

Law Day 2013

Future Equality

The ideal of equality is neither new nor uniquely American. In fact, the roots of equality can be found as far back as ancient Greece. Philosopher Aristotle is quoted as stating, “*Democracy arose from men’s thinking that if they are equal in any respect, they are equal absolutely.*”

This thinking can be also be found in natural rights philosophy developed by Englishman, John Locke (1632-1704). Locke defined natural rights in terms of life, liberty and property as inclusive rights, belonging to every human being.

e·qual·i·ty

[ih-kwol-i-tee] *noun*,

1. the state or quality of being equal

2. justice, fairness

This concept of equality was understood, embraced and reiterated by our founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence with the words “all men are created equal.”

From Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation to Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” and from granting women the right to vote to creating a safe school environment where all students can learn

- we’re moving towards equality. However, there remains ongoing issues involving civil and human rights. Our nation and the laws that govern us are a continual work in progress. Just as Martin Luther King and Lincoln before him challenged their peers, the citizens of New York State and the nation must work to protect and defend the rights of all people.

As stated in a speech by jurist Learned Hand in 1941, “... *Liberty lies in the hearts of men, when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there it needs no coinstitution, no law, no court to save it.*”

Are you up to the challenge?

Newspaper Activity: Editorial Writing

Look through the newspaper (print or online) and read several editorials. Thinking about the challenge of “Realizing the Dream: Equality for All” write a persuasive essay in the same style as an editorial challenging your peers to protect and defend the rights of all people.

Student Assessment: Complete this statement – I think equality is ...

For more information about Law Day go to the NYS Bar Association’s Law, Youth and Citizenship website at www.nysba.org/LawDay2013

For additional lesson plans for Law Day go to the American Bar Association’s website at www.americanbar.org