

**ETHICS THOUGHT PAPER**

**“Immoral Standards”**

**By**

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I was fortunate to have received great mentoring from a retired Sergeant Major during my Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) days in high school. He masterfully motivated all his students to define goals in life and taught us to adopt values that has and will continue to carry us through many difficult times in our adult years. I will never forget his mottoes, “Winners never quit”, “Always give your 120%”, and the principles of leadership, “BUILD”-Bearing, Unselfishness, Integrity, Loyalty, and Dependability. I’ve built my life on these mottoes and it has brought me through a lot of challenges in the military. The unfortunate reality today is the fact that a lot of senior ranking leaders have lost their focus to lead, teach, mentor, and guide Soldiers to be good leaders. These senior leaders have forgotten that they have a responsibility to our nation and our Soldiers to be ethical standard bearers, role models. They must set a positive example for America’s sons and daughters, our future leaders.

We presently live in a society filled with moral corruption and individuals who are self consumed. Young Soldiers need leaders who will show them the importance of good moral character, ethics, and values to be great leaders. I have seen too many senior leaders failing to set the example and do the right thing. These leaders have set bad examples whether indirectly or directly with immoral acts or poor decision making processes. Using their positions to violate the Soldiers they have been charged to protect is inexcusable. There are women leaders who set a bad example by building an unprofessional stereotype for females in the service. Using their looks and manipulating characteristics to attain favors from male leaders and making it harder for those females who strive to be professional, upholding their dignity, and doing the right things. Currently with our country at war with terrorism there are senior NCOs and Officers that

use their positions for financial gain. These leaders are not presently deployed in the combat theater, but they have Soldiers deployed throughout the combat theaters. Some of these senior leaders intentionally schedule their visits to check on their Soldier's morale and welfare within a time frame that covers both the ending of the month and the beginning of the next month. This is not so they can have more time to spend with their Soldiers; it is so they can obtain tax free credit and hazardous duty pay for two months instead of one. This is blatant intent to circumvent the system and not have the Soldier's best interest at heart. When these senior leaders are in theater they spend majority of their time with other senior leaders or friends, instead of checking on their Soldiers and attending to their needs. The average amount of time they spend with their Soldiers equates to a few hours in a few weeks visit. Majority of the time spent with the Soldiers is done at the mess hall over lunch or dinner. What example does this set? It tells a young private what is truly important to senior leaders, and it is not the Soldiers.

I've assessed that as a senior leaders we fail our Soldiers when we see these bad acts but do nothing to stop it. We fail our institution as leaders by not getting involved and holding these senior leaders accountable for their actions. Setting an example is living up to your obligation to protect the welfare of America's son and daughters; showing them the right way to lead versus just telling them. Actions speak for themselves versus meaningless words of promise and praise that never holds any truth.

Senior leaders who set these poor examples are unethical and they only breed more unethical followers. Soldiers view their actions and decide early in their careers that they would rather succeed through abusing their power, backstabbing, and manipulation of the Army system like the senior leaders they were unlucky to bear witness to. During

my tenure as a first sergeant I was privy to several acts that were truly unethical. For example, it is normal for leaders to take responsibility for their Soldier's actions no matter if they are good or bad. However, leaders with Soldiers who excel above standards, be it boards, competitions, education or daily performance would give themselves credit for mentoring, or developing this Soldier. Yet the Soldier's NCOER would not accurately reflect all that they had accomplished, but the leader's NCOER or OER would. Leaders must put aside their personal bias and treat everyone fairly. Two NCOS, both Sergeant First Class and both selected for promotion to Master Sergeant interviewed for a first sergeant position. When the Battalion Command Sergeant Major is asked why he selected the one over the other, his remarks were, "I did not want a female first sergeant in my battalion". The fact that the battalion CSM made his decision in the manner he did was already unethical and unprofessional, but when he voiced his decision making process to others, his words became a poisonous viruses for all who followed his leadership style.

We are only human, and yes we will make mistakes but as leaders we must know how to admit to our mistakes, correct them and continue taking care of Soldiers. Senior leaders must not lead our troops astray by presenting unethical or unprofessional standards. The worse thing a leader can do is put a subordinate in an ethical dilemma to make a false statement on their behalf. We, as leaders, must set the proper example and live by the Army Values as we have constantly directed our young Soldiers to do. It is not only our duty as leaders but it is our responsibility as a professional to have ethical standards to protect the welfare of our Soldiers who made it possible for us to be leaders.