

Court Justice

"With Liberty and Justice for All." The final words of the pledge of allegiance promises justice for everyone. Justice is the idea that everyone is rewarded or punished for their actions accordingly. But is there truly justice for all?

Two criminals. One is a sex offender, a rapist who violated an unconscious woman; the other, a robber, a thief who stole \$50.75 from a bakery. According to justice, who should be punished more heavily?

Two different sentences. One was given a life sentence without parole; the other, released after 3 months. According to justice, who deserved which punishment?

Think about the impact of each crime, then think about the consequences. We were taught people should get what they deserve. That's justice. But reality is not always just.

The rapist is Brock Turner. A white, Stanford University swimmer.

The thief is an Alabamian African-American man named Alvin Kennard.

Turner was given the shorter sentence, and Kennard the other. Both were given a trial in court, but what went differently?

Kennard's sentence was a result of the "Habitual Felony Offender Act" in Alabama that punished repeat offenders. This law was often used by prosecutors to punish low-level criminals with life sentences, and Kennard was forcibly given one. A similar code of law that applies to the entire nation, known as Title 18 U.S. Code § 924(c) exists today, designed specifically to harm low-level criminals.

Meanwhile, Turner's case was judged by a judge that was biased. Judge Aaron Persky was a Stanford athlete himself. He also presided over a different rape case before, in which the defendants were not held liable.

If we believe, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," things have to change. Laws that were made specifically to punish low-level crimes have to change. Judicial processes that are biased for and against specific groups of people have to change. And for these changes to take place, we have to vote. We elect our lawmakers and our judges. We have the power to elect those who will secure justice for all.

But that's just the beginning. Call our representatives and Congressmen. Push to get rid of laws like the Habitual Felony Offender Act or Title 18 U.S. Code § 924(c). Recall unjust judges like Aaron Persky. It's up to us to make the world a more just place.