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Ethical Framework to Liberty Education at the National Liberty Museum

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*This paper is dedicated to our Founder Irvin J. Borowsky
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Introduction

The National Liberty Museum (NLM) is located in historic Philadelphia, USA in the birthplace of the United States' democracy, just steps away from the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where the substance of the US Constitution was fiercely debated by the delegates of the Continental Congress, and compromise finally carried the day.

Surrounded by institutions that present historical artifacts of American liberty, the NLM stands out as a unique educational institution and cultural destination exploring the concept of liberty as a living, moral construct in contemporary society. Our educational mission is to foster in young people the positive character and sense of civic purpose that will help them to achieve not only as individuals, but also as contributing, caring members of our citizenry who are concerned about the greater good, the health and well-being of our communities and democracy.

Our presentation will take attendees on a 'virtual walk' through the galleries and educational and community programs of the NLM and conclude with a synopsis of the evaluation study currently underway.

Our History

The National Liberty Museum is the culmination of the life's work of Irvin J. Borowsky, a lifelong Philadelphian, publisher, art collector and philanthropist. Mr. Borowsky was the youngest son of two Polish immigrants who arrived in Philadelphia in 1904. Like millions of other immigrants, they came with only what they could carry, seeking safety and new opportunities in America. Their experience and background gave their son a profound appreciation for what he referred to as our 'creative democracy.'

Mr. Borowsky was an entrepreneur from a very young age. When he retired, he wanted to give back to his country by reminding people that liberty makes everything else possible. In founding the NLM, his vision was not merely to present a collection of art and heroes, but rather for our exhibits to illuminate that liberty is a work in progress requiring citizens to understand, respect and care for each other. As Mr. Borowsky explained at the Museum's opening ceremony on January 12, 2000, "We who are fortunate enough to live in the land of liberty must protect it, preserve it and guard it for future generations." Today, his daughter and the Museum's co-founder Gwen Borowsky serves as our CEO.

Our Mission

The National Liberty Museum is dedicated to preserving America's heritage of freedom by fostering good character, civic responsibility and respect for all people. Visitors to the Museum take an inspirational walk through freedom, interacting with incredible stories of liberty heroes and artwork that encourage them to find their own place in the story of liberty. Our primary art form is glass art, as it makes the point that freedom is as fragile as glass, and that art cannot be created without the right to self-expression.

Our Approach

The NLM conceptualizes *liberty education* at the nexus of character and civic education, as teaching the 'practice' of liberty from an agentic perspective. This practice entails thinking critically about such topics as diversity and identity, conflict and communication, rights and responsibilities, social change, and the virtues that comprise positive character.

The seven galleries of the Museum are filled with 2,000 interactive exhibits of liberty heroes from around the world, past and present, famous and 'ordinary' –from Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. to Nurse Gail Gibson who rescued 12 babies during Hurricane Katrina, and Philadelphia 11th grader Adaline Ortiz who produced and filmed an anti-bullying video after she was beaten up on her way home from school. These heroes have enacted virtues chief of which are courage, respect, empathy, responsibility and integrity to expand, protect and practice liberty. Learners of all ages explore our content through an array of educational programs, including educator-facilitated student tours, outreach education, professional development, community awards and diversity and inclusion events.

When engaging with our curriculum, students consider how their everyday actions enhance or detract from their own liberty, and the liberty of others. They discover the personal and social power of the virtues they already possess. They become empowered to enact their virtues to make the changes they want to see in their community and in our world.

Although we work with students of all ages, our core population is the middle school years from 4th through 8th grades, or 9 until 13 years of age. Our educators work with every kind of school, for example: public, private, parochial, charter, and alternative education programs. Schools come to the NLM from throughout our region, although the majority of our population is from the inner city of Philadelphia, where 40% of children are living in poverty, the School

District is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, and most intervention and social support programs for students have been eliminated from schools. Currently, between 40-50% of Philadelphia high school students drop out of school before graduating. In an environment where most students receive reduced or free lunches and risk being beaten up or shot on their way to and from school, the issue of liberty or lack thereof is very real and lived every day by young people.

It is in this context that we have observed the virtues such as empathy and optimism to be universally lacking in young people (as well as in their teachers). The NLM is committed to positively impacting the lives of students and educators with multi-layered character and civic education programming designed to make liberty personal, contemporary and meaningful through Museum, online and school-based components.

NLM's Educational Programs

I. Tours & Museum Learning Experiences at our facility

The NLM's educators facilitate tours and Museum Learning Experiences in our nontraditional classroom setting. Student-centered activities engage students from all walks of life and learning styles in acquiring the concepts of liberty and its associated virtues, and make the concepts relevant to 21st century youth.

Our liberty education curriculum is aligned with US common core standards in several subjects, including Social Studies and English Language Arts. Students and teachers can access our curriculum on our website before and after visiting the NLM to extend learning and build an online community.

The NLM's curriculum is aimed at inspiring and empowering students to participate in actualizing and supporting liberty for all. The curriculum comprises four themes, each of which underpins our conceptualization of liberty:

1. **Appreciating Diversity:** Each person has a unique identity and perspective, and all people have the same inherent right to liberty.
2. **Resolving Conflicts Respectfully:** People face conflict on a regular basis and can handle conflict in a variety of ways. Some options for addressing conflict enhance liberty, while others detract from it.

3. **Balancing Rights with Responsibilities:** Using your rights responsibly by respecting the equal rights of those around you creates an environment in which liberty is shared by all.
4. **Heroes of Liberty:** There are gaps in liberty, which people have the power to address. Heroes of liberty are moral exemplars who, despite the risks involved, take action to close the gaps.

Our Museum Learning Experiences (MLX) programming combines an educator facilitated Museum tour with an in-depth, classroom-style workshop, incorporating writing, role-playing, art projects, and other engaging learning activities, which offers students the opportunity to explore our themes in greater depth. We offer MLX programs to all age levels. Following are examples of the MLX programs we offer 4th -8th grade students:

1. **Appreciating Diversity**

USA Diversity Puzzle – What do American families look like? How varied are the interests, skills, and backgrounds of people in the United States? In this workshop, students “unite the states” by piecing together a puzzle that shows just how diverse the United States is. Students will be asked to use their critical thinking skills to identify which pieces belong in the puzzle and which pieces are “red herrings.”

2. **Resolving Conflicts Respectfully**

The Art of Peacemaking – Students discover the challenges and importance of negotiating as a means of solving conflicts. In this workshop, students will role-play conflict resolution scenarios, using heroes and exhibits from the Museum as inspiration.

The Freedom Riders – In this workshop, students use a primary source –an NBC news report from 1961– to investigate the Freedom Riders. They also explore segregation in the South and the tenets of nonviolent protest.

3. **Balancing Rights with Responsibilities**

My Country’s Bill of Rights – After exploring the NLM’s exhibits about freedom of expression, rule of law, and rights and responsibilities, students participate in a fast-paced game in which they develop a Bill of Rights for a fictional society.

4. **Heroes of Liberty**

Allies in Justice – Using footage from the United Farm Workers Movement led by César Chavez, students will learn how the farm workers gained support for their cause by building alliances with other individuals and groups who shared their vision for justice.

Students will then discuss the social changes they would like to see and create signs to help spread their message.

Be an Upstander – After learning about inspirational heroes of liberty who stood up for the rights of others, students will learn ways that they, too, can become “upstanders” by transforming themselves from passive bystanders to active advocates for the people around them. Students learn and practice a variety of “Upstander Strategies” that can be used in real life to help defuse bullying and social injustices of all kinds.

II. School-based programming: *Young Heroes Club* outreach program

This year-long educational initiative for grades 4-8 uses project-based learning to empower students in the areas of leadership, civic engagement, social justice, and critical thinking. The purpose of the program is to demonstrate that anyone, including the young students who are recipients of the program, can apply positive virtues (such as courage, respect, empathy, responsibility and integrity), activate their rights, investigate social issues and take action to make real change in their respective communities.

After students complete the liberty education curriculum facilitated by our educators, they establish a *Young Heroes Club* and execute community action projects. This project-based aspect of the program provides an opportunity for students to practice interpersonal skills and to begin to define themselves as change-makers in their schools, communities and society.

We piloted the Young Heroes Club program over the 2011-2012 school year, working with students considered to be ‘at risk’ at three ‘Title 1’ urban Philadelphia schools. ‘Title 1’ is a designation given to schools by the US government with greater than 40% of students living in poverty. Students receive free or reduced lunches and other support benefits because of the Title 1 designation. We were frankly astounded by the relevance and cogency of the community action projects our pilot cohort of students devised. In one of the schools we worked with, out of 180 surveys completed by students, not one contained a ‘silly’ or irrelevant idea. The students almost unanimously voted that their playground was a dangerous place, with broken glass and trash strewn everywhere. They collectively decided to work together on a school wide clean-up and recycling campaign.

The Young Heroes Club program has become the NLM's flagship outreach initiative. It has now entered its fourth year, and our educators are currently working inside 12 Philadelphia metro-area schools. The following are the components of the Young Heroes Club program:

1. Faculty Advisor Professional Development: NLM educators lead faculty advisors in professional development, training them on liberty education pedagogy, instructional strategies, curriculum and other best practices beginning with a two-day professional development orientation in which participants will be eligible to receive Pennsylvania State credits for promotion.
2. Training Phase: The Young Heroes Club curriculum unit includes 11 lessons establishing key concepts, skills and virtues, including leadership, civic engagement, social justice, critical thinking, and project-based learning.
3. Action Phase: The primary goal for the action phase is for students to complete a community action project that address a social issue of the Club's choice.
4. Online support: NLM educators moderate a Young Heroes Club blog on the NLM web platform for faculty and students. The student blog allows young people from all participating schools to connect and communicate through peer share. This space also allows students to discuss key concepts, terms and ideas learned in the program and to brainstorm ideas for the Action Phase of the program. For faculty advisors, we provide a resource library, supplemental resources for Clubs, web links, additional education literature and opportunities to brainstorm with advisors from other schools.

Following is a sample of community action projects formulated and implemented by Philadelphia *Young Heroes* last (2013-2014) school year:

- St. Christopher Catholic School, (northeast Philadelphia). Issue students chose: Animal Welfare. The students discovered that the cause of many stray pets is irresponsible pet ownership. The Club members put what they found out during their investigation into a PowerPoint and flyers, educating people about the responsibilities of animal adoption. They also organized a school-wide assembly and had two guest speakers from local animal welfare organizations: the PSPCA and the Women's Humane Society.
- Feltonville Arts & Sciences public school (north Philadelphia). Issue students chose: Community trash. The students noticed that there is a lot of trash, litter and graffiti in the neighborhood. Their goals were to raise awareness and encourage their neighbors to take

responsibility for keeping their community clean. The Club investigated why people litter and the effects of trash on the local environment. They designed a community clean up kit to distribute in their neighborhoods.

- Lingelbach public school (northwest Philadelphia). Issue students chose: Bullying. The students decided that one of the root causes of bullying is the lack of counseling/support staff and funding at their school. They decided to begin a letter writing campaign that included writing to local decision makers: Chair of the School Reform Commission Bill Green, Philadelphia School District Superintendent Hite, Philadelphia Mayor Nutter, PA State Governor Corbett and PA State Representatives and Senators. They have already received a personal response from Dr. Hite.
- William Rowen elementary school (northwest Philadelphia). Issue students chose: Pedestrian safety. The students at Rowen were concerned about the safety of students during parent pick up time. The school is near busy roads and a major intersection, where kids have to deal with unsafe drivers and walking into the streets through double, sometimes triple parked cars. The Club developed alternatives for how to handle dismissal procedures and proposed their solutions to the principal and leadership team at the school. They also visited classrooms to promote road safety and held a rally outside of the school to raise awareness in the community.
- St. Francis de Sales Catholic School (west Philadelphia). Issue students chose: Gun violence. The students were concerned about gun violence in their community. In their Club meetings, they shared their personal experiences with violence, and did a thorough investigation of how to prevent and deal with gun violence. Club members visited classrooms to present the information they found and educate their peers.

III. Professional Development Resources

The NLM's accredited professional development workshops for educators, guidance counselors and school administrators provide the hands-on tools and support needed to help students achieve and succeed. This arm of our programming was launched in our first years and aimed at giving educators practical support and training on relevant issues that is not typically offered. Our course catalogue currently offers 22 workshops on topics including anti-bullying and peaceful conflict resolution strategies, social and emotional learning and classroom

management. Full-day workshops provide up to 15 Act 48 Continuing Professional Education hours for advancement approved by both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Departments of Education. Half-day workshops provide up to seven Act 48 hours. During our workshops, expert presenters provide instruction that supports targeted, standards-aligned learning objectives. The workshops include case studies, facilitated discussion, lesson planning and practice, exploration of the Museum and new resources that can be used immediately in the classroom.

Community awards programs:

NLM's annual awards programs recognize everyday liberty heroes among us who have enacted their virtues to make positive contributions in our communities and world. Our current roster of awards programs is the following:

1. Awards of Valor: Honoring police officers and firefighters for remarkable acts of courage and empathy, and for meritorious service as role models in their communities. Their stories are gripping and inspirational, and they represent the very best of what it means to be an "Everyday Hero."
2. Teacher as Hero: Spotighting outstanding teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators, who inspire, motivate and educate young people. These dedicated educators are honored for fostering an appreciation for diversity in the classroom; teaching students how to resolve conflicts respectfully; providing students with a deeper understanding of the relationship between rights and responsibilities; honoring student voice.
3. Young Heroes Award: Recognizing young people between the ages of 8 and 18 who have championed liberty through their actions. The Award honors young people who have identified areas where liberty is lacking, and have taken action to make positive social change in their schools and communities through civic engagement, peaceful conflict resolution, promoting diversity and school or community leadership.

Measuring impact:

Since the NLM's founding in the year 2000, we have relied upon self-report surveys and evaluation forms administered to all program participants for constructive feedback. Now in the second decade of operation, our institutional focus is to enhance and extend program impact

through several mechanisms. We are converting our educational curriculum to an online format that is adaptable to school settings across the US and around the world. We are presenting our unique approach to character and civic education at the relevant conferences to share and learn from others. We are seeking the involvement of expert consultants to enhance and evaluate our programming.

Supported by grant funding from the John Templeton Foundation, the National Liberty Museum is currently undergoing an independent evaluation study for the first time, in partnership with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues based in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, UK. The goals of the study are ambitious: to provide fresh insights into the operationalization of liberty, offer new information to researchers and practitioners about liberty and which virtues (i.e. courage, respect, empathy, responsibility and integrity) most closely associate with the concept of liberty, and present insights into a new model for liberty education that is relevant and engaging to 21st century youth.

The details of the study are beyond the scope of this paper. However, in summary, the study is currently underway over the 2014-2015 academic school year among 1,000 (projected number) students ages 9-13 in Philadelphia to assess the measurable impact of the NLM's educational interventions on youth's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to liberty and its associated virtues. The study specifically examines the measurable impact of the three NLM interventions: 1) interactive educational exhibitions at its facility presenting heroes of liberty – exemplars of virtue ethics – from around the world; 2) web-based educational activities providing students and teachers the opportunity to extend learning and participate in an online community; and 3) Young Heroes Club Program, the NLM's school-based civic engagement program.

It is hypothesized that, as assessed by the developed evaluation questionnaire, there will be a significant difference in the growth of retention of knowledge, improved attitudes about, and practice of liberty and its pillar virtues, among students participating in the interventions compared to those who do not participate. It is also hypothesized that degree of dosage of the program (i.e. participation in all three interventions versus only one or two) will be a significant factor in determining the degree of improved and retained knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to liberty and virtues.

This study is a quasi-experimental design, with one control cohort receiving no educational intervention (until after their participation in the study is finished), and three cohorts receiving varying degrees of educational interventions. Students in all cohorts will take the evaluation questionnaire three times: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and at the end of the school year. Students in the three treatment cohorts will receive a tour of the NLM in the fall of the 2014-2015 school year.

A primary objective of the evaluation study is to operationalize the construct of liberty, thereby creating a measure of this complex concept. Informed by the moral philosophical literature, the measure of liberty must be multidimensional and be operationalized at the intrapersonal (individual), interpersonal (relational) and collective levels. The construction of the new measure of liberty is informed by measures of the individual, relational, and collective dimensions of liberty and its pillar virtues of empathy, respect, responsibility, integrity and courage that exist within the literature.

More specifically, existing measures of liberty that operationalize the concept at the individual level define liberty as personal autonomy, self-agency and an individual's capability for self-transformation. At the relational level, existing measures of liberty operationalize liberty as moral autonomy, fairness, empathy, and recognition and respect for the rights of others. Finally, existing items that tap into the collective dimension of liberty measure the degree to which, for instance, a person is committed the practice of justice and flourishing in his or her community and society as a whole.

Based on the review of the moral philosophical and operational literature, 45 original items were generated to tap into the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of liberty at the individual, relational and collective levels. These original items, along with existing subscales from the Youth Assets Survey (Oman et al., 2010), Index of Autonomous Functioning (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012), Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983), Civic Attitudes Scale (Mabry, 1998), and the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA)-Youth Version (Park & Peterson, 2006) were piloted in the summer of 2014 on a sample of 427 Philadelphia middle-school students.

Following the factor analysis conducted on the pilot data, as well as information derived from focus groups conducted in July 2014, the resulting 28 original Likert scale items comprise the self-report measure of liberty, which we are calling: "Learning Liberty: Character in Action"

Questionnaire. This 28-item self-report instrument employs a mixed methods evaluative approach. The questionnaire is also composed of a section open-ended questions about the meaning, importance and practice of liberty and a moral reasoning section in which a moral dilemma is presented and participants rate choices for the protagonist's actions as well as select and explain their choice for the best course of action for the protagonist.

Unfortunately, due to the financial crisis of the Philadelphia School District, schools barely opened on time for the 2014-2015 school year, and this has made cohort recruitment challenging. However, pre-intervention data has been collected for all students in Intervention Cohort 3, and post-intervention data for these students is currently underway. Pre-intervention data for the majority of Intervention Cohort 1 has been collected, and post-intervention data collection for this cohort is underway. For all participants who have been recruited for the Control Cohort and Intervention Cohort 2, pre-intervention data has been collected. Recruitment for more participants in the Control and Intervention 1 and 2 cohorts is still underway.

Data entry is currently underway at the Jubilee Centre. Preliminary analyses have begun, and we will have more information about the analyses at the time of this presentation.



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