

“Freedom is never more than one generation from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.” This quote by Ronald Reagan depicts the idea that America will always need leaders to preserve the rights and freedoms we have here in this country. However, a leader isn’t always someone behind a desk that signs papers. A true leader is one who leads by example and service.

A servant leader is one who leads out of compassion for their people, not by fear and tyranny. As the United States has shown over the course of its history, we will not stand for injustice or tyranny. This love of democratic ideals has preserved this great republic; however, great countries were made by great leaders: leaders who had faith in their cause of freedom and justice for all.

In 1967 at an outpost in Vietnam, artilleryman Sammy Davis was quoted saying, “If I don’t do my job, these guys behind me ain’t got a chance,” His famous quote showed the true meaning of a leader, even when the job is dangerous. North Vietnamese soldiers overran Sammy Davis’s position during the night, where he managed to fight off large swaths of them to protect his wounded men. After defending his position, he single handedly made a raft and rescued his men from a flooded out position while being fired upon from both sides. His unrivaled courage and his bravery made it possible for he and his men to hold their position and evacuate the wounded. His extraordinary servant leadership allowed him to save many lives that day.

Although leadership is required on the battlefield, leaders are also needed to protect the rights of the people and to ensure the nations future on the home front. Franklin D. Roosevelt displayed these characteristics through his leadership during an economic depression and a world war. His courage against the axis powers showed the nation that there was hope. He worked tirelessly to protect and assure the American people that his war could be won. Even his own disability did not discourage him from leading the American people to a better future. In addition to driving forward the American war machine, he brought the country out of the Great Depression. His plan to improve employment lead to the unemployment rate going from 25% to 2% while he was in office.

In addition to soldiers and presidents, civilian leaders have driven forward some of humanity’s greatest accomplishments through servant leadership. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led by example a message of peace and prosperity for all Americans. His message of equality and friendship helped lessen the divide between our great nation. During protests, he encouraged his followers to be peaceful and respectful to all people. He was mostly known for leading large crowds of supporters in peaceful protests to halt racism against all people across America.

These three men may be different races, have different jobs, and have different goals, but they all wanted to make a difference. Their leadership showed through their service, whether it be service to country or service to halt injustice. Their selflessness and courage gave them the strength to push through adversity for the greater good of their people. In our nation today people say that there are no good leaders, but I simply say that they are just looking in the wrong places. The American dream has been urged on through the struggles of great men, and cannot be kept without struggle. So what truly defines a servant leader? A leader is a person who cares more about their cause and their followers than the challenges they might face on the road to progress. A leader

serves by example, not fear and hatred. A leader shows compassion for his people and respect for his enemies. Where do you find the next great leaders of America? I say look into the doors of every school in America. As the next generation moves into adulthood the tradition of freedom is passed down to us. The young men and women of America have the courage and ability to lead our people in the right direction and to strive for success in all we do. And with that I leave you with one simple question, what will you do to lead your country's people to a better future?