

The final category is creative courage, “discovering new forms, patterns” and solutions that no one has yet imagined and that might even promote a better future. A writer, musician, or inventor shows creative courage when he or she rejects the status quo,⁵ seeing beyond what *is* to create something new. President Lincoln called Harriet Beecher Stowe, the “little woman who wrote the book that started this great war.” Her 1851 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, while it didn’t actually provoke the Civil War, created a groundswell⁶ of public outrage against slavery through its detailed and moving descriptions. Another example is *Rent*, one of the longest running shows on Broadway. *Rent* was the first musical to address the HIV health crisis through life-affirming personal stories aimed at the general public. An uplifting musical form helped the public face difficult issues.

Not just the arts, but all professions, require creative courage. Tim Berners-Lee, for instance, is credited with inventing the World Wide Web, maybe the most important innovation of our time. In 1991, he set up the first web site and began networking his computer with others around the country. Concerned that patenting his discovery would make the growing Web too expensive for general use, Berners-Lee chose to keep the technology public. In doing so, he passed up a personal fortune and risked mockery for his “foolish” insistence that the World Wide Web should belong to everyone.

Of course, the four types of courage sometimes overlap. Tobacco executive Jeffrey Wigand was motivated by moral courage when he revealed in the 1990s that Big Tobacco⁷ was hiding the truth about nicotine causing cancer. This whistle blower⁸ demonstrated physical courage as well, refusing to be silenced by veiled threats of violence. Wigand’s social courage was tested as the case hit the media, the business community shunned⁹ him, and his own family deserted him. And when his old life was shattered, this man somehow found the creative courage to build a new one.

“Courage has many faces,” writes Katherine Martin, the author of *Women of Courage*. “We lose much when we dismiss it in ourselves, thinking we don’t measure up.” The classification that May sets forth invites us to find and cultivate courage in our own lives, to ask what blocks our daring, and then to stand and try.