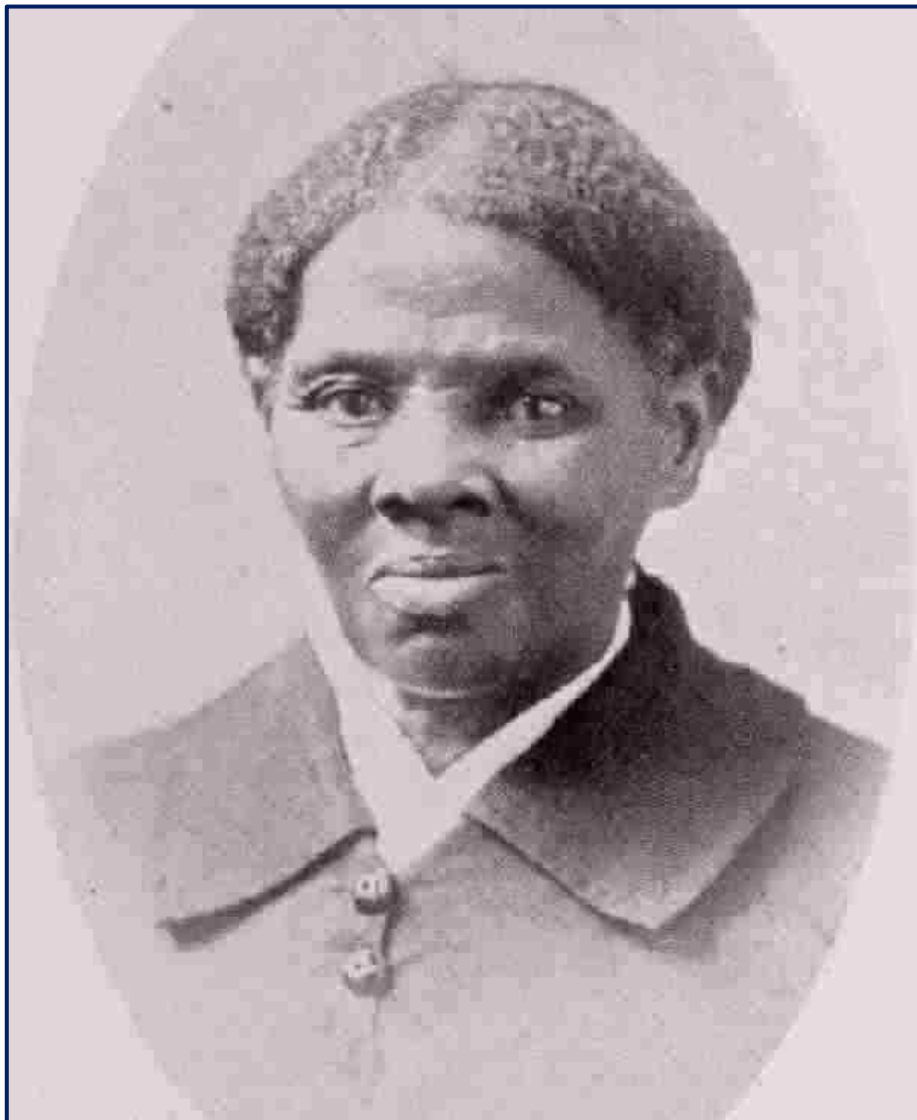


**P.S.** For those interested, this is a lovely children's book based on a Tolstoy work bearing the same name ... It is truly delightful, for young & old alike -- so enJOY!

## *Hero #136: Harriet Tubman*

Born Araminta Ross sometime in the early 1820's, Harriet Tubman was an African-American abolitionist, humanitarian, and social activist. Born into slavery, she eventually escaped in the fall of 1849, only to return of her own free will to rescue her family. Thereafter, she continued to head back into southern lands to rescue groups of slaves and lead them north. All in all, she made roughly thirteen such missions and rescued approximately seventy slaves. When the American Civil War began, Tubman worked for the Union Army, first as a cook and nurse, and then as an armed scout and spy. She was the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war, when she guided the Combahee River Raid, which liberated more than 750 slaves in South Carolina. After the war, she retired to her family home in Auburn, New York, where she cared for her aging parents, and became active in the women's suffrage movement in that state until illness overtook her in 1913.

*"I had reasoned it out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a right to: liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have the other ... I freed thousands of slaves, and I could have freed thousands more, if they had but known they were slaves ... Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and to change the world."* ~ Harriet Tubman

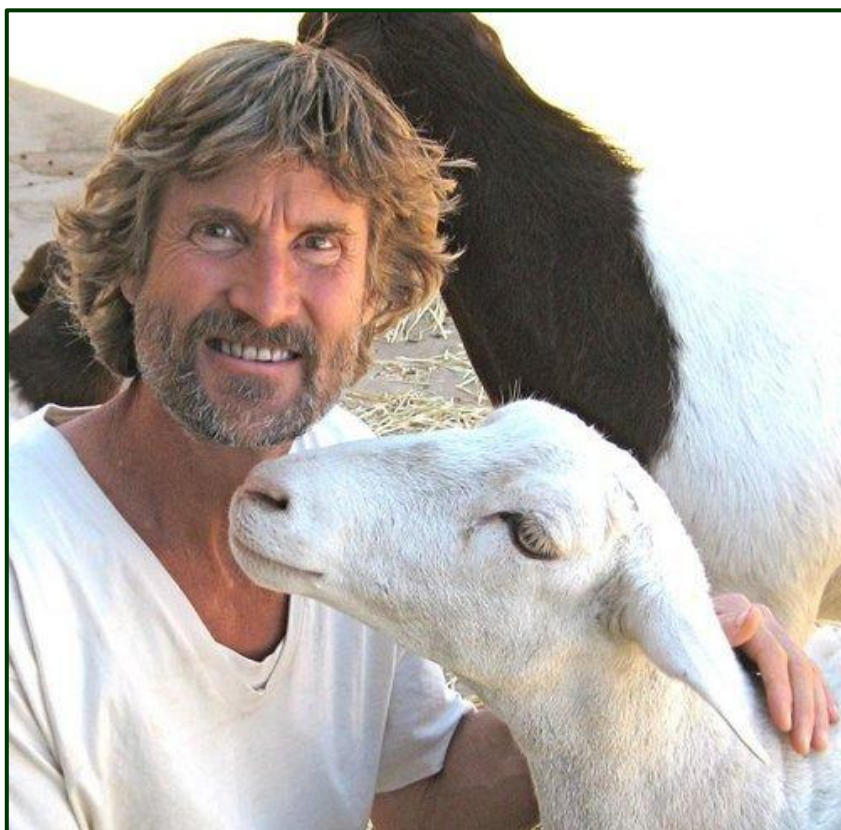




## *Hero #137: Will Tuttle*

Will Tuttle is an author, scholar, ex-Zen-monk, vegan educator, musician, philosopher, musician, and animal rights activist. After receiving a Masters Degree in Humanities from San Francisco State University and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley (where his doctoral dissertation focused on educating intuition and altruism in adults – a treatise that was nominated for the University’s Best Dissertation Award), Will taught a wide variety of college courses in philosophy, religion, mythology, humanities, music, literature, history, writing, and creativity. Since 1995, however, Will and his wife Madeleine have dedicated their lives to a different cause – living out of their solar-powered mobile home and travelling the world fulltime; presenting 100-150 lectures, workshops, and concerts every year -- primarily to colleges and universities, progressive churches, conferences, and for yoga, meditation, vegan, environmental, peace, and social justice communities ... Will also offers online training in the main ideas found in his bestselling (and quite brilliant) 2005 book, *The World Peace Diet* – which was the first book ever published that illuminates the big picture of the consequences of eating animal-sourced foods, and which focuses on spreading the vegan message of health, sustainable living, justice, and compassion for all sentient beings.

*“My perception of veganism is as a modern expression of “ahimsa,” the ancient core of all spiritual teachings, which is essentially non-violence. Whatever we sow, we will inevitably reap, and the key to true happiness lies in blessing others and being loving and kind to all beings ... Most of us are born into a culture that forces us to participate in regular rituals of violence (a.k.a. “meats”), and therewith we are injected with a mentality of reductionism, exclusion, privilege, and the immoral myth of “might-makes-right;” tending to see others as mere instruments to be used for our own pleasure or gain. In contrast, I teach veganism, which is nothing more than a coming home to one’s true Heart by seeing other beings as Beings instead of commodities; by respecting them and honoring them as equally sacred manifestations of life.” ~ via Will Tuttle*



## *Hero #138: Underworld*

Underworld are a British electronic music group (composed originally of Karl Hyde and Rick Smith, often accompanied by Darren Emerson -- and since 2005 with Hyde and Smith often alongside Darren Price) ... Known for their visual style, driving beat, loving vibe, and dynamic live performances, Underworld have influenced a wide range of artists and have been featured in soundtracks and scores for films, television, and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London ...

In 1999 Underworld embarked on a spirited and extremely well-received tour, which resulted in a live CD and DVD drawn from several dates on the tour. Called *Everything, Everything*, the project captured the live Underworld experience quite faithfully ... In 2008 the band also participated in an album called *Songs for Tibet*, “to express our support for the Tibetan people at a time when the eyes of the world are on China” (referring to the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing).



*“It’s quite interesting how it works, us two, because we’re polar opposites, really. People ask us why we’ve been together so long, and it’s certainly not because we’re all loved up all the time. That’s not to imply that we’re constantly disagreeing, either. We’re just different, you know? But we’ve finally realized, at our tender age, that that’s OK ... I said to Karl, ‘When you try to make sense, it doesn’t make me feel the same way. But when you just are who you are, then that makes me feel something.’”~ Rick Smith*



## Hero #139: Vegan Sidekick

Richard Watts (a.k.a. Vegan Sidekick) has over the past several years produced thousands of comics boldly championing the cause of animal rights and cleverly debunking the many faux-arguments made against the cruelty-free vegan lifestyle – always doing so with humor, always doing so with respect, and always doing so for free ... His efforts alone have inspired thousands of people to go vegan, thereby saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent animals every year.



*“I make comics that deal with the rationalizations people give for harming animals, as well as with the general mental process that goes on when people try to weigh their own deeper beliefs about animals against how they actually treat animals every day. The point is to get people to rethink what we’re doing to animals – the massive amount of suffering we are causing them, and realize that it’s all totally unnecessary.” ~ via Richard Watts*

**Please consider the following facts ...**

- We don't need to eat meat, we can live healthily on a plant-based diet, and many athletes and bodybuilders are vegan!
- In the egg and dairy industries, males are of no use as they don't make milk or lay eggs so they're killed. The females get killed too when their production is less profitable.
- There are many other things to buy in terms of food, clothing and cosmetics. Just ask a vegan for advice or google for recipes or products in your area!
- It might not seem like your responsibility, as you don't kill the animals yourself, but farms only continue because of demand. As demand decreases, supply has to decrease too. You might feel like you can't make a difference, but there are now millions of vegans, and we each need to make this choice as individuals to increase numbers even further.
- Nobody can force you to go vegan, or even force you to read this. The animals are the focus. Veganism is simply looking at what's going on, and deciding not to support it anymore.

**Thank you for reading**  
www.vegansidekick.com

**Panel 1:**

Character 1: I am so tired of the illogical nonsense people say to justify not being vegan.

Character 2: Well not all non-vegans are like that! I respect vegans and I don't argue against veganism.

Character 1: If you don't argue against veganism, then how come you are not vegan?

Character 2: It's my personal choice, I respect your decision to be vegan, you should respect me.

[www.vegansidekick.com](http://www.vegansidekick.com)

**Panel 2:**

Character 1: I didn't disrespect you, I asked you a question. It's not a personal choice when you are harming others.

Character 2: Yeah but I've got canines, lions eat meat, you drive a car, humane slaughter, ancestors, self-righteous, deserted island plants, have feelings, what are your views on abortion? nobody's perfect, stop judging me, I love animals and killing animals.

Character 1: Oops.



## *Hero #140: Vegans*

First coined in November of 1944 by Donald Watson when he co-founded the Vegan Society in England, “vegan” at first meant “non-dairy vegetarian”, and later was amended by Watson to refer to “the doctrine that mankind should live without exploiting animals” whatsoever. Millions of the Earth’s human residents are already vegans these days (almost 7% of Americans, according to a 2013 Public Policy poll, and roughly 2-3% worldwide), and yet, as often happens to concepts & principles over time, the term “vegan” has been unfortunately watered down to mean many different things to many different people.

That having been noted, I feel it is important to clarify which “vegans” I have nominated to “Hero” status with this chapter, and the easiest way to do so is to start by explaining to whom I do *not* refer – what “vegan” does *not* mean to me ...

\*To me (and all other “ethical vegans” like me), veganism is *not* a diet – even though it does indeed tend to help one look more beautiful and feel more fit.

\*To me, veganism is *not* an environmental movement – though it is indeed by far the most multi-faceted (and by far the most effective) way to protect the Earth’s ecological stability and preserve its natural beauty – not to mention the most effective way to minimize the impact of the Mass Extinction Event that already on its way; a Mass Extinction Event brought on by man-made climate change, which in turn has been primarily brought on by the animal agriculture industry.

\*To me, veganism is *not* a call to preserve a fair & equitable distribution of resources to those in need – though every new vegan does indeed bring the world’s poor that much closer to sustainability, the world’s thirsty that much closer to clean water, and the world’s hungry that much closer to food.

\*To me, veganism is *not* a health plan – though its lifestyle undeniably does indeed bring greater energy, less debilitating illness, greater clarity of thought, and a much longer, much happier, and much healthier life.

\*And finally, to me, veganism is *not* about striving for “spiritual enlightenment” – though becoming a vegan does indeed harmonize one’s values with one’s choices; bringing with it a deep sense of peace that can only properly be called a “soothed Soul”.

No, my Friends, while all these aforementioned “vegans” are indeed surely fine & dandy folks, they are *not* the “Heroes” mentioned in this post. For to me, vegans are simply any people who willingly abstain from using other sentient beings in any way – not as sources of food, not as sources of clothing, not as sources of entertainment, not as sources of research – not as commodities or indentured servants in any way whatsoever.

And yet, after penning and re-reading that last sentence, I feel it didn’t do proper justice to my Vegan Heroes ... And so I prepared this short tribute to explain further the depth of their service and the grandeur of their sacrifice; to make it all the more clear to you just what vegans *ARE*, first & foremost via what vegans **DO** ...

As it turns out, the simple economic workings of supply & demand mean that each & every vegan saves the lives and prevents the suffering of anywhere from 100 to 400 aware & caring animals every single year. Noam Mohr, a mathematician & physicist at Queens College, puts the average number of annually vegan-saved animals at 198, while a mathematician named Harish puts that figure at 406 (his mathematical proofs of this subject are pretty complex, and he notes on his webpage that his 400+ estimate is a probable underestimation), but these figures don't really matter. Even one life saved would make going vegan more than worth it, and it is an indisputable Truth that doing so saves **far** more lives than merely that one.



And yet even this noble doing is not the primary reason for me giving vegans their aforementioned “Hero status” ... Consider the following illuminations into what it truly means to me to be a Vegan:



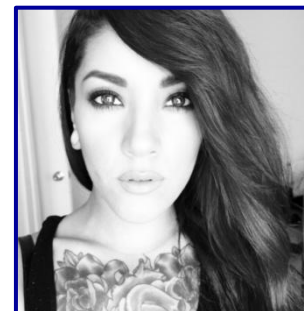
\*Vegans are people who make their daily choices as though animals matter; as though animal cruelty is wrong, and not a right.

\*Vegans are folks who have remembered that they have the power to refuse to take another life for their own enjoyment – and they are the people who refuse to pay others to do that taking for them ... They have replaced the “might” of being able to dominate & terminate others with the “Right” of refusing to do so.



\*Vegans know that intellectual sympathy and emotional empathy, while well-intended, are not enough when we come face-to-face with injustice ... Vegans know that action is necessary to effectively combat any evil.

\*Vegans are those who not only recognize the injustices being perpetrated against millions of animals around the world every day, but they are also the people who have chosen to actively DO SOMETHING about these crimes. They know that what we each allow in our own everyday private lives is what will persist & continue throughout society as a whole, and as such, they have chosen to refuse to allow cruelty & injustice & abuse to infiltrate their everyday choices. And thereby, they have lessened the prevalence of those travesties in our greater global society as well.



\*Vegans are people who don't care about calling themselves "animal lovers", but instead go about the day-to-day task of actually actively Loving animals.



\*Vegans are those who have awakened to the fact that animals are indeed sentient, and therefore that animals have rights – rights that those animals cannot defend effectively by themselves, and therefore rights that we humans must defend for them. These liberties include the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to pursue happiness, the right to privacy, the right to not be hunted or murdered, the right to not be tortured or experimented upon, the right to not be incarcerated or forced to perform for others, the right to not be harvested for food or fur, the right to not be forcibly impregnated, and the right to not have their children abducted after birth.



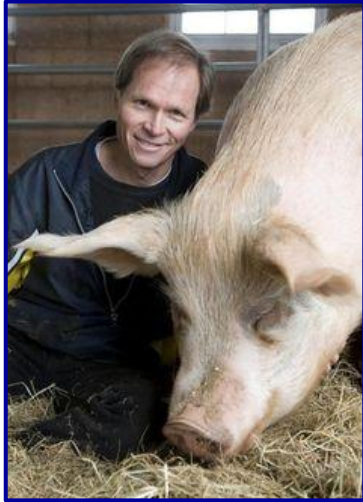
\*Vegans are the ones who have the guts to stare our current society's cruel conventions and tragic traditions directly in the face; and to openly call out their callousness, their cruelty & their ignorance. Thereafter, after those wrongs have been identified & exposed, vegans are those who refuse to be silent; who repeatedly stand up for the downtrodden & the oppressed; who give voice to those who are voiceless; to give strength to those who are too weak to fly free on their own.

\*Vegans are those who don't care if they are ridiculed or labeled an "insignificant minority". Maybe they *can* only do a little, and yet vegans do that little anyway, and they do it with verve. They know that every innocent being that is confined, abused and murdered by human hands violates all of humanity. And as such, they know that every animal saved from such torture & termination is a victory; not only for the individual animal saved, but also for the sanctity of humanity as a whole as well ... In essence, vegans are those who know that saving one animal may not change the world, but that each & every animal saved will indeed change the world for that animal -- and thereby eventually change the world as well.





\*Vegans see the innate Beauty of the Earth, and view their presence thereupon as a privilege to honor, not as a license to exploit.

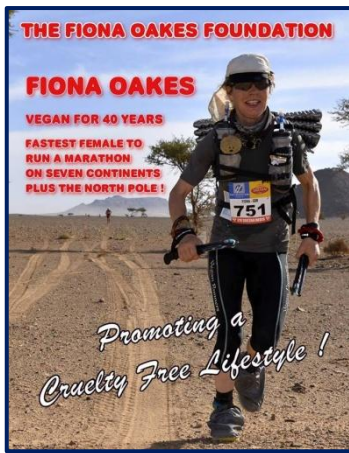


\*Vegans comprehend that – at least when it comes to how we are to treat our fellow beings – there is no fundamental difference between species. Vegans know that – at least when it comes to avoiding cruelty and engaging kindness – a man is a woman ... is a child ... is a dog ... is a pig ... is a cat ... is a cow ... is a horse ... is a chicken ... is a canary ... is a whale ... is a fish ... is a mink ... is a rat ... is a hamster ... is a goat ... is a lion ... is a lamb.

\*Vegans may feel ostracized &/or uncomfortable being incorrectly labeled “weird” or “strange” or “radical” or “extremist” or “hippie” or “freak” or “crazy”, and yet -- for the animals & for justice -- they openly proclaim their veganism anyway.



\*Vegans have immense compassion for all meat-eaters & all milk drinkers, for vegans know that it is non-vegans who are actually the unreasonable ones; that it is not logical to unnecessarily cause other sentient beings to suffer ... that it is not logical to support farming practices that to this day are destroying our health, destabilizing our economic well-being and eroding our planetary ecologies ... that it is not logical to slaughter **billions** of innocent animals every year – all to satisfy superficial cravings of taste & fullness ... that it is not logical to despise hypocrisy & animal cruelty on the one hand, while hypocritically supporting far more harmful acts of animal cruelty by purchasing meat or milk products on the other ... that it is not logical to worship domesticated pets while enabling to torture & suffering of their farmed cousins ... that it is not logical to drink the mammary gland secretions from another species when they have already weaned themselves from their mothers’ own breasts ... Vegans understand these contradictions and refuse to manifest them in their everyday lives, and vegans have a gentle empathy for all those still enmeshed in those hypocrisies’ sticky webs.



\* Vegans know that there is no such thing as “meat”; that what non-vegans partake of is actually the dead flesh of a butchered corpse.

\*Vegans are those who are no longer conned by deceptive displays & manipulative marketing – they know the brutal & inexcusable truths behind the lies of “humanly slaughtered pork” & “grass fed beef” & “free range chicken”. Vegans know that no warm & fuzzy euphemisms for murder – neither “cruelty-free” nor “raised with compassion” nor “biodynamically tended” nor “organically fed” – can validate or justify the forceful taking of a life in its vibrant adolescence. Vegans know that it is greed & greed alone that creates the demand for this mass murder, and that it is apathy & apathy alone that prevents this travesty from coming to an end.



\*Vegans are the people who are able to stoically confront the darker side of humanity – the shadowed side that has millions of otherwise kind & caring people actively participating in needless cruelty against animals only to satisfy desires of personal pleasure or convenience. Vegans confront this wall of seeming hopeless despair without losing hope -- they do so with a remarkably resilient faith in the innate Goodness within every meat-eater & every milk-drinker; a faith that this latent, innate Goodness will one day come once more to the fore and re-awaken every non-vegan to a cruelty-free lifestyle. Vegans have a faith deep down – even when things seem hopeless & even when the cause seems lost -- that their efforts to bring about a world of compassion and freedom and justice are never shared in vain.

These vegans come in all shapes & sizes, all genders, all races, all classes, and all sexual preferences. They inhabit all regions, are citizens of every nation, and represent every religion. They are a minority of the world's population still, yes, and yet they are already everywhere – all around you; caring with power & presence for every sentient being on this planet ... including you.

So I send out a great & heartfelt thanks to them, for thanks to them, a glorious world of peace & justice & respect & compassion is indeed already on its way ...

Feel free to *join the cause* and help them make it so.



*“I am not well-versed in theory, but in my view, the cow deserves her life ... as does the ram ... as does the ladybug ... as does the elephant ... as do the fish, and the dog, and the bee ... as do all other sentient beings. I will always be in favor of veganism as a minimum because I believe that sentient beings have a right not to be used as someone else's property. They ask us to be brave for them -- to be clear for them, and I see no other acceptable choice but to advocate veganism to that end. If these statements make me a fundamentalist, then so be it. I will sew a scarlet ‘F’ on my jacket so that all may know I'm fundamentally in favor of peace and compassion and nonviolence; and may they bury me in that same coat, so that all will know forever exactly for whom I stood.” ~ inspired by Vincent J. Guihan*

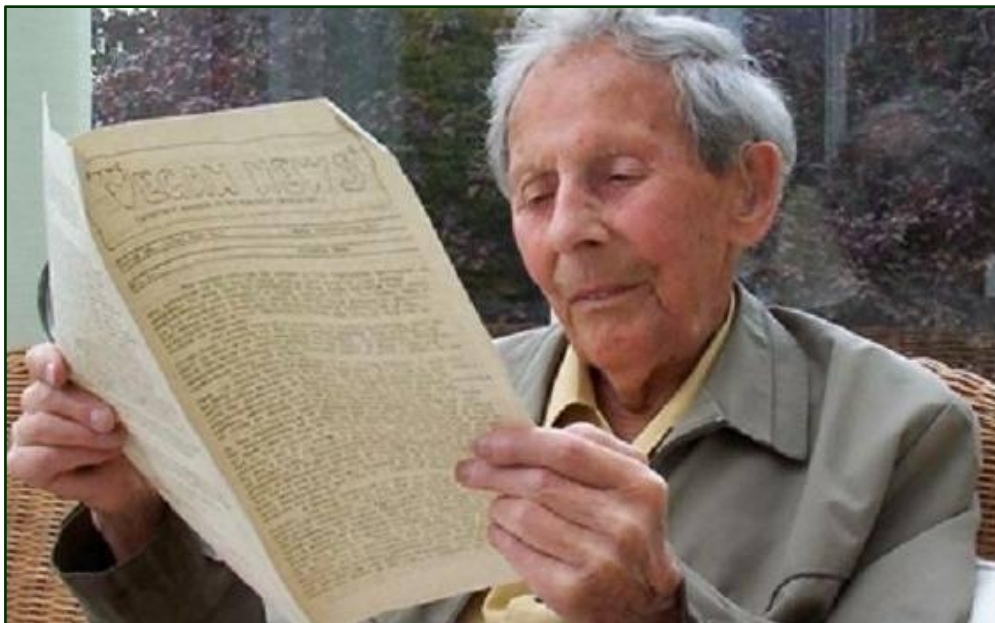
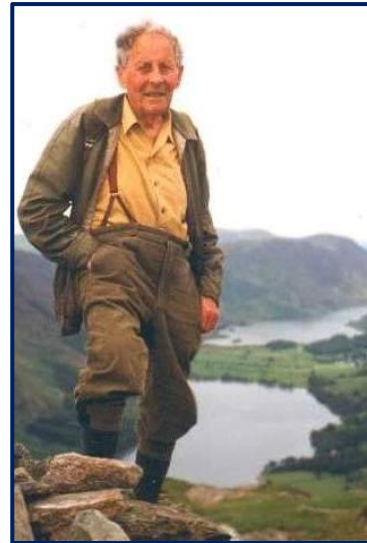
*“Small acts, when multiplied by thousands of people, can -- and do -- transform the world.”  
~ inspired by Howard Zinn*



## *Hero #140a: Donald Watson*

Donald Watson is essentially the “Founding Father of Veganism,” and great thanks go to him for gracing this Earth with his presence. Indeed, great thanks go to him as well for the legacy of Love for the animals that he left behind -- a legacy that will indeed continue to grow & expand, until one day all their “voices” are heard, all their innate rights are upheld, and all their lives are respected.

*“Achieving what I set out to do: to feel that I was instrumental in starting a great new movement which could not only change the course of things for Humanity and the rest of Creation but alter Man's expectation of surviving for much longer on this planet.” ~ Donald Watson (02/09/1910 - 16/11/2005)*

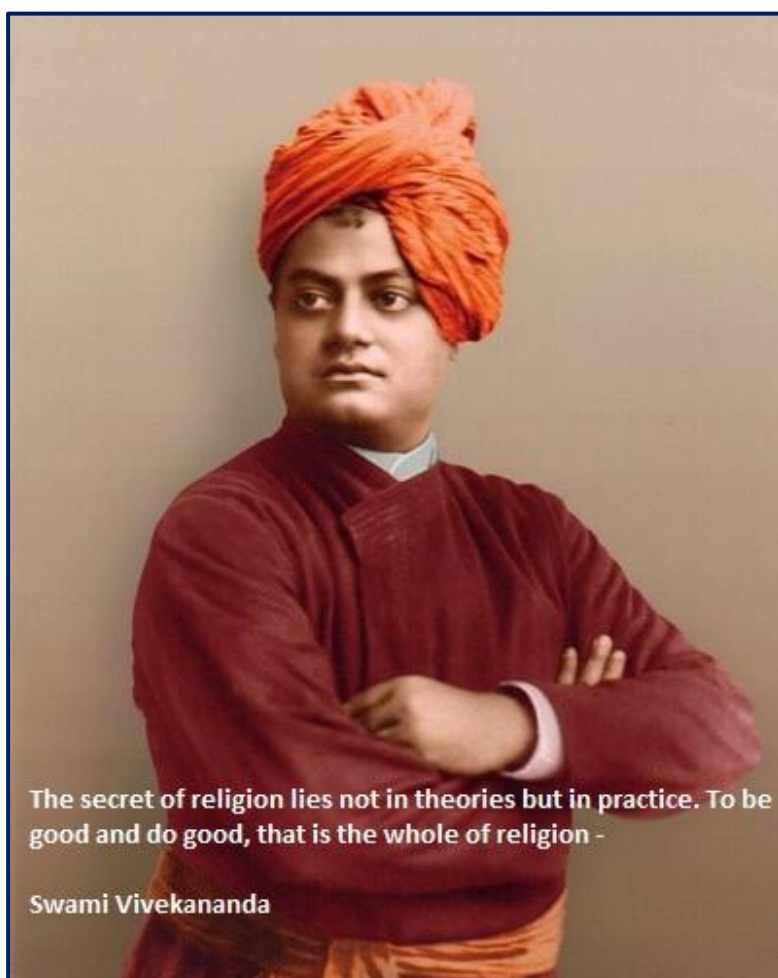


*"**Veganism** is nothing less than the ethical principle of choosing to live in such a way as to **liberate all sentient beings** from all forms of human exploitation -- primarily by refusing to use animals or their dead bodies as sources of food, clothing, labor, sport, experimentation &/or entertainment."*

*~ via **The Vegan Society**  
(founded by Donald Watson in 1944)*

## *Hero #141: Vivekananda*

Vivekananda (born Narendranath Datta) was an Indian Hindu monk who played an instrumental role in the introduction of the Indian philosophy of Vedanta to the Western world. He is also credited with raising interfaith awareness, and bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the late 19th century. He was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India, and championed the concept of nationalism in colonial India, fervently desiring “to set in motion a machinery which will bring the noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the basest” ... Vivekananda ultimately founded the Ramakrishna Math (an interfaith monastic order that abstains from political interactions and that sees acts of social service as spiritual practice) and the Ramakrishna Mission (a Vedantic mission that aims to harmonize all religions and that promotes peace and equality for all humanity) ... Vivekananda was influenced by his guru, Ramakrishna, from whom he learnt that all living beings were an embodiment of the divine self, and therefore that service to God could be rendered by service to mankind.



*“Where can we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being ... We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act ... The more we come out and do good to others, the more our hearts will be purified, and God will be in them ... Our duty is to encourage everyone in his struggle to live up to his own highest ideal, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the Truth.” ~ Vivekananda*



## *Hero #142: Karim Wasfi*

Bomb explosions were, sadly, not an unusual occurrence in Baghdad. And yet after a car packed with explosives detonated in the busy Mansour district in 2015, killing 10 people and injuring 27, something very unusual happened. Karim Wasfi, the renowned conductor of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra, showed up just as soldiers and police were securing the area. He then took out his cello, sat down on a chair, and started to play. Images and video clips of the man some simply call "maestro" quickly went viral, not only on Iraqi social media, but further afield as well.

Wasfi later spoke about his decision to play at that place and time, saying, *"It was an action to try and equalize things, to try and reach the equilibrium between ugliness, insanity, and grotesque acts of terror - to equalize it, even to overcome it, with acts of beauty, creativity, and grace ... When things are normal, I will have more normal responsibilities and obligations. But when things are insane and abnormal like that, I have the obligation of inspiring people, of sharing hope, of perseverance, of dedication, and of simply preserving the momentum of life."*





## *Hero #143: Paul Watson*

Born in December of 1950, Paul Franklin Watson is a Canadian environmental activist, who founded the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a direct action group focused on marine conservation ...

Watson's pro-Earth, pro-environment & pro-animal activist career began when he joined a Sierra Club protest against nuclear testing in 1969. He was thereafter an early and influential member of Greenpeace, and was credited by The New York Times, The New Yorker, and other publications with being a founding member thereof, though Greenpeace denies the claim. Watson argued almost from the beginning for a protest strategy founded on direct action -- a strategy that conflicted with the Greenpeace's interpretation of nonviolence. For this reason, Watson was ousted from the Greenpeace board in 1977, and subsequently left the organization completely. That same year, he formed Sea Shepherd Conservation Society -- the same activist group that is the subject of the reality show, "Whale Wars" ... Soon after its founding, Sea Shepherd established itself as one of the more controversial environmental groups, known for its provocative direct action tactics; tactics which have included (and still include) throwing "stink bombs" onto the decks of whaling ships, using "prop foulers" to sabotage whaling vessels, boarding whaling vessels, and even scuttling two ships in an Icelandic harbor. In 1993, Watson also published "Earthforce!," a practical guide for all environmental activists. Therein, he specifically endorses the tactics of "monkey-wrenching" -- the purposeful destruction &/or sabotage of any & all property being used to harm the environment and any of the earth's resident life forms.

Consistent with his anti-whaling & anti-sealing positions, Watson also promotes veganism, along with a biocentric (life-affirming), rather than anthropocentric (human dominate) worldview ... Watson's courageous activities have led to legal actions against him from authorities in countries including the United States, Canada, Norway, Costa Rica, and Japan. He was detained in Germany in May 2012, on an Interpol red notice requesting his detention to allow an extradition application from Costa Rica. A second red notice was issued on September 14, 2012, this time at request from Japan. After staying at sea for 15 months, he returned to Los Angeles in late October 2013, and went through customs without incident. Costa Rica later dropped its extradition request after documentary footage taken at the time of the incident in question proved Watson's innocence. Watson remains in the United States to this day, where he continues to be active in various pro-environment & pro-animal endeavors.

*"They call me an eco-terrorist, but I don't work for BP." ~ Paul Watson*

*"Whaling is cruel, uncivilized and has no place in the modern world ... We are pirates of compassion opposing pirates of profit ... We will not stop until whaling ends ... People can criticize us all they want, but what they have to remember is that our clients are the whales and the Earth, and I have never heard either complain ... You don't walk down the street and see a woman being raped and do nothing. You don't walk down the street and see a kitten or a puppy being stomped to death and do nothing. You don't walk down the street and see a child being molested and do nothing. You DO SOMETHING." ~ Paul Watson*



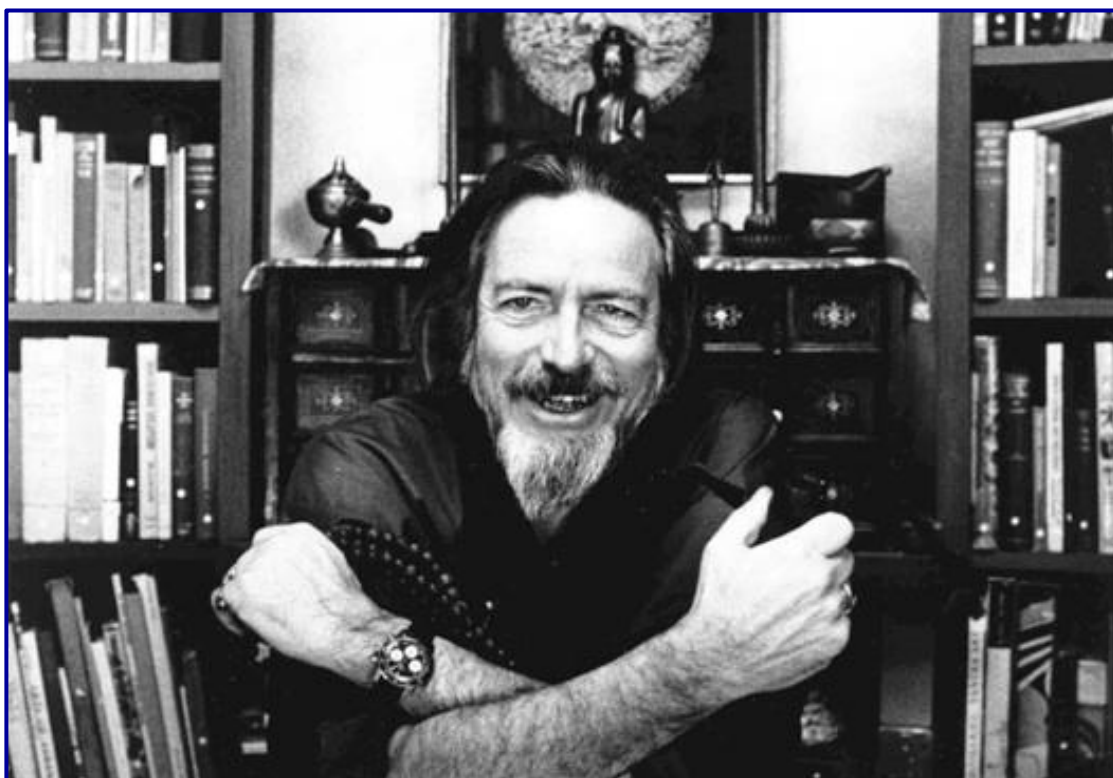
## *Hero #144: Alan Watts*

Born in 1915, Alan Watts was a British-born philosopher, writer, and speaker. He was best known as a re-interpreter of Eastern philosophy for those living in or having intimate ties with the West ...

Even in his early years at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, it became clear that Watts disliked all religious outlooks that he felt were dour, guilt-ridden, or militantly proselytizing — and this dislike knew no particular prejudice, as his disdain was thrown with equal vigor upon all conservative dogmas, regardless of whether they were founded in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist beliefs ... While at Seabury-Western, Watts attempted to work out a practical conjoining of contemporary Christian worship, mystical Christianity, and Asian philosophy. Despite his somewhat radical views, he did ultimately receive a master's degree in theology from the school, and thereafter became an Episcopal priest, only to leave the ministry in 1950 and move to California, where he joined the faculty of the American Academy of Asian Studies.

All in all, Watts wrote more than 25 books and articles on subjects important to Eastern and Western religion, introducing the pop-culture phenomenon known as “The Way of Zen” (1957), which also happened to be the title of one of his early books; in fact, one of the very first bestselling books on Buddhism in the United States.

*“To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float ... The only way to make sense out of change in life is to plunge into it, to move with it, to join the dance ... After all, you are a function of what the entire Universe is doing in the same way that a wave is a function of what the entire ocean is doing ... So then, the relationship of self to other is the complete realization that loving yourself is impossible without Loving everything defined as other than yourself.” ~ Alan Watts*



## *Hero #145: Steve Wheen*

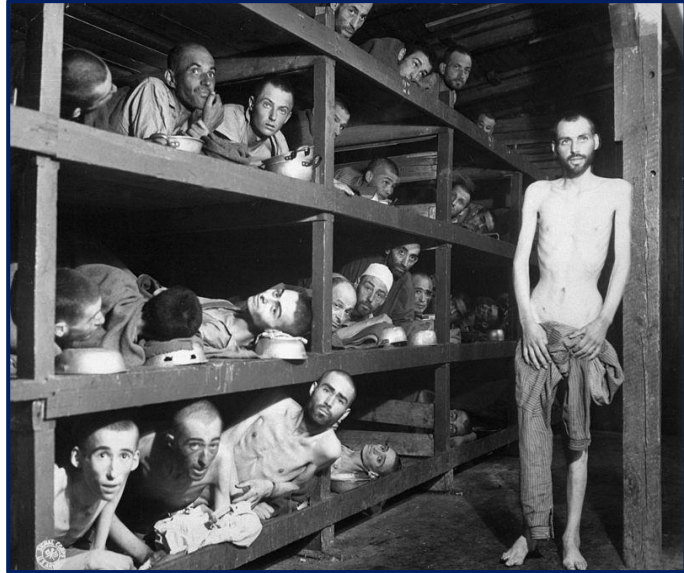
Steve Wheen is a radical gardener on a miniature scale. Essentially, Steve altruistically & anonymously creates miniature gardens in the unlikeliest of urban spaces -- potholes, cracks in sidewalks, borders of footpaths, beside curbs etc. His “micro-gardens” were born out of frustration with both the potholes he encountered in the roads during his cycling to work as well as the overall lack of greenery in his community. He's now on a mission to create unexpected moments of joy and wonderment amidst the madness and the grayness that often is London, England, and – in his words – to make people “think about where they live and their environment and think about getting out there, doing some gardening and helping the community.”



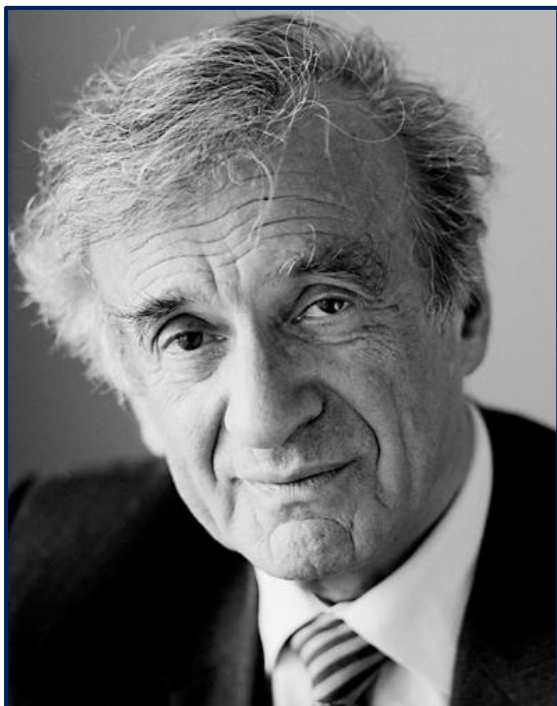


## Hero #146: Elie Wiesel

Born in September of 1928, Elie Wiesel is a Romanian-born Jewish-American professor and political activist. He is the author of 57 books, including *Night*, a work based on his personal experiences as a prisoner in the Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald concentration camps during WWII. Indeed, the image below is of the Buchenwald barracks that housed Wiesel – and he can actually be seen in this image (second row from the bottom; 7th man from the left) ... For ten years after the war, Wiesel refused to write about or discuss his experiences during the Holocaust. However, a meeting with the French author François Mauriac, the 1952 Nobel Laureate in literature who eventually became Wiesel's close friend, persuaded him to write the 900-page memoir *And the World Remained Silent*. Wiesel thereafter rewrote a shortened version of the same manuscript in French, which was published as the 127-page *La Nuit*, and later translated into English as *Night* – a work that now well-regarded in literary circles and has many million copies in print.



Wiesel was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for speaking out against violence, repression, and racism. When giving him the award, the Norwegian Nobel Committee called him a “messenger to mankind”, stating that through his struggle to come to terms with “the utter contempt for humanity shown in Hitler's death camps”, which led to his noble and “practical work in the cause of peace”, Wiesel delivered a powerful message “of atonement and human dignity” to all of humanity.



*“The opposite of Love is not hate, it's indifference ... Mankind must remember that peace is not God's gift to his creatures; peace is our gift to each other ... This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century -- solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.” ~ Elie Wiesel*

## Hero #147: Jim Withers

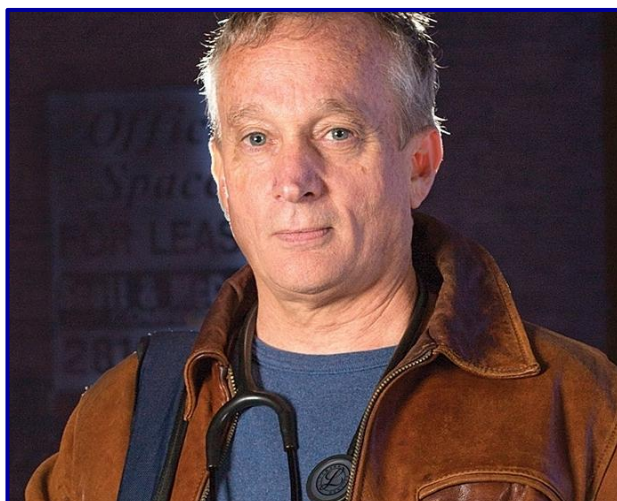
For more than 20 years, Dr. Jim Withers has taken his medical practice to the streets of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by offering free, quality health care to the homeless ...

Originally, to win their trust, Withers used to walk the streets dressed like a homeless person -- rubbing dirt in his hair and muddying up his clothes. He would search for those who needed medical attention who might be too suspicious of him otherwise. It was important for Withers to connect with people who wouldn't seek him out. Instead of waiting for them to come to him, he reached out to them instead ... Eventually Withers' one-man mission became a citywide program called Operation Safety Net. Now well-known among the community's homeless, Withers no longer needs any disguise, and yet he does till set forth every week to seek out those in need. Toting medicine, bottled water, and peanut-butter sandwiches (made by the Sisters of Mercy in West Oakland), he and his team climb the South Side Slopes, walk under bridges downtown, and venture into abandoned buildings in the city's North Side looking for patients. They treat all who are willing to be treated, and they treat them all for free.



Since 1992, Operation Safety Net has cared for well over 1000 people every single year and helped more than 1200 of them transition into housing. The non-profit also runs a Severe Weather Emergency Shelter, which is open to all in need from mid-November to mid-March on all nights when the temperature drops below 25 degrees. In addition, Withers started the Street Medicine Institute, a nonprofit organization that helps communities worldwide establish similar programs of their own.

*“I think we have reached a point in our society where we have to decide whether we’re in it together or continue to go our separate ways. Street medicine has the capacity to challenge conventional prejudice; it could end up pulling us together. Perhaps it could even facilitate a new and unified vision of community and commitment to each other.” ~ Jim Withers*





## *Hero #148: Yoda*

One of the most respected Jedi Masters in galactic history, Yoda -- especially in his later, Muppetesque years -- was known for his penetrating wisdom, childlike sense of Humor and Peace-full ways.



*“Always in motion, the future is ... Grave danger you are in, [because] impatient, you are ... You must train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose ... Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering ... Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter ... Oh, a great warrior, are you? Wars do not make one great ... Size matters not ... [real] Strength flows from The Force ... A Jedi uses The Force for knowledge and defense, never to attack ... Do or do not; there is no try.” ~ Yoda*

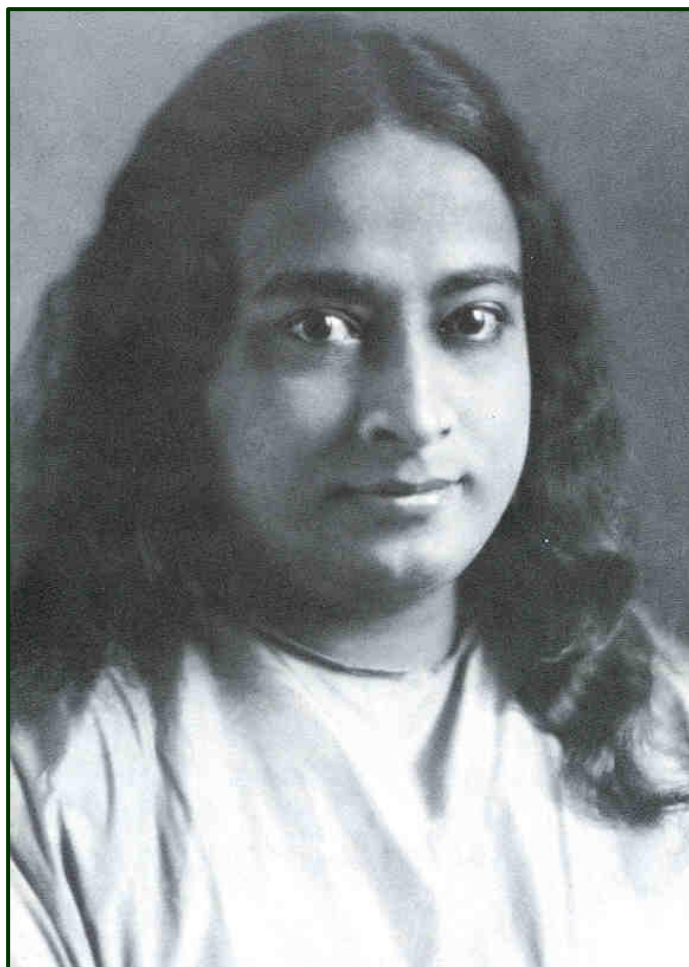




## *Hero #149: Paramahansa Yogananda*

In 1917, Paramahansa Yogananda began his life's work with the founding of a “how-to-live” school, where modern educational methods were combined with yoga training and instruction in practical spiritual ideals. In 1920, he was invited to serve as India's delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. His address to that Congress was well received and later that same year he founded the Self-Realization Fellowship and in 1925 established its headquarters in Los Angeles. Among other things, Yogananda stated that this Fellowship was designed to “teach that the purpose of life is the evolution, through self-effort, of man’s mortal consciousness into God Consciousness,” to “reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna,” to “show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions,” to “liberate man from his threefold sufferings: physical disease, mental unharmony, and spiritual ignorance,” to “spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples,” to “unite science and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles,” and to “overcome evil by good, sorrow by joy, cruelty by kindness, ignorance by wisdom.”

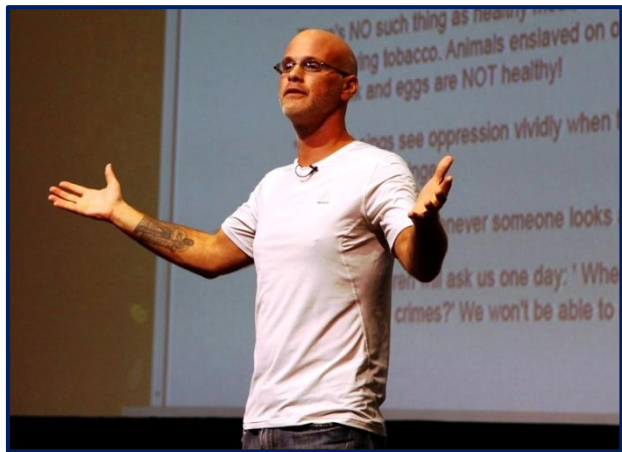
*“To me there is no difference between one person and another; I behold all as soul-reflections of the one God. I can't think of anyone as a stranger, for I know that we are all part of the One ... Let my soul smile through my heart and my heart smile through my eyes, that I may scatter rich laughter upon sad hearts ... Indeed, the happiness of one's own Heart alone cannot ever fully satisfy the Soul; one must choose to include, as necessary to one's own happiness, the Joy and Peace of others.” ~ via P. Yogananda*



## Hero #150: Gary Yourofsky

Born in 1970, Yourofsky is an American animal rights activist. Over 20 years ago, after a behind-the-scenes visit to a circus partially awakened him to the immense suffering that humans were inflicting upon the animal kingdom, Gary wanted to know more -- especially about the treatment of the animals whose flesh he ate and whose skin he wore. So he found a slaughterhouse in his hometown and visited it every day for six weeks; and vividly brutal experience that altered his consciousness and changed his life forever. Thereafter he immediately began a life of radical activism, and was arrested thirteen times for various pro-animal protest actions (in which no human lives, other than his own, were harmed or endangered) between the years of 1997 & 2001 ... On March 30, 1997, Yourofsky, along with four members of the Animal Liberation Front, raided a fur farm in Canada, successfully releasing 1,542 mink who were set to be killed for their fur. He was subsequently arrested, tried, and sentenced to six months in a Canadian maximum-security prison. After serving 77 days of that sentence, he was released a further changed man, noting at the time that “[he] was no more than an animal in the zoo”, and that his prison-time reinforced his intense “empathy and understanding of what the animals go through.”

Since his time working for PETA thereafter (2002-2005), Gary gave roughly 2500 presentations & lectures on veganism and animal rights to more than 60,000 people. In 2010, Yourofsky's popularity exponentially accelerated around the world following the release of a YouTube video (entitled *Best Speech You Will Ever Hear*) showing him giving a speech at Georgia Institute of Technology. That video alone has been translated into dozens of languages and has already been viewed millions of times.



Accepting no money for his efforts on behalf of the animals, Yourofsky lives modestly and gets by on donations sent to him from admirers and fellow activists ... While many -- including myself -- are not particularly fond of the somewhat aggressive stance Yourofsky's advocacy sometimes takes, there is no question that he is a true champion of Justice and a faithful advocate for the rights of the innocent.



*“When I see a meat-eater I see somebody who has blinders on, who’s not thinking rationally. I see a hidden vegan – I want to reach down inside and say, ‘Hey, I know you want to be compassionate, just like when you were a kid.’ ... I don’t want to fight you, I want to embrace you at the end. I want to get that wonderful person out of you ... The Golden Rule states: ‘Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself.’ Well, animals qualify as others ... Contrary to political and religious dogma, animals do not belong to us. They are not commodities. They are not property. And they are not inanimate, stupid objects, who can’t think and feel.” ~ Gary Yourofsky*



It is not your right, based on your traditions, your customs & your habits, to deny to animals their freedom so you can harm them, enslave them & kill them. That's not what rights are about. That's injustice. There is no counter-argument to veganism. Accept it. Apologise for the way you've been living. Make ammends and move forward.

~ Gary Yourofsky



*“Are you aware, that for the first time ever, you can now directly participate in ending a massacre? Instead of sitting around and paying lip service to all the massacres, and all the problems that are always going on, on this planet ... You sit back in the comfort of your living room, and condemn the atrocities of elsewhere. But veganism is a chance to actually walk the compassionate talk ... It is the chance to show others how peaceful you truly are.” ~ Gary Yourofsky*





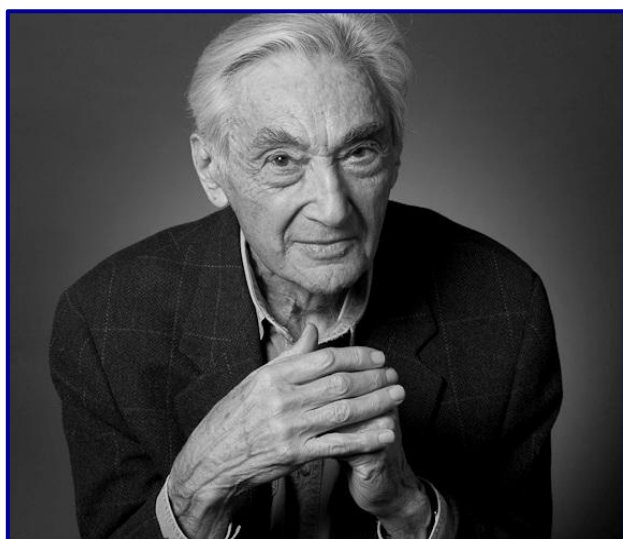
## *Hero #151: Howard Zinn*

Howard Zinn was an American historian, political science professor (Boston University), playwright, and social activist. While writing extensively about the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movement, and the labor history of the United States, Zinn penned more than twenty books -- including his best-selling, immensely insightful, and highly influential *A People's History of the United States*. The latter depicts the struggles of Native Americans against European and U.S. conquest & expansion, slaves against slavery, unionists and other workers against capitalists, women against patriarchy, and African-Americans against systemic racism. It was highly regarded from its release and was a finalist for the National Book Award in 1981 ... Zinn said his experience as a wartime bombardier sensitized him to the ethical dilemmas faced by soldiers during wartime. He also openly questioned the weak justifications given for military operations that inflicted massive civilian casualties, including the Allied bombing of cities such as Dresden, Royan, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, Hanoi during the War in Vietnam, Baghdad during the war in Iraq, as well as the persistent civilian casualties during bombings in Afghanistan during the current war there.

*“Recall that in the midst of the Gulf War, the U.S. military bombed an air raid shelter, killing 400 to 500 men, women, and children who were huddled to escape bombs. The claim was that it was a military target, housing a communications center, but reporters going through the ruins immediately afterward said there was no sign of anything like that. I suggest that the history of bombing — and no one has bombed more than this nation — is a history of endless atrocities, all calmly explained by deceptive and deadly language like 'accident', 'military target', and 'collateral damage'.” ~ Howard Zinn*

To his credit, after Barack Obama was elected President of the United States, Zinn was one of the first to immediately name him for what he indeed turned out to be, stating that, “If Richard Hofstadter were adding to his book *The American Political Tradition*, in which he found both 'conservative' and 'liberal' presidents, both Democrats and Republicans, maintaining for dear life the two critical characteristics of the American system, nationalism and capitalism, then Obama would fit the pattern.”

Contemporaries held Zinn in high esteem, with fellow Boston University professor Caryl Rivers (who with Zinn was threatened with dismissal after refusing to cross the picket line during a clerical workers strike in 1979) saying, “[Zinn] had a deep sense of fairness and justice for the underdog, and yet he always kept his sense of humor. He was truly a happy warrior.”



*“The lesson of that history is that you must not despair, that if you are right, and you persist, things will change. The government may try to deceive the people, and the newspapers and television may do the same, but the truth has a way of coming out. The truth has a power greater than a hundred lies.”*

*~ Howard Zinn*

## Hero #152: Zoroaster

Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra) was an ancient Persian prophet whose teachings and innovations on the religious traditions of ancient Iranian-speaking peoples developed into the religion of Zoroastrianism, which by some accounts was the world's very first major religion.

Zoroaster saw the human condition as being the mental struggle between *aša* (truth) and *druj* (falsehood), which thereafter manifested a similar struggle between Love and fear. So it is that humankind's essential purpose is to nourish and maintain *aša*. For humankind, according to Zoroaster, this occurs through active participation in life and the exercise of constructive thoughts, words, and deeds. Zoroaster emphasized the freedom of the individual to choose right or wrong, as well as stressing an individual's responsibility for his or her deeds. This personal choice to enliven *aša* and thereby shun *druj* (ignorance and chaos) is one's own decision and never a mandate from any other political or religious authority.

It is also worthy of note that Zoroaster's influence extended well beyond Persia. Indeed, Zoroastrian philosophy has been shown to have influenced the development of both Judaism (and as such, indirectly, Christianity) and Platonic thought, and has been identified as one of the key early events in the development of Western philosophy in general (with the 2005 Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy ranking Zarathustra first in its chronology of philosophers). In addition, among the classic Greek philosophers, Heraclitus and Pythagoras are often referred to as having been inspired by Zoroaster and his "love of wisdom."

*"One good deed is worth a thousand prayers ... Taking the first footstep with a good thought, the second with a good word, and the third with a good deed, I entered paradise ... Doing good to others is not a duty. It is a joy ... Always meet petulance with gentleness and perverseness with kindness. A gentle hand can lead even an elephant by a hair. Reply to thine enemy with gentleness ... By my love and hope I beseech you – do not forsake the Hero currently residing in your Soul!" ~ via Zoroaster*



## Hero #153: YOU!

That's right – YOU, each & every one of you, also qualify as being a Hero; at least a potential one. True, you may not have the equanimity of Thich Nhat Hanh or the political clout of Martin Luther King or the mass popularity of Gandhi or the limitless freedom of Peace Pilgrim, and yet you **do** have the ability to live a truly heroic life nonetheless ...

\*When tempted to pass by a homeless person or scurry past a downtrodden stranger, **you can choose to Be Kind** to them instead ...

\*When tempted to feel hatred for or utter gossip about an enemy, you **can choose to forgive** them instead (remembering that real Forgiveness is a verb – a good deed – often an anonymous one) ...

\*When tempted to complain about the blatant corruption &/or inexcusable ineffectiveness of your political “leaders” (be they local or regional or national) **you can choose to exit the political system** that is wasting your energy and invest your time and your money and efforts in building self-sustainable, giving&sharing-based communities instead ...

\*When tempted to let your selfish desires for palate pleasure lead you towards supporting acts of callousness and cruelty towards farmed animals, **you can choose to Go Vegan** instead ...

\*When tempted to live your life primarily for yourself and those who already love you, **you can choose to Live your Life for the betterment of others** – ALL others – instead.

And it is important for us all to remember that we don't need to “change the world” or “save our communities” or even “discover our true purpose in life” to become the heroes we were all born to be. We don't have to donate all of our time or all of our wealth or all of our caring in order to make a huge difference in the lives of those around us. We simply have to regularly give 5 minutes of our time when we are truly busy with other “every important things” – only have to give a few dollars when we are at the end of the month and have just enough for ourselves – only have to reach out and care for a moment or two in those times when we least wish to do so, for those “least deserving” of the same ... That is all it takes to become a hero – for that is essentially what all Heroes truly do.



**Amen** ... Let it be so!

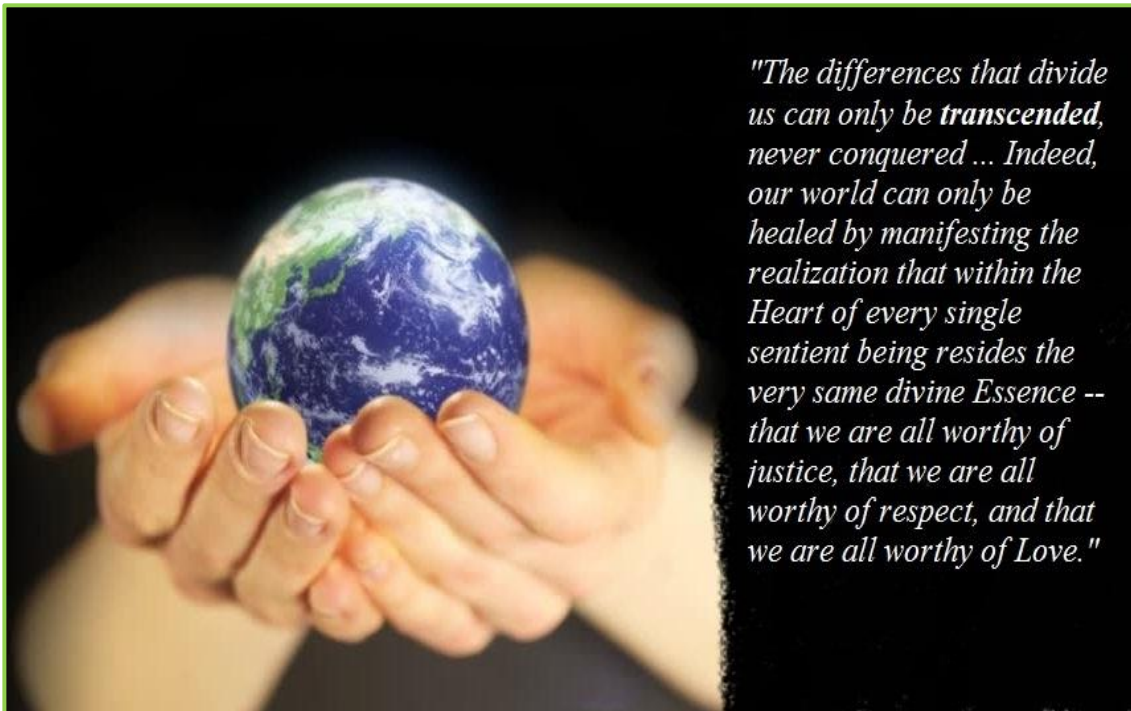
*“Everybody can be great ... because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of humble grace; a Soul generated by Love.” ~ inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.*





*“Many of the greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel.” ~ Florence Nightingale*

*“Heroes aren't heroes because they worship the light, but because they know the darkness all too well to sink down and live with it.” ~ Ninya Tippett*



*"The differences that divide us can only be transcended, never conquered ... Indeed, our world can only be healed by manifesting the realization that within the Heart of every single sentient being resides the very same divine Essence -- that we are all worthy of justice, that we are all worthy of respect, and that we are all worthy of Love."*



*“And I will take one from a thousand  
and two from ten thousand,  
and they shall Become a single One.”  
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*