

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Lessons for Our Children

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Every woman has her stories.

When I was in the sixth grade, I was among a handful of girls who wanted to play in the baseball game at recess. Some of the boys accepted us without issue and shared their gloves when it was our turn to field. But there were other boys who were determined to keep us out. They knew they couldn't ban us directly, so they announced a new rule: Every player had to own a baseball glove — no more sharing.

Years later, I graduated from law school and got a job at a top-tier law firm. At a team meeting, a male partner shared that a big case was coming to the firm. It would be a great professional opportunity for a few junior lawyers. The partner wanted to know who was interested in working on the case — and who among the female lawyers had plans to get pregnant.

I am not alone in having these stories. All women experience some form of sexism, and some of us have been denied jobs or other significant opportunities due to our gender. That's why Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a hero to girls and women everywhere. We are grateful for Justice Ginsburg's lifelong commitment to challenging gender inequality in all its

pernicious forms. She moved us toward a fairer workplace and a more equitable society.

In 2016, I had the honor of meeting Justice Ginsburg. PJ Library had selected the newly released book *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark*, written by Debbie Levy, for its lineup and was sending it as a gift to thousands of 8-year-olds. Justice Ginsburg graciously agreed to share a few words about the book in a short video to PJ Library families.

During the video, we asked Justice Ginsburg if she had a message to share with the parents of PJ Library's young readers. Her response was clear and strong:

"For one thing, cherish your daughters as much as your sons. And teach them both to stand up for what is right and to be brave and not be put down. If at first you don't succeed, then you try and try again."

Fortunately for me, these are the same messages I received at home. After I told my dad about the baseball game situation, he spent his lunch hour that day shopping for a gift for me — my very own baseball glove. It felt great to head right to the field at recess. It felt even better to hit the ball over the pitcher's head after he'd dramatically moved in close when I went to bat.

I also learned from my mother's example that I have a voice, and I shouldn't be afraid to use it. I asked for a meeting with the male partner at the law firm. I explained to him why it was wrong to ask the young female lawyers about their pregnancy plans, even if he'd intended it as a joke. I was polite, and he was open to listening to me. Afterward he thanked me for the conversation, and I believe he meant it.

I passed on these same messages to my kids as they were growing up, and now I get to share them with children across the PJ Library community through



Winnie and Justice Ginsburg in 2016

the books we select – books that highlight doing what’s right, books with female protagonists, and books that commend bravery and standing up for others.

And, of course, books like *I Dissent*.

Levy’s book shares Justice Ginsburg’s journey from Brooklyn to the Supreme Court and her persistent fight against discrimination. The book brings to life Justice Ginsburg’s example of putting Jewish values to action through her relentless pursuit of justice, not only for women but for everyone who is denied equal treatment. In a 2004 speech at a Holocaust Remembrance Day event, Justice Ginsburg explained:

“My heritage as a Jew and my occupation as a judge fit together symmetrically. The demand for justice runs through the entirety of Jewish history and Jewish tradition. I take pride in and draw strength from my heritage.”

She then referenced the framed words that hung on the wall of her Supreme Court chambers, words from the book of Deuteronomy: “Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof” – “Justice, justice you shall pursue.” The justice explained, “Those words are ever-present reminders of what judges must do that they ‘may thrive.’”

For PJ Library, Justice Ginsburg’s story is an inspiration to children, especially to Jewish children who take unique pride in her example. Her rise from humble beginnings shows what is attainable through hard work and perseverance. Her dedication to improving people’s lives shows our kids what it means to live by one’s values. As author Debbie Levy’s simple words explain, Justice Ginsburg is a hero to many of us because of how she lived her life:

“She made change happen, and she changed minds.

She cleared a path for people to follow in her footsteps – girls in college, women in law school, and everyone who wants to be treated without prejudice.

Her voice may not carry a tune, but it sings out for equality.

Step by step, she has made a difference ...”

She surely has. I will forever cherish the day I met Justice Ginsburg and expressed my admiration and gratitude to her as a woman, as a lawyer, and as an American. She opened doors for me and so many others, and she was relentless in her pursuit of justice for all. I am honored that I get to share her story with thousands of families in the PJ Library community. May her memory be a blessing.

We asked PJ Our Way kids to send us their drawings, videos, and written tributes to honor Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg – and they delivered! Here are a couple of the amazing submissions we received.



Addie, Age 9

Ruth:

Supreme Court Justice,
Left-handed,
Mother of two,
Smart and serious,
Seriously smart,
Biography subject.
But none of that matters.
None of it.

All that matters is this:

You have changed the world for the better.

Despite losing your mother,
sister, and husband,
You are still strong.
You have suffered.

But you haven’t let that change you.

Supreme Court Justice,
Left-handed,
Mother of two,
Smart and serious,
Seriously smart,
Biography subject.

And most importantly:

A hero to people everywhere.

By Nora, Age 10