

**NEW SERIES from the Education
Committee: Character Matters!! The
Character Quality of JUSTICE**



The Character Quality of JUSTICE

JUSTICE is taking personal responsibility to uphold what is pure, right, and true. . . .¹



John Adams

(1735-1826)

“Character is the inward motivation to do what is right according to the highest standards of behavior in every situation. It consists of the stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual’s life that determine his or her responses, regardless of the circumstances. It is the wise response to the pressure of a difficult situation and what we do when we think that no one is watching.”²

John Adams – Valuing Justice

From the time that British troops arrived in Boston in 1768, tensions between the troops and the people of Boston had increasingly mounted. Finally, on March 5, 1770, an unfortunate confrontation brought these tensions into the open. It all began when a group of school boys threw snowballs at a British sentry. When the sentry called for help, soldiers and angry citizens came running. Citizens began to aggravate the soldiers; and in the confusion of the moment, someone ordered the British soldiers to fire. When the smoke and haze of the musket fire had cleared, three Bostonians lay dead; and two others were mortally wounded. This incident would come to be known as the *Boston Massacre*.³



After the bloody confrontation, British Captain Preston and his men were **arraigned for murder**. An appeal was made to John Adams—an appeal for Adams to act as counsel in the soldiers’ defense. Undoubtedly, this request placed **popular favor** on one side, and the **demands of justice and humanity** on the other—popular favor and the demands of justice and humanity were noted as the **horns of the dilemma** between which Mr. Adams was placed. Adams was not long in choosing what he should do. He agreed to accept the invitation to act as counsel for the soldiers—ultimately, he defended the prisoners successfully—Captain Preston was acquitted. At the close of the trial, six soldiers were acquitted and two were found guilty of manslaughter and given light sentences.³ Notwithstanding the tremendous excitement that existed against the soldiers, the **patriotism of Mr. Adams was too far above suspicion to make this defense of the enemy a cause for withdrawing from him the confidence which the people reposed in him**. His friends applauded him for the act, and the people were satisfied, as was evident by their choosing him, that same year (1770), a representative in the provincial Assembly.⁴

Guided by a life committed to *Justice*, John Adams knowingly chose the path of greatest resistance when he chose to defend British Captain Preston and his men—all had been caught up in the bloody *Boston Massacre*. In the course of the trial, Mr. Adams displayed a single-minded determination to seek out the truth, to seek out that which was right, to seek out that which was pure—to persevere in order that *Justice* might prevail!

It has been said that **no man's life is an island**—the dealings of a man's life are rarely isolated. Indeed, the actions of one *Just* man may well yield an incredible influence on the lives of countless others.

**Can it be said that *we have benefited* from the life of John Adams,
the man who valued *Justice*? Yes, indeed!**

John Adams. . . .

- Introduced (May 1776) a motion in Congress “that the colonies should form governments *independent of the Crown.*”
- Served alongside President George Washington as the First Vice President of the United States.
- Served as Second President of the United States—the first to live in the White House.
- Was a member of the Continental Congress.
- Was appointed as one on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence.
- Urged Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration.
- Signed of the Declaration of Independence.
- Recommended George Washington as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.
- Was the main author of the Constitution of Massachusetts.
- Was a U.S. Minister to France.
- Was a U.S. Minister to Great Britain.
- Wrote *A Defense of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States.*
- Established during his Presidency the Library of Congress and Department of Navy.
- Helped to negotiate the treaty with Great Britain ending the Revolutionary War.
- Was the father of the 6th President of the United States, John Quincy Adams.

May *Justice* be valued and reflected in all that we think, in all that we say, and in all that we do!
May our families, our friends, and our Nation be stronger and more secure as a consequence of the measure of *Justice* that we choose to demonstrate in our lives as – ***we, too, take personal responsibility to uphold what is pure, right, and true!***

Sources

1. Character Determines Success, Character First!® ©2000 Character Training Institute, 520 West Main, Oklahoma City, OK. (Hand-held card displaying character qualities.)

2. The Power for True Success: How to Build Character in Your Life. Institute in Basic Life Principles, Inc., Oak Brook, IL.

3. United States History: Heritage of Freedom, 2nd Edition, Michael R Lowman, George Thompson, Kurt Grussendorf. A Beka Book, Pensacola, Florida.

4. Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence: A reprint of an 1848 original. Reprinted in 1995, WallBuilders Press, Aledo, Texas.

5. America's God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations, William J Federer. Fame Publishing, Inc., Coppell, Texas.

Additional Resources

- **[John Adams \(HBO Miniseries\)](#)** ~ Paul Giamatti, et al. (DVD)
- Adam's National Historic Park: **<http://www.nps.gov/adam/index.htm>**
- The Library of Congress, John Adams: A Resource Guide: **<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/presidents/adams/memory.html>**
- Children's Biography of John Adams, coloring pages, and puzzles, etc., are available at: **<http://gardenofpraise.com/ibdadams.htm>**. It is never too early or too late to start discussing character qualities with children.

Choose to make application of the Character Quality of Justice until you see it operating in your life.

– The Education Committee