

Toward a More Perfect Union

As noted in the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, the founders aimed to form “a more perfect union.” They understood the document was merely a starting point in establishing justice, tranquility, welfare, liberty and prosperity for the nation and its people.

Our democracy has never progressed in a straight line. From before the adoption of the U.S. Constitution to today, we have been a country full of controversy and debate. In fact, our form of government is dependent on a public forum of open ideas and debate. We also have a history of fighting for acceptance and working toward compromise.

The three cases in this series highlight key democratic principles that are necessary to be full participants in our government: access to free public education, the right to an impartial jury as well as the right to serve as a juror, and the right to vote.

The events and judicial decisions very briefly reviewed in this series are in no way comprehensive but merely a few highlights from U.S. history. As a nation formed by “we the people,” it is fitting that the action of an ordinary citizen or group standing up for what they believed to be right has sparked positive change.

Change is constant and inevitable. But, if we are to continue to move toward a more perfect union, it is vital that we adhere to the rule of law. We must seek to include the voices and participation of all people and continue to protect and defend their rights as well.

Newspaper Activities: Look for current examples in the news of inequality under the law. What, if anything, is being done to change the situation and move us toward a more perfect union?

Look for news reports of individuals or groups of people standing up for what they believe is fair. Select one. Do you agree or disagree with them and why?

If interested, this series has a corresponding teaching guide with graphic organizers, audio podcasts, related videos and a Spanish translation version available online at <https://nynpa.com/nie/lawday.html>.

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