

Diversity, equality and the law in the UK

Topic 3: What is discrimination? Does the law change people? Why has equalities law changed over time?

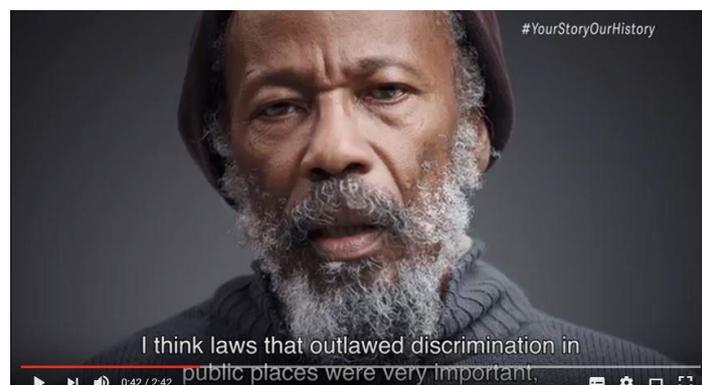
Learning intentions:

- Describe how individuals and groups are discriminated against because of their characteristics
- Recognise why the law on equalities has changed over time
- Assess the extent to which equalities legislation has addressed issues of discrimination and inequality
- Explore the extent to which law can change behaviour and attitudes

Shango's Story

Remind students that in the UK we have laws on equality to help ensure an individual or group in society is not discriminated against because of their characteristics - race, religion/belief, sexual orientation etc. (Protected characteristics are explored in more depth in Topic 4 of these materials.)

Watch video 2: [My life as an immigrant in 1960s Britain](#)



Ask students to respond to the following questions:

- a) When did Shango arrive in the UK?
- b) What kind of discrimination did Shango experience when he came to the UK?
- c) What does Shango think about racism in society and the impact of race relations law on people's attitudes and actions?

Why has equalities law changed over time?

Organise students as pairs or small groups. Give them the two sets of cards on *resource sheet 5*, one showing the names of different pieces of equalities legislation and the other showing a problem in society that the law was trying to address.

Ask students to sort the 'problem cards' into two categories:

1. 'I agree this is a problem in society today'
2. 'I don't think this is a problem in society today'

Next ask students to organise the 'legislation cards' by date and identify which problem the legislation was trying to solve by lining up each problem card with the appropriate legislation card.

Finally, ask students to discuss the extent to which these problems have been successfully resolved by Equality legislation and whether there may still be problems. Students should make notes about their suggestions.

For example: the lesbian employee gets a promotion but may be excluded from going out to socialise with the team after work or a landlord might not be able to put signs up but may still exclude black people from renting a house.

The Equality Act 2010

Introduce the Equality Act 2010 using the following description:

"The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.

Before the Act came into force there were several pieces of legislation to cover discrimination, including:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995”

www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

Class debrief

Explain to students that the law has changed considerably over time as steps have been taken to try to ensure no one is discriminated against because of their characteristics, and as values and attitudes in society have changed over time.

Recently a number of individual pieces of equalities legislation were replaced with the 2010 Equality Act to simplify the law and make it easier to understand and implement. The Act also ensures that private, public and voluntary organisations do not discriminate against their employees or people who use their services.

However, there are issues of inequality and discrimination that remain in society today.

Resource sheet 5

Equality legislation and problem card activity

Legislation Cards

Problem cards

1918 Representation of the People Act	Men are allowed to vote in elections, but women are not
1970 Equal Pay Act	Men are paid more money for doing the same job as women
1976 Race Relations Act	A landlord puts up signs outside houses that he has for rent saying 'No blacks, No Irish'
Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003	A company only employs people who say they are Jewish
Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003	A gay woman is not allowed a promotion because a member of the team refuses to work for her because she is gay
Employment Equality (age) Regulations 2006	A company forces all employees over 60 to retire