

You know, it's just a little surprising—one of the most interesting politicians in America's entire history is a man that 99.99% of Americans have never heard of. In fact, it's safe to say that this politician is hardly remembered at all, even in his own home state of Colorado—yes, even though he was governor of the state during one of the most important times in American history. Do you know who I'm talking about? Well, his name is Ralph Carr, and he was Governor of Colorado when the country of Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in 1941. That act officially brought the U.S. into World War Two.

And therein lies the story of the remarkable Colorado Governor Ralph Carr. I'm certain you're going to find his story captivating and encouraging, regardless of where you are on the spectrum of political belief. That story is fully told by Adam Schrager, who wrote Carr's biography 58 years after he died—and the title of the book is *The Principled Politician*. Did you chuckle just a bit at that title? How long has it been since you heard the word "principled" used as an adjective for a U.S. politician, except by a public relations blitz? Of course, there have been a few principled politicians, but the phrase that might best fit here is: "few and far between." So, what made the author title the book that way? Let's dig into that just a bit....

Ralph Carr was born in 1887 in a tiny mining town of Rosita, Colorado—now it's a ghost town—and Carr grew up in various towns in the heart of Colorado where his family tried to scratch together a living. This was when Colorado mountain mining towns were accessed only by horseback, stagecoach, or wagon—they couldn't even be reached by train. Carr stayed a son of Colorado all the way through law school.

Ralph married his girlfriend Gretchen and moved back into the Colorado mountains, ending up in the high-elevation San Luis Valley. Carr established a flourishing law practice to serve a largely poor farming clientele, teaching himself Spanish along the way. Carr was then selected to serve as Colorado's assistant attorney general for a couple of years—then he was appointed by U.S. President Herbert Hoover in 1929 to be the U.S. attorney for Colorado, the state's top federal law enforcement officer.

And it all starts getting pretty interesting from there. Carr was in charge of enforcing national Prohibition laws against alcohol, so he tangled with entrenched organized-crime families—the Denver family of Joe Roma as well as the Carlinos of southern Colorado. Of course, just like drug laws today, the liquor laws of the time didn't work simply because so many ordinary folks wanted to drink alcohol! With that kind of prevailing wink-wink attitude, many law enforcement officials were on the take with bribes. But not Carr! He earned the respect of observers for his courage and tenacity in upholding the law and actions taken to prosecute dangerous, known criminals—especially becoming admired for being incorruptible.

Riding on that reputation and his clear affection for people, Carr was elected governor and took office in January of 1939, swearing to uphold the Constitutions of both the United States and the state of Colorado. And, while that sounds routine, that very vow is the crux of our story—why Carr became known as a very principled politician. But, boy, in due course, Carr's principles made a whole lot of folks very angry! In fact, numerous Coloradans considered him a kind of a stubborn knucklehead who put citizens' lives at risk. Yeah, many pleaded with him to change his approach on a particular policy. So, just what sparked this deep consternation and condemnation? Well, it was the deadly attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii by Japan.

Suddenly, to many Americans, anyone of Japanese descent or even Japanese appearance seemed an enemy of the United States. No matter whether they were U.S. citizens. No matter how long they had lived in the U.S. No matter if they were *born* in the U.S. After all, who wants to take a chance that those folks weren't more loyal to Japan than to America? Who wants to take a chance that those folks weren't direct spies for Japan? Who wants to take a chance that those folks weren't saboteurs who were going to detonate bombs at bridges or dams? Well, the truth is, regarding those Japanese Americans who were citizens of the U.S. with all the rights afforded by the Constitution, Carr was unwilling to accept such condemning assumptions as *de facto* truth. After all, Carr had sworn to uphold the U.S. Constitution!

Here's the backstory. The U.S. government was essentially in charge of a very huge crisis, of course, trying to handle the very real threat from the Allies' World War Two enemies, you know, Germany, Italy, and

Japan. And, yes, a notable number of such individuals were indeed ultimately identified by the U.S. government as enemies of America. Fear was understandably rampant when Governor Carr crafted his soon-famous speech that appealed to civil rights ideals, saying, "...let us pause here to speak a word in behalf of loyal German, Italian, and Japanese citizens who must not suffer for the activities and animosities of others...They are as loyal to American institutions as you or I. Many of them have been here—are American citizens, with no connection with or feeling of loyalty toward the customs and philosophy of Italy, Japan, or Germany." Wow, in those circumstances, that position was truly courage in action!

Many Coloradans—some sending family as combatants into the war—disagreed with Carr deeply. And this wasn't an overnight news cycle...the lashing of Governor Carr lasted for months! Carr heard from numerous people, many of whom admired him *before* Pearl Harbor. But not now. They reasoned that the U.S. was now sending Colorado soldiers into harm's way, risking life and limb to fight the dreaded Japanese. And when news came back to citizens about atrocities by the Japanese military—intense events such as the horrific Bataan Death March—many were irate. But Carr stood his ground throughout the political firestorms. To Carr, this was not negotiable: Americans had civil rights and deserved due process.

Regardless, no matter what anyone else really thought or fought for, the push was made by the Federal Government—notably regarding Japanese Americans because they were more easily identified as to skin color, to be placed in "relocation centers" or "internment camps" in a number of states in the Western U.S. The Granada Relocation Center near the tiny farming town of Granada in eastern Colorado became known as Amache and ultimately housed over 7,000 Japanese Americans who were stripped of their rights, their property and their freedom, some for over three years. Still, 953 men and women from Amache volunteered or were drafted to serve in the U.S. military—105 were wounded, 31 killed in action.

But...just what about Ralph Carr here? Alone among governors in his region, Carr unwaveringly advocated for the Constitutional rights of Japanese Americans. And even when the Feds forced states to put Japanese Americans in camps anyway, others didn't even want these U.S. citizens *at all* within their borders—Carr alone empathetically embraced having a camp in his state. Yes, Carr's principles *were* admired by many citizens *before* Pearl Harbor, but they essentially cost him reelection in 1942 as Colorado's governor. He promptly hired a Japanese American from Camp Amache as his housekeeper. Eight years later, Carr did win the Republican nomination for governor of Colorado...but he passed away before the general election.

In what's widely known as the "Golden Rule," Jesus said, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them..." (Matthew 7:12 ESV) And you know what? In that spirit, the best parts of the U.S. Constitution guarantee ordinary citizens protection from powerful government. Carr understood that. But more than that, he courageously paid a price for standing up for those stripped of those protections.

So, what does "history" now say about Carr's stand? President Ronald Reagan apologized on behalf of the U.S. Government, and the U.S. eventually paid \$1.6 billion to 82,219 formerly-interned Japanese Americans. Ralph Carr has a street named after him in a Denver suburb and is afforded some other honors, like a plaque and a portion of a highway named for him. And, in 1999, when the *Denver Post*, the state's largest newspaper, named Colorado's "Person of the Century," it was Ralph Carr. The principled politician.

But here's the thing. As believers, it really isn't about how "history" remembers us. Instead, we know every one of our deeds are known by the Lord Himself and will be judged at His judgement seat...in the context of eternity. So, believers have no reason to strive or to worry or to even fear what "history" says about us. Instead, we're focused on what the Lord directs us to do. And our arena of all nations is far more encompassing than politics, even when compared to the State of Colorado in the United States!

Indeed, we are playing for principled stakes important to the Kingdom of God! The key principles are to love God and to love our neighbors. For the latter, the Golden Rule is as good as it gets. Yeah, Jesus said, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them..." Yeah, like proclaiming the Gospel.

A&A: Application & Action

1. Do you consider yourself principled in the face of adversity or strong disagreement? How do you measure that? Have you taken a principled position that cost you something significant? Discuss.

2. Can you name the believers in the New Testament who took a stand for the Gospel and paid a significant price? If so, relate what you know. If not, why not?

3. Paul counseled Timothy to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2 ESV) Do your church members expect this set of principles to be practiced in your church? Discuss for each part of the verse.