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A sense of justice is a fundamental civic value that is vital for American citizens to possess in order to become productive and contributing members of society. To be just is to be fair and equitable. Fairness and equality must be available to all American citizens regardless of their race, religion, gender or age. Therefore, justice is the most important civic value in America's past, present and future. Documents, such as the Preamble to the United States Constitution, provide a foundation of justice for its people through their writings. Individuals such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. base their whole life on fighting for justice for all. As an American citizen and a human being, I deliberately attempt to be fair and equitable in my daily life through my beliefs and my interaction with others.

In 1787, a Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention by the name of Gouverneur Morris eloquently wrote the Preamble to the United States Constitution. The Preamble states, "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice..." Morris was an outspoken Federalist and fought for a free and just American society. Although Morris was born wealthy, he strongly believed in a nation in which justice was provided to all of its citizens. He realized that for America to be a strong and independent nation that her citizens must be treated fairly not only in a court of law, but also in their daily life. The Preamble to the Constitution clearly articulates a vision of justice being an important civic value for the American people. The Preamble is powerful and meaningful to all who value and promote justice.

During America's Civil Rights Movement, a notable figure by the name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought tirelessly to end racial segregation. His goal was to create a just society based on fairness and equality. Dr. King based his philosophy on the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau. Gandhi believed in nonviolent resistance and Thoreau believed in disobeying unjust laws. Combining these two ideas, Dr. King combated racial segregation and created an environment of positive change in America. King stated that the "tension was not between the races, but was between justice and injustice..." He had faith that justice would occur in America's future. King's belief and ability to promote justice for all is a model that America's leaders attempt to emulate. The fact that our nation has elected the first African American to be its President is a positive step towards greater justice.

Justice is not just a lofty concept to me. It is both the easiest and yet the most challenging civic value for me to uphold. My belief that justice is important can be seen in my daily life. I use the golden rule on a daily basis; treat others, as you would like to be treated. I believe that this rule and justice can be interchangeable. To treat others in this way is to treat them justly and with respect. The golden rule is really at the core of justice. I have been raised to look at everyone in the same way no matter how different they are from me. Religious beliefs, skin color, gender, social status, level of education; all of these are held subject to discrimination and injustice, but not to me. I make a conscious effort to get to know each new person that I encounter as a unique individual. Justice is blind and does not judge people due to superficial attributes. Everyone should be treated equally regardless of what clique the person may or may not be in. Also, I participate regularly in the Topeka Youth Court. I have volunteered to serve on the youth jury multiple times and help to consider the fair penalties given to teens that break the law. The idea that justice involves both equality and fairness is demonstrated on a daily basis in my life. These concepts should be practiced everywhere in America in order to better ourselves socially and morally.

Justice is the most important civic value a citizen can possess. From the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our nation has had its struggles to provide justice. However, if each citizen does his or her best to live in a just manner, then America will continue to be the strong nation that I am proud to call my country.