

Chapter 9: COURAGE

“COURAGE MEANS DOING WHAT’S RIGHT EVEN IF YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES ARE GOING TO BE.” —*Calvin Morrison, USMC*

To fully appreciate the courage it took to write the following message, you have to know how vicious the letters were that circulated in the wake of my letter to Peggy. I had expected to take some heat for what I wrote, which is why I wrote it—to take the heat off Jamal, which is why he posted his message on the boards—to take the heat off Hhhana. I thought I knew what to expect; the same old people saying the same old disparaging things would send their comments to everyone in the group. Then they’d get tired of me and jump on to something else.

I was wrong. Sure, I got those letters, but I also got them from people who had never said an unkind thing, that I knew of, to anyone on the boards or in the e-mail group. These people were so outraged by my letter that they felt compelled to speak up and condemn me and all that I stood for in explicit terms. I was called a demagogue, a coward and a hate-monger of the worst sort by people I didn’t know existed. Some called me a racist. One man, a lawyer who always took a careful, even-handed approach to all things involving O.J., came out four square against me. It was my use of the r-word that did it for him. He didn’t come right out and call me a racist the way some others did, but he articulated a thought that I had long suspected was true of how most American conservatives felt about the r-word. To him, people who used that word the way I did were in the same category as people who used the n-word.

Few of those letters survived, since saving them made about as much sense at the time as saving photos of a loved one’s severed body parts in plane crash. It was one of the most painful experiences of my life and one that was certain to rub off on anyone who got near me.

This is what it came down to: Hargrove was gone. Hhhana couldn’t speak up without being savaged. Petlady was upset with Trille, Jamal and me for

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

our choice of language. I couldn't associate myself with Jamal or Trille and no one else could associate themselves with me. Where did that leave the OJI's as a group? There was only one person who could save us. It would have taken an unheard of amount of moral courage for her to do it. But she did....

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her
Date: 97-02-10 09:22:57 EST
From: Whetham (Crowe)
To: Trooper, Petlady, Tiger
CC: All

I agree with Trooper. How can you have a discussion with anyone when every time you do they put you down, like a schoolteacher berating an unruly pack of kids. They tell us they want a discussion, and then make fun of us when we state our opinions. You may think Trille and Jamal are nasty, but read your own posts. The OJG's started the nastiness by treating us like children just because we don't agree with them. —Pat

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her
Date: 97-02-10
From: Lion
To: Pat (Crowe)
CC: All

Pat— Here's how I see it. Calling someone "stupid," "childish," "brain dead" etc. is absolutely rude and ill-mannered behavior and there are OJG's who have demonstrated this bad behavior, myself included...

Calling someone "racist," "bigot," "hate mongers," "KKK," "unwashed multitude," "venomous," etc. goes far beyond rude or ill-mannered behavior. They express an awful lot of hate for the person being addressed in that manner. Pat, there is a big difference in the name-calling done by OJG's and OJI's... Some of the post's from OJI's are downright

Chapter 9: COURAGE

frightening! I don't think OJI's have ever been frightened because an OJG has called them "stupid," have they? Don't compare peaches to apples, they are not the same.

Now, having said all that, and I know you won't agree with me, but that's O.K., can we just agree to show some respect for each other and eliminate the trash...I have stated I was willing to, over and over again. I have created a new thread in an attempt to make this happen. Let's do it!

Here's my apology for being rude, I apologize. —Lion

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her

Date: 97-02-10

From: Trille

To: Lion

CC: All

Lion— QUITE A BIT MORE THAN BEING JUST CALLED STUPID, HOW ABOUT BEING CALLED INSANE, OR ESCAPEES FROM THE LUNATIC ASYLUM, (TIGER) OR HAVING NO BRAIN, OR NEGATIVE INTELLIGENCE, THAT IS, NOT EVEN HAVING ANY INTELLIGENCE BUT HAVING IT BELOW NEGATIVE. THAT IS BEYOND BEING AN IMBECILE. THINGS LIKE "HOW ARE THINGS AT THE ASYLUM (THIS FROM TIGER TO A COMPLETELY NEW PERSON WHO HAD NEVER POSTED BEFORE). HAVING ARMED CAMPS, HAVING TRIED TO BRAINWASH OTHERS, BEING MEGALOMANIACS—THIS GOES ON AND ON. I CAN SEND THE VARIOUS MESSAGES IF ANYONE DOUBTS IT. BUT THERE IS A COMPLETE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF OJG'S, ABOUT THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR.

JAMAL TRIED TO COPY WHAT WAS BEING SAID ABOUT US OJI'S, AND BOY, THAT REALLY SET OFF

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

THE OJG'S. TRY LOOKING IN THE MIRROR ALL YOU OJG'S. BUT I REALLY DON'T EXPECT ANY CHANGES BECAUSE YOU ARE TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF SEEING ANYONE ELSE'S VIEWPOINT AND SEE YOURSELVES AS MORALLY AND MENTALLY SUPERIOR TO ALL OTHERS. —Trille

Subj: FIRESTORM

Date: 97-02-10 14:18:34 EST

From: Hhhana

To: Trooper173@aol.com

CC: Pat (Crowe), Trille

Jasper— You've created quite a firestorm, haven't you? I think it's funny to watch the different reactions to your e-mail to Peggy. It's pretty typical, don't you think? I guess if we are tired of attacking the evidence in the Simpson case or tired of attacking OJ on the other side, we just attack each other. It's old....getting older.

Pat Whetham sure moved up a bunch of notches in my esteem. She is active in posting on the threads and often comments about the nastiness displayed by the "group." I am still nursing the bruises I received from them and I have never called any names. You know and we know you were right in the e-mail. You have tremendous self-control to read some of the garbage and still remain out of it... —Paula

What Hhhana took for "tremendous self-control" was actually a case of me hunkering down in my bunker, nursing my wounds and waiting for the shells to stop dropping on my ego. I was getting hundreds of letters a day from all manner of people telling me what a jerk I was. The way they saw it, I was "playing the race card like Johnnie Cochran"—using race as a weapon and a smokescreen to avoid dealing with the "real issue of O.J. Simpson's guilt." To the extent that any of us were seen by the others as something less than we were,

Chapter 9: COURAGE

we knew that's how we would be treated. Indeed, that's what we were fighting about.

There didn't appear to be a student of anthropology in the OJG crowd, which translated into ignorance about the word "race," and its historical place in *The Proper Study of Mankind*. Everyone was seeing black and white when that was only one sense in which I used the word, and one of the reasons its utility was so limited.

Race has always been defined by different people in different ways for different reasons. In cyberspace, few of those arbitrary divisions of humanity had any functional value. It seemed plain to me that the OJG/OJU/OJI division of our group was the closest thing to race we had, including the tendency of the numerically or technologically superior group to consider itself morally and intellectually superior as well. The only thing color had to do with us was the clear parallel between the way OJI's were treated as a group in cyberspace and the way African-Americans were treated outside.

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her

Date: 97-02-10 16:49:26 EST

From: Tiger

To: All

You know, what amazes me is the OJ Simpson traits in some OJI's. You commit an insulting act by posting accusation of racism and bigotry against us on a public forum, and then, when someone responds by evaluating the act as what is—and the posts were stupid (that's the kindest word I can use)—suddenly the reaction is the crime, not the action.

Laws of physics tell us that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Simpson killed two people, and some of us deal with him as a murderer. His deed is forgotten, and the reaction of the OJG's of the world is judged. That's how Simpson lived his life. I do as I please, but you may not judge

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

me for it (lest you be labeled racist). If you go back, the name calling and the accusation began with Trille and Jamal. My posts were reactions. Words are my forte, and they can be far more biting than hers. Don't read them if they irk you. Trooper and his PEOPLE LIKE TIGER shout would be the first to have a fit if that phrase were used to warn people about an OJI.

Trooper hasn't the faintest idea in the world about what people like Tiger are. All he knows is that people like Tiger are not stupid, and it seems that intelligent, logical, female members of the group (such as Lion, who gets lumped with TIGER) cannot be controlled, and pose a threat to insecure men like Trooper. Every message I wrote to Trooper was polite, and in fact my latest messages were offers for us to try and communicate as adults, without malice. That was a mistake. I should have ignored him. Could we put this to rest? The others are tired of hearing it, and I have too much else to do that is important. —Tiger

Enter Judge, an African-American judge who came into the discussion group at some unknown point in January, with only enough information to generalize about people who "resort to calling folks racist." For the moment, let's not consider whether Johnnie Cochran or I properly applied the r-word. Consider what happens to honest communication when no one dares to use it when it does apply.

Condemning racism in the abstract is like condemning evil. Who's for it? Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was against evil. That's why he charted the mission of the Ku Klux Klan. Adolph Hitler was against evil. That's what the Final Solution was for. The peace movement was against evil. That's how the unflinching acceptance of genocide, practiced against people with funny-sounding names in far-away places since 1975, became America's first line of defense against war.

The issue of white racism against blacks in America is not one of opposing colors, but opposing ideas about color, going all the way back to the

Chapter 9: COURAGE

institution of slavery. Whites and blacks have always fought on both sides of the color line. Some blacks supported the Confederacy. Some of this country's most potent advocates of white supremacist ideology today are black. They are known as "black conservatives" like Clarence Thomas to the people they appeal to on the high end of the socio-economic ladder, and "Gangster rappers" like Ice T on the bottom. Listen to what they say. Look at how they influence public policy and social norms in and out of "the black community." Note how well they are rewarded and by whom.

The basic elements in what I've just described apply to people in any group where another group holds the power of circumscribing their self-determination. It's a minor variation of the Stockholm Syndrome, where some members of any oppressed group—if it's large enough—can be counted on to identify with the oppressor. With groups as diverse as American prisoners of war in Korea and Vietnam, "racial" prisoners of the Third Reich, and Japanese-American citizens herded into Midwest "internment" camps during World War II, the pattern was the same. And in each of those instances, those who did identify with the oppressor saw themselves as brave, honest, independent thinkers, superior to their group. They were typically rewarded by the system.

In cyberspace the highest reward one could give or receive was approval. One sure way to get it in an O.J. discussion group was to take a firm stand close to the middle—which, in effect, is an endorsement of the status quo. Judge was about to become a popular guy....

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her

Date: 97-02-10

From: Tiger

To: Judge

CC: All

Judge— Just to clear my name—under a separate mailing (it would not be fair to send it to everyone) I will send you the exchanges that were made between me and Trooper. Trooper long ago could not deal with my ideas, and chose to banish me forever by demanding (not for anything I ever said to him or anyone else) in capital letters, of course, that I remove

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

him from my e-mail list. I did that, and I did not post to him on the threads. It is Trooper's right to avoid contact with whomever he chooses. When Sara Reason, a group member, died suddenly, I offered to send a message of condolence in the group's name. No one objected, so I did.

Surprisingly, Trooper sent me a very nice note of thanks for my message, saying it was a job well done. I, mistakenly, took that for an opening for further communication, and told him I thought we might find some common ground to connect us, rather than dwell on the opinions that separate us. I suggested the we were not that far apart on everything, as we shared the same humanity.

Trooper's response was that I was very wrong...that we were universes apart, and that there was NO WAY we could communicate on anything. Again, I acquiesced. It was his choice, and I respected it. The next communication was his tirade about PEOPLE LIKE TIGER. Unprovoked, and illogical. I have the messages we exchanged, just to convince anyone who cares that this has been a one-way attack. That is, until the final nonsense from Trille. I also have the barrage of correspondence she sent me privately, the files she sent, the musical messages, screaming, capitalized name-calling, the threats, the obsessive involvement with my posts. I answered, but never once — (I have all the copies) did I call her a name, or suggest she was anything other than a very disturbed person who needed help. I'll stand by that.

Yes, I was sarcastic, and patronizing, but not rude, not insulting, and rather kind—because I have a professional's ability to use words; it's what people pay me to do—and I know what damage a skilled phrase can inflict. I didn't join the group to go to war. For whatever reason, I became the focal point of the anger of three OJI's—and only three. Paula, Peggy, Diana, and other OJI's are with us and exchange messages in civil, and often in very warm tones. I'm sorry you

Chapter 9: COURAGE

and the others had to be witnesses to this. I hope to keep contact with you and the wonderful people who joined the e-mail list. I have no more to say to Trille, or Trooper, or Jamal. Unless, that is, they choose to renew the battle. I will not flinch. —Tiger

Subj: Re: Tiger and others like her
Date: Monday, February 10, 1997 12:58 PM
From: Judge
To: Pat, Lion, Trille
CC: All

Hello— I have been sitting on the sidelines watching and listening. It appears to me that there is merit to what all have said. That is: some OJI's have been mean-spirited in response to what they perceive as condescending and racist comments from some OJG's. Some OJG's likewise have been rude and unnecessarily mean-spirited in their remarks. It seems to me that this group was formed to communicate and not throw stones at each other. I remarked to someone.. I forget who.... that sometimes folks will never agree, and understanding of perspective is more telling and important for this society to work as a fair union of many different peoples.

If you get stuck on the who's right or wrong approach, the opportunity for true communication will be lost. So.. listen.... to each other....these differences in opinion are not what this should be all about. OJG's should hear the OJI complaints... which after I have reviewed the posts, I can see their point. Some have apologized already. Good start. Maybe all on both sides should apologize and start over. All who are guilty know who you are. OJI's should not resort to calling folks racist. It does not do any good. It would be much better to point out the failure of civility to the person and move on.

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

Both the OJIs and OJGs should remember that they are talking to adults of intellect and not offend. If there can be no discourse why are we here? I hope we are not here trying to convince others. It will never happen. All across America people with various backgrounds, white, black, Latino, lawyers, doctors, etc., are of both sides of the issue of O.J.'s guilt. It would be better to give your opinion and go on. If you do not agree, oh well, life goes on. There are bigger issues. I respect each and every one of you. If you respect yourself and others, your conduct and words should mirror this respect. Peace. —Judge

P.S. If I have unintentionally offended, accept my apologies.... I just like to comment once in awhile.

Subj: Fire Storm

Date: 97-02-11 01:49:18 EST

From: Hhhana

To: Trooper173@aol.com

Hey Jasper—Did you go to work today? I've been watching for you all day. I wanted to call it what it was because it was sure flying, but I sent at least one cc and didn't want everybody to think Mama didn't raise me right.

It was amazing. I had e-mail backed up everywhere. I'd read 4 or 5 messages, do something else for 5 minutes, then find 4 or 5 new ones. I'm harmless on the net. I have never been much with computers. Used a database and professional write. I don't know how to cut and paste, forward, remail, do attachments, none of the fancy stuff. I'm lucky to pillage around in here as well as I do.

When I get in a snit, my sister Becky always tells me I'm mean and evil and need to be destroyed. Well, the 3 stooges sure qualify, don't they? Jasper, they are ridiculous, mean, women. Vipers, every one. Tiger is nasty to the highest degree... Bear is meaner, but easier to spot. She's consistent,

Chapter 9: COURAGE

ever mean. Lion is a pain, but by herself almost acts like a real person. The three of them together give me the shakes. I mean it. I actually shake looking at their small-minded, racist remarks. I refuse to respond to any of them. That's why I didn't write anything today during the storm. If I had, I would have told them they are racist cowards (now that I'm getting to have this black experience).

I hate what they do to Jamal and Trille. I really do. I posted to him tonight on the CTV threads and he told me he thought I didn't want to talk to him anymore because of the things they said about him. I didn't tell him, but I was afraid to talk to ANYBODY because of the things they said about me.

Was that some jury or what? I hope you got to see the press conference. Looks like Petrocelli handpicked them. I guess they did what they thought was right, but it was just crystal clear that they really didn't consider any of the conspiracy evidence (even the little bit the judge let in). I'm interested to watch them for the next few days. Did you hear the one alternate juror, the lady? She told it like it was, I thought.

My e-mail just started flashing.... Is it you? Got to go. —
Your bud, Hhhana.

Subj: Re: Dianne and Mark

Date: 97-02-11

From: Trooper

To: Trille, Pat

CC: Hhhana, Petlady, Chameleon

Hi Pat— Dianne Sawyer interviewed MF before. I saw it. Mark was quite a guy. I know he looks like a racist to you now, but when you see him being interviewed by Dianne Sawyer, boy will you be impressed. The man does, in fact, have many talents. You ought to see the picture he painted of his little girl. Yeah, he said some bad, bad, bad things and

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

boy, is he embarrassed. He can't believe the things he heard coming out of his mouth.

That was not the real MF.

The real MF is a loving husband and father, a man who cares deeply about all people. It pains him that he has spent his life putting felons behind bars—and now he is one. Now he can't own a gun, and being a hunter, that really hurts. He still has his bow and arrows, though—and his knife. —Jasper

This space, I believe, represents another example of a letter I wrote that was lost by my ignorance of how to save it, and my correspondent's inability to copy it. Fortunately, the letter worth saving is the one below.

Subj: WET PHOTOS

Date: 97-02-11 02:24:04 EST

From: Hhhana

To: Trooper173@aol.com

CC: Pat (Crowe)

See, I knew it was from you. I hope you're talking about my earlier note about the Flammer photos. In court they presented the 30 photos and a copy of the "Buffalo Bills Newsletter" with one of the 30 pictures on it. The paper was never authenticated. It just all came in. Tonight on MSNBC Jack Ford was interviewing Kelly, the Browns' attorney. They asked him about the pictures. He said somebody called him from New York [*Editor's note: The man who called was the lawyer who represented photographer Harry Scull*] and said they thought there was another photographer who might have pictures to back up the Scull photo. He said he flew to New York and met with the photographer, Flammer. He said the pictures hadn't been developed yet and they did it the next day. How could they have it in the Newsletter in '93 if they weren't developed until Dec '95?

I posted it to Jamal and he flipped to MSNBC and caught it. I don't have to tell you his reaction..... I haven't seen Trille on

Chapter 9: COURAGE

there tonight. Unusual. I saw the MF interview before, too. He didn't impress me, Jasper. He did impress me at the pre-lim. After the truth came out about him, he's easy to see through. He is still arrogant. I really think he will slip up, maybe in the book. I'm still trying to figure out where Marcus Allen figures in this whole mess. He says he didn't have an affair with Nicole, but we know he did. She told OJ and Kato double dated with them one night. We know Marcus wouldn't set OJ off, but could the fact that she was seeing him have set MF off? Yep! Just a thought at 1:20 a.m. Just about it for me. Have a good night. I'll look to hear from you tomorrow. Pat, I hope you won't have any problem mailing to me. The 3 h's are sometimes the problem. Sometimes one of them falls off. Have a good one —Hhhana

Subj: Re: Dianne and Mark
Date: 97-02-11 15:04:00 EST
From: Trille
To: Trooper173@aol.com
CC: Pat, Hhhana, Petlady, Chameleon

Jasper—I think Dianne Sawyer is totally biased and always had been. Worse, she seems to be laughing all the time, she should not be on that program. It is bad enough to have a crapshow like “Dateline,” and, of course, all the other crap shows like “Entertainment Tonight,” etc. I won't even get into Geraldo and Groin. But a show that purports to be fair—not entertainment, but news, should not be using this case in this racist, biased way; making Fuhrman sound like a misunderstood cop, it gags me. How can they make this decision?

Last night there was a movie on called “Payback” starring Ed Asner and Mary Tyler Moore, which was about corrupt cops and other misdeeds. I suspect Ed Asner DID THIS ON PURPOSE, to show the possibility of police corruption (Asner is always for the underdog and is a decent man). But I

IAGO IN BRENTWOOD

am afraid that not too many people got it, that is, understood that this referred to Fuhrman. I am sickened by this whole thing.

I, too, had my computer down last night, and I watched that movie in order NOT TO WATCH THE VERDICT STUFF, BUT THERE WAS NO WAY TO AVOID IT, YOU COULDN'T WATCH THE NEWS WITHOUT GETTING SOME O.J. NASTY STUFF.

Incidentally, am I the only one who thought that one of the jurors, the dark-haired one who was frequently shown with Kelly—am I the only one who thought that she and Kelly were “playing footsie” or something like it? How absolutely disgusting they all were. Fred Goldman is looking better only because the rest were behaving as if they were having a party, a lynching party to which only the most racist hard-core bigots were invited. Is this what American justice is all about? Well, excuse me if I differ! —Trille