

US History II Important Court Cases

Slaughterhouse cases (1873) This U.S. Supreme Court decision that held that the Privileges or Immunities Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution only protects the legal rights that are associated with federal U.S. citizenship, not those that pertain to state citizenship.

US v. Cruikshank (1876) This case overrode the enforcement acts by throwing out the convictions of some of those responsible for the Colfax massacre of 1873.

Tape v. Hurley 1885 the Supreme Court ordered San Francisco to admit Chinese students to public schools in 1885. The California state legislature then passed a law authorizing segregated education for the Chinese.

In **Wabash v. Illinois 1886**, the Supreme Court ruled that the authority to regulate railroads which spanned states belonged to the federal governments--not to the states.

US v. E. C. Knight 1895 – the Supreme Court ruled that the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 could not break up a sugar refining monopoly because the constitution empowered Congress to regulate commerce but not manufacturing. It's important because it shows the Court's bias for business in the 1890's.

Plessy v. Ferguson 1896 - Supreme Court ruled that separate-but-equal facilities were constitutional. The decision upheld the principle of racial segregation over the next half-century. The ruling provided legal justification for segregation on trains and buses, and in public facilities such as hotels, theaters, and schools.

Lochner v. NY 1905 – Supreme Court voided a state law establishing 10 hours per day or 60 hours per week as the maximum hours of work for bakers in NY. In other words, the Supreme Court ruled that a New York law setting maximum working hours for bakers was unconstitutional. The Court used the 14th Amendment to support its ruling. It was a setback for labor reform. This case highlights how the Supreme Court ruled in favor of businesses and against states' reform efforts from 1897 – 1937. This period is known as the **Lochner era**.

Muller v. Oregon 1908 – The Supreme Court set a maximum for women's working hours. Louis Brandeis argued that women had less strength than men and should work less hours than men. He also believed that the state should protect women because of their child-bearing roles. This ruling challenged the ruling in the **Lochner v. NY case**. By 1917, thirty states limited the hours that women could work. This case also raised the idea that government should better the living and working conditions of men and women.

Bailey v. Alabama 1911 – Supreme Court overturned laws making it a crime for sharecroppers to break their labor contracts. It also made it unconstitutional for Louisville to zone blacks out of certain parts of the city. Alabama's peonage law (debt slavery) was unconstitutional because the 13th Amendment provided protection against involuntary servitude.

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Schenk v. US 1919– Supreme Court ruled that Charles Schenk was rightly convicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 for distributing anti-draft leaflets in the mail. His first amendment rights do not trump the Espionage Act during war. The ruling in this case upheld Eugene V. Debs conviction for his speech in condemning the war. This case demonstrates that the freedom of speech protection afforded in the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment could be restricted if the words spoken or printed represented to society a “clear and present danger.”

US v. Abrams 1919 – Jacob Abrams was convicted under the Espionage Act of 1918 for distributing pamphlets criticizing American intervention in Russia after the Russian Revolution. He was deported to Russia. This case demonstrates that the freedom of speech protection afforded in the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment could be restricted if the words spoken or printed represented to society a “clear and present danger.”

Scopes Monkey Trial 1925 - a high school teacher, John Scopes was accused of violating Tennessee’s Butler Act, which had made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. The trial was deliberately staged in order to attract publicity to the small town of Dayton, TN where it was held. The Butler Act was upheld.

Buck v. Bell 1927 – Supreme Court upheld state laws instituting the sterilization of the insane and “feeble-minded” inmates in mental institutions.

Scottsboro Boys Cases 1931 – nine black boys were accused by two white women of being raped on a train. The American Communist Party took on the case on the state level in an attempt to free the boys. The case then went to the Supreme Court in **Powell v. Alabama**. The Supreme Court also took up the **Norris v. Alabama** case in 1935.

Powell v. Alabama 1932 – ruled that the **Scottsboro boys** had been denied the right counsel which violated their right to due process under the 14th Amendment.

Norris v. Alabama 1935 – The Supreme Court overturned the guilty verdicts of the **Scottsboro boys** ruling that the systemic exclusion of blacks on the Jackson County jury roles denied a fair trial.

Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States 1935 the **National Industrial Recovery Act** was struck down The Supreme Court. Major elements of FDR's New Deal act was unconstitutional.

Korematsu v. US 1944 – the Supreme Court upheld that the internment of Japanese Americans was constitutional during war.

Smith v Allwright 1944 – outlawed all-white primaries, one of the mechanisms by which southern states deprived black citizens of political rights.

Mendez v. Westminster 1946 – The Supreme Court ordered all schools in Orange County, CA be desegregated. Following that, the state of California ordered all schools be desegregated.

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Brown v. Board of Education 1952 – Thurgood Marshall attacked the ruling on Plessy v Ferguson case which called for separate but equal institutions. In this case, a young girl had to walk across dangerous railroad tracks to attend a black school rather than attend one closer. The Court ruled that separate but equal has no place in education.

Engle v. Vitale 1962 ruled that that school-sponsored prayer in public schools violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

Miranda v. Arizona 1966 the Supreme Court ruled that detained criminal suspects, prior to police questioning, must be informed of their constitutional right to an attorney and against self-incrimination.

Loving v. Virginia 1967 outlawed Virginia's law prohibiting interracial marriage

Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education 1971 approved busing programs to speed up racial integration of public schools.

Roe v Wade 1973 created a constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy

Regents of the University of California v. Bakke 1978 rejected the idea of fixed affirmative action quotas but allowed race to be a determining factor in college admission; set the precedent to allow for affirmative action in colleges