

The Mighty Mouse Theory of saving the world

COMMENTARY

By Jody Russell

I have recently taken to wearing a pin on the pocket of my jean jacket. It's a colorful pin of Mighty Mouse. He's that strong little cartoon mouse in a yellow Lycra suit with a red cape and booties. I see him perfectly in my mind, his white-gloved fist pumped forward in the air, flying. He's a hero of a mouse. He solves the world's evils. He puts bullies in their place. He's in charge. On sea or on land. The refrain of his theme song is sung in a deep masculine voice: Here I come to save the day!

I can hear that theme in my head, a familiar tune from childhood. Scratchy like an old record, a refrain that I heard so often; I simply believed.

And for a long time, I believed that there were heroes who would come and save the world. Heroes that would create vaccines, stop wars, settle differences and change the wrongs of the world to rights. Those heroes were in the history books in school, launching off to the moon, sitting behind a desk in the White House, or maybe he was my father at the dinner table.

Here I come to save the day!

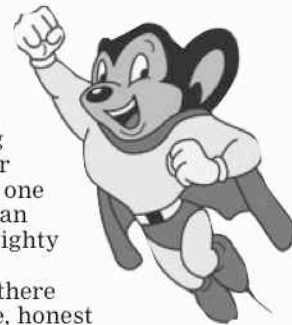
A teenage summer spent in Alabama building houses with VISTA (now known as AmericaCorps VISTA) was likely the beginning of this theory of Mighty Mouse. Sitting atop a roof in rural Alabama on a sultry hot

southern afternoon with a hammer in my hands, on a house without plumbing, watching the homeowner bring out a tray of ice water for us naïve kids was one of the first days I began to understand who Mighty Mouse really was.

While I knew that there were heroes out there, honest heroes, real amazing men and women who discovered and invented and solved, there was also the possibility of the everyday person doing something amazing. And doing something amazing can be one tiny little thing in your own community. It can be repairing a roof to keep out the leaks or it can be bringing a pitcher of water out to someone who is thirsty.

When there is a wrong to right, Mighty Mouse will join the fight.

Back to my friend Mighty Mouse. I don't think it matters too much what we do, whether it's changing the world or changing one seemingly small thing in our community. We're all just like that diminutive mouse in a superhero suit. Whether we're volunteering at a local nonprofit, serving on a city commission, or simply picking up a piece of trash on the sidewalk, it's the Mouse inside. Without the cape and the white gloves.



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