

Major Civil Rights Cases

Case	Date	Background	Question to be Answered	Ruling
Slaughterhouse cases	1873	Louisiana created state-sanctioned monopolies in slaughterhouse business—butchers believed their 14 th Amendment rights were being violated	Did 14 th Amendment expand the federal government's authority to protect black citizens?	No, defense of most rights still a job for individual states 13 th and 14 th Amendments did not greatly expand power of U.S. government 14 th Amendment did not create new set of national citizenship rights
U.S. v. Cruikshank	1876	Colfax Massacre resulted in 100 black deaths/ 3 whites killed—no one convicted	Did the 14 th Amendment protect blacks from private acts of violence?	No, 14 th Amendment did not give U.S. government power to suppress ordinary crimes by individuals U.S. involved only when state actions denied citizen rights
U.S. v. Singleton	1883	Black man denied entry into an opera house in New York City	Did Civil Rights Act of 1875 prohibit private acts of discrimination?	No, Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional 14 th Amendment only dealt with state discrimination; did not cover private acts of discrimination
Plessy v. Ferguson	1896	Black man tried to sit in "white" railcar to test Louisiana's Jim Crow laws	Did Jim Crow system violate 14 th Amendment?	No, legislation was powerless to stop private acts of racial bias Separate facilities were not inherently unconstitutional Facilities could be separate if they were equal