

MORAL COURAGE COLLEGE: **HOME OF THE GUTSY GLOBAL CITIZEN**

**Proposal by Irshad Manji
Founder, Moral Courage Project**



**MORAL COURAGE PROJECT
ROBERT F. WAGNER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
295 LAFAYETTE STREET, 2ND FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10012
T 646-329-5110
E Irshad.manji@moralcourage.org**



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*"Schools the world over bear a new and fundamental responsibility:
to prepare students for difference and complexity."
– Educating for Global Competence, Asia Society, 2014*

Educators of 21st century independent schools have more obligations than ever. Cultivating global citizenship is one of them. The Moral Courage Project provides a clean and clear solution.

Our focus is fostering *gutsy* global citizenship. The package that we're proposing answers your needs in a comprehensive way.

GUTSY GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Today's high school students are the first generation in history that's expected to address global problems. The Greatest Generation fought a world war but didn't grow up anticipating that they'd need to. In this decade, 14- to 18-year-olds are well aware of the necessity to be global citizens. What they don't know is how much courage it will take to make a difference.

Moral courage is doing the right thing in the face of your fears. Independent schools are well placed to teach gutsy global citizenship. But this doesn't mean feel-good trips to foreign villages. For students, gutsy global citizenship means:

- Knowing oneself at least as much as knowing "the other." Self-knowledge creates a culture that honors lived experience. It's the source of feeling one's own agency, then acting on it.
- Being fearless about questioning arguments and positions while being open to changing one's mind. Welcome to the central challenge of living ethically in a pluralistic era.

Many students these days are afraid to say or ask anything that risks being offensive. Their fear stifles creativity and innovation, the very attributes that enable new solutions to now-urgent global problems.

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OUR SOLUTION

The Moral Courage Project is utterly unique in its approach. We honor the self as much as the greater good. In so doing, we reverse self-censorship and foster gutsy global citizenship. In the emergent field of global civics, ours is the only package of its kind: pedagogical, multi-media and turnkey.

As founder of the MCP, I'm partnering with top-notch independent schools. My team and I will help you create Moral Courage College (MCC), a space of self-expression, peer collaboration and concrete action hosted within your school.

Throughout the academic year, MCC will use original materials and methods to incubate the gutsy global citizenship of students, faculty and parents. MCC will help you identify opportunities for less resourced schools to get involved. In this way, we can leverage your institution's leadership.

At the end of the academic year will be a capstone activity that connects the growing MCC network. The most motivated students at each MCC will attend Moral Courage Academy at New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service (NYU Wagner). There, students and faculty from across the MCC network will collaborate on a challenge of public service and global reach. The Moral Courage team will consult with you, among our other partnering schools, about what that challenge should be.

During the year, the Moral Courage team will measure progress through questions asked first and foremost of the students. Our findings will be brought to Moral Courage Academy for discussion with your school's representatives. Additional metrics of meaning and impact may be innovated by Masters of Public Administration students at NYU Wagner.

STORY BEHIND THE CONCEPT

As the author of books about religious and social reform, I've engaged with young people worldwide. For them, the most popular conversations are about the issues that influence whether they'll become constructive global citizens: What is identity? Who defines mine? Is my identity assigned to me or am I a free human being who's capable of making choices -- and is therefore responsible for my choices?

Although the focus of my research has been Muslim youth, it has inspired discussion among non-Muslims as well. In turn, this has led me to discover the central role of moral courage in standing up to intimidation, speaking freely, igniting difficult yet honest dialogues and, above all, transcending tribalism – not only among Muslims, but also among non-Muslims.

Along the way, I've learned that too many youth are afraid simply to ask questions about each other's cultures. They worry that they'll be deemed bigots if they "say the wrong thing." But without feeling the freedom to express where you're coming from, you can't hope to communicate across diverse audiences, let alone think critically about premises that societies – yours and others' – take for granted.



Diversity of thought is therefore integral to innovation. No wonder Apple CEO Tim Cook says, "We really value diversity with a capital D. We want diversity of thought." (*Bloomberg Businessweek*, December 16, 2012.)

This brings me to an equally salient finding: gutsy global citizenship demands much more than slogans about respect. It requires the practice of pluralism, which is distinctly different from mere respect. How so? Put bluntly, on campuses at every grade level, "respect me" has come to mean, "don't challenge me." That's the weakness of much cross-cultural study today.

By contrast, Moral Courage College will educate students in true pluralism – assessing what is conscientious and unconscientious, right and wrong, but with the humility to recognize that our assessments are provisional. They're contingent on having more experiences and hearing better arguments. Hence the educational value of free speech.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

In late 2007, New York University recruited me to teach moral courage. I innovated the course, "[Moral Courage and Your Purpose](#)," which combines scholarly study and personal reflection. To experiment with pedagogy, content and audience, I've also built the [Moral Courage Channel](#) on YouTube. It features polished videos about gutsy global citizens and distributes them in multiple languages, reaching young people well beyond my classroom.

Over five years, I've integrated the videos into my syllabus, added elements of peer mentorship and experiential learning, and thereby devised a methodology that will be taught at Moral Courage College. You can read student testimonials about the Moral Courage Method at the end of this document.

But would high schoolers benefit as much as university students? To help answer that question, I've partnered with The Bishop Strachan School (BSS), one of Canada's most respected independent girls' schools. In a two-year pilot program to develop gutsy global citizenship, we translated my research and scholarship into action.

First we launched the Moral Courage Task Force, a student group mandated to break silences within the school. In the spirit of self-efficacy, students themselves decided whether to join the task force.

They were free to choose the issues that mattered most to them – based on what they believe deserved and demanded *honest* conversation in the school community. The students chose perfectionism, self-care, mental illness, cheating, the rich/poor divide, feminism and corporate social responsibility.

Through mentoring year-round, the task force members experimented with starting conversations among their peers. BSS students gave voice to roiling internal dialogues: What do I believe and why? Have I ever struggled to apply my beliefs? Am I open to being challenged?



Am I permitted to question others people's beliefs? How can I do so without judging their humanity? What do I do if someone feels that being disagreed with is the same as being demeaned? When should I step up in the name of honesty and when should I step back for the sake of humility?

After Year One, task force members offered reflections at a BSS-wide town hall. By the end of Year Two, they became ambassadors for these conversations to other students in the Greater Toronto Area. This, in turn, showed BSS the potential for demonstrating its community leadership through moral courage.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS OF THE MCC PACKAGE

- Professional development. Select faculty from your school will come to NYU and be trained to teach "Moral Courage and Your Purpose." This interdisciplinary course gives students the incentive to contemplate their futures and ask questions to deepen their contemplation. It can be designed to meet eligibility for credit towards the secondary school diploma and/or AP.
- Faculty mentorship. My consortium of educators – known as Moral Courage Mentors – will work with your teachers and students on programming that reflects the culture and needs of your school while delivering on our vision of gutsy global citizenship. Your relationship with your mentor will ensure consistency and quality in our year-round activities with you.
- Premium content. Your students live in a multi-media universe. As an author, filmmaker, TV producer, journalist and scholar, the products I create combine digital media with deep ideas. You'll receive premium content that can be used in various ways.
- "Irshad in the house." Every year, I'll make two on-site appearances to engage your entire community. These visits will excite and inspire, serving as occasions to publicize the school's leadership. Working with your school's communications team, we can combine keynote talks, classroom visits parent mixers and media interviews. One appearance will take place at the start of the year and the second as we wrap up the year.
- NYU capstone summit. You'll choose the most motivated students from your MCC, along with teachers, to attend a summit hosted by Moral Courage Academy at NYU. Your students will collaborate with their peers from other MCCs on a public service project with global resonance and reach. Teachers from the MCC network will share practices, experiences and observations with one other. They'll help MCCs to determine the metrics of impact.

Implicit in the MCC vision is attention to career development. Student character and career development should go hand in hand, as explained by Google's head of hiring: "Most [students] don't put enough thought into why they're going to university and what they want to get out of it. The first and most important thing is to be explicit and willful in what you want to get out of this investment of time, effort and money." (Lazlo Bock, quoted by Tom Friedman in *The New York Times*, April 19, 2014.)



Therefore, a valuable feature of MCC is that the parents of participants will know their children are entering higher education with self-understanding and a toolkit for translating it into public service. As such, post-secondary tuition will be invested with vision and purpose.

All of which leads us to MCC's take-home value over a lifetime. Harvard's Howard Gardner, writing for the Asia Society, urges educators "to help young people develop their own ethical compasses, which they can and should use in conjunction with their mentors and peers." As part of becoming gutsy global citizens, MCC students will be taught to serve as peer mentors. The Moral Courage Method emphasizes Socratic questioning of oneself and others. Thus a subtle bridge between individual and globe: MCC will equip students with tools that serve their integrity, as well as prepare them to respect (that is, challenge with humility) their peers.

IN CONCLUSION

As you've seen, Moral Courage College answers your needs on various fronts: global citizenship, of course, but also elements of student life, curriculum development, faculty learning, institutional reputation and brand relevance.

In appreciating this big picture, schools that partner with the Moral Courage Project will be visionary. Such schools embrace opportunities to motivate students and their families, to graduate young leaders who are at once self-aware and world-aware and to attract (as well as retain) innovative teachers who find meaning in their mission. We can't wait to get gutsy with you.

irshad.manji@moralcourage.org



CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

Independent Schools:

"The Moral Courage Project is our partner of choice in fostering the global citizenship of our students. We choose Moral Courage because Irshad and her team deliver on our world-class expectations. They listen to our needs, work with our culture, consult with us from conception to execution and challenge us to improve on our 150-year-old tradition of leadership.

We look for an approach that emphasizes action and not just discussion. The idea of a Moral Courage Task Force at our school came from Irshad's collaboration with us. Students join the task force not only because it speaks to their desire to make a difference, but also because they love to engage with Irshad. She motivates and mentors with personal passion.

In short, Irshad's method is both brave and respectful, like the very global citizens whom we nurture together. We continue to choose Moral Courage -- proudly."

- Deryn Lavell, Head of School, The Bishop Strachan School

"Irshad's message clearly captivated our students. Their standing ovation said it all."

- Linda Field, teacher and diversity committee member, The Nightingale-Bamford School

"She is riveting. Her personality and humor immediately engages us as students and leaves us with the desire to learn more."

- Mark Prinz, student, Trinity High School

"We can think of no more important role model for our students than a woman who has dedicated herself to the promotion of freedom, dignity and human rights for every person."

- Kathleen Ponze, Director of Education, Young Women's Leadership Network

New York University Students:

"Moral Courage and Your Purpose has changed me in a way that law school never could."

- Roxanne Moore (rjm509@nyu.edu)

"I had no clue how transformative MC & YP would be to my life... With our society being so driven by end results, we have overlooked teaching students to align themselves with human values."

- Renee Brown (rmb497@nyu.edu)

"Probably the most challenging course I've ever taken."

- Mohammed Sakhwat Hosain (msh434@nyu.edu)

"A month after finishing Moral Courage and Your Purpose, I'm applying its lessons to my MBA program. This class was a turning point in my education."

- Jenny Roberts (jenny.roberts@stern.nyu.edu)

"Prof. Manji hacks to the core of your being in the most constructive way."

- Adam Cross (adam.cross@nyu.edu)

"It's a course that I can only dream of every school offering, one that balances profound reflection with practical skills for creating a meaningful life."

- Kathleen Walsh (kw1455@nyu.edu)