

DOES THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF OUR LEADERS REALLY MATTER

Arianna Huffington

The Power of Character, p. 205
Michael S. Josephson & Wes Hanson

In a study on altruism, Evin Staub analyzed men and women who had risked their lives during World War II to protect Jews hiding from the Nazis. What turned an ordinary bystander into an intrepid defender? “Goodness, like evil, often evolves in small steps,” Staub wrote. “Heroes evolve, they aren’t born. Very often the rescuers made only a small commitment at the start – to hide someone for a day or two. But once they had taken that step, they began to see themselves differently, as someone who helps.”

Indeed, heroes evolve, but they could not evolve if the seed for heroism, for goodness, for transcending self-interest, had not been planted a long time ago. It is this capacity, this potential to love others more than ourselves that is our common heritage, waiting like a seed to be watered by the first tender drops of compassion.