

The False Claims Act and The Heroic Imagination Project

How can regular folks be inspired to act heroically?

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA, February 19, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- How can regular folks be inspired to act heroically? That's the question that famed Stanford University research psychologist [Philip Zimbardo](#) seeks to answer with his nonprofit organization, the [Heroic Imagination Project](#).

Zimbardo is best known as the architect of the controversial [Stanford Prison Experiment](#) of 1971 which showed how quickly "average people" could devolve into corruption and abuse toward others in a prison environment. He went on to write about the abuses by American soldiers in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq—a situation that he found paralleled the Stanford Prison Experiment.

Drenched in the darkest side of humanity, in 2008 Zimbardo decided to step into the light and focus on a much more positive aspect of human nature: heroism. "We are training ordinary people on how to become everyday heroes by learning how to stand up, speak out and take wise and effective action in the challenging situations they face daily at home, [and in] school, business, community and nation," Zimbardo wrote in 2013. The Heroic Imagination Project conducts research on heroic behavior and conducts programs promoting an ethos of courage and altruism in schools and in corporations.

Because, Zimbardo contends, heroes aren't just the chiseled men of Greek mythology or Cineplex blockbusters—they are and can be everyday people (including women!).

A big part of the Heroic Imagination Project is figuring out why people fail to act when they witness wrongdoing, and how to correct that by cultivating a mindset of taking action and speaking out.

Answering that question is critical in the battle against massive fraud against the government—exceptionally widespread in arenas such as health care and defense and surely witnessed by many people who work alongside the schemers. The federal False Claims Act is the government's main tool to fight fraud, and about 70 percent of the suits are initiated by whistleblowers, who stand to earn a percentage of whatever sums are recovered by the suit. While the government touts its recovery of tens of billions through the law over the years, with the critical aid of whistleblowers, there were less than 800 cases filed in 2013. It's a safe bet the 752 cases (even combined with the ones pending from previous years) do not touch the hundreds of billions of dollars the government estimates it loses to fraud each year. The fact is that the number of people committing the frauds still wildly outpaces those willing to report it. As a result, the false billing is still rampant and seemingly endless.

Thus, the need for more whistleblowers—everyday heroes, in Zimbardo's parlance—to step up is greater than ever.

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Kathleen Scanlan

Justice News Flash
866-598-1315
email us here

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