

College Guild  
PO Box 696, Brunswick, Maine 04011

# Challenges to Justice and Freedom

Unit 1 of 5

## Global Challenges

Welcome to the College Guild course on Challenges to Justice and Freedom.

**Guidelines for all College Guild courses:**

1. **Answer all the questions in bold print, using black or blue ink or dark pencil if possible.** After we receive and review your completed Unit, we will send you feedback from your reader along with your original work and the next Unit. You don't need to return the questions – it saves us both postage.
2. There is **no specific deadline** to complete any Unit, but we would get concerned if we hadn't heard back from you after two months.
3. Remember how often the mail service loses things. **If you don't hear back from us within two months, please write to ensure we received your Unit** and sent out the next one.
4. Several questions ask you to **draw/sketch** something...please TRY these! It does not matter if you think you are a terrible artist; even stick figures are fine with us.

**Introduction to Challenges to Justice and Freedom:** These challenges can take many forms including disabilities, ignorance, and poverty. In this course, you will explore various life challenges, the people who experience them, the effects these challenges can have, and methods some people use to cope with their limitations.

\*\*\*\*\*

This unit will focus on international and United States issues that have an impact on freedom and justice.

Glossary of Terms:

1. **Discrimination** - the process of making unfair or prejudicial distinctions between people based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they belong or are perceived to belong, such as race, gender, age, religion, physical attractiveness, or sexual orientation.
2. **Fairness:** lack of favoritism toward one side or another
3. **Justice** - the quality of being just, impartial, or fair.
4. **Objectivity** - expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations
5. **Prejudice** - a favoring or dislike of something without good reason; unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group, or a race.
6. **Stereotyping** - to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same. It's not fair to stereotype a whole group of people based on one person you don't like, for example - "my last boss was really mean so all bosses are mean."

## PART 1: LADY JUSTICE

The figure "Blind Justice" represents the United States legal system at its best. Her eyes are covered to show that she has not seen anything to prejudice her before entering the courtroom. That way, she weighs the evidence on her scales to reach a fair, objective decision.

However, justice isn't always handed down with **objectivity** and **fairness**. Here are two quotations written in the 1800s that have something to say about that:

*The law is a ass, Sir!* (Charles Dickens )

*Justice is blind. Blind she is, an' deaf an' dumb, and has a wooden leg.*  
F.P. Dunne (1867-1936,)

1. It's clear what Dickens meant when it comes to justice, but what does Dunne mean?
2. Give an example of when justice has been "blind" in the way we hope for – objective and fair.  
Give an example of when she was blind and deaf, turning her back on fairness.
3. In the history of the United States, what is one law (past or present) that could be considered unjust? How would you change that law?
4. Instead of a blindfolded woman, what would be a good symbol for justice at it's best? Sketch a picture of it next to Lady Justice. Or write a paragraph to describe a symbol for justice.



Ideally, the members of the Supreme Court (called "Justices") approach each case with open minds, but of course each Justice has political views. The reason this is so important is that Presidents nominate Justices for the Supreme Court, and they are appointed for life! Therefore, if a seat on the Supreme Court becomes empty during his term in office, the President's political views influence American laws for years to come.

5. Present your position on whether or not you believe a Supreme Court Justice should be appointed for life.

Here are some of the issues Americans are debating: sale of automatic weapons and gun control, right to die, legalizing all drugs, immigration and border control, and regulating social media sites.



**6. Pick one of these issues – how do you think the Supreme Court would rule on it? How would that affect the country?**

When the Supreme Court makes a decision on a law, it requires that every state comply with that decision. It can also leave the decision up to the state. We can see this occurring with the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* (the abortion ruling).

**7. Pick another one of those issues. Would you prefer to have your state or the Federal courts rule on it? Why?**

## PART 2: PREJUDICE

Injustice thrives on **prejudice**, which is usually fed by fear and differing beliefs and/or customs.

Despite the power and wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King's plea that his children be judged "*not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character*," prejudice is still very much with us. It is based on race, religion, culture, gender, sexual preference, disabilities, etc.

- 8. Pick any group of people who face discrimination and stereotyping.**
- Give an example of the stereotype and discrimination.**
  - How and when did the stereotype begin, and why has it lasted?**
  - What are the results of that prejudice? Have they changed over time?**

Books, movies and TV can reinforce a stereotype. For example, it was common in the movies of the 1950's for indigenous or Native Americans (Indians) to attack cowboys and pioneer settlements; the "redskins" were the bad guys, the white man the hero. Some sports teams have changed their names (such as the Redskins) to avoid being accused of perpetuating or continuing a stereotype.

- 9. Does it make a difference to change team names? Why or why not?**
- 10. How did society view Native Americans 100 years ago? What is that view now?**
- 11. Give an example of a book, movie or show that encourages stereotyping. Name one that shows stereotyping is wrong.**

### PART 3: INTERNATIONAL PREJUDICE

**Stereotypes** and **prejudice** can apply to whole countries. Following World War II, the United Nations (UN) was formed. Its goal is to maintain international peace between countries with differing values, cultures and religions, cooperation, and peace. It now includes 193 countries that are full members, and two non-member states - the Holy See (an area of Rome under the Pope's jurisdiction) and the State of Palestine. The UN's General Assembly (UNGA) is the main meeting which decides what the organization should do. It is the only meeting at which all of the 193 UN members are represented.

The UNGA presents a unique opportunity for the world's heads of state and governments to meet in one place. It has been described as a "diplomatic speed dating" event. The most significant outcomes from the UNGA often come from meetings between national leaders held on the sidelines.

The UN's aims also include ending world hunger and poverty, improving incomes and education around the world, and increasing access to clean water and sanitation.

The goals of the UN are shared by many programs and organizations. Two examples include: Doctors Without Borders, which consists of volunteer medical professionals who travel to other countries to help improve the quality of medical services and reach more people in need of doctors. There are also summer camps that bring together Israeli and Palestinian children who form friendships and learn to respect each other's cultures.



12. Select 2 countries and explain the differences between them that could lead to conflict.

13. How does the United Nations function now? Is the US always in support of the United Nations? Why or why not?

#### PART 4: INCARCERATED PERSON PREJUDICE

This section is not about prejudice toward residents but stereotyping **by** residents. Three inmate groups who face discrimination to the point of being actively persecuted by other residents are:

- informants
- those convicted of child molesting
- former police officers/law enforcement personnel

The quick response here is that these groups are harassed for their actions. "Pigs", "snitches", and "tree jumpers" are beneath contempt and deserve what they get, right?

**14. Select one of these three groups and explain why they should be treated with the same respect as other residents.**

#### PART 5: THE DREAM OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Some of the most stirring words among the early documents of the United States and on the monuments erected to honor the country are quoted below. Government as it exists today is certainly flawed. Voters have to want to make changes, then support candidates who promise to work for those changes. Ideally, that's how democracy should work.

**15. Name 3 ways that politicians convince people to vote for them.**

**16. Pick one issue you feel strongly about (at either the national, state, or town level).  
How would you get people to support it?**

Despite greedy politicians, manipulation of the voting system, and the influence of money, the United States is a democracy – a system of government that allows all Americans to vote (including incarcerated individuals in some states.) It's a magnificent dream to want equality and justice for all. The Americans who wrote the following words believed it could happen. These quotations represent our country at its best.

The Liberty Bell, made in 1752, was first rung in 1776 for the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On it are the words:

*"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."*

The Statue of Liberty sits on an island in New York Harbor. It was a gift to the United States from France in 1886. The figure of a woman holding up a torch faces the ocean; for immigrants landing in New York City, she was their first sight of the new country. A poem is engraved on the Statue of Liberty's base. It portrays the U.S. as a country that welcomes those who had to leave their own countries to find better, safer lives....

*"... Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

From The Declaration of Independence, the document declaring the United States a country separate from England, comes this excerpt:

*“... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness – that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”*

The Bill of Rights [Amendments 1 through 10 to the Constitution] were ratified by Congress in 1791. Article 1 says:

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”*

The Emancipation Proclamation

*“...That on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State... the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”*

These quotations demonstrate the desire of the country to:

- proclaim liberty
- welcome immigrants
- recognize that all men are created equal
- protect the rights of religion, speech, the press and assembly
- free the slaves

**17. Pick one of these quotations and write an essay, story or poem about the dream it represents.**

### Self-Reflection Exercise

- 1) **What was the most interesting thing you learned about Global Challenges?**
- 2) **How do the lessons of Global Challenges apply to your own life?**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*