



Civic Virtue and Citizenship

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[00:00:00] Jeffrey Rosen: Hello friends. I'm Jeffrey Rosen, president and CEO of the National Constitution Center, and welcome to We the People, a weekly show of constitutional debate. The National Constitution Center is a non-partisan non-profit chartered by Congress to increase awareness and understanding of the Constitution among the American people. This week, we're sharing an episode from our companion podcast, Live at the National Constitution Center. In this episode, we discuss the role of civic virtue and citizenship with Richard Haass, Christopher Beem, and Lorraine Pangle. It was a great conversation and it was streamed live on March 30th, 2023. Enjoy the show.

[00:00:45] Jeffrey Rosen: Hello friends. Welcome to the National Constitution Center and to today's convening of America's Town Hall. I'm Jeffrey Rosen, the president and CEO of this wonderful institution. Let's begin, as always, by inspiring ourselves for the conversation ahead and let's recite together the National Constitution Center's mission statement. Here we go. The National Constitution Center is the only institution in America chartered by Congress to increase awareness and understanding of the US Constitution among the American people on a non-partisan basis. It's now a great honor to introduce our panel, a dream team of writers, about the importance of civic education. Christopher Beem is managing director of the McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State, where he's also an associate research professor and an affiliate faculty with the Rock Ethics Institute. He's the author of several books, the most recent of which is *The Seven Democratic Virtues: What You Can Do to Overcome Tribalism and Save Our Democracy*.

[00:01:43] Jeffrey Rosen: Richard Haass is president of the Council on Foreign Relations. He has served in the Pentagon in the state department in the White House under four presidents. He is one of America's leading diplomats and thinkers about foreign policy and he's the author, most recently, of *The Bill of*

Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens. And Lorraine Pangle is Professor of Government and co-director of the Thomas Jefferson Study for the Center of Core Texts and Ideas at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of many books including, most recently, Reason and Character: The Moral Foundations of Aristotelian Political Philosophy. Thank you, and welcome, Christopher Beem, Richard Haass, and Lorraine Pangle. Richard Haass, I'll start with you. You had a remarkable career as a thinker about foreign policy and you've chosen to write this extremely well-received book about civic education and civic virtue, The Bill of Obligations. Tell us why you chose to write about civic education and how you chose the 10 habits of good citizens.

[00:02:46] Richard Haass: First of all, Jeffrey, thank you for this, for all that you and your colleagues do at the Center, and it's a real pleasure. It's an honor to be with two real authorities in the field. So I look forward to the conversation. Look, as you say, I'm a foreign policy guy, I confess, that's what I've been doing now for 40 plus years. But increasingly I noticed as I went around the world that our friends were unnerved by what they were seeing here. Their willingness to put their security eggs in our basket was increasingly fraught with questions on their part. I thought our foes were getting somewhat...saw opportunity. Indeed I can't prove it, but I think that one of the reasons Mr. Putin moved against Ukraine was his view that the United States was unlikely to have the unity and will to resist. I also hear worried increasingly that, I saw all these external problems from China to Russia, climate change, but I what I really question was our ability to meet them. That's been central to the last 75 years. It's been a pretty good run of history, but we did have a considerable degree of consensus and even when we didn't, there was a willingness to work together and compromise. That began to disappear.

[00:03:59] Richard Haass: So the first answer to your question was motivated by traditional foreign policy concerns. Almost...our domestic troubles were beginning to undermine our ability to conduct a foreign policy. And then increasingly I simply worried about it for the future of American democracy. It wasn't simply that we wouldn't be able to show an example that anyone would want to emulate, but we simply wouldn't be able to meet our domestic challenges. Worse yet, beyond gridlock, January 6th showed me the possibility of violence. I spent three years as the US Envoy to Northern Ireland. We're just marking this year the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement that ended three decades of violence known as The Troubles. I come away thinking an American version of The Troubles, as dystopian as it sounds Jeffrey, is not inconceivable. So I worry about gridlock. I now worry about politically inspired violence. And my own view is that a preoccupation with rights alone, which is so central to the American democratic

way of thinking, it's obviously our unfinished work, as Lincoln put it. But even if we finished it, it wouldn't be enough. Rights inevitably collide. So we need to think of citizenship as a coin with rights on one side but obligations on the other.

[00:05:13] Richard Haass: Obligations everybody in this call has to one another, obligations we all have to this country of ours. So I thought really hard about... You know, I read widely, educated myself, and just thought and walked a lot in Central Park about what I thought a good citizen needed to think about. And it was everything from being informed and being involved with the most basics: Jefferson's idea of an informed citizen, Reagan's idea of informed patriotism, to being involved, Kennedy's ideas of putting country before person or a party. I thought a lot about behaviors, which I expect my colleagues have both written about, that almost fall into the rubric of character and virtue. Things like civility, rejection of violence, openness to compromise, adherence to norms and so forth. And then I thought hard about a couple of policy issues, things like making civics central to our education, requiring it in high schools and colleges, incentivizing public service and how do we then enlist Americans of all sorts to advocate for them. For example, the people who give sermons in religious institutions. They should be talking, of all people, about the common good. That is based in scripture. We are our brothers' and our sisters' keeper.

[00:06:36] Richard Haass: So I looked basically around American society for inspiration and 10 was a pretty good number. I figured it worked for Moses, and it worked for our founders.

[00:06:47] Jeffrey Rosen: So significant and striking that you were moved to write the book out of foreign policy concerns. Of course the founders shared those, and that you got your list of 10 virtues both from recent presidents like Kennedy and Reagan, and also from American history. Very, very powerful indeed. Christopher Beem, you've written your important new book about the nature of virtue that you call the Seven Democratic Virtues, and they include humility, honesty, consistency, courage, temperance, charity, faith, and hope. How did you choose those seven virtues and why do you think it's important for citizens to practice them?

[00:07:31] Christopher Beem: Well, the impetus for my book is not very far away from Richard's. I would go around and we'd do outside events or people would find out [laughs] what I do, did for a living and they would... I would hear this question a lot. "What can I do? What can I do about where things are and

where they're going?" And I just was never really very satisfied with my answer and I thought it was a completely fair question. And so I went and thought about it. And most people have heard of the seven deadly sins. Not too many people have heard of the seven angelic virtues which may say [laughs] something. But that's where I got the number seven and, so I know enough about Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas to be dangerous, but I really felt like what I needed to do was take those classic accounts of virtue and apply them to the specific setting of a democracy and then the specific setting of where we find ourselves now.

[00:08:41] Christopher Beem: And, I mean Richard mentioned January 6. You know, that's what I start with. I don't know that you can understate what a dramatic and terrifying event that was. And despite the efforts of some to do so, I mean, I think that's crazy. This is something that's never happened in our history. And the other thing he mentioned was Northern Ireland, and I talk about that too. That when you have a society that is riven down the middle and every dimension of our identity lines up on one side or the other, that is a recipe for civil war. Now I'm not saying that that's where we're going, that we're going to inevitably get there, but I would say that the condition which we find ourselves is dangerous and it requires us as people who care about democracy, want a sustained democracy, to think about what is my role here? What can I do?

[00:09:56] Christopher Beem: And so the virtues just kind of came pretty directly from that thought, and like I say, once I started down the road, Aristotle and Thomas had pretty much told me what I needed to talk about. So that's where we are.

[00:10:20] Jeffrey Rosen: So interesting that you look to Aristotle and Thomas as well as, like Richard, January 6th, and that the virtues you chose have similarities. Professor Pangle, you've written this important book about Aristotle and character, and about Ben Franklin and education. And Franklin of course looked to the classic sources including Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus, as well as enlightenment sources, and came up with a list of 12 virtues that he later increased to 13 by adding humility, that people should practice to achieve moral perfection. And they included both the classical Aristotelian virtues like courage, justice, prudence, and temperance, but also other virtues that he added like industry and order. Tell us, and it's a big and interesting question, how Franklin shows his 12 or 13 virtues which seem mostly classically inflicted, and what's the influence of Aristotelian thinking was on the founders.

[00:11:19] Lorraine Pangle: Okay. Those are big questions. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:11:22] Jeffrey Rosen: Yes [laughs].

[00:11:23] Lorraine Pangle: And it's a real honor to be here with these distinguished panelists. My interest in education and character goes back a long way. I wrote a senior essay in college on Thomas Jefferson and his views on education for a republic, and that's rooted in this fascination with what does it take to sustain freedom. The American founders believed that they could do a lot to give us freedom simply just setting up a good form of government, and with checks and balances, and channeling of ambitions and so on. And there was, among some very hopeful enlightenment thinkers, the idea that that's all we need and people then can do what they want. The founders were wise enough, and Franklin and Jefferson, and Washington, all among them, to realize that that's not enough. And so, in my first book, *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, I talk about all of them and the ways that they tried to shape American character and to develop an American version of classical virtues that we need.

[00:12:34] Lorraine Pangle: So Franklin is an interesting example of that because, in a certain way, he's talking about the same virtues that Plato, and Aristotle, and Xenophon did. He read Xenophon and said he learned a huge amount from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, his recollections of Socrates, and put those lessons to work. And so the qualities of character that the ancients taught we need, not just to do our duties, not just because society needs them from us, but in order to have thriving lives, are things that Franklin adapted to a democratic polity. A polity that was based on the working man. So we've got industry and honesty coming to the fore as important things that Aristotle didn't focus on as much, but the goal is quite similar: to live rich lives in rich connection with other people. Understanding the virtues as not either just doing your duty and meeting the law, or as often as the case today, we think of virtues as policy positions, taking a stand on social justice and so on, but things that are rooted in character and long habit and practice. And Franklin shows us in his autobiography how he tried to put that to practice in his own life.

[00:14:02] Lorraine Pangle: So more recently I have come back to thinking about Plato and Aristotle and their understanding of the relationship between virtue and our intellectual capacities in what way is virtue rooted in or even guaranteed by

wisdom, how does it need wisdom, what else does it need besides understanding. And so my book on Aristotle, Reason and Character, is very much about Aristotle's response to the Socratic paradoxical claim that virtue is wisdom. And his more, I think, realistic and down-to-earth way of showing us those things are intimately connected and more is needed also.

[00:14:51] Jeffrey Rosen: So interesting to learn from you that for Aristotle, virtue is character, is moderation, is practice, and is leading a rich life, as you said, and rich in connection with other people, not just doing your duty, it's rooted in character. I have to share that I have a book that's coming out early next year about the ancient virtues that inspired the founders' quest for the good life, and I learned from reading the sources that for the founders, virtue was the pursuit of happiness. Happiness was being good, not feeling good. And they used the phrase, "The pursuit of happiness," taking it from the ancient and enlightenment sources to mean the practice of virtue and character development. Just such an unfamiliar but revelatory lens on American history. Richard Haass, we have already some questions in the Q and A box from guests who are asking, "What can I do to practice civic virtue to contribute to my community?"

[00:15:50] Jeffrey Rosen: Many people who've read your book have been similarly inspired to contribute. There's a degree to which the virtues that you identify involve self-mastery, self-reliance, basically getting your own house in order. And of course another aspect involves contributing to other people. So when you look down your virtues, and I know you get this question a lot, and citizens ask you, "How can I practice the 10 virtues that you outlined?" what would you tell them?

[00:16:17] Richard Haass: Well, the most important thing, Jeffrey, is that people take ownership and take agency. If we are passive and wait for somehow American democracy to be saved by others, it won't be. And I think my message of the last few years or my takeaway is, being sanguine is a luxury we don't have. I think everyone who cares about this experiment of ours ought to feel a sense of urgency and that's to say the least worth preserving, worth improving, but it's just not going to happen. And it's not going to also happen simply because some president or whatever, some candidate's going to emerge who's going to do all the work and lifting for us. This is really going to be a bottom-up decentralized approach if American's democracy is going to endure for decades or centuries longer. And to me that's also good news. Because it shows the potential in all of us. Again, getting informed is truly basic so we're aware of what's going on and informed means both

the foundations of our democracy but also staying abreast of issues, being involved. We just had a midterm election, more than half the people who were eligible to vote did not vote. That's wrong.

[00:17:37] Richard Haass: I mean, we've got to take ownership of democracy. If you don't vote you're essentially letting others who, odds are don't share your views and your interest and your preferences, decide for you. So it seems to me every citizen has the obligation to get informed and then to get involved. So that's one thing. I think religious leaders. Even though support or involvement of religion has fallen off, we're still very much a religious people. We go to church, we go to synagogue, we go to mosques. Okay, well the people who give the sermons, as I always say, their job is not just to comfort the afflicted, it's to afflict the comfortable. So they should be out there, they should be saying, "There's no reason when you differ for it to take the form of violence." They should be saying, "We are responsible for one another." That's scripturally based. They should say, "Being open to compromise is the right thing to do." To be civil, that's... So religious leaders it seems to me have a real obligation to talk about... This isn't required and, Jeffrey, just to be clear. I'm not asking them to take policy positions, but I don't think support for non-violence or civility is a policy position. That's something much more fundamental.

[00:18:54] Richard Haass: Business leaders. Business leaders, corporate leaders, have the obligation to make it easy for their workers to vote. Give people a few hours off on election day, if election day is, as it is in this country, falls on a workday. But also I would say business leaders have the obligation not to contribute funds to candidates who are democracy wreckers, election deniers, people who advocate for violence. Don't write them a check using corporate money. Don't advertise on platforms that give such individuals voice. Again, corporations now under the law are seen as citizens. Okay, accept the obligations of citizenship. I think educators have got to take on the obligation to teach civics. We're not born knowing the American narrative. Your Center is dedicated to making sure that the American narrative is preserved and reaches Americans. Okay. Educators have got to do their part. The only thing Americans have to do, the last I checked, is through the age of 16 attend school. Well, that's one opportunity to reach people. Then there's high school, then there's college. Why is it that not only a handful of our 4,000 colleges and universities you are required to take a course in civics? I think it should be a condition of anyone getting a diploma.

[00:20:13] Richard Haass: And that's the least we can do, if we're going to teach people to read and write, why won't we prepare them to be citizens? That seems to me worth doing. Parents. And one of Reagan's quotes I like is that the most important room in the house, the most important educational venue in America, is the dining room table. Okay, let's use it as an opportunity if we can to teach. So my point is simply, as you go around society, I think virtually all of us has a potential role and a potential opportunity here to do some lifting that will make a difference.

[00:20:49] Jeffrey Rosen: So galvanizing and helpful for you to call out particular obligations that particular individuals and groups can have, including faith leaders, business leaders, and parents. Thanks for calling out the work of civic education centers like the NCC and others, and thank you for inspiring our listeners about concrete things that they can do in their communities. Christopher Beem, maybe we should talk about the democratic vice which you begin your book with, which is tribalism. And you talk about Madison's precautions and the tremendous concern that the founders had with faction, and polarization, and tribalism. What was that concern and why did they think that virtuous self-government, both a personal self-government and political self-government, were necessary to avoid the dangers of tribalism and faction?

[00:21:42] Christopher Beem: Well, first thing to say is that tribalism is a vice but it's inescapable. I mean, it is baked into human nature. There are good reasons for that, right? It was evolutionarily selected and we can't turn it off. All we can do is mitigate the effects. And there is nothing about tribalism per se that is a problem and in a democracy you have to assume that it's going to happen, right? Madison said that liberty is to... I'm sorry, I never get this right. Liberty is [laughs] to fire what it... Anyways, that faction is an inevitable and the more free your society is, the more likely you're going to have it, right? So, there's... That's not the problem. The problem is when our factions all line up. So when your identity in terms of what entertainment you choose, what sports you watch, what restaurants you go to, not to mention, where you live, what your neighborhood is, what your church is, when all those things reinforce being an us or a them, then it becomes very difficult to sustain a democracy.

[00:23:06] Christopher Beem: And yes, you're right. Madison went to great lengths to find these auxiliary precautions that help to mitigate the effects of this faction, right? To make it less possible for one faction to kind of take over and to overwhelm the procedures of democracy and freedom. But Madison was absolutely rigid as were, I think, every single one of the founders that I'm aware of

was as well. That these procedures...He says their auxiliary, right? That's not the only game in town, and you can even say it's not sufficient to get you to the end that you desire. And every one of them look to some concept of virtue as a way of insuring this experiment. And Madison, outside of the Federalist Papers, said that if we don't have a virtuous society, we're in big trouble. And I think it is worth just admitting that this is hard, right? That democracy asks us to do things that are difficult, if not even kind of unnatural, right? To listen to someone say something that you not only disagree with but something that goes to the core of your identity and just accept their right to say it, and to listen to them with something approaching an open mind, that is very [laughs] difficult to do. And if we...and what Richard said I completely agree with. The idea that people can learn how to do this and be able to do this, with some kind of facility, without us teaching it, without us going out of our way to help them learn this skill is just a miracle. It's a miracle, it's never going to happen. And I think that our generation has really failed the students who've come up in like the last 20 years. We just decided that teaching people about the realities of political behavior was too problematic, was too troublesome.

[00:26:04] Christopher Beem: And so we just decided that civics, when we have it, is about, "Well, here's the three branches of government and this is a pocket veto," and that was it, right? And so, I completely agree that job one for people who understand virtue should be a necessary component of a successful thriving democracy is to find a format for the teaching of virtue that can transcend this polarization and that can move us towards the kind of training that all Americans need.

[00:26:54] Jeffrey Rosen: Professor Pangle, let's talk about the teaching of virtue through the lens of Aristotle. Aristotle famously defined happiness as virtue itself, an activity of soul in conformity with excellence, he said in the Nicomachean Ethics. And that's important because for the founders, that Aristotelian definition was the meaning of the pursuit of happiness. Tell us about what eudaimonia meant to Aristotle. It's hard to translate but it might be rendered as human flourishing a purpose-driven life or being your best self. And how Aristotle thought it should be taught, in particular, through character education that would teach us to use our powers of reason to moderate our unreasonable passions or emotions so we could achieve the golden mean that would allow us to be our best self and serve others. Do I have that basically right? And help us understand the Aristotelian conception of character education and happiness.

[00:27:48] Lorraine Pangle: Yes. Good. So eudaimonia I think is most simply translated as happiness. And Aristotle makes the provocative, but I think powerful, claim that happiness consists in activity. Happiness is a matter of living well and doing the most with what we're given in life. And that what's most satisfying in the big picture, in the long run, is meaningful activity that is done well for a bigger purpose. It could be making the country better, it could be raising a family well, it could be advancing knowledge, but that it's something that expands us beyond our narrow selves. And he argues that this takes extensive education. He makes the claim that virtue is the perfection of nature. It's rooted in nature, it's rooted in the capacities that nature gives us and the things that are naturally fulfilling, and yet it doesn't come naturally. It's one of the things that we have to work the hardest at to perfect.

[00:28:59] Lorraine Pangle: So it has an intimate relationship with wisdom and understanding. But before you get to that, what's even more important is an education of the heart that has to begin in childhood. It involves good models, having your parents exemplify the virtues that are important, and habituating you first to practice them, and then eventually to see how satisfying it is to have these qualities and these habits that become part of your character. In childhood, the classical authors all argue it's extremely important to have the right stories, the right songs, the right music, the right appeals to patriotism, the right heroes to admire. And this is something that we need to do more of in our schools. Our civic education in our schools, it's too technical and there's much too much focusing on everything that's wrong with America rather than on the ideal that we've been working towards and heroes who've worked towards it well that should inspire our love. If we don't love our country, then we're never going to be good citizens. And so this has got to be at the heart of good education.

[00:30:20] Lorraine Pangle: And then building on those things comes a careful understanding of the mind through reading good books, through reading classics, through reading things carefully and debating them and seeing the great debates that have gone on between great minds, and becoming thoughtful about what the virtues are. For citizenship, the central virtue is justice: understanding how important justice is, understanding why it matters to each of us, understanding the different forms of fairness that are involved in justice, but above all, understanding that justice is the common good. Aristotle keeps coming back to that idea. So, in our democracy, we're all prone to campaigning for one or another view of what justice is against one another and viewing each other as enemies. Aristotle would say, "That's exactly the wrong approach." We need to keep bringing each other and ourselves, and our children, and our students, back to the question, "What's good

for the whole country?" And as citizens then we need to learn to choose the people we vote for, especially on the basis, not of their policy positions, but their character and their commitment to the common good of the whole country. We've gotten away from that.

[00:31:44] Jeffrey Rosen: We've gotten away from that indeed. Richard Haass, as Lorraine Pangle says, character education defined, as she just defined it so eloquently, as education of the heart, as reading great debates, reading great minds, listening to songs and music and so forth, used to be a central part of public school curriculum, from the founding through at least the 1950s. But it seems to have fallen out of the curriculum in the second half of the 20th century. Do you agree with Lorraine Pangle or not that that kind of character education is a good way to teach virtue and at a time when that's unfashionable, how do you think that schools, and parents, and Americans can cultivate these habits of virtue that she has identified?

[00:32:36] Richard Haass: Jeffrey, I think, more broadly, the civics education, including character education and other things, have fallen off a lot of school curricula. When I wrote my book, I looked for the explanation as to why and I couldn't quite find it. It's not as though there was an anti-civics movement for the most part. It was more like musical chairs, and when the music stopped there just weren't enough chairs and stamina. Other things started taking priority and there weren't real advocates for this. And there were other priorities. Teachers in many cases weren't prepared to do it. These are not easy subjects, listen to this conversation. This is tough stuff. It's important stuff but it's difficult. And well, I also think what civics there was often taught in a fairly mechanical way. How a bill becomes a law, which is about as uninspiring and probably tertiary, I wouldn't even call it secondary, when it comes to understanding democracy.

[00:33:36] Richard Haass: So we did the movement. We talked also too much about civics and not enough about citizenship. And I actually think the framing is important here. We ought to be talking about citizenship, what goes into making a good citizen, of which this thing of character is so important. Listening to Lorraine and Christopher reminds me that the founders put so much faith in checks and balances and the rest, but you realize how character is central and they obviously thought about it. And then what we're seeing is that you can't count on character. It's often missing. And when it is then what do we do? Because, we like to say we're a nation of laws not men or women, but guess what? We actually are a nation of men and women. Laws will only protect us so much. You can do an awful lot of

damage and not break the law. And I think that's where all this, I think, really becomes central to the conversation.

[00:34:37] Richard Haass: So sure, when I'm thinking about what I do next, one of the things will be to put together a civics education for high school and college students. And it's got to have some history to it, it's got to have the workings of government. I think, information literacy has to be part of it. How, in this environment, in which we're flooded with information, how do we know a fact when we see one and how do we know something that purports to be a fact but isn't? How do we discern that? So I think it turns out to be a pretty big challenge and, sure, character...what goes into it, how do you develop it? I think that's part of it as well. I like simulations and the rest in school which allow people to play certain roles and then you blow the whistle and you switch at half-time and you put people in somebody else's shoes, and you have to take the opposite side of an issue even when you're uncomfortable with. And what is it you learn from that and then you talk about it afterwards.

[00:35:34] Richard Haass: So I think debates and simulations and the rest become really important for coming up with the ground rules of political activity. One thing I didn't mention and I should've, I think another thing is service. What we've got to have is a situation or community service where public service again becomes incentivized, expected may be too much of a word but certainly it can't be mandated. But certainly should be incentivized. We've got to have situations where people meet people from other walks of life where we get rid of the atomization or reduce the atomization of our society. And again, people learn a bit about interacting with others who come from different geographies and have different political views, and have different religions, and colors, and genders, and watch different networks. I think that's also got to be part of our education. So, I think we need to think of this in a very, very broad way and again, much richer than the, "How a bill becomes a law, connect the dots," approach.

[00:36:38] Richard Haass: So, listening to these two experts, I think it's challenging how we make civics teachable. I guess, in this day and age where education has been politicized, even weaponized, it ain't going to be easy. But just because it's tough doesn't mean we can fail to do it. Not doing something I've learned in public life is every bit as consequential as doing it. So, I don't think we have the luxury of putting this in the "Too Hard" box. I think there's got to be an effort to build political support to make it happen. Doesn't have to be done nationally, it can be done locally at the state level. You know, Brandeis's notion

that you're familiar with, as states as the laboratories of democracy. So let's come up with different approaches, let's try it, and we'll find that some things work and then we can take it regionally and nationally even.

[00:37:30] Jeffrey Rosen: So important to identify the criteria that you have. Teaching history, civics, information literacy, introducing people to competing points of view through debates as well as service. Christopher Beem, we're really brainstorming now together about models and different ways of teaching civics. Richard has introduced some ideas. I've just showed the interactive constitution. As you think about teaching your seven virtues and teaching civics, what kind of models would you suggest?

[00:38:00] Christopher Beem: Well, I'm working on it. I mean, I actually had a friend of mine say, "Where's your pedagogy?" And I'm like, "Oh, yeah." [laughs] So I do think that is the important question and I actually really resonate with what Lorraine was saying. I think we have to appreciate the fact that when we're talking about ethics it is not enough to just talk about them as an academic subject. We have to connect to people emotionally. And so I do think that is about telling stories. And telling stories... I mean, it's not like there's examples of politicians and others behaving virtuously that are just all over the place. In fact, they're really kind of pretty hard to find. As I've said on many occasions, profiles encourages a really thin book. So it's not easy to find those examples but they're out there.

[00:39:04] Christopher Beem: And actually Richard's book has a number of examples. The friendship between Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I think, is really important as a model. These are people who disagreed about the color of the sky but they respected each other. They liked each other and they recognize that disagreement doesn't make you a bad person. It doesn't make, I mean, it doesn't make you an idiot, and it doesn't make you un-American. It doesn't make you insufficiently religious or anything else. It just means you would disagree. And so being able to separate out the person from the point of view is something that we are really bad at, and so we need to come up with a better way of modeling that, right? And so the other example that I point to is John McCain. When he was running for president there's a woman who called Obama a Muslim and he said, "No ma'am. No ma'am. That's not correct."

[00:40:20] Christopher Beem: His argument was, "Look, there's nothing wrong with Obama, it's just that I disagree with him and I think I would be a better president than he would. But he's not lying, he's not evil, he's not malicious. He

just has a different point of view." And so my argument is that if you can present people with these actions, these virtues in action, to present these virtues in action, then that's the way students can learn what they mean. It's not enough just to talk about them. I mean, we can talk about them pretty easily. But, seeing people who are willing to, to what Richard calls it, putting the country first. That's what John McCain did, right? It would've been much easier and much, and probably more in his interest to just say...just to not engage the point at all and just to move on and answer the question. But he did not do that. And because he didn't, that's something that all of us are to recognize as heroic and to laud it, to try to encourage it.

[00:41:39] Christopher Beem: And that is what I would want to ground and a virtue pedagogy. These are the kind of virtues that all of us need to... Even if we can't live up to them, we need to acknowledge them and understand that is what we're all shooting for.

[00:42:03] Jeffrey Rosen: Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Antonin Scalia, John McCain and Joe Biden, you're so right that modeling those kind of bipartisan friendships can be such a powerful way of teaching the habits of disagreeing without being disagreeable, and civic virtue. Lorraine Pangle, you've written definitively about the founders' views on education and including separately, Jefferson, Franklin and many others. Washington thought the solution to faction was a national university that would gather students from across the country to set aside their partisan and regional differences so that they could converge around common principles, including the science of government, and learn habits of civil dialogue. Tell us about the... The founders had different views but tell us about that idea of a national university as a model for teaching civics and what we can learn from the other founders about how to teach civics.

[00:42:55] Lorraine Pangle: So I wish Washington had succeeded in establishing a national university as an honorable place where people who aspire to lead the nation could come together and learn from each other. I like Richard Haass's idea of national service as another way that citizens from different political and social backgrounds could come together in working together and build some unity. Washington was also interesting in the way he understood the American army to be a unifying force of that kind. And he gave a lot of thought to the importance of democratic honor in, as well as courage in, connection with the army. And I think that that's something that we especially need now, is to honor courage and to demand honor and honorableness of our police forces in particular. And he's

very...he was leading a democratic army. You can't force people to do things in a democracy the way you can in other political regimes. He talks about the importance of paying people enough, recognizing them enough that you build up in them the spirit of honors. That's a kind of bridge between a simply intrinsic sense of virtue and a concern for your standing in the community and your recognition.

[00:44:33] Lorraine Pangle: He knows you can't count simply on most people's virtue, but if we honor the right things, if we create the right ethos in an army, in a police force, in a country, then honor can be a really important factor. Honor is tricky. It's one of the hardest things, I think, for a democracy to sustain. And if I could go back to your back and forth with Richard Haass about what went wrong for us, why is it that we got away from this teaching of civic virtue as we once did. I think our own spirit of democracy, our love of equality, our discomfort with saying anybody is any better than anybody else, our extreme sensitivity to criticism, and piled on top of that, the relativism that took over in the American academy starting in the 1960s, I think have made it very hard for us to talk about virtue and vice as anything real and common.

[00:45:41] Lorraine Pangle: There's been... In the academy I've noticed it around me, there's been a real movement away from relativism. People need meaning and causes to believe in. And it was always shallow, but I think now there's been a resurgence of concern with social causes, and that's something that we need to educate because it's quite narrow and it's not grounded in a deep understanding either of our country or of human nature. And this is to go back again to Washington. I think there was an awareness... We need to cultivate democratic versions of the important virtues, the simply humanly important virtues. And because of our extreme love of equality, we need to lean in first, I think, to the virtues of civility, and kindness, and gentleness, and open-mindedness, and humility, and compassion. Some of the other virtues will be easier to teach if we begin with those.

[00:46:54] Jeffrey Rosen: Powerfully said and a strong diagnosis of some of the causes of our current vexations and possible solutions. Well, it's time for closing thoughts from each of you in this superbly rich discussion please, end as you think best, but Richard Haass, I know that our audience would love to hear from you ways that they might follow the bill of obligations, in particular promoting the common good and putting country first, respecting government service at a time when it is so much polarization, individualism, and partisanship. How concretely

do you suggest restoring this focus on common ideals and the common good, and any other closing thoughts you'd like to offer?

[00:47:42] Richard Haass: Well, for public service I'm struck, Jeffrey, by how much support there is for it. And to be clear, I'm not talking about mandating it. I'm not in favor of the draft for the military, the old volunteer force is working fine. But we can incentivize it. We can incentivize public service. Look at what's going on in California. You have people being paid decent salaries for going out and working in designated areas. I can imagine employers just like now, they give certain advantages in hiring to veterans. I can imagine employers saying, "Hey, if you do two years, or whatever, of public services we will take that into account when we make hiring decisions." I can imagine universities when it comes to admissions saying the same thing. This is really valuable experience and outside the class and we really welcome it. So I think there's things we can and should do with public service. Another things business, by the way, can do on public service along the list, is just like universities, will give people often a two-year leave of absence to go work in government. Why doesn't business do the same thing?

[00:48:59] Richard Haass: Businesses will often make provisions for people in the military reserves, which is great. I'd love to see the leading corporations in Silicon Valley or the Fortune 100 or anywhere else say, "Okay. Go work in state government or city government, or a federal government for two years. Your job will be waiting for you when you come back. You'll actually be better at your job because you've had this experience, but in the meantime, you can give something directly to government." So I think that would be a way that things can do it. Look, everyone, anyone is involved in schools as parents. We've had all these bad stories about school board meetings, but school board meetings can also be wonderful venues. And alumni and parents can talk about, going to universities and say, "Why aren't we teaching at Stanford coming next winter?" It's going to require that every freshman, all 1,700 freshmen, take a module, a winter module, in civics. Okay. So other schools can and should do the same thing.

[00:50:06] Richard Haass: I actually say public education is in some ways the most important ladder in our society for mobility but we've got a problem right now. We talk about equal opportunity in this country, the fact is we don't have equal opportunity. Public schools are not equal and we've got to improve public educations. That has got to become a priority for our citizens. And again, every person listening to this, watching this, Jeffrey, has the ability to spend a little bit more time getting informed, and to go out and vote in elections. That's to get

involved in the political process, to work at a polling place, to encourage others to vote, drive people to the polls, make it easier... A democracy can't be a spectator sport. We have all got to get involved and I would simply say we do it, not simply because it's the right thing, but maybe that's not enough of a motive for everybody. Then do it because it's good for you, if others do it. That we all have, if you will, a collective self-interest in this democracy working and others looking out for the common good because you're part of that common good.

[00:51:14] Richard Haass: So I think there's a virtue dimension here but there's also a self-interest virtue here, which will hopefully click, and none of us will do well as individuals if this society, if this democracy, deteriorates. So we all have, if you will, a collective stake in collective action.

[00:51:31] Jeffrey Rosen: A collective stake in the effective action. Very, very well put and thank you for those powerful suggestions. Christopher Beem, some concrete suggestions for our audience about how to practice civic virtue.

[00:51:44] Christopher Beem: Let me just pick one thing. Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues, I don't use that, I chose consistency instead. But I use it in a very similar way, which is to say that we are all biased. None of us see the world as it is. None of us. And so we need a discipline that pushes us to challenge our biases. And that's what I mean by consistency. So if we think that some action is good when it's performed by someone who's on our part of our tribe, part of our political party, then we should say the same thing when it's performed by somebody in the other party. And if we think that there's something bad that the other party is doing, then it is incumbent upon us to say that that same thing is bad when we see it in our own party. And it's only through citizens developing a more refined and, again, disciplined sense of what the virtues mean, and what kind of demands they make on us. And willing to affirm the fact that those virtues are not merely within our own tribe, that they extend beyond that.

[00:53:13] Christopher Beem: And if and when people are able to do that... I'm not saying it's easy, it's really challenging and it's a habit that requires practice, it is absolutely essential if the virtues are going to have cache, are going to have impact, in how we run our country. And so that's what I would challenge people to do. If you say that here, would you say the same thing here? And if not, why not? And if we can all do that, then I think our country is better off.

[00:53:48] Jeffrey Rosen: Practice consistency. A very, very powerful suggestion about practicing virtue. Lorraine Pangle, last word in this wonderful discussion is to you. One concrete suggestion for how to practice civic virtue.

[00:54:00] Lorraine Pangle: So my suggestion would be that we lean into another aspect of citizenship, which is not political per se, but that's essentially for a thriving democracy and that is our local and voluntary associations such as our schools and our churches, and the various charities that Franklin was so good at starting and exemplifying. That Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* says are the school for democracy in America. Jefferson talks about the importance of getting parents involved in local schools and running the schools as much as possible as a way not only of training the children well, and encouraging the parents to put energy into this and to take it seriously, but for the parents to actually learn the habits of self-government, the habits of compromise, and give and take, and civility, and so on. And I think this could be extended by expanding charter schools where parents are often quite involved, where different small communities come together around different visions of what it means to live a rich life.

[00:55:19] Lorraine Pangle: And I think we should be encouraging everybody to understand that, as citizens, it's important to have our individual freedom and exercise our rights and to vote. But one of the most important ways to be citizens is to be part of a smaller community of meaning where we not only exercise virtues but find meaning in life in different ways in this pluralistic community. And that one of the best things that our free society does is give us a framework for supporting and protecting different kinds of communities of meaning and thoughtfulness as fellow citizens.

[00:56:01] Jeffrey Rosen: Thank you so much, Richard Haass, Christopher Beem, and Lorraine Pangle, for a superbly rich and really engaging discussion about civic virtue and civic education. Thanks to the three of you, it was an honor to be part of this conversation, and I look forward to talking again soon. This episode was produced by John Guerra, Tanaya Tauber, Lana Ulrich and Bill Pollock. It was engineered by the National Constitution Center's A/V team. Research was provided by Sam Desai, Lana Ulrich, and the Constitutional Content team. Please recommend the show to friends, colleagues or anyone anywhere who's eager for a weekly dose of civil, thoughtful and non-partisan constitutional debate, and if you enjoyed the episode, please subscribe to our companion podcast which is Live at the National Constitution Center, on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast app.

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