

Bravery Isn't Easy, and It's Overrated

I find that people are hijacking the term bravery to feel good about themselves. Here is the deal ... You are not brave by saying anti-Trump stuff when you have nothing to lose by saying it. If you lose some friends you don't care about, you are still not brave.

You are not brave by saying anti-PC stuff when you have little to lose by saying it. You are never brave by coming out against Nazis, unless you live in Germany 1933-1945. You aren't even brave by saying or doing stuff that will make you lose your job but gain you tens of thousands in donations or a high status among your friends.

You are brave when you will lose stuff you deeply desire in order to live by principles you believe in, with no other immediate perceived reward. That is bravery.

Edward Snowden is brave. Terrorists are brave (even if towards crummy goals). Fleming Rose is brave. Ayaan Hirsi Ali is brave. I can go on for a while. However, on the national scale, the people who are most brave today will not be especially widely appreciated if they are appreciated for their bravery, it probably didn't take much bravery to do what they did since it is so popular.

That being said ... bravery is overrated. As children we are taught that change in the world comes from bold and brave individuals, but it doesn't. Change is a subtle phenomenon that is inspired by various economic, cultural, technological and environmental forces. All of us inspire things in a small way for better or worse (depending on your standards).

The people who inspire the most change do take risks, and tackle the unknown but they are chasing a very large pot of gold at the end of that rainbow. If they innovate and inspire great change, they get paid of enormously. It's hard to call that bravery, though these people can still be admired for the noble qualities they have.

I think bravery can be a noble quality to a certain degree, but it is often much better to take preventive actions to not require bravery. Not going to school is a better choice than standing up to a shitty teacher. Living in a nice neighborhood is a better choice than fighting a criminal. Picking friends that appreciate your values is better than fighting associates who are hostile to you and your values. We don't need people to sacrifice in order to have a great life and world ... It is better to just liberally express your freedom of association.