

On Being a Life Example to Others

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At this writing, Amy Coney Barrett has completed two days of testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee as part of her confirmation as a justice on the Supreme Court. Watching the televised proceedings, I was taken by Amy's manner. I realize some of it likely had to do with the circumstances, being questioned by the committee members, some of whom were lightweights and adversarial, but I'm not going to take that into account here. I'm just going to get into what seemed to be Amy's basic approach to dealing with people, and even broader, living her life.

As far as I could see, Amy had no need to respond to anything her questioners on the committee said, set them straight, help them out, inform them, charm them, debate them, or advocate anything to them. She sat there calmly and attended to them soberly and with little affect and let them go on as long as they wanted. If they had a criticism of her, fine with her; no need to refute it. When the questioner finished, Amy said what was true for her. She wasn't trying to justify herself, explain anything, defend herself, ingratiate herself, promote herself, change anybody's mind, none of that. She was simply saying, this is what I think, this is who I am. What you do with that is your business.

It looks to me as if Amy plays her game, her way, not your game your way. She's not bidding for your favor or sucking up to you, and Senator or whatever you are, she's not a cut below you in the pecking order, and she wasn't put on this earth to be your bobo or punching bag. She feels no obligation to deal with you and what you are about—at all. You don't exist for her unless she decides you do, and she will deal with you in the way she chooses; you don't have power over her. Amy got it across in her bearing that if you put her off or don't serve her needs, she's not going to make a big deal of it, but as soon as she can manage it, you're out of her life. She's not hooked to you.

Perhaps I'm projecting this on to Amy, but it seemed as if she lives by four rules, call them that, in her life. 1. She does what she most believes in. 2. She expresses what is true for her, in speech and in writing. 3. She does whatever job she takes on as honorably and honestly and effectively as she can; work, family life, whatever it is. 4. She gives energy to people she sees as worth her time, and detaches from people who aren't.

As I watched Amy for those two days of testimony and came to conclusions about what she was doing, a flood of people and episodes from my past washed over me along with "now I get" realizations. Some current people and circumstances came up with "I get it and that business is over" commitments, which, nice to see, I've been carrying out. Of course, Amy was just being Amy there on television and doesn't know I'm alive. But her presence brought home to me that all of us can have a big impact on people, including those we've never met, through the way we conduct our lives.