

# Just

## Judaism Action Social Change

### JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 1: CHAPTER 1 – CALL TO ACTION LESSON 2: JUSTICE AS A UNIVERSAL AND JEWISH VALUE

#### LESSON 2: JUSTICE AS A UNIVERSAL AND JEWISH VALUE (45 mins -1 hr)

##### Time

To shorten:

Cut the opening activity

**Or**

Include fewer statements

**Or**

Cut the closing activity

To lengthen

Have the closing activity done in class (as a discussion or as a writing exercise)

**Or**

Do step 6 of the main activity as a full class discussion

##### Goals

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##### Materials

- 2 sheets of paper, saying “Jew” and “American”
- 1 copy of the “2 Languages” paragraph (see appendix)
- Copies of the list of statements – one per student, with the “2 languages” paragraph on the back (see appendix)

##### 1) Framing exercise (10 mins)

In advance, write the following quote on the board:

“The administration of justice is the firmest pillar of government”

(do not write the author on the board, but it is by George Washington, 1789)

- a) As the students enter the room, ask them to take out a piece of paper and write down who they think might have written this quote.
- b) Take guesses. You will most likely get different Jewish authors/sources. If no one guesses correctly (very likely!), write under the quote: “George Washington, 1789”
- c) Ask the students if this surprises them. Why? What does it say about the relationship between being a Jew and being an American?

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#### 2) Main Activity (30 mins)

- a) Place signs on opposite sides of the room saying “Jew” and “American”. Clear a space in the middle of the room so that students can fill the space between the two signs in a continuum.
- b) Give one student the “2 Languages” paragraph. Have them read it out loud.
- c) Read as many of the following statements as you desire. After each one, have the students choose a side – do they do this action as a Jew or as an American? (You can decide if there is a middle ground or only the two polarities). After the students have dispersed themselves, ask a few students to explain their placement.

#### Statements:

1. I go to school every day.
  2. I help my elderly neighbor take out her trash.
  3. I celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.
  4. I obey the speed limit (or will, when I drive!).
  5. I volunteer at a soup kitchen.
  6. I intend to go to college.
  7. I make sure there aren't any pieces of glass or holes in the sidewalk in front of my house.
  8. I go to synagogue.
  9. I never litter.
- d) Ask students to get into pairs / triads. Give each pair a copy of the list of statements. Ask them to identify one value that leads them to act in such a way. For example, I celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July because of patriotism, or because it is important to my family. Tell them not to worry about using specific terms for the values, they just should get the ideas down.
  - e) While they are working, write the list of statements on the board, with a large space next to each one. Or pre-prepare this list on a poster board before class.
  - f) Regroup: Go through each group's values as a class. Elicit explanations of the values on the board, and write these next to each term.
  - g) Discuss the values. Ask students:
    - Are these values Jewish values or American values?
    - Are any in conflict with Judaism?
    - How do you decide which set of values to follow?

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- Can you think of an example when American and Jewish values conflict?

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#### 1) Conclusion (5-10 mins)

- a) Ask students to turn to the “2 languages” text. With this page open, ask them the following questions:

#### Journal Questions:

- Do you (or should you) act as a Jew when engaged in social action or as an American?
- What’s the difference?
- Can I be both?

- b) Ask students to think about these questions and write answers in their journals or discuss them in pairs.

- c) If you give homework / grades:

Ask students to answer those questions in an essay.

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JEW

Just

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# AMERICAN

# Just

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I go to school every day.	
I help my elderly neighbor take out her trash.	
I celebrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> of July.	
I obey the speed limit (or will, when I drive!).	
I volunteer at a soup kitchen.	
I intend to go to college.	
I make sure there aren't any pieces of glass or holes in the sidewalk in front of my house.	
I go to synagogue.	

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“2 Languages” Text

As Jews in America, we have two primary “languages,” two identities, two cultures: Jewish and American. Often these cultures overlap and reinforce each other. Other times they don’t. The question for us is: how do we negotiate this bi-lingualism? Given a world of choice, why should we continue to choose to be Jews? And when? If Jewish and American values either clash or are motivated by different impulses, how shall we choose between them? As Jews, how should we negotiate the tug of particularism with the demand of universalism?