

Hero's in America, and why they remain an aspirational dream

What is your definition of a hero? Is it the traditional “a person who is admired or idolized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities” as the Apple iPhone dictionary tells me?

Most of us look upon a person who is a hero for often singular accomplishments, such as professional athletes. No one can say that the latest Super Bowl MVP isn't a hero to many fans. That does not, in my opinion qualify as a license to set moral aspirations. Hero, in the definitive sense, probably. Hero in the moral sense – absolutely not.

Most of us look for heroes in other places – in our daily lives – but the criteria is different – much different. Is it heroic, or simply good character, to choose “the right thing” over something easier? Is it exemplary to choose “right” over something a little less morally acceptable?

Is it reasonable to assume that professional athletes are “heroic” for their dedication to the craft they have chosen? Does the fact that their talent, dedication and luck (among so many other factors) has taken them to their position as heroes to so many mean they are now representatives of character instead of just aspirational figures (with no moral factor applied) for hard work and dedication?

Does your father, mother, aunt, uncle or other person in your life represent a truer picture of “hero” in the aspirational category? When we are very young, we wish to be “just like you” when we speak about our parents – then the “you can be” statements we as parents make begin to influence our children. What we mean is “you can do better than me,” but what we are saying, subconsciously is “I'm not good enough to be your hero!”

We need to stop saying that – perhaps humility is not necessarily bad! Perhaps we should find other moral examples closer to our daily lives than the professional athlete.

We all want our children to be “better than me,” but the reality is very few will ever be professional athletes – most will be “ordinary” and have normal lives – and I'm not saying we should establish limits, rather we should make our children's heroes be someone we morally emulate and respect.