LESSON 11

MORAL COURAGE

"Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Moral Courage

Prework for participants: Read the Robert Hallett story, "In Search of Moral Courage," and develop written answers to the questions for the story on the Moral Courage Discussion Checklist. Also, select a person you know who exemplifies moral courage and complete the Personal Example of Moral Courage worksheet. If time permits, have students bring to class a news article featuring a morally courageous individual.

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Compare and contrast moral courage with other kinds of courage
- Identify individuals who have demonstrated moral courage, explain how these people exhibited moral courage, and describe why they should be admired

Opening

We have learned how to determine right from wrong and how to analyze and resolve right-versus-right ethical dilemmas. Today, we will probe the concept of moral courage and its function as a catalyst in helping us to act on our convictions.

Strategies

Engage the class as a whole in a discussion of the reading, "In Search of Moral Courage." Go over all of the questions on the Moral Courage Discussion Checklist. Using the reading and the Courage/Moral Courage overhead from Lesson 7, review the definition of moral courage and how it differs from other forms of courage. Remind students, as well, of the yielding and resistance factors studied in Lesson 7.

Next, engage the group in the Giraffe Profile Exercise, using the stories included with the activity or other stories listed on the Giraffe Project's Web site at *http://www.giraffe.org*.

Finally, break the class into small groups and ask students to share additional examples of moral courage, referring to the Personal Examples of Moral Courage homework assignment. Debrief this discussion as a whole class, focusing on questions such as: What ethical values did these individuals choose to uphold despite personal risk? What types of opposition did they face? How did their actions benefit others?

Request submission of the Courageous Moral Stand Paper, assigned in Lesson 7.

Key Questions

- How is moral courage different from other kinds of courage?
- What examples of morally courageous individuals can we cite? In what ways do their actions exemplify moral courage?
- How can we practice to become morally courageous?

Closure & Transition

As we approach our final session, and prepare to reflect on what we have learned, our greatest challenge will be to develop our moral courage so that we can "walk our talk" and act on our ethical convictions. In our next class, we will look at what we have learned and how we can apply this learning on our campus and in the community at large.

Homework Assignment for Lesson 12

- Prepare for final progress check/exam
- Prepare for sharing of final reflections
- Prepare for final submission of required written work

Lesson Assessment: Revisions for Next Time

In Search of Moral Courage

Like most independent schools, St. Paul's School for Boys posts athletic schedules on its Web site. Click on it, and you'll find the list of baseball games, tennis matches, and crew events from its campus in suburban Baltimore.

But in the spring of 2001, you would not have found lacrosse. Despite being ranked No. 1 in a nationwide lacrosse poll earlier in the year, this prestigious 151-year-old institution canceled its entire varsity season on April 3.

That day, headmaster Robert W. Hallett met for twenty minutes with a group of parents and with the varsity team—many of whom had been drawn to the school because of its reputation as a lacrosse power—to announce the cancellation.

The reason? Earlier in the spring, a 16-year-old team member had had a sexual tryst with a 15-year-old girl from another private school—and, without her knowledge, videotaped the whole thing. He was apparently mimicking a sequence in American Pie (a movie some of the students had recently seen and discussed) in which a character videos a sexual encounter and puts it on the Web. When this student's teammates gathered at a player's home to look at what they thought would be game tapes of an upcoming rival, they saw his tape instead.

None of the teammates objected. Nobody tried to stop the showing. Instead, they watched.

You can imagine the soul-searching among board and staff members leading up to that announcement. Lacrosse—a game played on a soccer-like field with a small ball hurled from long sticks with nets on the ends—is Canada's national summer sport and has a strong following among East Coast prep schools and colleges in the United States. At St. Paul's it has a sixty-year history and solid alumni support. But the school, affiliated with the Episcopal Church, still requires chapel for its students and retains a serious tradition of ethical concern. What do you do when a popular sport crosses swords with an ethical collapse?

In this case, the answer was clear: The boy who made the tape was expelled. Thirty varsity players were suspended for three days and sent into counseling with the school's chaplain and psychologist. And eight junior varsity players were made to sit out the rest of the season.

This is a story about moral courage—a lack of it among teammates who failed to object to the tape, and the expression of it by an administration that took a formidable public stand against behavior that in other schools might have slid past with perfunctory penalties.

"At a minimum," Hallett wrote to parents, "we should expect each boy here will, in the future, have the courage to stand up for, to quote the Lower School prayer, `The hard right against the easy wrong.'"

What, exactly, is moral courage? It's a question we've been pondering here at the Institute for Global Ethics. In our workshops, we've noticed an increasing inclination among participants to mention "courage" as they set about defining their core moral values. It's a word they want to list along with honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion. And while it's not a synonym for any of those others, it shares with them a family likeness. But does it really belong in the same category? There's no question that courage is hugely important. But is it a different kind of concept from those other five values?

Here are some preliminary observations:

1. Moral courage is different from physical courage. Physical courage is the willingness to face serious risk to life or limb instead of fleeing from it. "Courage," says the 1926 Webster's Dictionary, is "that quality of mind which enables one to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear, or fainting of heart." General William T. Sherman, after whom the tank is named, called it "a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger and a mental willingness to endure it." John Wayne put it with characteristic bluntness: "Courage is being scared to death—and saddling up anyway." Sir Ernest Shackleton, seeking adventurers to join him on his fateful South Pole exploration, described it nicely in an advertisement:

> Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness—constant danger, safe return doubtful—honor and recognition in case of success.

2. Physical courage is less in demand than it once was. Where once the frontier loomed mysterious and uncharted, global positioning satellites now take us right to our mark. And where once beasts, bugs, underbrush, storms, and topographical obstacles made travel dangerous, there is less to fear now and less need for physical courage. Even war, which Artistotle thought was the only place to find true courage, has become less dependent on the physical courage of the individual warrior and more dependent on technology, information, and weaponry launched from a safe distance.

3. Yet the *lessons* of courage are still needed, especially among youth seeking tests of adulthood and rites of passage into maturity. At their best, this need may explain the popularity of the contrived risk-taking of extreme sports and some high-risk financial ventures—and, at its worst, the prevalence of risky sexual behavior, drug use, and gang activity. It's as though many are saying, "If nature, war, and survival are not going to test my courage, I'll find other ways, for I need to prove to myself and others that I really am courageous!"

4. Moral courage is not about facing physical challenges that could harm the body. It's about facing mental challenges that could harm one's reputation, emotional well-being, self-esteem, or other characteristics. These challenges, as the term implies, are deeply connected with our moral sense—our core moral values. Pass the white light of moral courage through the prism of our understanding of values, and it breaks out into a five-banded spectrum: the courage to be honest, to be fair, to be respectful, to be responsible, and to be compassionate. If *values* is in some way synonymous with *convictions*, then moral courage is (as it's often characterized) "the courage of your convictions" in these five key areas.

5. That suggests why courage is not quite like the other values. Rather than being the next pearl on a string with the other five, moral courage is something that enables the others to be effective. Maybe it's the string itself. Maybe it's the catalyst that speeds up the reaction times of the others. Maybe it's the hardware upon which the software of the other values operates. Whatever the metaphor, courage seems a necessary element in the ethics equation. What good is a conviction about honesty or fairness if there is no willingness to put them into action in the face of adversity? Of what use is a code of ethics that hangs on the wall, unimplemented? Without the courage to act, virtuous conviction is pointless and paralytic.

6. Yet courage without virtuous conviction is empty or perverse. The Mafia hit-man needs physical courage, of course, to wreak mayhem among the innocent. But he also needs a kind of "immoral" courage to implement a cluster of distinctly bad values: self-seeking, lust, revenge, wrath, and others of the "Seven Deadlies." Or think of Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber. One of his lawyers, Richard Burr, tried to paint him with the colors of moral courage. For years, he said, his client had been "deeply concerned about the overreaching of federal law enforcement authorities. When that overreach became apparent to him in his own case, it overrode other considerations." Yet McVeigh showed little respect for others, and no compassion for his victims. The only responsibility he felt, apparently, was to take the law into his own hands, subverting justice and fairness. And his dishonesty showed up in the various deceptions he pursued to meet his ends. Hard to see anything moral or ethical here, though he had an odd sort of daring and bravado.

7. But must every evidence of courage be thought of as true moral courage? Here Aristotle's conceptions help. He defined moral virtue as an "intermediate" between a defect and an excess. Courage, he said, lay balanced between the defect of cowardice and the excess of rashness. Put another way, one can think of courage as flanked by two alternatives: (1) its opposite, the cowering timidity that dares not act, and (2) its counterfeit, the bravura and foolhardiness that looks a bit like courage but isn't. Moral courage, then, has a moderating restraint built into it. If it falls backwards, it becomes its own negative. If it lapses into excess, it turns into a caricature of itself.

8. Like the five core values, however, courage is built by practice and repetition. Think of it as a habit, or a muscle, that gets strengthened by use. "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face," wrote Eleanor Roosevelt. "You are able to say to yourself, `I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Moral courage, then, has four salient characteristics:

- It is the courage to be moral—to act with fairness, respect, responsibility, honesty, and compassion even when the risks of doing so are substantial.
- It requires a conscious awareness of those risks. The sleepwalker on the ridgepole is not courageous unless, waking up, he or she perceives the danger and goes forward anyway.
- It is never formulaic or automatic, but requires constant vigilance against its opposite (moral timidity) and its counterfeit (moral foolhardiness).
- It can be promoted, encouraged, and taught through precept, example, and practice.

That final point explains the actions of the educators at St. Paul's. They already had a precept—"the hard right against the easy wrong"—to use as a reference point for testing the actions of the team. They must have known the value of examples, known that a Hollywood movie can poison budding moral sensibilities, and that in the absence of a strong ethical antidote the poison can do permanent damage. And as for practice, that was essential. They were building, over time, a tradition of moral education just as they were building a reputation for lacrosse. Yes, they sacrificed the short-term glory of a sterling athletic season and the financial support it could bring. But the long-term risk of educational hypocrisy—talking up values without walking down the road to integrity—would have been far more damaging.

In the annals of moral courage, this is a small story. It's not about a whistleblower, an investigative journalist, a researcher finding an unpopular truth, or the signers of the Declaration of Independence. But its very smallness is telling. Moral courage plays itself out daily, hourly, in the interstices of our lives. Without it, our brightest virtues rust from lack of use. With it, we build piece by piece a more ethical world.

And, at times, reap unexpected successes. By late April, the *Boston Globe* was already reporting rumors that admissions inquiries at St. Paul's were up from previous years. Which may suggest that while lacrosse is a big draw, moral courage is even bigger.

Rushworth M. Kidder
Camden, Maine
July 2001

Martha Bracy helped research these ideas.

Moral Courage Discussion Checklist

1. What was the action taken?
2. Why did the action require moral courage? What was at risk?
3. What did the actor feel?
4. What values were important to this person?
5. Was the ethical choice between a right and a wrong?
6. Was the choice a real ethical dilemma? If so, what were the paradigms involved?
7. Which choice did the actor decide was the "higher right"?
8. Is this a person you would admire? Why or why not?
9. What choice would you have made? Why?

Personal Examples of Moral Courage

1. Do you know someone personally who exemplifies moral courage? Who is this person and why do you believe he or she has moral courage?

2. What action did this person take?

3. Why did this action take moral courage? What risks were involved?

4. What did the actor feel?

5. What values were important to this person?

6. Was this a right-versus-wrong decision?

7. Or, was this an ethical dilemma? If so, which choice did the actor decide was the "higher right"?

8. What may have weakened this person's moral courage and discouraged him or her from taking action?

9. What may have strengthened this person's moral courage and allowed him or her to face danger or threat of harm with greater confidence?

10. Looking back, do you think this person would do the same thing again? Why or why not?

The Giraffe Profile Exercise

Background

The Giraffe Project is a national nonprofit whose mission is to get more people to stick their necks out for the common good. Knowing that early learning can lead to life-long "giraffeness," the Project is in schools with a K–12 curriculum that teaches courage, compassion, and personal involvement in the community at large. The basis for the program is the Project's story bank of more than 900 real-life heroes whose lives show students what they, too, can do. By the end of the curriculum, the students are in action, doing a service project they design to address a public problem that concerns them. To learn more about Giraffe Project programs, write them at P.O. Box 759, Langley, WA 98260; call 360-221-7989; or email them at *office@giraffe.org*. Also, see their Web site at *http://www.giraffe.org*.

Purpose

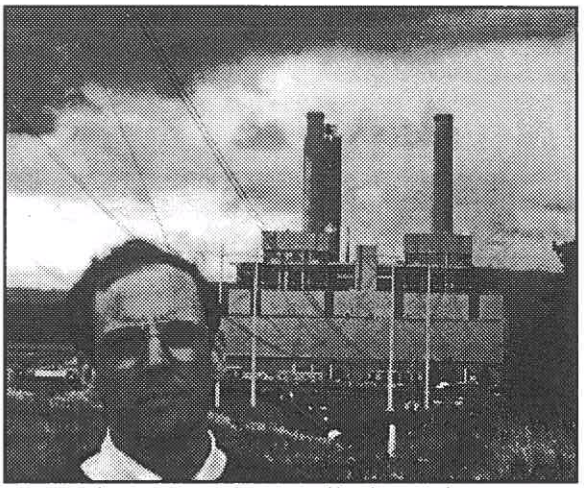
- To connect students to real examples of ordinary citizens who have sacrificed their own personal interests for some larger good
- To help students understand more deeply the concept of "moral courage"

Preparation & Materials

Prepare copies of the Giraffe Profiles for students.

Process

- Divide students into pairs.
- Distribute copies of the Giraffe Profiles—one story per pair. Ask the students to carefully read their assigned story.
- Ask each pair to discuss the following questions:
  - —What ethical values did the actor choose to uphold despite personal risk? Describe the nature of the personal risk.
  - —What opposition did the actor face?
  - —Did the person's actions benefit others? How?
  - —Is this the kind of person you would admire? Why or why not?
- Return to the large-group setting. Ask each pair to give a brief rendition of the story and to summarize their discussion.



Greg Bowers

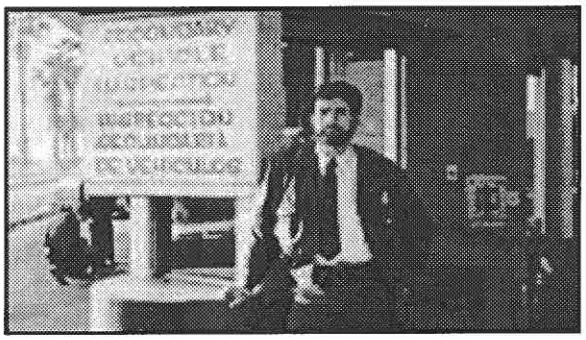
A Giraffe has been sighted in Seattle, Washington.

Greg Bowers wants the residents of Washington State to breathe easier. For years he's fought to eliminate the lethal air pollution produced by a coal-burning power plant 65 miles south of Seattle. The aging facility was built before 1977, exempting it from modern clean air standards. An official with a pollution control agency once called it, "the state's single-biggest source of air pollution." According to Bowers, both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and even the company running the plant admit, "there's likely no safe level" for the particulate matter discharged by the twin smoke stacks.

Bowers, an independent consulting engineer with twenty years of experience in electrical power planning, began his crusade back in 1995 when he calculated that 400 people a year—mostly people with sensitive cardiac or pulmonary systems—were being killed annually by the long-term impact of the plant. He worked relentlessly, confronting the utilities that owned the plant, testifying at corporate board meetings, and meeting with county officials. He used his own money to sue both the company running the plant and the regulatory body that issued a permit allowing the release of 55,000 tons of sulfur dioxide annually. Bowers' litigation drove a five-fold reduction to 10,000 tons per year by 2003. This victory alone will save countless lives, but Bowers fights on to reduce the pollution even more.

Bowers has paid a heavy price for his cause. He's neglected his own business, focusing his energy full-time on contacting elected officials, environmental groups, and public utilities. He had sold his house to buy another, but instead spent the money on living expenses and attorneys. He's gone through most of his retirement savings. He can't apply for a job with many of the organizations that would need his skills, since he's probably sued them. But Bowers carries on, insisting that industries that intentionally cause death must be forced to consider the true costs of their behavior. "Does an industry have the right to knowingly cause needless mortalities?" he asks. "I'm not asking the plant to shut down. I'm asking for their economic analysis to include the health costs to people. They'd find cleanup to be justified."

When asked why he's persisted, Bowers says that the EPA estimates that 30,000 people a year are killed by power plant pollution, but that he believes the number is much higher. "To me, it's like somebody with a gun shooting people. The evidence is that clear," he says. "You're either outraged or you accept atrocities. We're either going to tolerate industry being allowed to kill or we're going to fight it."



JOHN CARMAN

A Giraffe has been sighted in San Diego, California.

A 20-year veteran of law enforcement, John Carman is in what he calls "the real war on drugs: fighting corruption within the U.S. Customs Department." Carman, who began his career in the White House Secret Service, became an inspector with U.S. Customs/San Diego in 1983. He was proud to be going to the front lines, where the movement of drugs into the United States could be stopped. He was soon a top-rated inspector, nabbing drug couriers before they could deliver their deadly goods. But Carman's job evaluations suddenly took a dive when he reported to his superiors about corruption within his department. Carman broke ranks when his many reports of illegal activity within the agency were ignored. When, for example, he showed a supervisor a memo from a ranking Customs official that allowed 167 Mexican nationals to transit—without inspection—through the San Diego Customs district, the supervisor agreed that the order was illegal. But the only action Carman's supervisor took was to throw the memo in the trash. Later, when Carman supported allegations made by a former Customs inspector, he became a marked man: a whistleblower. He was threatened with dismissal on trumped-up charges that proved baseless. His car has been tampered with on more than one occasion. He's heard people trying to break into his house.

When border inspectors get sick from spending endless hours in clouds of carbon monoxide, they are moved to less toxic locations; when Carman got sick, he was told to stand his ground or go home. Just a few days before he was to return to work after sick leave, his car was broadsided near his home by a driver who was going over 50 in a 30 mph zone, headlights off, and never sounded his horn or braked before plowing into Carman's car. Despite the attempt on his life, Customs ordered him to fly across country to attend a training course, with no sidearm and no other security. When he refused, Carman was fired. His wrongful-termination suit is now in the courts.

Carman's ordeal has left him broke and sick but determined to go on. "I've got to do what I feel is right no matter what people think," he says. "It's important not for me, but for the people I'm sworn to protect." In a world where bribes and intimidation silence many challengers, John Carman is standing his ground.

Mary Clouse

A Giraffe has been sighted in Moncure, North Carolina.

Mary Clouse is the Joan of Arc of the chicken industry.

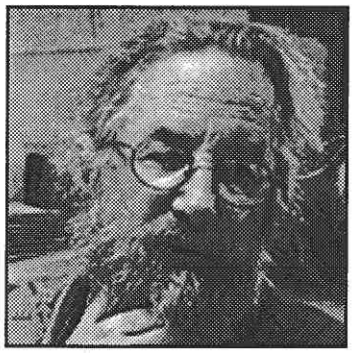
Did you know that chickens are raised by over 50,000 contract poultry farmers—not by the huge processing companies whose names appear on the packaged birds you buy?

Mary Clouse and her husband John were poultry farmers struggling to fulfill a contract that she describes as placing huge demands on growers, while absolving the processor of any responsibility. When she spoke up for a more evenly balanced agreement, the company cut off the Clouses. They lost their entire investment in equipment, birds, and buildings—they were out of business.

Instead of accepting the injustice, Mary Clouse began a drive to organize growers. Frightened and worried, they warned her not to drive back roads alone at night and to be sure there was fire insurance on the house. A major processing corporation circulated a letter to field supervisors, calling her a "shady character" they should not deal with. John Clouse tried to convince his wife they should just move on with their lives.

But Mary Clouse could not accept the reality that thousands of other contract poultry farmers were in jeopardy from unfair contracts and high-handed dealings. She worked day and night to get farmers working together to negotiate with the processing corporations. In the early days of her campaign, she sent out mailings to growers in random-sized envelopes with fake return addresses so no one would harass the receivers. Some of the first growers to join the organization lost their contracts and went broke.

Still, her endless hours of organizing have worked: Today, the National Contract Poultry Growers Association speaks for over 40,000 growers, and they are being heard. Mary Clouse says of them: "Every poultry farmer that has joined this new association is a Giraffe—they've stuck their necks out big time."



Sandy Dore

A Giraffe has been sighted in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

Sandy Dore would give you the shirt off his back—the one that says, "Standing Together Against Racism." And then he'd want you to wear it down the main street of a white-supremacist town.

Dore started a campaign to stop racism and the recruitment of youth into white-supremacist groups in his hometown. "People Against Racism, Standing Together Against Racism"(PAR STAR) touched a nerve in a town targeted by racist activities and attitudes. "Communities get apathetic if something doesn't galvanize them," says Dore. "We were showing people where we stand."

As a teacher and school counselor for over twenty years, Dore was used to taking a stand—in front of a classroom. Standing up to the Aryan Nation was another matter. But when Dore's secondary school was targeted as a recruiting ground for Aryan youth, Dore spoke out. "As teachers, we should be the guys who are leading. We should be up there saying what we believe." Not everyone agreed. School administrators and colleagues were skeptical. "When you start being vocal," says Dore, "people say 'Tone it down' or 'Don't make waves.'" Dore and his family started to get hate mail, and anonymous phone calls in the middle of the night. Instead of toning it down, Dore just got an unlisted phone number—and went right on advocating for respect and understanding.

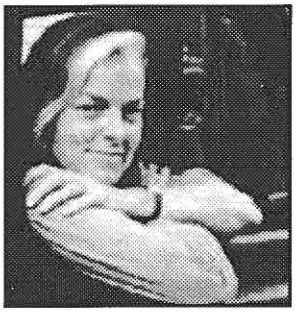
He gets students at his school to examine racism up close and personal, bringing Holocaust survivors in to talk to them. He convinced city hall to declare the town a racism-free town. The mayor has proclaimed a "Standing Together Against Racism" day and members of the attorney general's Provincial Hate Crime team now wear Dore's antiracism T-shirts.

Brian and Ruth Jackson

Mother and son Giraffes have been sighted in San Francisco, California.

Brian Jackson isn't your typical college kid. Although he works two jobs to pay for his studies, Jackson gives up his weekends and most of his other free time to coach sixty neighborhood kids in sports. Aware that the children in the Visitacion Valley housing projects have few male role models, Jackson has been trying to fill that gap since he was in high school. He takes his lead from his mother, Ruth Jackson, who takes in kids in trouble, runs a day care center, and comes up with the cash to buy vans that take Brian's charges to games and cultural activities. Brian teases his mother, telling her, "You have your children and I have mine."

Brian and Ruth Jackson live in a house that stands between two giant housing projects. The Jackson family grows periodically, as it did recently when they took in a boy and his twin sisters who were living in the street. Although she has the means to live in a safer place, Jackson refuses to flee the inner city and its problems, saying that it is up to the people to solve the problems of their own neighborhoods. Her group, Visitacion Valley Parents for Youth, is devoted to expanding the horizons and opportunities of the young people there. She has faced down drug dealers, warning them to keep away from "her" kids. Although she works for the school district, she challenged their management of the local youth center, saying it wasn't adequately serving neighborhood kids. She is working to involve local business owners as well, telling them that "the kid you help today won't be breaking your window for a few bucks tomorrow."



Claudia Johnson

A Giraffe has been sighted in Live Oak, Florida.

Writer, professor, activist Claudia Johnson is sure that reading *Lysistrata* and *The Miller's Tale* when she was a student changed her life: These two classic works made her think and made her laugh—two things she's been doing ever since.

Her book, *Stifled Laughter,* tells the sometimes frightening story of her battle to save these very works from being banned from the public high school in Lake City, Florida. When some local parents demanded the works be banned because they were "pornographic," "blasphemous," and "promoted women's lib," Johnson was so concerned she stuck her neck out to challenge the banning, first in the community and then in a long, expensive, and grueling journey through the courts.

Johnson was attacked in the newspaper, at public meetings, and in threatening phone calls. She kept to the high ground, explaining the principles of separation of church and state and freedom of expression, talking about students' right to read and learn from the classics so that they understood cultural history and could analyze challenging ideas.

The uproar was agonizing for Johnson and her family. While the case was in the federal courts, they moved to Live Oak, Florida. But instead of finding respite there, Johnson was appalled to find parents trying to ban *Of Mice and Men* from their high school. She and her husband also found their almost-finished house burned to ashes in a suspicious fire.

Johnson and her family rebuilt the house and, despite renewed attacks on her personal integrity, she used everything she'd learned in Lake City to stop bannings in Live Oak.

She has continued to work tirelessly against censorship—speaking, writing, educating, inspiring, organizing, and helping others create grassroots anticensorship coalitions in their own communities. "Communities across America are being ripped apart by this issue," she reports. Johnson knows where she stands. "People who ban books believe children are fundamentally weak," she says. Claudia Johnson believes that kids are smarter and stronger than that, and that a full and broad education makes them even stronger.

Kanésha Sonée Johnson

A Giraffe has been sighted in Hawthorne, California.

When Kanésha Sonée Johnson started fifth grade in Hawthorne, California, she saw that the African American kids in her class often taunted the school's Asian kids. And the tougher kids went a lot further, bullying and tormenting the kids from Asian families. Kanésha, an African American, thought that was wrong, so this one small girl broke ranks.

She began making friends with kids who couldn't speak English, helping them with their homework, teaching them the ropes, and telling other kids to lay off them.

"I just decided to, because I know how it feels when people laugh at you," Kanésha explains. "That old poem says, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names can never hurt me,' but some words do hurt." When Kanésha herself was tormented by the bullies for standing against them, she cried—at home, where they couldn't see her—but she held her ground.

And one small girl succeeded, even ending de facto segregation on the playground. After seeing blacks and Asians choose only each other for their teams, Kanésha talked them all into playing together—integrating the class teams. And in class, she got them working together, seeing each other as real kids like themselves, not African Americans and "those foreigners."

Sarah Swagart

A Giraffe has been sighted in Oak Harbor, Washington.

Sarah Swagart may be young, but she knows an injustice when she sees one. Back when she was an eighth-grader, Sarah decided it was wrong for young skateboarders to be treated like criminals. Kids who skated in Oak Harbor's parking lots and on its sidewalks were threatened with fines of as much as $500 and ninety days in jail. The kids were nobody special, she thought—just boys who needed a place to exercise their sometimes awesome and quite legal skills.

She formed "Nobody Special," an organization whose mission is to get the skateboarders their place—and to get the community to recognize them as good athletes, not hoodlums.

Architect Terry Ledesky volunteered to design a skateboard park. But there had to be some place to put it. Sarah wrote up a petition for land and got signatures from kids, teachers, police officers, and even some store owners. Leading a delegation of forty kids, she stood before the city council and pointed out that the town had baseball fields, basketball courts, a roller rink, and a swimming pool where kids could do the sports of their choice. What would be so different about accommodating the skateboarders?

The biggest problem, besides the kids' bad image, was insurance liability. What if a skater got hurt and sued the city? Sarah and the skateboarders got information on safety and liability from other towns that had skateboard parks. The city council finally agreed there could be a park next to the public swimming pool.

The kids are on a major fundraising and volunteer-recruiting drive now. They've got a commitment from the SeaBees at Whidbey Naval Air Station to do the construction work. They're going to businesses to get donated materials. And they're on the sidewalks raising "a mile of money"—26,400 dollar bills. That's a lot of car washes and penny roundups, but Sarah and the members of Nobody Special are determined to get the job done.

Supplemental Activities

Assign the following projects to any student wishing to further explore the concept of moral courage or wishing to earn extra credit:

Research Project on Moral Courage

1. Choose a famous person, deceased or living, who you believe is a moral exemplar and has exhibited moral courage to accomplish a significant goal. Consider choosing someone from your chosen profession or career field.
2. Conduct library and online research to identify specific evidence showing how moral courage played a part in this person's life and achievements.
3. Present your findings in a factual report complete with references and citations to support your hypothesis.

Short Story on Moral Courage

Write a short fictional story about an individual, perhaps yourself in the future, who stuck to his or her own values in the face of opposition and risk of great sacrifice. Draw your ideas from class readings and discussions about moral courage.