

From Poverty to Empowerment: Teaching Tech on Recycled Computers in Kenya

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before the discussion questions.

Lesson Goals

Help students...

- learn more about the conditions of those who live in extreme poverty and to practice empathy for those who are living in poverty.
- realize that with determination, perseverance and the support of family and others we can overcome obstacles and difficult circumstances.
- be grateful for the people who support us in our lives.
- see how we can be wise in our use of technology to educate, advocate, and provide opportunities for others.
- see how we each have a duty as members of our communities to improve them.
- be inspired to reduce, reuse, and recycle things in our own lives for the benefit of others and the environment.

Highlighted Virtues / Character Traits

Determination: firmness of purpose; complete commitment to achieving a goal

Duty: something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and / or member of various communities.

Perseverance: trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties

Wisdom: ability to apply knowledge, experience, and understanding in ways that are effective and good. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting.

Caring: to help others; to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and then with generosity in acting to help (please include these three virtues in lessons when discussing caring)

Empathy: trying to understand another person's situation; entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

Compassion: feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help

Generosity: giving freely of our own possessions, time and/or talent.

Leader Introduction:

Nelly Cheboi (Che-Voy) grew up in extreme poverty in Kenya, a country in Africa. Despite the challenges she had growing up, Nelly was able to attend college in America where she embraced her education and developed a passion for computers. Cheboi decided that instead of using the skills she learned only for herself, she would also use them to help the people from her hometown in Kenya. Let's watch a video to learn about her work and why she was named the CNN 2022 Hero of the Year.

Lesson Videos:

Nomination Video:

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2022/07/14/technology-education-recycling-kenya-poverty-cnnheroes.cnn>

Acceptance Speech Video (start at 48 seconds):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnME9LEok0c>

Leader Summary:

Cheboi shows us the value of wisdom and hard work in discerning how to use technology to empower individuals and make a real difference in their lives. Cheboi also reminds us to never forget where we come from and the people who have supported us as we strive towards our goals. Let's discuss how her story speaks to our lives.

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

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions, found in the online lesson as a separate document.

1. From the video we saw of Cheboi, what is it like to grow up in extreme poverty in Africa? (She had to scavenge for food in trash bins, hunger that kept her up at night, holes in her tin roof house, potholes in the floor, not able to attend school as often as she wanted to, not even knowing what a computer was)
2. What was Cheboi's attitude towards school in Africa, even though her school was very poor and lacked in resources? (She appreciated the opportunity to learn and applied herself in school, saying I was the "hardest working person I knew.")

How did Cheboi provide for herself while she was in college?

(She worked as a janitor cleaning toilets and through the scholarship she earned.)

This is not a job that most students would want to do, yet Cheboi was happy to have the opportunity. Why do you think her outlook may be different than someone else's? (Coming from extreme poverty, she appreciated the opportunity to learn and provide for herself more than being concerned about how hard and difficult the work was to achieve her goals.)

What primary virtue did Cheboi live out as she worked toward her goal of becoming educated?

(**Determination** in being completely committed to getting an education and being able to provide for herself, **Perseverance** in working hard and continuously to overcome the obstacles in her life to achieve her goals)

3. Cheboi said that when she looked at the lights from the holes in her home's roof, she would imagine what it would look like to not live in poverty. Do you think imagining a goal, even one that we are far away from now, can help us to achieve it and if yes how? (Imagining ourselves achieving a goal can help motivate us to do what we need to do now, and especially when we encounter difficulties and obstacles, to achieve our goal.)
4. When Cheboi found a passion for computers and technology, she felt a sense of **duty** to help the children in her community in Kenya to also learn about computers. What exactly does Cheboi's organization do, how is it helping people in her community and in what ways is Cheboi living with **wisdom** in her project? (Cheboi figured out that by refurbishing used computers and customizing them for the

children of her community she could at a very low cost effectively teach them about computers and how to use them to make money for their families. Using our own knowledge and experience to discern how to effectively achieve something good is a key pillar of wisdom.)

5. Cheboi said, "With these kids I can see a path, I can see a way that they can make a living online, and that is why we are doing this work. . . My life is bigger than myself. If I have the power to change anything, I have to do it." Do you agree with this statement that we have a **duty** to change what we can for the better?
6. Cheboi demonstrates **wisdom** in using technology in ways that will help lift other people up out of their challenges. In our country, technology and social media are readily available, but it is often used to tear other people down. Do you think in our country and community we are using technology wisely and for the good? Let's discuss examples of how we are using technology for the good, and also negatively.
7. If we look closely at the virtue of **caring**, it is made up of living with empathy, compassion and generosity. How do each of these virtues play out in Cheboi's story?
8. How did Cheboi's family and others in America support Cheboi in striving for her goals? In answering this question, let's think about the complete path of her life from her childhood to now.
(her mother cared for her and supported her, others in Africa must have helped her apply for the scholarship to attend college in America, the college in America and their many donors gave her a scholarship to attend college and learn, many companies and colleges donate used computers to the charity, her close friend highlighted in the acceptance speech travels with her to Kenya to help setup the computers)
9. Cheboi's efforts to reuse the computers benefit both America's environment and the children she is supplying computers to in Kenya. Are there things in our lives and community that we can reduce, reuse, and recycle for a greater purpose? Let's think about every aspect of our lives in discussing this question. [Expands into an extended activity below](#)

Journal Writing Options

1. Despite all of the challenges she has had to overcome, Cheboi is happy and approached striving towards her goals with a sense of determination, perseverance and hard work. Write about a time you achieved a goal in part because of your determination and hard work.
2. Write a thank you note to someone who has supported you in your life as you have in the past, or are now working towards a goal.

Extended Activity:

Organize students into groups of 3-4, have them brainstorm a problem or goal in their community that they could help address by reducing, reusing, or recycling things. Remind the students that in many communities they can sell certain recyclable items to make money for a cause. Teams can also consider how to refurbish used items for the benefit of others. Each team should create a presentation that outlines the goals their plan will work to achieve and the exact steps to build the project. Each team will then present the plan to their class.

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