

Liviu Librescu

**by Cassy Tischer, Skutt Catholic High School
9-10th Grade Category, First Place**

Moral courage is a trait that is talked of frequently, but one becomes confused as to what a person with moral courage looks like, sounds like, or does. Moral courage requires and calls for all people to stand on the side of truth, even if they stand alone, and to speak up when they believe something is wrong. Each person who possesses moral courage has a story, but Liviu Librescu's story touched a certain place in my heart and stood out amidst all the rest. Librescu was among the few lucky people to actually survive the Holocaust, but he gave up his life willingly to protect his students and keep them alive. He stood up for what he knew was right and possessed courage in a situation where there was nothing but chaos.

In the midst of World War II, Liviu Librescu was forced to witness his family being torn apart (Moynihan). After being placed in several ghettos and moving around to a variety of places, his family was later reunited (Holland). Upon marrying and starting a family, Liviu immigrated to Israel in 1978 with his wife, who was also a Holocaust survivor (Moynihan). The family then moved to the U.S. where Librescu was a researcher and lecturer in engineering, along with having a degree in aeronautics (Moynihan). Librescu became a professor at the college of Virginia Tech. After teaching there for years, the terrible day of April 16th, 2007 came along (Moynihan). A troubled young student attacked the school and started shooting innocent people. In the shooters' two attacks, he made his way to Librescu's room. Librescu directed his students to jump out of the window to safety while he barricaded the door with his body to prevent the shooter from getting inside (Holland). He saved many lives that day as he selflessly gave up his own.

Liviu Librescu sacrificed his life in order to protect the students he taught. He did the only thing he knew how to do; it was a natural instinct. A young student by the name of Ms. Merrey said, "We had heard the gunfire coming from the classroom behind us, and we just reacted to it and headed for the windows, Professor Librescu never made an attempt to leave. He's a part of my life now and forever. I'm changed. I'm not the person I was before Monday." (Moynihan) He not only affected the people whom he saved, but he also left a memorable mark upon anyone who knew him. Librescu was said to have been a brave man, and one who would never back down from helping those in need (Moynihan). He survived the Holocaust, and after, one would think that he would do anything to keep his life, but instead he saw the need to be the hero to those kids. He was not only doing what he thought was right, he was doing what he believed was his job. His heroic act brought hope to many people around the world.

Liviu Lebrescu's sacrifices not only affected the Virginia Tech population, but it also affected those outside of Virginia. His courage has influenced people today to take a stand and to speak up for what is right. His act was one out of a million, but has continued to help the people of today, and I am sure his story will go on for quite sometime. Many people could have died that day, but instead lives were saved because of his selflessness.

I have heard of many amazing people and people that are full of courage, but this story touched me deeply. It goes to show that no matter how persecuted someone has been, and how much they have been through, they can still find the power within themselves to save others. His story has inspired me to "reap what I sow", so to speak, and to treat others the way I want to be treated. When I first started to attend a Catholic school I was told that we would have to do a certain amount of service hours to graduate. My initial reaction was to groan and get them done as soon as possible. After doing my required hours, I came to like doing service. I was urged to step out of my comfort zone and work with those who were less fortunate. I have taken these opportunities to enjoy helping people. Seeing the faces of the people I have worked with and seeing their response to my work and knowing that they are thankful, is one of the best feelings I have ever felt. Knowing that one man alone can save a whole classroom of students' gives me hope that the things I am doing will in the end help those in need. I hope that one day I can also look back and say that I made a difference because I wanted to, not just because I was required to do so.

Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.

-Maya Angelou

Bibliography

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