

Character Action Media

Striving for Olympic Gold in Rio de Janeiro through Perseverance, Discipline and Caring

This lesson has 2 parts and stories. Both can be presented over 3 sessions, or instructors can choose to present only one part and story. Part 1 is best presented over 2 sessions, designated by session (A), and session (B). Instructors should feel free to use whichever activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues and an overview of the story before each session.

Lesson Goals

Help students understand:

- Benefits of setting high goals for ourselves.
- Wisdom in judging what is true and right helps us to determine goals for our lives that will provide lasting value for ourselves and for our community.
- Discipline and perseverance empower us to achieve our goals.
- Caring and support from others enable us to both reach for higher goals and to build the self-confidence to make a difference in our community and country.
- The perspective that larger groups of people should not only be viewed and treated as one group, but rather as a collection of individuals, each with their own story, dignity and worth.
- Solidarity as we are called to express unity and support with those who are suffering.

Primary Virtues

- **Caring-** to help others; a caring person tries to understand another person's situation (empathy), desires to help others (compassion), and then acts in helping others (generosity). *(Please try to include empathy, compassion and or generosity when discussing caring).*
- **Discipline-** training expected to produce a specific benefit, moral or mental improvement.
- **Perseverance-** trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties.

Secondary Virtues

- **Hope-** confident expectation of the fulfillment of a goal or wish.
- **Respect for Others:** showing full appreciation of the worth and dignity of others; living by "the golden rule": do unto others as you would want done unto you.
- **Solidarity-** unity from a shared common purpose and/or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group.
- **Wisdom-** ability to apply knowledge, experience, understanding in ways that are effective and good. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting.

PART 1: Claressa Shields – fighting through poverty to achieve Olympic Gold

Leader Introduction Part 1

Over the summer the Olympic Games were held in Rio de Janeiro and we were able to watch athletes from around the world achieve spectacular goals for themselves and for their countries. Today we will learn the story of one Olympian, Claressa Shields, who didn't receive as much press attention as other Gold medalists, but has an amazing story of perseverance, discipline and caring that speaks to all of us.

Film Clips: Claressa Shields

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zT3mUDPaNo>

Please start at 5:16 –previous content is too explicit concerning her previous abuse.

Leader Summary

At the Rio Olympics Claressa achieved her dream winning another gold medal and becoming the first American boxer (male or female) to win gold in back-to-back Olympic Games. Claressa is also inspiring those in her hometown of Flint with her story of overcoming a difficult childhood, and achieving her dream through perseverance, the discipline of her training, and the care and support of others. Claressa has also begun to experience the success she hoped for in sponsorships, earning contracts with major companies such as Powerade, and having a movie made about her life. Claressa is now already working toward her next goals of winning gold at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, and helping poor children to set their own goals and to succeed.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses if needed)*

Before beginning our discussion let's read over the virtues and their definitions *(included within the online lesson as a separate document)*.

1. How difficult or easy do you think it is for someone who comes from an extremely poor and violent area like Flint, Michigan to define a goal like winning an Olympic medal?
Does Claressa's story change our view of whether and how we are defining goals for ourselves? (A)
2. Claressa explained that before she began boxing, her frustrations from a difficult life made her feel angry and this led to negative actions like fighting classmates who bullied her. If Claressa chose to stay on this path of anger and violence against others how do you her life would have turned out?

Claressa instead chose to channel her anger constructively toward a goal for the benefit of herself and her community. What virtue did it take for Claressa to define a more positive goal for herself, and how do you think she came to her decision? (wisdom in likely seeing how others in her community who chose violence were often themselves the victims of violence, and she wanted a life beyond the poverty she grew up within)

What virtues did and are still required for Claressa to achieve her goals of Olympic gold

and inspiring others? Please give specific examples (discipline in her training, perseverance in moving forward and continuing to work toward her goals despite her poverty, violence in her neighborhood, lack of family support and lack of sponsorships after her first Olympics) (A)

3. How did Claressa view her coach, and how important was he to Claressa? (*She viewed him as a “second father”.*)

What virtues did her coach live out and exactly how in Claressa’s life? (compassion in wanting to help her, generosity in giving her a safe place to live, enough to eat, and training her for no cost)

How can we help others striving for higher goals within our own families, among our friends, teammates and others? (B)

4. What motivated Claressa to pursue excellence and a gold medal in boxing? (*to help her and her family attain a better position in life, to give hope and inspiration to the people of her community, to make herself proud, her community and her country proud. Please write student responses on the board for the second part of this question*)

Do some of the motivations that Claressa had inspire us to strive for higher goals in our lives? (B)

5. How did Claressa handle the disappointment of not receiving endorsements after her first gold medal, and what does Claressa’s example tell us about how to handle disappointments in our lives? (*her attitude has been to not dwell on what she didn’t / doesn’t have, she adjusts to whatever her situation is and makes the best of what she does have, she embraced what was true and real in her life*) (B)

Journal Writing Options

1. How has Claressa’s story inspired you to define higher goals for yourself? What virtues will you need to live out to achieve these goals? (A)
2. Now that she has earned two Olympic gold medals in boxing, how might Claressa “give back” to her hometown of Flint? Please mention specific virtues in your response. (B)
3. What message does Claressa’s story send to young people from similar circumstances? Please mention specific virtues in your response. (B)

PART 2: Refugee Olympic athletes inspire the world and highlight the individual dignity of refugees

This lesson is a one-day session, but can be used over two sessions depending on the time your group spends on each activity and the number of activities you choose

Leader Introduction

This year's Olympics in Rio marks the first time that an Olympic team did not represent one nation, but rather represented a very large group of people in our world today – refugees. Refugees are people forced to flee their homes because of their religious beliefs, their political beliefs, and often because of the violence of war or terrorism. Sadly, there are 65 million refugees in the world today. Ten refugee athletes were chosen to represent the refugees of the world. Let's watch their amazing stories and then look for the virtues that enabled them to become Olympic athletes.

Film Clips

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/new-refugee-team-wins-hearts-not-medals-rio-olympics/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/rio-2016/2016/08/12/refugee-olympic-team-sudan-na/88614118/>

Leader Summary

Although the refugee Olympic team did not win any gold medals, they did accomplish a more important mission - to act as a symbol of hope for refugees worldwide, to bring global attention to the magnitude of the refugee crisis, to demonstrate that refugees have individual dignity and value, and importantly to show that they can individually and as a group contribute to and enrich our communities. Hopefully after seeing their stories we will each have a greater sense of solidarity with refugees around the world and those whom live within our own communities.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses if needed)*

Before beginning our discussion let's read over the virtues and their definitions. *(included within the online lesson as a separate document)*

1. Members of the Olympic Refugee team have lost their families due to war and violence. What virtues are they now experiencing as members of their team, especially the runners training in Kenya, that we would often experience within a positive family environment? *(caring, hope, solidarity, please write student responses on the board for the second part of this question)*

Do you think these virtues are necessary for us to succeed in our lives in striving for our goals?

2. In addition to the virtues they are living out as a group, what virtues are the refugee Olympians living out that have enabled them to even make it to the refugee camps and to other countries, and to now compete in the Olympics? (*perseverance in striving for better lives despite immense difficulties and physical dangers, discipline in the training, hope for a better future*)
3. When we don't experience caring, hope & solidarity within our own families, such as Claressa Shields and many refugees who have lost their families, do you think that we can be tempted to search for a sense of belonging and support from other groups that may seem attractive in the short term but in the long run will hurt us?

What virtues and attitudes will help us to say no to gangs and friends who will influence us in negative ways? (*a belief in our own dignity and value, setting positive and high goals for ourselves, wisdom in realizing and thinking through what happens over time to individuals who join negative groups like gangs and who choose bad friends*)

What positive groups exist within our community that we can join that will benefit us and our community over the long term?

4. How does the existence of the "Refugee Team" in the Olympics bring attention to personal dignity of refugees? (*In sharing their stories with the world we are able to see refugees as individuals, instead of one large group, and to better realize that they each have personal dreams and hopes.*)
5. What refugees live within our immediate community and nation? Where are they from and why did they have to flee their countries?

Do you think we as a nation demonstrate enough respect for refugees in acknowledging dignity and value? If not, how do you think we can improve?

6. Do you think that we sometimes view others too much as members of larger group as opposed to individuals, each with their own story and personal dignity? Examples are ethnic and racial groups such as African Americans, whites, Hispanic Americans, economic differences such as the rich and poor, members of different religions, and even professional groups such as the police.

How can we do better in thinking about others and our approach to them as individuals, instead of only as members of larger groups? (*stop ourselves within our minds and hearts from making assumptions based on a person's exterior characteristics or connection to a larger group, and instead make a conscious effort to approach each person as an individual. This involves spending time with others and truly listening to others*)

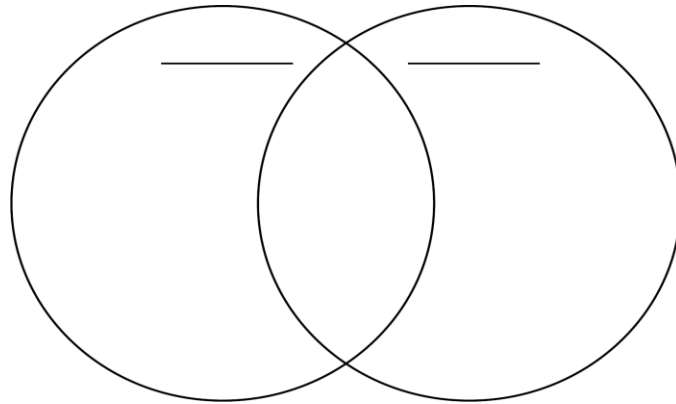
Journal Writing Options

1. The members of the Olympic Refugee team originally came from several different countries and they did not know each other before training for Rio. Why do you think they likely bonded closely with each other? What virtues led them to have trust in each other?

2. Which individual from the team has a story that impacted you? Why were you touched by his/her life?
3. Write about someone you know, or yourself, who has chosen not to become involved in a negative social situation or group such as a gang? How did he/she overcome outside influences to choose a more positive life? What virtues does he/she exhibit?

Extended Activities Options (The first activity combines parts 1 & 2)

1. Leader draws a large Venn Diagram on poster paper, board, etc. (see below) Label circles: Claressa Shields and Refugee Team. Ask students to state the virtues and phrases that describe each and their stories, and record them within their circles. The overlapped section should include the virtues and phrases the two have in common.



2. Refugee Team Presentations: organize students into teams of 2-4 students. Task each team with giving the group a presentation on a refugee community. Each presentation should include the country they have come from, the factors that forced them from their homes, where they are now living and the challenges they face. Each team should also present an idea on what more we can do to assist those who are forced to flee their homes.

The UN Refugee Agency website <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us> provides a comprehensive overview of the refugee situation globally as well as personal stories and a means for students and groups to donate and help refugee children receive an education.

Character Action Media

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