

Letter: We need role models

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Do we have role models anymore? We used to talk about who is, or who isn't a good role model. The closest person that fills that description that I've seen recently is Time Magazine's Person of the Year, Taylor Swift.

However, she is not billed as such. Rather, she is described as "the editors' assessment of the individual who most shaped the headlines over the previous 12 months, for better or for worse. In a divided world, where too many institutions are failing, Taylor Swift found a way to transcend borders and be a Source of Light."

This might be news to many of us who haven't heard of her, but her story is inspiring in a world that is very much in need of good role models, far beyond her career success. To learn the amazing details of her career, you will need to read Time Magazine's Person of the Year issue.

In her own words, "She's modeling radical self-acceptance on the world's largest stage, giving the audience a space to revisit their own joy or pain, once dismissed or forgotten. Getting to this place of harmony within her past took work."

One clue to her success in such a cutthroat business is that she grew up on a Christmas Tree farm in Pennsylvania with her younger brother Austin, away from the grim reality of modern cities, and especially show business. Her father Scott was a stockbroker with Merrill Lynch, and her mother Andrea was in marketing. So the family was certainly in touch with the world.

“For building a world of her own, that made a place for so many, for spinning her story into a global legend, for bringing joy to a society desperately in need of it, Taylor Swift is Times 2023 Person of the Year.”

I’m asking those of you who can tell us about role models here in town. I think it’s a great theme for the New Year. I personally would nominate Sunny Baker, a friend of mine. She arrived here with her two small boys about 15 years ago from Korea. She has gone from a restaurant waitress with a modest knowledge of English, to an important position with Social Services. But, most of all, any time I mention her name to anyone, they say, “Oh, I love her.”

My interest in writing this letter is to encourage others to contribute information about great role models you know of. Teachers, ask your students to write about their role models. You don’t have to be Jesus to be a role model. Above all, don’t let disgusting drugs rob you of your power. Taylor Swift quotes the Beatles lyric, “Take these broken wings and learn to fly.” The same goes for Big Government that “helps you” when you need to learn to help yourself. My mother told me that when I was a child, I would say “Do Self.” I still think that’s an important concept.

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