

## **“Miranda-Ain’t Nobody Got Time for That”**

“You have the right to remain silent.” This is just the beginning to the Miranda warnings, but these seven words resonate soundly within anyone’s mind. Any law enforcement television show or movie clearly states them upon someone’s arrest. But what all do the Miranda warnings entail? Is it just fancy police rhetoric that claims protection over arrested individuals or does it actually serve a purpose? The reality is that Miranda warnings serve a very large role in protecting an individual’s rights and trying to ensure justice for all. The warnings, alongside amendments such as the 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, help to maintain the standard of “innocent until proven guilty” and promote morality in the criminal justice field.

Let’s break down the Miranda warnings. First, “you have the right to remain silent.” This ensures the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment right against self-incrimination. The police cannot force you to speak, however “anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.” If you say something to the police after being read your rights, it can be brought up if you are taken to trial. Lastly, “you have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.” This means that no matter what, you will be provided legal counsel to help you understand exactly what is going on. This helps reinforce the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s Due Process clause.

With that being said, why is any of it even important? If there are already amendments to protect citizens, why is there a separate warning? The issue arose because of unethical tactics being used by law enforcement to elicit confessions from suspects after hours of brutal interrogation. However, these statements were coerced, many times from individuals that had minimal education levels and did not understand what was going on. Even though these

statements should have been inadmissible, innocent people were incarcerated and their due process rights afforded to them in the constitution were taken away from them. Had the individuals in question been notified of their right to remain silent and an attorney, they might not have been incarcerated.

These two rights are so important in criminal proceedings. Many individuals say things in the heat of the moment when law enforcement is involved that they wish they had not. Reminding someone of their right to an attorney also allows people to get their bearings together before giving a statement to the police. Informing someone of their right to remain silent, whether they adhere to it or not, and providing them an attorney provides morality to the police and ascertains the due process clause.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are nowhere to be found within the Miranda warnings; however, these basic human rights are associated with it. Whenever someone is detained by the police, reading them the Miranda rights protects these concepts. Everyone is afforded these rights in the constitution. You can enjoy a free life, be a contributing member of society, and follow your dreams. Denying someone their due process rights in turn denies them these rights as well.

The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment explicitly contains an equal protection clause. Miranda warnings and other amendments were not only created to protect certain individuals. Equal protection is imperative to our society. No one should have their rights unjustly taken away from them; on the same note, certain individuals should not be allowed to get away with crimes because of their ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. The Miranda warning ensures equal protection because it reminds people of the rights entitled to them. There is no possible way to know every single law that is in the record books. Whether they are enforced or not is irrelevant. An

uneducated individual may be berated by authorities in an interrogation and confess to a crime they did not commit in order to stop the questioning. Telling them right off the bat that they have the right to remain silent and the right to an attorney ensures these individuals get equal protection to their educated counterparts.

In closing, the Miranda warning which stemmed from *Miranda v. Arizona* is very influential in American society. The warning reminds a detained individual of his or her right to remain silent, while including that anything said after being Mirandized is admissible at trial, and the right to an attorney, adding that one will be provided if he/she cannot afford one. This helps to ensure equal protection under the law for all individuals and protect their constitutional right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These all lead to one large principle— justice for all citizens. No matter your background or what specific crime you commit, you can be sure that you will have equal protection under the law. This holds the criminal justice system accountable for actually proving guilt and presenting proper evidence rather than rushing through and convicting innocent people. As Madea in the comedy Madea Goes to Jail said “Ain’t nobody Miranda me, Miranda wasn’t even in the room” and with that, the judge had to let her go. Without *Miranda v. Arizona*, our society would be a very scary place, because you would never know if you would go to jail for a crime you did not commit or if everyone would get to walk free for their crimes.