

**Crime
And
The Law
Part 2**

IN THIS PART YOU WILL LEARN

- ☐ Understand how the police and citizens learn about and form opinions about each other
- ☐ Understand how negative images of either the police or the citizens in a community can come about
- ☐ Identify ways of improving police-citizen communications in your community
- ☐ Know how to tell someone else about how to keep tensions from escalation in police-citizen encounters
- ☐ Be able to see yourself as other do in situations that could involve conflict

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE SYSTEM

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Gate-keepers to the criminal justice system

EMPOWER YOURSELF

One way in which the police and the public communicate is through the media. The media has a great effect on police-citizen relations. In high crime areas, in the media and in real life, there is much tension between the two. The picture each has of the other can be negative. Explore the scene below with your small group to discover how turning police encounters into a positive experience can mean not having to become involved in the criminal justice system.

Scene: Members of a local street gang watches a TV series every Tuesday night about violent encounters between police and a gang in a small town. The police and the TV gang act like enemies whenever they see each other. There has been a crime wave in the community but no real reason for police to suspect the gang. There is a shootout. Several cops and gang members are killed. There is no solution offered for the violence. The gang members react badly and so do the police. In part, the gang is acting out what it has seen on TV. In this situation, neither police nor gang members used behavior that reduces tension.

Will this program have any effect on the community?

1. In your groups, discuss the kind of negative police-citizen encounter or kinds of meetings on the street that happens most often in your community. Talk about words or actions that build tension.
2. Develop a short role-play of your group's negative encounters. Write a script for it that includes words and actions that cause tension to build or escalate.
3. Role-play your group's encounter for the class. (Videotape it if possible.) Play back the tape at least twice — once to view it — and once to identify words or actions turn that the encounter into a negative one. As a result of analyzing the class role-plays, make a list of opinions or feelings that citizens might have about the police. Write a list of opinions or feelings that police might have about the citizens.
4. Next, choose the subject or issue your group feels causes the most tension or conflict in police-citizen encounters. Develop a TV public-service message that tells people how to improve police-community relations.

While reading this chapter...

Stop and think about the differences between a positive encounter involving talking and a negative encounter that involves confrontation or conflict.

Imagine it is 800 years ago. Imagine you live in a small village in England. A neighbor says you stole some potatoes from her garden. You say that you are not guilty. In order to prove that the accused is telling the truth, it is the custom to have the person stick one hand in a pot of boiling water. If the hand comes out not burned, then people are willing to say the accused is telling the truth. However, if the hand is burned, then the accused will be hanged!



This is what the criminal justice system was like centuries ago. A person could be forced to **confess** to a crime by being tortured. In those days, if you did not have money to pay the fine, you could lose your life! Laws have changed a great deal since then.

CHECK vocabulary words in bold.
LOOK UP word meanings in the glossary beginning on page 92.

In this chapter, you will learn about the history of our laws and of the **Constitution** of the United States. You will discover the different kinds of laws and legal rights everyone has to stay safe and out of prison.

The History of Our Laws

Where did our laws come from? Laws in the United States developed or came from English laws. Our legal system is also similar to the Canadian system. This is because the United States and Canada were once colonies of England.

For hundreds of years, laws were not written down or recorded. Most people could neither read nor write. Yet, people always had a strong notion of what was right and what was wrong. Throughout history, people have continued to search for what is fair—for the individual and for society as a whole. Laws regarding fairness in everyday life are called **common laws**.

After the United States broke away from England, it still kept most of English common law. However, the first Congress wrote a constitution for the new country. This new American Constitution became the foundation for our laws. Later, more parts were added to the Constitution. These were called **amendments**.



CRITICAL THINKING

About 61 percent of Americans have not even heard of the Bill of Rights. Why is it important to know about the origins of the laws of this country? How can knowing about the laws of your state and city or town help your life?



Offender Johnson says: "I am behind bars now. Another prisoner in my cell block tried to kill me. But the law says that is attempted murder. Fairness in how laws work means behind bars, too. It is funny:

Now that I am here for breaking the law, I realize for the first time why we have laws."

Crime and the Law- Part 2

1. Identify ways of improving police-citizen _____
2. Be able to see yourself as others do in situations that involve _____.
3. What is one way the police and public communicate? _____
4. Give examples of the media. (3) _____
5. In high crime areas in media and real life there can be much _____
6. In the "scene" in the lesson how did the TV series affect the street gang members? _____

7. How did the police react to the crime wave in the community? _____

8. Which side used behavior that reduced tension? _____
9. What kind of negative police-citizen actions happen on the street here in Columbia? _____

10. What subject or issue causes the most tension with police here? _____

11. Eight hundred years ago how did they determine if someone was guilty of a crime? _____

12. If they were found guilty what was their sentence? _____
13. How did they force a person to confess to a crime? _____
14. What will you learn about in this chapter? _____
15. What does everyone have to stay safe and out of prison? _____
16. Where did our laws come from? _____
17. Why is our legal system similar to the Canadian system? _____
18. Why were laws not written down for hundreds of years? _____

19. What are common laws? _____
20. What are parts added to the Constitution called? _____

9-17-13

Critical Thinking

(pages: 30 &31)

1. How do police and citizens learn about each other?
2. How do negative images by the police of the citizens in a community come about?
3. How do people in a community develop negative images of the police?
4. What are ways to improve police-citizen communications in our community?

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5. What is the Bill of Rights?

6. How can knowing about the laws of our country, state and city help us?

7. Why do 61% of Americans say they have never heard of the Bill of Rights?