

Silence Doesn't Mean Cowardly

People often associate integrity with great acts and memorable men. They think of Abraham Lincoln, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Rosa Parks and other famous historical figures. When I think of integrity, I think of the small acts.

Let me present a scenario. Charity is walking to school. This child is a little on the heavier side. She can't seem to lose weight and she hates herself for it. It doesn't help that there are children in her class that also remind her of her weight, most of the time not so nicely. As she walks into the schoolyard, she waits for the barrage of insults that she has become accustomed to. Some days she pretends she is sick so that she will be able to stay home from school. Indubitably, the mockers are present and waiting around the corner for her. They start throwing insults at her like bouncy balls. Charity pushes on and does not add any retorts to the conversation. Then the unthinkable happens. For months she has gone through this scene. Nobody has ever stepped up to help her for the fear of being the next victim. What she didn't know is that there is a new girl at the school. She does not like the way that that Charity is being treated. Stella, the new girl, tells the bullies to stop and they walk away without another word. They are not used to being told off and they were caught off guard.

There are two sides to integrity. When people actively help someone, they show integrity. The opposite is not doing something, which can either show what integrity isn't, or it can show integrity. When Charity didn't retort, she was showing integrity because she didn't say anything. Also, when Stella stepped in to help, she showed integrity by her actions.

In the school setting, some students act differently in different situations. When a teacher is around, students may act in an appropriate manner. When teachers are not around, the same

students that were appropriate around the teachers may act in a different manner and it may not be for the better. In my own class, I have seen this play out.

I remember a time when we were in Government, my friend N. picked up a book for me after it dropped. Another time, when we were in the hallway and my book dropped, he laughed and walked away. In the classroom, the teacher was there to witness, in the hallway, there was not an adult around, so he acted accordingly.

It's the little things that count. If a person has true integrity, it doesn't matter if anyone is around to see; they will still act in a way that is appropriate. It is important for my peers and me to grow in integrity now! High school is the time for me to practice this because in the real world, there will be instances where I will be tested. People will be watching to see how I will carry myself. My conduct has to be a reflection of my words. Our heroes do the same. They carry themselves honorably both in private and in public. That's integrity.