

PSL Student

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Justice-oriented Essay

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### Justice-Oriented Citizens

Society is set up to follow certain rules and ways of doing things. Most people follow that system, but others are willing to take a chance and do things their own way. Justice-oriented citizens are willing to do just that in order to fix problems they see arising. They range from small issues found in their community, to large ones that some people thought could never be fixed. Throughout this class, I have seen many examples of what it means to be a justice-oriented citizen. They all have something in common. Breaking away from social norms and actively engaging in the community efficiently describes what it means to be a justice-oriented citizen.

When looking at the way our society has set up what is considered normal, most people do not question it. Instead, they embrace it the way society as a whole would. For example, the stigma surrounding mental hospitals is that everybody there is insane and there is no way of really helping them. That is not the case though from a justice-oriented point of view like Morrie's in *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom. When Morrie worked at "Chestnut Lodge" (Albom 109), a mental hospital in Washington D.C., Morrie was able to "befriend" (Albom 110) some of the patients, which helped make a difference in their lives. He talked to patients, giving them something that was taken away from them. Society isolates them, yet all some want is

“someone to notice” (Albom 110) them. Morrie’s actions were not “encouraged” (Albom 110) in any way, but his actions represent what it means to be a justice-oriented citizen.

Morrie is just one example of stepping outside of what society would consider to be normal. If everybody were to only follow social norms, there would be many issues that never get solved or even noticed. Without this, people do not get the services they need and their problems will persist. Morrie is removing what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie would call “single stories” in her Ted Talk “The Danger of a Single Story.” Single stories occur when somebody does not know the whole truth about something. Instead, they are invested in the stereotypes that society has created, and they are unable to see the potential problems with what they are seeing. In Morrie’s case, he sees people in a mental hospital, and rather than treating them as patients, he treats them more like friends. This is something most people in our society would not do, but he was willing to go beyond what society knows, and eventually give hope to the people he talks to. Morrie is one example, but these instances are common all throughout our own community. Having justice-oriented citizens in helps us find these issues, alleviating the struggle some people may have to go through. With that being said, engaging in the community is the best way to become aware of the problems in it.

Actively participating in the community not only helps someone feel like a better person, but also helps make progress in the community. PSL is a good example of bringing awareness to problems that occur and finding ways to fix it. Through PSL, service sites are found (or created) that can use some extra hands, making a difference to those receiving the service. The Pirate Power Pack Program, for example, is supplying food to low income families that might otherwise not receive a decent meal. In my own experience, Karpos creates a space for people

that are homeless or have a low income to enjoy a nice big meal. The people who founded both the Power Packs and Karpos sought out ways to fix a problem, and are constantly making adjustments to fit the needs of those receiving the service. Karpos has not only allowed me to see just how many people in the area are living in poverty, but it has also allowed me to see how people are taking action to decrease that number. Karpos serves food, but it also provides a safer place for people to sit and interact with each other, something they may not have all day. The volunteers are comfortable with what they are doing, which helps newcomers feel welcomed, as well as people who have been there before.

Knowing what goes on around the community opens up doors to improve it. A justice-oriented citizen actively participates in their community, and is willing to do whatever it takes to make the change happen. This means that they are willing to work towards their goal, even if it does not fit in with society's norms and obstacles are thrown their way. By actively participating in the community and stepping out of those norms, somebody can efficiently become a justice-oriented citizen.

### Citations

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