

Clarifying the Concept: Examples, Non-Examples and the Fairness Spectrum

1. Were the Hindus treated fairly? In responding, provide as many reasons as possible.

The fictional island nation of Pacifica includes three groups of very religious people. 51% of the population follow the Buddhist religion and call themselves Buddhists. 47% of the population follow the Hindu religion and call themselves Hindus. Finally, the remaining 2% of the population follow the Christian religion and call themselves Christians. In 2007, the Buddhist-controlled government passed the *Free Religion Act of 2007* which allowed all people in Pacifica to worship freely. In spite of this new law, some of the Buddhists secretly began to persecute the Hindus by requiring them to pay \$100 to the government before they could enter their own Hindu temples. When this persecution became known to the Buddhist leader, he said nothing and did nothing. Hindus throughout Pacifica protested and argued that they were being treated unfairly. The Buddhist leader responded by noting that everyone was allowed to worship freely. As evidence he pointed to the Christians who weren't protesting like the Hindus. Hindus soon learned that the Buddhist leader was secretly married to a Christian woman. Hindus soon learned not to discuss the Buddhist leader's wife; Hindus who raised the issue were sometimes punished with hot spoons to the feet.

2. Did the U.S. army act fairly when awarding the security contract? In responding, provide as many reasons as possible.

Where would you place the U.S. Army's decision on the Fairness Spectrum? Defend your choice.

A British company called "Secure Plus" filed a complaint against the U.S. military because it said that it was improperly excluded from bidding on the largest security contract ever awarded in Iraq. Secure Plus says that the American government's decision to award the contract to an American company was unjust. The company argues that the U.S. Army publicly required all companies interested in the security contract to get business and operating licenses from the Iraqi government before being considered for the job. After getting the proper licenses, however, Secure Plus argues that the U.S. Army privately did not enforce the license requirements and awarded the job to an American company who did not even have a license. When pushed to defend their decision, the U.S. Army said the decision was fair because the company they chose employed more Americans than any of the other companies.

(Loosely based on Washington Post report by Alec Klein)

- 3. Is the mall's "Parental Guidance Required" policy fair? In responding, provide as many reasons as possible.**

Where would you place the Galleria Mall's decision on the Fairness Spectrum? Defend your choice.

Saint Louis's high end and luxurious Galleria Mall faced a problem. Adult customers began complaining that teenagers were making them feel unsafe. The mall was popular with the under-18 teenage crowd who enjoyed the relative freedom the mall offered. Teenagers frequently walked the Galleria Mall for hours. They could be seen standing around in large groups and sometimes heard using inappropriate language. After two teenagers from rival groups got into a fight in which a young girl standing nearby was cut with a knife, the mall decided to enforce a curfew. Instituting what they called the "Parental Guidance Required" rule, the mall decided to prohibit all shoppers under the age of 19 beginning 3pm on Fridays and continuing through the weekend until 8am on Monday mornings. Those young people accompanied by someone 21 years old or older were allowed to shop at any time regardless of the curfew. The policy has angered many teenagers but managers of the mall say that the policy is needed because of teen violence and because teens are loud and get in other shoppers' way. When asked, teenagers typically respond as Elaina Barnie, 13, did: "I don't think all kids should be punished for something others did."

(Based on Christian Science Monitor report by Caitlin Carpenter)

- 4. Was Tufts University's decision to build a dorm for "single-parents only" fair? In responding, provide as many reasons as possible.**

Where would you place Tufts University's decision on the Fairness Spectrum? Defend your choice.

Yissy Perez is a single mother of a 22 month old daughter. She is also a full time undergraduate student at Tufts University outside of Boston, Massachusetts. When Yissy realized that Tufts did not have dorm rooms for students with children, she organized other mothers into a group called *Tufts Alliance for the Advancement of Mothers*. The organization began a campaign seeking on-campus housing for single parents, male or female. In addition the organization created a public relations campaign through which they combated the stereotype that all single parents had ruined lives. After recognizing that more needed to be done to assist single parents, Tufts University built a dormitory specifically for parents at its own expense. The dorm is nearly identical to dorms for single students except that each living space has an additional room for a child. In addition, the dorm has a community playroom where children can play with parental supervision. No special treatment is given to single parents seeking to gain entrance to the university and all normal housing expectations apply to the parental dorm. When the university was criticized for providing single parents with special treatment, it argued that society also benefited from the program because college educated single parents have been found less likely to depend on government aid after graduation. Tufts University President Bruce Reitman also noted that single parent college graduates have helped others to reconsider their stereotypes of single parents.

(Based on Christian Science Monitor report by Marilyn Gardner)