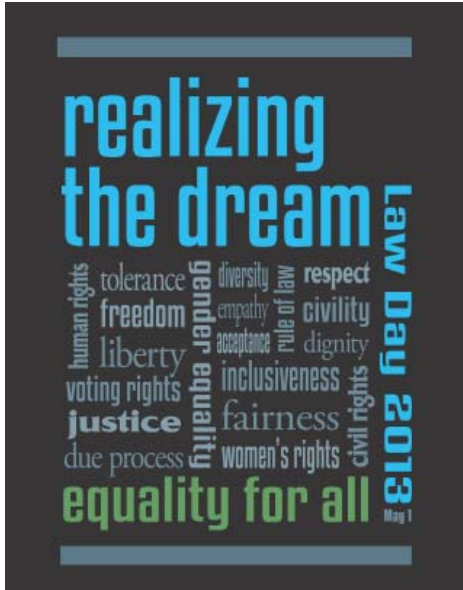


Law Day - May 1, 2013
**“Realizing the Dream:
Equality for All”**



The promise of equality under the law is what has made America a beacon to other nations. It is a pledge clearly set forth in the Declaration of Independence and in the opening words of the Preamble of the Constitution, “We the People.” It is in the words of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. And it was restated 150 years later in the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech which challenged us to live up to our national ideal of equality under the law.

There have been times throughout New York State’s history, when our struggles for equality lead those of the nation.

This educational series was created to give students and readers an opportunity to explore the movement for civil and human rights in America and to promote discussion of the continued fight against injustice and discrimination. For the next five days, this newspaper will run features covering the following topics:

Religious Freedom
Women’s Suffrage
Equal Opportunity
Dignity For All Students
Future Equality



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Religious Freedom

New York began as the Dutch colony of New Netherland in 1624, when it was governed by a series of Directors who were appointed by the Dutch West India Company and operated under Dutch and local law. Peter Stuyvesant became Director General in 1647, and one of his

re·mon·strance

[rĭ-mōn'strɛns]

noun - An expression of protest, complaint, or reproof, especially a formal statement of grievances.

goals was to establish a strong, cohesive society. He strongly believed at the time that full acceptance of many religions would put a society at great risk. The “Society of Friends,” or Quakers, were among the most radical religious sects at the time. It was in this environment, in 1657, that Director General Stuyvesant issued a proclamation which severely limited the rights of Quakers to worship freely within his colony. Those who allowed Quakers to worship in their homes were fined, and any ships carrying Quakers were to be turned away. Residents of the predominantly English town of Flushing were unhappy with the proclamation. They saw it as an infringement of their “Liberty of Conscience” which had been promised to

them in a 1645 patent establishing the town.

In response, the residents of Flushing prepared a remonstrance that protested Stuyvesant’s actions and asserted their right to religious freedom. Although initially rejected by Stuyvesant, the Dutch West India Company, ultimately sent a letter rebuking Stuyvesant, saying that he should ‘not force people’s consciences, but allow every one to have his own belief’ – effectively ending the persecution of Quakers and other religious minorities in the colony.

New York maintained a high degree of religious diversity and tolerance throughout the colonial period. When New York adopted its Constitution in 1777 it included the “free exercise clause” stating: *... the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever hereafter be allowed, within this State, to all mankind: Provided, That the liberty of conscience, hereby granted, shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this State.*

Thus religious freedom was part of New York’s protection even before the inclusion of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights.

Student Assessment:

Complete this statement:
I was surprised to learn...

Next installment: Women’s Suffrage

Newspaper Activity: Persuasive Writing

People make their voices known in our government directly such as in congressional hearings, and indirectly through letters to their representatives. Other indirect methods include the use of newspapers and other media. Letters to the editor, political cartoons, press releases and even newspaper advertising are vehicles used to sway others. Each student should select one of the newspaper methods listed and create a persuasive argument based on a local issue in the news. Be sure to use facts to strengthen their point of view.

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Women's Suffrage

The First Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY in July 1848. Although the convention was supposed to be for women only, men were not turned away. Ultimately, 42 men were part of the 300-member assembly. James Mott, an advocate for women's rights and the husband of one of the day's speakers, Lucretia Mott, even chaired the event.

suf•frage [sūf'rīj]

noun

1. the right to vote esp in public elections; franchise
2. casting a vote

On the first day, in addition to Lucretia Mott's speech, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read her Declaration of Sentiments, symbolically modeled after the Declaration of Independence and included these words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed

by their Creator with certain inalienable rights..."

The convention was just the beginning of the fight for the right to vote. There were rallies and parades that included large numbers of supporters and individual acts to challenge the status quo. One

such act was when Susan B. Anthony attempted to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election of 1872.

She was arrested and brought to trial in Rochester, found guilty and fined \$100 for breaking the law. She never paid the fine and never served jail time.

In 1915, a referendum was held in New York State on the suffrage issue. Despite rallies, parades, speeches, and broadsides, the amendment was

defeated. However, in 1917 New York State granted women the right to vote – one of the first states to do so. It came three years before the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution giving women the vote in national elections. The 1917 result followed nearly 50 years of marching, fund-raising and rallies. The triumph was achieved despite fears of antisuffragists that when a woman received the right to vote, "... political gossip would cause her to neglect the home, forget to mend our clothes and burn the biscuits."

Student Assessment:

What one new thing did you learn from this activity?

Next installment: Equal Opportunity

Newspaper Activity:

Protests and their Effects

The struggle for American women to gain the right the vote was a lifelong fight which eventually led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Look for news about current protests. What happened as a result? What do you think could be the long-term effects of protests going on today?



Women's Suffrage Parade, New York City 1913

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Equal Opportunity

In March 1945, Governor Thomas E. Dewey signed the Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Bill, making New York the first state to enact legislation prohibiting workplace discrimination “because of race, creed, color or national origin.” Since the era of Reconstruction, New York was the first state in the country to pass such a law and the first state to establish a permanent commission to enforce such legislation.

As written in baseball executive Branch Rickey’s biography, the law gave Rickey the opportunity he’d been seeking to break organized baseball’s unwritten rule banning black players from the game. In October 1945 Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to play for the Montreal Royals, the Brooklyn Dodgers’ farm team. In 1947, Robinson not only broke baseball’s color barrier, he also went on to win Rookie of the Year. Robinson was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962.



Jackie Robinson
Courtesy of the National Baseball Hall of Fame
and Museum

op•por•tu•ni•ty [ɒp ə
toʊn ɪ te] *noun*

1. an appropriate or favorable time
2. a situation or condition favorable for attainment of a goal
3. a good chance or prospect, as for success

While Jackie Robinson’s success gave hope to many African-Americans, it took nearly two decades for similar legislation to pass at the federal level assuring equal opportunity under the law for all Americans. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

New York’s Anti-Discrimination Law – renamed the Human Rights Law – has been expanded over time to protect more people under more and various circumstances. Specifically the law now prohibits discrimination in employment, housing,

credit, places of public accommodations, volunteer firefighting, and non-sectarian educational institutions, based on age, creed, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, disability, military status, domestic violence victim status, arrest record, conviction record, predisposing genetic characteristics, and familial status (in housing only).

Next installment: Dignity for All Students

Student Assessment: What questions do you still have about this topic? Where do you think you might be able to go to find answers to your questions?

Newspaper Activity: Equal Opportunity

Look through the newspaper, print or electronic, for an example of a group or individual receiving equal and fair treatment and someone being treated unfairly. Compare and contrast the two examples you selected.

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Dignity For All Students

The New York State Dignity For All Students Act (Dignity Act) was signed into law on September 13, 2010. The intent of the Dignity Act is to provide all public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, taunting or intimidation, as well as to foster civility in public schools.

Dig-ni-ty - [díg'ní-tē]

noun

1. The quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect.
2. Poise and self-respect

The Dignity Act explicitly provides that no student must be subjected to discrimination and/or harassment by employees and/or students on school property or at a school function based on his or her actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity or expression), or sex.

As the original New York state law was taking effect in July 2012, an amendment to the new law expanded the Dignity Act to help protect students from cyberbullying as well as other

forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Effective July 1, 2013, the law requires school districts to have a plan in place to deal with cyberbullying and to act when cyberbullying occurs. School officials must investigate reports of cyberbullying, on or off campus, when it creates or would create a substantial risk to the school environment, substantially interferes with a student's educational performance or mental, emotional or physical well-being, or causes a student to fear for his or her physical safety. The law also requires current and future school employees to be trained to identify and reduce the incidences of harassment, bullying, cyberbullying and discrimination.

The Dignity Act is another example of recognizing the existence of harassing behavior and discrimination and addressing the problem through changes in the law. It is a current continuation towards the ideal of equality under the law.

*Next installment: **Future Equality***

Newspaper Activity: Resolving Conflicts

Use the newspaper (print or electronic) as a resource to find a current conflict among individuals or groups of people that involves discrimination, bullying or cyberbullying. As a class and/or family discuss the possible solutions and work on finding the best compromise.

Student Assessment: What is the most interesting thing you learned about the Dignity For Students Act? Explain.

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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