

Roots and Callings for Freedom Education Project by Life Leaders in the City of Birmingham and State of Alabama to contribute to the USA

"What is Freedom?" That was the title of my first paper and speech on "Freedom," an assignment in Junior High Social Studies class--to write a paper on "Citizenship" and present to the class. Soon after, my teacher entered me in a Citizenship Speech Competition sponsored by Civitan International at Gresham Jr. High School, so she gave me a chance to dig deeper, internalize more, and improve.

I am grateful to my teacher and school for the challenge to learn more of principles upon which our country was founded as well as to "stand and deliver" a message to others. That is my first recollection of thinking of what "freedom" means and the price some pay for all of us to enjoy it. At age 14, my knowledge of freedom was mainly from books, asking a few adults, and watching TV news. At that time, my future co-author, Col. Dunn (USA Ret) was 24 years old and a soldier fighting in Vietnam on orders to defend our country and our freedoms. While I was in Jr. High reading of the price of freedom, he lived it. Years later, while writing Professionalism Under Stress about "true professionalism" in combat, college, and corporate life with Stretch, I learned more about preparation and service in the military.

Decades later, I feel called again to stand for, speak out, teach, and protect freedom. If we are to strengthen commitment to freedom for our country, where else would we start than with ourselves as well as our teachers, students, and parents?

Veterans Day

We have opportunity to inspire this and future generations--starting in Birmingham, expanding to Jefferson County, the state of Alabama, and more across the USA. We believe, every student in the Birmingham Area should know the factual and inspiring history that America's national holiday, Veterans Day, started in Birmingham through the

"patriotism and perseverance" (two of Alabama's character traits taught in school) of a former Birmingham School student, Raymond Weeks.

Civil and Human Rights

Our military in WWII (and since) kept our Freedom of Life and Liberty. That freedom made it possible to focus on higher level values, including Freedom of Civil and Human Rights. Birmingham is known as the "cradle of the Civil Rights Movement." For some, so is Alabama. Birmingham partnered with Montgomery and Selma make Alabama a leading state contributing to the national movement that created more rights for more Americans.

Freedom to Flourish

With Freedoms "Liberty" and "Rights," we have "Freedom to Flourish." We can PLAN and LEAD in LIFE to identify, plan for, and take action to flourish at our callings. We can teach our students why freedoms advanced in Birmingham, Alabama, and the USA and how they can honor those sacrifices to flourish at their callings.

John Hornsby proposed a concept after Life Leaders (Patriotism in Action and Veterans Day Founding Education) gained the U.S. Senate Resolution in 2012 restoring Raymond Weeks, Birmingham, and Alabama as the leaders starting the movement for our nation's Veterans Day in 1947 (led in Congress by Senator Jeff Sessions and supported by Senator Richard Shelby). John made the connection between the meaning of Veterans Day and the Civil Rights Movement--"Freedom." John enlisted Terry Slaughter to design a web site, www.FreedomLives.org, and magazine ads advancing Birmingham for leading the Veterans Day and Civil Rights movements.

John joined me visiting Mayor William Bell of Birmingham. Mayor Bell added "Where Freedom Lives" to the city's web site. He spoke about our program at Rotary Club of Birmingham and at our Patriotism in Action Tribute to the Founder of Veterans Day. And, he supported our pilot program teaching in Birmingham City Schools.

Plans for School and Life

We can guide students to write Plans for School and Life that help them decide who they want to be and what they want to do. We can help inspire them with examples of people who proved we are "free to flourish" through their actions and results. With this added motivation "from within" we can expect improved attitude, attendance, and achievement, plus graduation rates.

We believe, to help the next generation do their best requires helping them learn basics of best-self leadership (how to flourish) and to write their own plans for school and life to inspire and guide thoughts and actions. This will help parents, teachers, counselors, and coaches know better what students seek and need. Students can use parts of these plans for writing assignments, meetings with counselors about career and/or college, conversations with parents, and applications to schools and jobs.

For those of us who live in Alabama, we, especially, should know why and how our nation's Veterans Day started here. We should know how that freedom connects to Freedom of Civil and Human Rights. And, we should know the Alabama character traits related to these freedoms mandated to be taught in our schools, among them: patriotism, courage, perseverance...

Questions for Your Consideration of Values, Beliefs, Goals, and Actions of Support?

- Do you also believe we have Freedom to Flourish because our military and foot soldiers led the way for Americans to have Freedom of Liberty and Rights?
- Do you also believe true patriotism includes doing our best at home, school, and work?
- Do you wish you wrote a plan for life in school to identify mission, goals, and options?
- Do you wish in high school or college you learned more of best-self leadership-- to do your best in personal, professional, and other areas of life?

- Do you want the children you know to learn the inspiring history of why they are free to flourish?
- Do you want students to write a plan for school and life that can inspire and guide them--for some, to give reasons to stay in school?
- Do you want Life Leaders to do this work for city, then country?

Life Leaders is initiating this movement: to teach Freedom to Flourish and to help teachers, counselors, and parents to help students write and use Plans for School and Life so more honor their freedoms. We can students:

1. Learn why they are Free to Flourish
2. Learn of, hear from, and be inspired by examples of others who flourished
3. Teach them at least a few best practices for "how" to flourish
4. Help them take action outlining at least a basic plan for school and life to use
5. Motivate them to write plans for college, career, and character traits by assigning the work with grades and using the plans in class, counseling, coaching, and more to boost student development success.

The teachers we know are motivated to help their students. Partners of advocacy, volunteerism, and funding are needed so we can provide planning, programming, training, and resource publishing until our schools provide this preparation automatically. Rewarding people for the right priorities is part of leadership will get more attention in the next generation.

I told an enthusiastic Dr. Bice (Superintendent of Alabama Schools) we wanted to deliver this program and help our State implement as an example for the nation and a service to students. He was receptive and had great ideas when the time was right. This is content I hoped for when a student. I sure would like for us (Life Leaders and partners) to provide this gift to our students and state. If you agree, we welcome hearing from you. We encourage you to share this concept with educational and community leaders--or take us with you to share ideas with them. [statement improved 2015, September 20] --David Dyson--