



By Joe Byerly

It's the critic who counts; the man who points out when we stumble, or where we could have done better. It's the one in the stands, who's well above the dusty floor with a beer in one hand and a warm hot dog in the other, not having to worry about coming up short again and again, because they remain seated, safely in the anonymity of the crowd. The man in the stands plays it safe. They know no great enthusiasms, no great devotions, no worthy causes. No, they've never dared greatly so they are strangers to both victory and defeat.

[Resistance](#) wants us to remain as the Man in the Stands because when [we answer the Call](#) and embark on the [Hero's Journey](#), we step onto the Arena floor, and all bets are off.

Wesley Schultz stepped into the Arena in grade school when he wrote poems in his spiral notebook. As he got older, he taught himself to play the guitar. By the time he graduated high school, he had written and recorded his own songs on a CD that he gave his dad for Christmas.

While others went to college and found normal 9-5 jobs, Wesley continued to practice. He continued to refine his musical ability. He worked whatever crappy jobs he could find to make ends meet.

You would think that friends and family would have cheered him on and told him to keep

going, but they didn't. Resistance doesn't work that way. It uses other people to hold us back. They told him to grow up, to take life seriously, to get a real career.

Wesley refused to walk on the well-worn path. He created his own. He answered his Call, and he stayed the course even as Resistance, sitting high above the Arena floor, questioned his choices.

At some point in our lives, most of us set aside our gifts to do what the world wants us to do. We focus on school or our jobs and follow preset career paths.

Recognize that this is a choice, and that you can choose the path less traveled if you so desire.

Even after you answer the Call, understand that it will be difficult. Resistance will use the Man in the Stands to scare you into submission. There will be people in your life who don't see what you are trying to do. Yes, they love you. Yes, they think they are looking out for your best interests. However, they won't understand your Call no matter how crystal clear it is to you, because it's not theirs to understand.

Wesley says there were moments when it hurt and he felt misunderstood by friends and family. He didn't see the crappy jobs and struggles as a dead end. He saw what they didn't. He understood what they didn't. The struggles he faced were the material for his Calling. He was on his path.

People will question your ability to change. They will encourage you not to risk it. They will warn you that you will fail.

Do not look up from the Arena floor.

Do not give in.

Do not try to explain yourself.

Do not waste time crafting clever responses to naysayers in your social media feeds.

The only thing you can do is keep going and putting in the work.

To do that, you will need a touch of arrogance to ignore the Man in the Stands, to believe that you can fight on the Arena floor without the support of those who remain comfortable in their seats. You will also need the same courage that aided you in facing [Fear](#) to go it

alone if need be.

When you answer the Call, fight through Resistance, and cross the Threshold, you will become the Man in the Arena. Doors will appear that weren't there before, like they did for Wesley. His band, The Lumineers, would go on to sell millions of records. He turned a Christmas gift to his father into a gift for a world-wide audience, all because he stayed on the Arena floor.

You must remember that Resistance is persistent; it will follow you. Even as you move forward in the Hero's Journey, Resistance pushes back. The Man in the Stands will continue to critique and make snide remarks, all the while safely watching from the cheap seats.

The Man in the Stands will always be there, no matter how far you've come.

When you are on your Journey, you must stay on that Arena floor and fight!

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat." — Theodore Roosevelt

This post is from Joe's [The Sunday Email](#) series. This year, he is exploring Joseph Campbell's theory of the Hero's Journey. The Hero's Journey is the story of our call to do something greater with our lives, something in service to others. It requires us to go inward to do the tough work of figuring out who we are and what gift is inside of us, and then return outward to our communities with that gift in hand. Learn more about this series [here](#).

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