

The DoD Times (Redacted)



The Issue of Futility

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Victims of abuse and injustice within the DoD often express their belief that fighting back is futile. What do you say to someone who has already endured months if not years of unjust reprisal, retaliation, and/or restriction when they say to you, “it’s futile to fight back; the system is too big, too corrupt, and has the money to win.”

A question: “Is it futile to fight back against a system that has the ways and means to harm you?”

It depends. What is at stake?

I submit to you that if our best answer is “it depends,” then we are asking the incorrect question.

A better question: “Is it *right* to fight back against a system that is abusive and unjust?”

Yes. For me. For you. For everyone.

A follow-on question: “Is fighting for what is right without risk?”

No. Not for me. Not for you. Not for anyone.

Consider the following examples in which fighting for what was right cost lives, time, and money: fighting for independence from England; the creation of the U.S. Constitution; the abolishment of slavery; women winning the right to vote; African Americans winning equal rights under the law.

None of these fights came cheap. None were fast. And certainly, none were bloodless.

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Nature is a great constant. Thus, human nature is a great constant. I submit that the framers of our Constitution said to themselves many times, just as we say to ourselves today when confronted with tough decisions, “this is futile.” But many – certainly not all – persevered. Because of this, we are blessed today to enjoy this beautiful creation that is our [United States of America](#).

The Department of Defense is more powerful than you or I. But so, too, was the British Military more powerful than the colonists, the slave holders more united than the abolitionists, the anti-suffragist movement better financed, placed, and more powerful than the suffragette movement, and the “Separate but Equal” faction more powerful than those who fought against those corrosive ideologies.

Our heroes, those men and women whom we admire, determined that their understanding of what is right mattered more than the power imbalances and the risks. Will is what mattered. And endurance.

Three of my favorite poems are “[The Impossible Dream](#),” by Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, “[If](#)” by Rudyard Kipling, and “[Cyrano de Bergerac](#)” by Edmond Rostand. Threads that run through each are an endless hope and an idea that winning or losing is less important than making the effort. [Stepping into the arena](#) makes the hero.

So, the next time you ask yourself if it is futile to fight against the abuses and injustices we see within the DoD, think on this dialogue from *Cyrano de Bergerac*:

“De Guiche to Cyrano: Have you read *Don Quixote*?”

Cyrano: I have – and found myself the hero.

De Guiche: Be so good as to read once more the chapter of the windmills.

Cyrano: Chapter thirteen.

De Guiche: Windmills, remember, if you fight with them –

Cyrano: My enemies, change, then, with every wind?

De Guiche: – May swing round their huge arms and cast you down into the mire.

Cyrano: Or up – among the stars!”

In our fight against abuses and injustices within the DoD, we may be thrown into the mire.

But... my friends...

We may be thrown up – among the stars!

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Feel free to reach out privately at francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org or in the comments.

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The graphic for this article is a screenshot from the movie, *Gladiator*, that was released in 2000.