

It's Not Fair!

INTRODUCTION

Is our system of law, the courts and justice fair?
Where do ideas of 'equal before the law' come from?
Is the *idea* of God needed to establish true 'equality' where all people are treated equally?

Inform students that, according to the 2010 Equalities Act, those in positions of authority have to take steps to reduce any inequalities that might result from decisions they take. In particular, there is a duty not to discriminate against people on account of certain characteristics. These are called 'protected characteristics' and they are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

It is also part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that 'All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law' (Article 7). Explain that this principle of 'fairness' is particularly important to minorities and to the poor.

ACTIVITY

Show students a short *TrueTube* film about 'Criminal Make-up': <https://www.truetube.co.uk/film/criminal-make> You may need to register to access materials on TrueTube (it's free).

Explain that the criminal psychologist in this film appears to attribute crime to a combination of 'genes' and 'upbringing', but is he right?

Ask the students to respond to such questions as:

- *Does this sound as though people have no free-will whatsoever?*
- *What does short film say about fairness and justice?*
- *Do you think that people are to blame for their own crimes? Why / why not?*
- *Why might the principle of 'equality before the law' be particularly important to minority groups and to the poor?*

ACTIVITY

Make a space across your room so that students can stand along an imaginary line. Explain that this line is a 'blame' continuum: one end of the 'line' stands for the view that 'people are completely to

blame for their own crimes' and the other for the view that 'people are victims of their own genetic inheritance and upbringing and in no way to blame for what they do.'

Ask students to place themselves on the continuum according to their relative opinion on the question. Encourage them to explain any views or questions, and ask them to consider further questions such as:

- *If you were a police officer or a judge, would your treatment of offenders be different according to which end of the 'blame' continuum you stand?*
- *If you were an offender yourself, and you believed that you were completely to blame for your own crimes, do you think that would be more or less likely to prevent you from reoffending, or make no difference?*

CONCLUSION

Some people believe that justice is impossible in this life, and that only God can truly judge the rights and wrongs of a person's life. Ask the students to reflect on the idea that a perfectly just society is impossible on earth.