

New U.S. History Digital Textbook from Bill of Rights Institute Encourages Viewpoint Diversity and Civil Discourse

With Schools in Need, and Nation Grappling with Past, Open Education Resource Helps Teachers and Students

WASHINGTON, D.C. – August 18, 2020 – Today the [Bill of Rights Institute \(BRI\)](#) announces a new, free U.S. History digital resource, [Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: A History of the American Experiment](#). In a nation grappling with its past, and student learning disrupted by COVID-19, this resource improves access to high-quality curriculum and encourages civil discourse and critical thinking among young people.

The digital resource combines modular content created by BRI, a leading civics and history education nonprofit, with OpenStax Tutor, a research-based learning platform created by [OpenStax](#) at Rice University, which has saved students nearly a billion dollars in textbook expenses. *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: A History of the American Experiment* is the first free, comprehensive open educational resource aligned to the College Board’s Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) standards.

“As our nation reckons with our past and considers our future, *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* challenges students to ask critical questions about what it means to be an American,” said BRI President David Bobb, Ph.D. “Difficult questions of history—and civics—are at its core. Its goal is for students, guided by their teachers, to understand their role in helping the nation live up to our founding ideals. The Bill of Rights Institute is pleased to partner with OpenStax to make this digital resource available free of charge to hundreds of thousands of teachers and more than 15 million secondary school students nationwide.”

“OpenStax is pleased to provide high school teachers and students across the U.S. with a free blended learning tool that aligns to Advanced Placement standards, while including rich content that deepens their critical thinking skills,” said Richard Baraniuk, founder and director of OpenStax and Rice’s Victor E. Cameron Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering. “With the unprecedented shift to online learning this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, free, digital, easy-to-use and effective teaching and learning resources are more critical than ever before.”

Written and edited by nearly 100 distinguished scholars from top universities and historical organizations, *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* takes a point-counterpoint, inquiry-based approach to the study of U.S. history. It includes 150 primary

source documents that help students learn about perspective, bias, and how to evaluate evidence.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, school budgets are constrained, and teachers throughout the nation are challenged to find appropriate digital resources for teaching their students.

Jessica Culver, a social studies teacher for 17 years at Ozark High School in rural Arkansas, helped pilot *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*. She said, "Schools' finances are tight right now and textbooks are a giant expense, even at a tiny school. So, I think people are hearing about resources like *Life, Liberty* and are realizing that this is the wave of the future and it's so much more valuable than a physical textbook."

To learn more about *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*, visit <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/educate/educator-resources/free-us-history-resource/>.

About the Bill of Rights Institute

Established in 1999, the Bill of Rights Institute supports secondary school teachers of American history, civics, and social studies, one in four of whom nationwide use BRI curricula in the classroom and participate in BRI professional development programs. BRI's team includes a full-time staff with more than 100 years of combined classroom experience, academic partners, and classroom teachers who serve as co-creators of BRI's curricula. Over its 20+ years of nonprofit operation, the Bill of Rights Institute has received funding from more than 15,000 individuals, corporations, and foundations, including more than 4,500 individuals and 50 foundations. in the last two years. For more information, visit <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/>.

About OpenStax

OpenStax is committed to improving access to quality learning materials. As an ed tech initiative that is part of Rice University and supported by philanthropic foundations, OpenStax provides free college and Advanced Placement textbooks that are developed and peer-reviewed by educators, as well as low cost, personalized courseware that helps students learn. For more information, visit <http://OpenStax.org>.

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