

A few good men



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A FEW GOOD MEN - Movie Review Aaron Sorkin may have begun his dream for, 'A Few Good Men', writing on cocktail napkins of the Palace Theatre<sup>1</sup> but heeded it in the renowned halls of Academy Awards and Golden Globes. His timeless classic revolves around a murder that takes place on the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba under its 'Code Red' regulations. This then follows an intense courtroom drama which intrigues us through its deep-rooted mystery and gives a fresh look at crime among the Marines. In this movie, it is the role of 'Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Markinson', Colonel Nathan R. Jessep's Executive Officer which issues the most interest in me. Belittled by his superiors and considered second best to his commanding officer, Col. Jessep, who was also his classmate in the Academy, Lt. Col. Markinson had a tough life. He was constantly ordered about and had little say in the everyday activities of the Base. He had never really been allowed to practise his full potential and had always remained on the sidelines; it is this frustration and disappointment that he acts out in the movie. <sup>2</sup> Locus of Control At first look it would seem that the character of Lt. Col. Markinson existed within an external locus of control. His actions throughout the movie remained controlled and regulated by his superior, Col. Jessep. The one time that he did wish to save the life of Private First Class William Santiago, by transferring him off the base, he was thwarted in his efforts by Col. Jessep who saw the method, "expeditious and painless". However, Lt. Col. Markinson never blamed anyone except himself for the incidents that ensued. His suicide note to PFC Santiago's parents makes that very clear when he writes, "... your son is dead for only one reason. I wasn't strong enough to stop it." Thus, this character has a strong internal locus of control.

Personality Trait Lt. Col. Markinson's personality was that of a 'Duty

Fulfiller<sup>3</sup>. He was a reserved individual who believed in security and peaceful living. He remained to the end, a strong believer in laws and traditions, and a loyal and faithful officer to Col. Jessep. However, his strong-felt internal sense of duty saw the reason in stepping out of the established mode of doing things. Two incidents in the movie are clear proof of these deviations - one, when he wished to transfer PFC Santiago to another base and second, when he got into Lieutenant Junior Grade Daniel Kaffee's car to tell him the truth about PFC Santiago's death.

**Significant Emotional Event**

The murder of PFC Santiago was a significant emotional event for Lt. Col. Markinson which rocked the very strong holds on which he stood. The part he played in trying to cover up the murder of a junior officer on the orders of his superior left his conscience shattered and his being depressed, this eventually resulted in his suicide where he wrote, " I wasn't strong enough to stop it." His inability to stand up in testimony against his commanding officer, Col. Jessep left him guilty and he died blaming himself for not having being able to stop the death of an innocent.

**Conflict Management Style**

Lt. Col. Markinson had a combination of accommodative and avoiding style of conflict management<sup>4</sup>. He remained throughout the movie in two modes of thought. While at one hand he wished to protect PFC Santiago and believed that what he had done to be right, on the other hand he had his duty to which he was bound and his commanding officer, Col. Jessep to whom he was accountable. Thus, he tried to resolve the conflict by transferring PFC Santiago to another Base but saw that possibility forcefully denied, he was then made a party to all the wrongdoings which eventually ended in murder. He felt the only way this conflict could rightfully be resolved was by bringing out the truth. It is this realization and his underlying guilt that made him tell

Lt. JG Kaffee, " I don't want a deal, and I don't want immunity. I want you to know that I'm proud neither of what I have done nor of what I am doing."

Ethics Methodology Style The character of Lt. Col. Markinson follows the path of ethical intuitionism. He was bound by moral duties and obligations to his junior officers, colleagues, senior officers and to the nation. It was this duty and sense of belief in moral virtues that guided his code of conduct. Even when he sought to help two innocent men who were being sent to the gallows, he did so secretively and said, " If there were something I could do about that I would but since I can't the only thing I can do is help you, Lieutenant." Ethical Turning Point in the Movie I believe the ethical turning point in the movie was the suicide of Lt. Col. Markinson who could not handle the conflicts within his mind. His character portrayed the true sense of duty to another which conflicts a Marine's life and actions. His death a true samurai style in full uniform galore showed his inability to rattle out on his own kind even when he knew that they had done wrong. It is as Col. Jessep shouts at the end of the movie, " You can't handle the truth!"