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## **Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)**

### **– CASE BRIEF –**

Citation: 163 U.S. 537

Docket No.: —

Date Filed: 1896-05-18



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Unknown Court

**Source URL:**

<https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/94508/plessy-v-ferguson/>

**Judges:**

Brewer, Brown, Harlan

**Procedural History:****Attorneys:**

Mr. A. W. Tourgee and Mr. J3. F. Phillips for plaintiff in error. Mr. F. D. McKenney was on Mr. Phillips's brief., Mr. James C. Walker filed a brief for plaintiff in error., Mr. Alexander Porter Morse for defendant in error. Mr. M. J. Cunningham, Attorney General of the State of Louisiana, and Mr. Lionel Adams were on his brief.

**Facts:**

In 1890, Louisiana passed a law requiring separate railway cars for white and 'colored' passengers. In 1892, Homer Plessy, who was one-eighth African American, bought a first-class ticket on the East Louisiana Railroad and took a seat in the whites-only car. He was asked to move to the 'colored' car but refused. Plessy was subsequently arrested and fined for violating the state law (Page 539-540).

**Issue:**

Whether a Louisiana statute mandating racial segregation in intrastate railroad cars violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Page 546).

### **Rule of Law:**

Under the 'separate but equal' doctrine, racial segregation does not inherently conflict with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as long as the separate facilities are equal in quality (Page 544).

### **Holding & Reasoning:**

No, it does not. The Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause was not intended to abolish racial distinctions made by states but rather to prevent discrimination against African Americans. The 'separate but equal' doctrine allows for such distinctions provided that equal facilities are available to all races (Page 544, 551).

### **Disposition:**

The Supreme Court of the United States affirmed the judgment of the Louisiana Supreme Court, which held that a Louisiana statute requiring separate but equal accommodations for white and 'colored' passengers on intrastate railroad cars did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause (Page 552).

### **Dissent:**

Justices John Marshall Harlan dissented from the Court's opinion. He argued that the Louisiana statute was unconstitutional because it established a 'badge of servitude' for African Americans, violating the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection under the law (Page 557).

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