

EXTRA LESSON - Segregation in the US

MILESTONES

- Racial Segregation: 1875-1960
- 1865:-Murder of Lincoln
 - Thirteenth Amendment
- 1868:-Fourteenth Amendment
- 1870:-The Fifteenth Amendment
- 1st December 1955: Rosa Parks and the bus



- 1896: Separate Car Act
- 18th May 1898: Plessy V Ferguson decision
- 1954: Brown V Board of Education



- 1964: The Civil Rights Act



- 12th February 2009: Marker commemorating arrest of Plessy

After the Secession War, the US was entering in a period of "Reconstruction". The old Confederate states used their legal freedom to pass anti-black people laws and to create segregation despite the passing of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendment.

In 1896, the Louisiana state passed the Separate Car Act that required separate accommodations for blacks and whites on railroads, including separate railway cars.

Homer Plessy who had 1/8 of African blood, decided to transgress this law. Plessy took a seat in the whites-only railway car, he was asked to vacate it, and sit instead in the blacks-only car. Plessy refused and was arrested immediately by the detective. As planned, the train was stopped, and Plessy was taken off the train at Press and Royal streets. Plessy was remanded for trial in Orleans Parish. On the 18th of May 1896, Plessy was recognized guilty, in virtue of the constitutionality of state laws requiring racial segregation in public facilities under the doctrine of "separate but equal."

In spite of this decision, some people began to challenge segregation thanks to Homer action, like the judge John Marshall Harlan who had written a public letter to show is dissenting opinion.

It was only later, with similar actions like Rosa Parks who had refused to give her place in the bus to a white man in 1955, and firstly with the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) case, that the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public education was unconstitutional. Plessy v. Ferguson was never overturned by the Supreme Court. But, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited legal segregation.

The Amendments:

The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the US:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

The Fourteenth Amendment addresses citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws:

Section 1:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; **nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law;** nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.