

Plessy v. Ferguson

163 U.S. 537 (1896)

Keyword Subject

Separate but Equal, Train

Facts

Plessy, a man of mixed race, sat in a “whites only” train car and was arrested under Louisiana’s segregation laws.

Procedural History

State courts upheld the conviction; Plessy appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Issue

Does state-imposed racial segregation violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment?

Holding: No

Principle

Laws requiring racial segregation do not imply the inferiority of either race and are therefore constitutional.

Reasoning

The Court held that “separate but equal” facilities did not violate the Constitution, legitimizing segregation.

Separate Opinions

Justice Harlan: dissented