

The makings of real heroes



SCRIBBLES OF SANITY

JAYNA BERGERSON

The saying, "Heroes are born, not made," sounds as if, in order to be a hero, one must have genetically perfect parents and be able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. In reality, most real heroes are very human. And not only are they human, but they also have no clue that they are heroes. For to be a hero or heroine, all that matters is hard work, courage and the right motivation.

Martin Luther King Jr. stands as a proud example of what it takes to be a hero. King was "a man of exceptional quality, who wins admiration by deeds of courage," which is one dictionary's definition of a hero. King's fame has lasted 33 years, and it is sure to last many more. His message changed the heart of a generation of people. But he was born, as is every man and woman. His birthplace and childhood home was 501 Auburn Ave. in Atlanta, Ga. It was a simple house, not a mansion. His father was a minister, not a superhero.

One thing that made King a hero in the eyes of the American people was his desire for change. But the key point is that he allowed this dream to transform itself into action that worked toward realizing the desired change. King didn't keep his dream to himself. He could have, but he didn't. He shared his dream with anyone who would listen. And in 1963, on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., King proclaimed to 250,000 people, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'" He had found others who shared his dream, and together they took steps to see that dream realized. This is the work of a hero.

But not only was he a man of vision who compelled others to action, King was also a man of hard work. He and his supporters

had to bleed, sweat, cry and pray to achieve that which they believed was worthwhile. All the sit-ins, speeches, marches, rallies and protests didn't organize themselves. They took time and planning.

King was arrested numerous times. In April 1963, he spent 11 days in jail. During this time, he did not wallow in self-pity. Rather, he wrote a letter to clergymen in Birmingham, Ala., to defend his methods and the purpose behind doing things his way. In essence, he fought for his vision from behind bars.

Above all else, King fought for what he believed against a tidal wave of opposition from whites and blacks. Some respected and admired him, but there were many more people who hated him, criticized him and laughed at him. Some even wanted him dead. It is easy to stand for something that everyone else believes in, but when you stand alone, you prove your worth.

Every year on the third Monday in January, we honor King's birthday. Back in 1986, when Congress declared a holiday in remembrance of King, the official document stated, "Such holiday should serve as a time for Americans to reflect on the principles of racial equality and nonviolent social change espoused by Martin Luther King Jr." We celebrate the hero that King has become and the dream that he defended to his death.

Many people idolized King, not realizing that he was just a man with a vision of what could be. And he had the guts and determination to see that dream realized at the cost of his own life. And thanks to his courage and self-sacrifice, that dream lives on. That's what it takes to be a hero.

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Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Letters to the editor

Striving to live up to principles

Bravo to Michael Kleckner for outlining his personal and political struggle with drug testing ("Testing the limits of my Principles," ODE, Jan. 10). I admit I've peed in a fair share

of cups because my ambition burned brighter than my principles, so I admire Kleckner for turning down a prestigious internship opportunity last year to protest the drug test.

And I also admire him for taking the drug test this year because, on balance, this year's internship opportunity is too good to pass up.

At least he's raising the questions and coming up with answers — and a moral scale — he can live with.

Almost all University students heading into the work world are probably going to face the little plastic cup. Some studies estimate as many as 80 percent of American companies require drug testing as a

condition of employment. So whether the issue is one of principle for you — or whether you think you might fail a drug test if you had to take one — start thinking about it now.

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