

CIVIC
Man Star

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Do you feel like you have lived through the 2009 as statist or side actors in somebody else's play whose entire scenario you were not allowed to see in advance, but were only given your part and told that's what you deserve? Do you have a feeling that this is also how we entered the 2010, arm in arm with the miners of Nikšić?

If your answer is "yes", and if you still know that deep inside you are dreams of being a star in your own life, do something to conquer that starry throne even if your talents, sensibilities and looks are not appreciated by the omnipotent director & co. The 2009 proved that the measures of stardom are not set by these self-proclaimed producers and directors of our realities.

Pupils of Cetinje gymnasium and Goran Stanković, defying the tastes of the petit bourgeois theatre establishment, shone as the brightest stars. They gave all of us hope that we can do it, if we only gather up the courage. They are the European capacities of Montenegro which abounds among us, it only takes doing what we really can do to set it free. They should have sat in that Rome-bound plane when visas were abolished, since they are the best European mirror of Montenegro in 2009.

In this exhausted, apathetic Montenegro, traditionally reluctant to civic rebellion, the pupils of Cetinje gymnasium taught everyone a lesson in civic disobedience which struck us with its sincerity, innocence, beauty, intelligence and self-confidence. In a society in which the right to ask critical questions is systemically eradicated, even through the educational system, we have to ask ourselves how come these new kids appeared against all odds? What makes these generations which have the guts to say out loud what they want and bear the consequences, if they had nobody to act as an example? Where did they learn to keep their backs straight, to fight for principles in a society of lowered eyes and trampled values? Isn't that the mark of real stars, which could not be darkened by their environment? I will not let anybody hold it against them that they went to the Leader's sofa to look for a solution and that they assessed that there is democracy in Montenegro, providing impotent critics with material to try and smear their starry halo. They should be forgiven everything, for they won their little-great battle and showed that democracy is possible, but that it won't fall on us from the sky, that it needs us to fight for it unreservedly and be ready to pay a high price. And they did overpay their victory greatly, which should cause at least a sting of consciousness for the minister who announced, in a country where knowledge is in alarmingly short supply, that high-school education isn't obligatory, and for all those who could have solved the problem immediately but have preferred to drag it on. Perhaps this will also make their parents think twice when they go to the ballot box whether to support those who tried to take away from their children a future of knowledge, rights and dignity.

Goran Stanković, one of the policemen accused in the case of torture against citizen **Aleksandar Pejanović**, contributed with his courageous and honest testimony to uncovering a case of torture and illegal practices of law enforcement forces. From a long first meeting in a modest house where many things are missing but most were made up for by palpable family warmth and harmony I remember the sentence: "I'm not a hero from those American movies, I'm an ordinary

person". But, given the circumstances, it was a heroic act to decide to be a person who has no courage to be a coward before his consciousness and who wants to preserve a clean name for his five-year old son. For a policemen who spent his entire working life encountering the most deviant members of the society, who works in a system where the phrase "orders from above" suspends all legally guaranteed rights, where the most protected and esteemed are those who voluntarily or by informal orders followed, eavesdropped on and tried to blackmail a human rights activist, and boasted about it in Podgorica's bars, in a system in which high ranking officials are best friends with criminals, it is almost a miracle that he managed to preserve the human in him, to demonstrate that humanity and courage which is often talked about but exists merely as a statistical error. An ordinary person against inordinately bad guys who misuse the power of institutions is in every movie a hero whose personal and family dramas we understand, because he manages to prove that goodness exists.

Heroes are incidental occurrences, some would say genetic errors. Which is why they are so precious, and we must repay them by spreading the seeds of their courage further, creating a real social change that would result in a society where no one will have to risk his or her life in order to get the hard-earned wage, and in which no one man will stand above all laws and institutions. This is the key difference between this Montenegro and that Europe we are going to, for and which rests on the power of its institutions. It is difficult, but who ever said it would be easy? And is it an excuse to live a life full of fear, to avoid risks and miss out on happiness? What is the worth of a life like that? It is so human to wish to be a star in our own lives, to live in a way worthy of humans, of all big and small dreams we have and which we must protect from the blows all around us. By preserving these dreams we are protecting ourselves, the best we can give, what makes us special, what awakens us and moves us...

These two public statements against injustice, one collective and one individual, have shown us that this is no time to be apathetic, that it pays off fighting for believes, for a modern Montenegro. And it is marvelous how little it takes sometimes to be the one courageous citizen who changes things. Imagine how it would be if you had done 10% of what you believed was right without being immobilized by the dilemma: why should I be doing this, why should I be making enemies, this is not for me, if I keep quiet I'll be better off... We forget that all of us are first and foremost responsible before ourselves, before our own dreams, before that moment when we will not be ashamed of our own fear and impotence and regret the long gone chances to make things right, for all the benefits of this world cannot replace these losses.

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The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education