

# People should expect fall of modern heroes

## O. J. Simpson only one example of prominent figures who lose public admiration after scandals

Look at him go! Accelerating, swerving, speeding past the opponents in hot pursuit, he races toward the goal.

**FRANK STANFORD**  
Columnist



No, it's not "Monday Night Football." It's a CNN special report about O.J. Simpson racing down a stretch of Los Angeles freeway, away from the police and his life. While the country watched what seemed like a story on a real-life cop show, one of America's finest athletes and popular personalities joined the ranks of sports heroes gone bad. Everyone seems to be shocked and saddened by these fallen symbols of success, but we should really expect it.

When I was in elementary school, professional football was my obsession and the players were my heroes. I had trading cards of all the big stars: Fran Tarkenton, Larry Czonka, Roger Staubach and O.J. Simpson were my most prized possessions. They could do no wrong. But over the years, as my interest in football waned and finally terminated completely, I began to see these "stars" as merely men who excelled at what they did. Besides the fame and the wealth, these individuals are just like the rest of us with the same desires to feel fulfilled, loved, respected and so on.

So, if these "heroes" are just like the rest of us, most of whom manage not to become junkies or kill our wives, why should we expect them to let us down?

It's really quite simple. When individuals set themselves up as prominent public figures, they are really raising their own standards of behavior and achievement well above that of a human being - not just AVERAGE human beings, but ALL human beings. In addition to these unrealistic standards, the factors of wealth and power provide incredible opportunities to make big legal and moral mistakes.

The list of fallen heroes is endless. Sports figures like Pete Rose and Jennifer Capriati, "Men of God" like Jim Bakker and popular actors such as River Phoenix and Elvis Presley all suffered from the same emotional pain and weaknesses as the average person. Just because Pete Rose can knock the cover off of a baseball, he should be no more expected to refrain from gambling than little old ladies in Las Vegas. At this point we have created a paradox of unlimited admiration and limitless disgust, the need for and the reality of "heroes."

### When individuals set themselves up as prominent public figures, they raise their own standards of behavior and achievement well above that of all human beings.

The unlimited admiration occurs when reverence for an individual's athletic prowess or other extraordinary capability spills over into the person's private life. Although the world was dismayed by Capriati's rumored use of illegal drugs - she being an Olympic champion and all - what could the fantastic ability to swing a racket at a rubber ball have to do with drugs? When we hear about drug-related crimes done by common citizens are we shocked into disbelief? Of course not. We are only truly disgusted when our "hero" is the perpetrator. We are also disgusted with ourselves for regarding this obviously average person as a hero. To avoid this shock and disgust, admiration for public figures should only go as far as their ability in their chosen field.

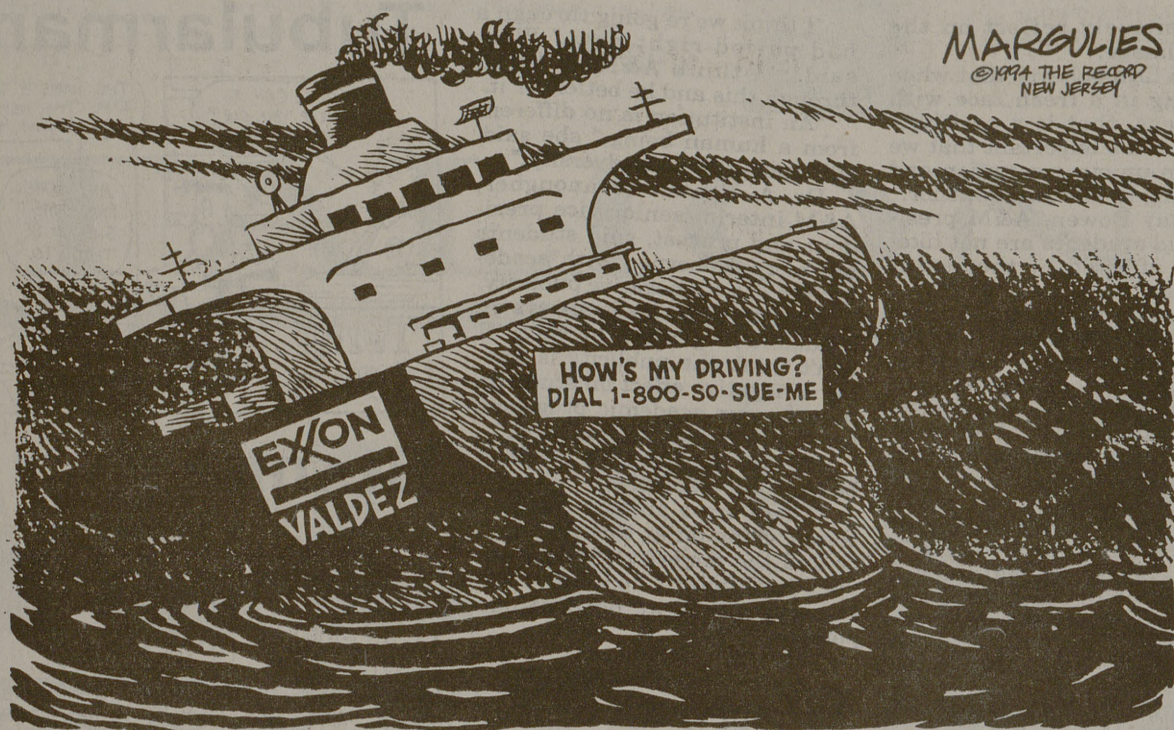
The reality of heroes is a sad one that has been written and talked about a great deal lately. We've all heard politicians and journalists say that America is in dire need of some heroes, that heroes provide the essentially unreachable but desirable qualities of role models for all of us, especially young people. In this vein, we DO indeed need heroes, but the sad truth is that there are no heroes except for Superman.

This may seem like a brazen statement, but we should be aware that a real person cannot be a "true hero," worthy of total respect and admiration in all capacities. A person can only be perceived as a hero by others. It is only the cartoonist or "perceiver" who creates the heroes, not the "heroes" themselves. Just ask yourself why some see Jeffrey Dahmer, as opposed to a particular president, as a hero, when many others do not. Dahmer was certainly "excellent" in his field.

It is a tragedy that O.J. Simpson's life as we knew it is over and that two people are dead. But hopefully, this stunning episode and the others to come will help us see each person - whether famous or sitting next to you in class - as just a person.

Not a rich person or a good-looking person or a morally upstanding person. Just a person.

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# PUNISHING CHILDREN

## Should parents use physical discipline?

By CHRIS S. COBB and GEORGE NASR

Columnists

Qui bene amat bene Castigat - He who loves well, punishes well, the Romans used to say. There was a strict society built on a tough, rarely forgiving discipline, often enforced by the severity of the father at the home and the stick of the master in the schools.

Thankfully, corporal punishment has limited use in our schools, as well as in our homes. But the question remains over how to discipline one's own children as a part of raising them into productive adults. And the answer is that, sometimes, physical punishment is necessary.

It is a societal duty, as well as a personal necessity, for parents to nurture and care for their children. Nurturing does not just involve buying them a good brand of cereal with all necessary vitamins, or providing them with an adequate education.

Proper child care also entails protecting one's children, who, in the course of their learning process, need not only to be guarded against foreign negative influences, but also against themselves and their own misguided impulses. In addition, adequate protection means rules which often require the enforcement of consistent discipline.

Discipline is enforced mainly through the parents' own example. Obviously, children will never follow the rules they see their own parents breaking. In real life, however, discipline has to be enforced through adequate punishment.

Disciplinary actions can take several forms, from sending a child to his room, to spanking him for misbehaving. But, were it not for the threat of "light" physical punishment, some messages would not be heeded and some rules not obeyed, although repetitive beating or verbal abuse of children is never tolerable.

A world of difference exists between physical punishment and monstrous child abuse. Parents who may physically discipline their children are by no means abusing them, nor are they breeding the monsters of tomorrow.

In modern society, rules are more forgiving, families strive to be less patriarchal - more educational and less disciplinary. In our idealized twentieth century, nations are consolidated and protected by disciplined soldiers, creative scientists and hard working industrialists, all the product of a harmonious, loving family.

In the today's world, children - like their parents before them, still need to be nurtured and protected - and therefore loved, educated and disciplined.

Psychologists agree that children are amazing learners, daring experimenters, and fearless explorers of the extent of their parents resolve and commitment. They also agree that children's types and characters come very diverse, ranging from the restless brat to the darling angel.

Different children require different degrees of persuasion, and many experienced parents would admit to having resorted to reluctant to more "convincing" arguments with some of their more audacious kids.

Parents cannot overlook a child's mistakes, and are sometimes required, and often challenged, to take action. The children of today are the adults of tomorrow and must therefore be prepared to inherit the world. And the world may not be so forgiving.

Children must learn to become responsible adults, and in doing so will make mistakes, and have to learn from them. Most importantly, they have to learn to accept the consequences of such mistakes.

That consequence could be, at an early age, the simple lesson of a spanking.

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By ELIZABETH PRESTON and JULIA STAVENHAGEN

Columnists

Spanking has been used as a tool for disciplining children since biblical times, but a long history does not make it right. In the 18th century, bloodletting was a common form of treatment for many diseases, but almost always did more harm than good. Long-standing practices are not necessarily effective or healthy just because they have been used for years.

Psychologists are finding the same is true for corporal punishment, or spanking. Eugene Walker, a psychologist at the University of Oklahoma stated in an interview with Ebony,

"When you use physical punishment, you don't really teach kids very much except that you are bigger and stronger than they are." This lesson leads to little more than increased conflict, especially for children old enough to hate their oppressors.

Corporal punishment does not teach respect, it teaches fear. Like any dog you are trying to train, painful stimulus results in fear of repeating an action. This is why your dog won't eat your shoes, but your children wish you were dead. Most importantly, when a spanking occurs, the child learns that it is acceptable to react to negative things violently. This behavior is replicated and even amplified upon others, including their own children.

Not only is corporal punishment a neat escape from having to address children's reasons for bad behavior, it does not last long enough to make a life-long impression. Some children will decide that a quick spanking is worth the enjoyment they get from aggravating their parents.

Edward L. Vockell points out in "Whatever Happened to Punishment?" that, "the undesirability of corporal punishment is not because it is necessarily a cruel form of punishment ... but rather because so many other more effective ways are available to eliminate undesirable behavior." It is this point which makes corporal punishment so illogical. An immediate, painful response that teaches fear should be so far down on the list of possible methods of discipline that it is never used. When

an algebra problem becomes frustrating, isn't it natural to step away from it until reasoning ability is re-established? Reacting violently when things go wrong results only in broken pencils and torn paper, but no solution.

If a child is rowdy at the dinner table and will not respond to verbal instructions to behave, taking away their privileges is much more effective than hitting them. Most children would rather eat with the family, watch television after dinner, or participate in other regular activities than make trouble. The connection between the punishment and the crime is an intellectual stretch for some children, but once learned, invaluable to the future of their decision-making lives.

Certainly, corporal punishment often results in the desired response: peace and quiet or a show of remorse for broken rules. What is left unspoken in a moment of physical violence is the worst crime. Treating children as learning, thinking people will cause them to learn and think.

Corporal punishment happens when parents lose patience. The blatant cowardice of a larger person attacking a less-powerful one will carry over as a lesson to children, who learn by example. The result is an unmanageable, unpleasant kid unable to respond intelligently to conflict. The adults they become are part of the problem, not the solution.

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## MAIL CALL

### Limbaugh draws 'ditto's' with his conservative sentiment

I am writing this letter in response to J. Sterling Hayman's June 16 guest column entitled "Dittoheads Ignore Opposing Views." While I would not call myself a "dittohead," I must admit I do happen to agree with about 98 percent of what Rush Limbaugh says. I suppose the reason

so many people use the "ditto" approach to what Limbaugh says is simply because he is the only media personality who expresses the conservative sentiment of this country.

Many people are simply tired of listening to what liberal newspapers and television sources have been spoon-feeding them, and are happy that there is someone out there who is saying what they, and I, have felt all along.

The whole focus of Hayman's column seemed to be that people are too ready to believe what others tell them, and do not think for themselves. He also said "dittoheads" are what they are because just saying ditto is easier than "learning about the issues and arriving at your own conclusion." If these points were indeed the basis of the editorial, then may I just say that the entire article was a lesson in hypocrisy. Hayman, focused on the stereotypical criticisms that people make about Limbaugh. He never researched what Limbaugh has actually said, he

simply used second or third-hand sources, and he used someone else's interpretation of what Limbaugh has said. For example he said, "This example obviously shows a person who knows nothing about the issue of racism, yet has accepted Limbaugh's suggestion that racism no longer exists." When exactly did Limbaugh say that racism no longer exists? On page 206 of his book entitled, "The Way Things Ought to Be," Limbaugh says, "... I admit that racism continues to exist in every imaginable direction among all races." This quote just doesn't seem to fall in line with saying Limbaugh believes and "preaches." Perhaps Hayman is guilty of taking things out of context or just being plain wrong, as he accused Limbaugh of being. Maybe he should try practicing what he preaches, and research topics himself, especially before writing about them.

Probably the most ironic thing about about the column is that Limbaugh also believes and has said exactly what Hayman was trying to say.

In fact, chapter 4 of Limbaugh's book is entitled "People: Think for Yourselves, or, Demonstrating the Absurdity by Being Absurd." In this chapter, Limbaugh says, "I try to provoke my audience into thinking for themselves, and not blindly accepting all they are spoon-fed by the media, myself included." To this, I, and I suppose Hayman, too, at least judging by his guest column, would have to say, "Ditto, Rush."

Terry Kopfer  
Class of '95

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