

Every action or decision we make is either justifiable or unjustifiable. Justice is usually decided by society or the "norm." The "norm" changes from one society to another. However, there are always laws that can be broken, consequences that must follow, and punishment that must be imparted. Justice can be seen in two different ways, social and criminal. Justice is in the eye of the beholder because we all have different attitudes about right and wrong.

Criminal justice is a term that refers to the area of social laws which a group of people deem valuable in order for the day-to-day mechanics of society to function. When these laws are broken, the infrastructure of a society breaks down, and this deviance from the "norm" must be corrected. Personal feelings, morality, religious beliefs, and inflammatory, biased feelings towards certain laws cannot supersede the concrete social laws. This type of high emotion was apparent when dealing with the facts in the murder of a Topeka police officer. In the recent trial Steven Shively was prosecuted for shooting a police officer. The prosecutor was caught up in the media and emotional hype of this case. She apparently thought that she could win simply because a police officer was shot and the public was behind her. It was a case of public revenge where the mind-set was "We're going to get the guy that did this horrible crime. It doesn't matter that he was defending his home." This type of public revenge could include the execution of Shively. No matter what verdict would have been handed-down, someone, somewhere would have been unsatisfied. If Shively were sentenced to be executed, then his family and friends would have had to fight for justice until the day he died. As the verdict of "not guilty" arrived, Paterson's family, many police officers, and friends of the family cried for justice. Yet, justice had been served.

Equal and satisfying justice has always been a problem. On May 30, 1939 a group of Texas Rangers decided to ambush and murder two people they wanted to destroy. They shot seventy five bullets into a man named Clyde and fifty four deadly bullets into a young lady named Bonnie. Of course, this is the famous story of the outlaw couple, Bonnie and Clyde. This action branched across the guaranteed right to due process. Another incident of the criminal justice's injustices occurred when the ATF decided to arrest David Koresh and his followers. We know how this story ends. The ATF was the reason that many people died and was probably the cause of the Oklahoma City bombing.

A more recent incident is one that was taped by a helicopter. A group of illegal Mexican immigrants were trying to get to the land of freedom and justice for all. After arriving they were hunted down by the border patrol in California. After the border patrol caught them they beat them up. This group of Mexicans were beat up for attempting to find liberty, homes, and food. We live in a country where we can send money to other countries but spit on the people that live in the United States of America.

Justice can also be defined in another form, social justice. When I give someone money, I expect to get a product or service of balanced worth back. When we are complaining about the price of gas, in our mind we are complaining that the price is unjust or unfair. However, public opinion can warrant an outcry for social justice so that gas prices may come down. Social justice laws are those society values that we as a society determine are right or wrong but that work within the framework of public law. When Abraham Lincoln said that "all men were created equally," he was talking about social justice. Social justice is usually someone's feelings or actions toward another person. A social injustice was played out in Topeka with the case of Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education. Racism is an unjustified feeling toward a certain race because of the color of their skin. Just the same there are many people who are spit on for being HIV positive when they

might not have had a choice in the matter. A 86 year old woman was recently discussed on the news because she was infected with HIV from a skin graft. Still people like Fred Phelps will freely picket people who are innocent.

Thomas Aquinas said, "Justice is a certain rectitude of mind, whereby a man does what he ought to do in the circumstances confronting him. Do we impart such rectitude of mind? And if we do no, will there be tolerable private or public order in the twenty-first century?" Despite our efforts to have justice, we will never succeed in the society in which we live unless social justice seeps into the laws that govern criminal justice. Then, the United States will truly be "one nation with liberty and justice for all."