

Bearing Witness

(Brief Excerpt)

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A reader wrote:

The seduction of the hiring process convinced me I had arrived in an organization that would embrace my methods. A place I thought my heart and talents could finally grow and flourish. I offered too much of myself unprotected and was “wacked” into reality.

“I watched as the president of the company berated, humiliated, and then fired a good and stable sales representative. He did this in front of all the employees of the company. I sat and squirmed in my seat, metaphorically visualizing the owner shooting a hostage in the head to instill fear and ultimate control over the rest of us. The president noticed my discomfort. He asked, in a threatening manner, if I wanted to stay with the company. I felt compelled to quit on the spot, which I did. I managed to speak my mind a little as I left. I am now home, unemployed and recovering.

Bearing witness requires that we experience the life of another and then take compassionate action. The action we take, our moment of authenticity, requires courage, and we may have to “bear” the results of our courage and action. The man who wrote me experienced the life of the sales representative and took action. The company president, who is not fit to be called a leader, betrayed the trust this man put in the company when he was hired: the trust that

he and others would be treated with basic human respect. While wounded, the man's soul is intact, as is his integrity.

Most who witnessed what happened admire his courage and action although he will never hear that from many of them. Some will think him a fool for speaking up and losing his job. They are as soul-dead as the abusive president of the company. They traded authenticity in exchange for the illusion of security. Like their president, they need to ponder that what they do in their lives they take with them into eternity. The wounded warrior will also take his action and integrity with him into his eternity. I hope he realizes that his loss is temporary. I admire him.