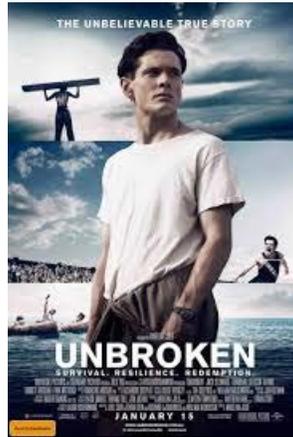


## UNBROKEN

By Lorraine Viade, PsyD



*Unbroken* is the story of one man whose greatness was not in his potential, but in his persistence. Once he was captured by the Japanese, Louie Zamperini, a WWII bombardier, became a symbol of the American spirit. Singled out for punishment because he was an Olympic runner, he took blow after blow without self-pity. Zamperini was unrelenting, determined, strong and endured more than could be imagined. This is a story of how a man who initially believed he had little worth came up against another man who seemed to have lived under the delusion that he had to make other men suffer in order to make himself seem more powerful.

True power lies in survival, acceptance and compassion. Little power is to be found in how well you can torture your enemy. When you believe in yourself, or better still, when others believe in you and support you, there is little that can be wielded against you that will break you. They can beat your body into weakness, but not your mind. And so it was to be found there in the battlefield of the soul pitted against the ravaging hell that is war. At the end of it all, captor or captured, who was the real prisoner?

For a man to overcome torture, humiliation and degradation and not to become angry, bitter or revenge-seeking is a testament to the unbroken human spirit. This dignity exists and has always existed in our society. However, not everyone has the mental or spiritual fortitude to keep going, not give up and to arrive at the end, a role-model for others. When you can realize that your pain can be used to inspire and encourage others, somehow endurance is enhanced and transformed into a resolve that transcends the physical suffering. How this mechanism works cannot be fully understood except by the person who has lived through it. So many survivors came back silent regarding what they went through. How fortunate are we to have this story to move and inspire us all to be greater.

Prisoners of war who live to tell their stories are unique in their ability to use tragedy in a positive way and to allow injustice to strengthen their will instead of destroying it. None of us knows what we are capable of until it is put to the test. Louie Zamperini passed

every test that a human being could go through. He remained emotionally, physically, and spiritually intact.

*Unbroken* is not an easy film to watch, but it will leave an indelible impression on you. We who complain if there is too much traffic on the freeway or any of the other meaningless inconveniences that annoy us might stop and think about how we would fare given such extreme circumstances. It is an exercise worth undertaking.

I give *Unbroken* four bomber pilots.

