

# What Does the Rule of Law Have to Do with Me?

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We are taught to obey school rules on the first day of school. We are also constantly reminded by our parents to obey home and family regulations. In fact, rules are part of our daily lives. As we grow older, we start to understand that we are under the rule of law as well. What does the rule of law have to do with me?

It is common knowledge that every country has basic laws for its people. The rule of law is a set of rules that ensures all the people in society have equal rights. Without laws, governments would be corrupted. Without discipline, our daily lives would inevitably be affected. The rule of law protects human lives and property. People who commit any kind of crimes in society, such as murder, drug abuse, human trafficking or even offences as trivial as dropping litter, will be punished under the judicial system. More importantly, a democratic society is based on the rule of law. No one is above the law and even the government is no exception. Democracy could never survive if it were not protected by a legal system. The rule of law props up our community and even the whole country: it is the root of any stable society.

Some people may argue that the rule of law is not directly relevant to teenagers. To my knowledge, this way of thinking is wrong. Even though I am only sixteen years old, the rule of law plays an important role in my life. It is meant to protect us. Teenagers are not mature enough to deal with all kinds of problems, so there are quite a few things that I am forbidden to do under the rule of law in Macau. For example, since I am still under 18, I am not allowed to buy cigarettes or alcoholic drinks. I am restricted from entering casinos although I would very much like to. Furthermore, it is illegal to have sex with a person like me as I am below 18. As a teenager, I have to understand these basic and fundamental laws which are designed to protect me. I may very well say that getting to know these laws is one of the most important life skills I should acquire.

Other people may argue that teenagers have limited freedom under the rule of law. As far as I am concerned, I am enjoying my freedom and rights even though I have many obligations. Thanks to the rule of law, no one can take away my right to education. In Macau, all students are entitled to free education from kindergarten to secondary school. Under the protection of the law, we can have our own privacy, freedom of thought and religion. Even the house I am now living in is protected by the rule of law. It is my parents' property

and it is illegal for intruders to break into our house. What's more, it is against the law if we are maltreated physically and psychologically. Discrimination is illegal and human rights are guaranteed. Just like grown-ups, teenagers can also enjoy the same constitutional rights. In fact, the rule of law is the reason why we teenagers can have freedom.

But is the rule of law flawless? Very often we hear people saying that there is no justice and equality in our legal system. In their opinion, it is very unfair for an accused man to be judged only by the members of the jury. Sometimes the defendant's fate depends on whether he can afford a good defence lawyer.

However, I still believe that the rule of law brings justice. Earl Warren, the 14<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of the United States, once said, 'It is the spirit and not the form of law that keeps justice alive.' From my point of view, although sometimes there may be misjudgment in some legal processes, the only way to establish and implement justice is by adopting this system of law. The rule of law is founded on justice and equality. That's why I think lawyers adhering to principles of law and promoting ethical principles can uphold justice and fairness. Conversely, without a legal system, there would be no justice in our community as there would be no punishment for people who harm our society. The democratic system would collapse without legal protection.

Luckily, I am living in a place where the legal system prevails. The rule of law has kept the community in good public order. While enjoying freedom, we know the importance of respecting one another's individual rights. The rule of law has brought us justice and security. I am living happily with my parents in a law-abiding society; we feel safe and our human rights are safeguarded.

To conclude, the rule of law is essential in every country. No matter who and where we are, we are subject to the law. The rule of law doesn't restrict freedom. On the contrary, it guarantees everyone's freedom and rights and enables citizens to live in a safe, healthy and stable society. To every country, the rule of law is the first step towards civilization: it is the cornerstone of welfare and security. But to me, it is the protection against tyranny. Law is not only for those who attend law schools. It is for each and every one of us.