

A Generational Legacy

When asked to define moral courage, most people will give a fairly basic answer. Moral courage is to do what is right even in the face of a possible consequence or personal risk. While this may be true, moral courage means so much more for me: moral courage is my generational legacy.

It is the 1960s, a time rife with racism and antisemitism, and the Ku Klux Klan gathers to plot and execute their evil. A man stands among them, an outsider. He tries to remain inconspicuous, his mind racing to memorize license plates and names. He doesn't dare write it down. Evil spews around him from mouths well-accustomed to hatred, but the man is calm. He knows he is doing right by his community, and that is what matters. And the next day, he sits down and recounts the facts he worked so hard to memorize. Rinse and repeat, 10 more times. After every recount, the Anti Defamation League uses what he'd learned to prevent possible attacks. This man is part of how I developed my definition of moral courage.

Some years later, a woman stands in front of seven people, her stomach a cyclone of tumultuous anxiety. With each slow wave of the United States flag in the back corner, her perturbation grows. She takes a breath and begins her fight. "Four burglaries, just in the past night." The woman stares with bravery into the blank faces of the Council. Their eyes scream listlessness, but she stands her ground. Her house was not one of the few burglarized, but she knows any struggle in her community is her fight, too. And while the scoffs and derision almost deterred her, she chooses instead to throw her words in the face of the mayor until he has no choice but to listen: police protection is increased, and her community and family become secure. Without this woman's resilient battle, safety may never have been achieved. This woman helped to form my definition of moral courage.

These two people were, respectively, my grandfather and mother. Now, the responsibility of moral courage falls to me. It isn't just something that *should* be in my life. It is a moral imperative . As the world shifts and changes more and more every day, moral courage needs to be at the forefront. If our society begins to lack moral courage, the human race we know would turn to bland, cardboard cut-outs who just follow the lead of the most influential. Without moral courage, no one would be willing to fight for their beliefs. Although going with the flow can be the right path at times, if it is constantly applied to all areas of life, there can be no progress or improvement. And while practicing moral courage is an obligation for me, it is also my duty to help others act upon their moral courage. Ultimately, the individual dictates how society runs, and I am intent on ensuring it progresses with morality.