

WHAT SUPREME COURT CASE FOUND THAT BLACKS, BOTH SLAVES AND FREE - "CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED"

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT SUPREME COURT CASE FOUND THAT BLACKS, BOTH SLAVES AND FREE - "CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED" IS A PHRASE THAT ENCAPSULATES A SIGNIFICANT LEGAL AND HISTORICAL MOMENT IN THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES. THIS STATEMENT IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE LANDMARK SUPREME COURT CASE DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD (1857), WHICH PROFOUNDLY IMPACTED THE LEGAL STATUS OF BLACK PEOPLE—BOTH ENSLAVED AND FREE—IN AMERICA. UNDERSTANDING THIS CASE, ITS BACKGROUND, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IS ESSENTIAL IN COMPREHENDING THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE ONGOING STRUGGLES AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE DRED SCOTT CASE

PRE-CIVIL WAR AMERICA AND SLAVERY

BEFORE DELVING INTO THE CASE ITSELF, IT'S CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE UNITED STATES PRIOR TO THE CIVIL WAR. SLAVERY WAS A DEEPLY ENTRENCHED INSTITUTION, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTHERN STATES, WHERE BLACK PEOPLE—WHETHER ENSLAVED OR FREE—LACKED BASIC RIGHTS AND WERE CONSIDERED PROPERTY RATHER THAN CITIZENS.

DURING THIS PERIOD:

- ENSLAVED AFRICANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS WERE LEGALLY OWNED BY WHITE SLAVEHOLDERS.
- FREE BLACK POPULATIONS EXISTED PRIMARILY IN NORTHERN STATES AND SOME BORDER REGIONS, OFTEN FACING DISCRIMINATION AND LEGAL RESTRICTIONS.
- THE NATION WAS DIVIDED OVER THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY'S EXPANSION INTO NEW TERRITORIES AND STATES.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF FREE BLACKS

WHILE SOME FREE BLACKS ENJOYED LIMITED RIGHTS, MANY FACED:

- LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR MOVEMENT, PROPERTY OWNERSHIP, AND VOTING RIGHTS.
- SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION.
- UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THEIR STATUS IN THE EYES OF THE LAW, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT OF 1850.

THE DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD CASE: AN OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

DRED SCOTT WAS AN ENSLAVED MAN OWNED BY DR. JOHN EMERSON, A U.S. ARMY SURGEON. SCOTT HAD LIVED IN FREE TERRITORIES—ILLINOIS AND THE WISCONSIN TERRITORY—FOR SEVERAL YEARS, LEADING HIM TO BELIEVE HE HAD BECOME FREE. AFTER EMERSON'S DEATH, SCOTT ATTEMPTED TO SUE FOR HIS FREEDOM, CLAIMING THAT HIS RESIDENCE IN FREE TERRITORIES MADE HIM A FREE MAN.

THE CASE PROGRESSED THROUGH THE COURTS, ULTIMATELY REACHING THE U.S. SUPREME COURT IN 1857. IT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT BECAUSE IT CHALLENGED THE LEGAL DEFINITIONS OF FREEDOM, CITIZENSHIP, AND RACE.

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION

THE SUPREME COURT, LED BY CHIEF JUSTICE ROGER B. TANEY, DELIVERED A CONTROVERSIAL AND HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DECISION. THE COURT RULED THAT:

- BLACK PEOPLE, WHETHER ENSLAVED OR FREE, WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE INCLUDED AS CITIZENS UNDER THE U.S. CONSTITUTION.
- BLACKS "WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE, NOR EVER WERE CONSIDERED AS, PART OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY CREATED BY THE CONSTITUTION."
- THEREFORE, DRED SCOTT HAD NO RIGHT TO SUE IN FEDERAL COURT BECAUSE HE WAS NOT A CITIZEN.
- THE COURT ALSO DECLARED THAT CONGRESS LACKED THE AUTHORITY TO PROHIBIT SLAVERY IN THE TERRITORIES, EFFECTIVELY NULLIFYING THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE OF 1820.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHRASE

UNDERSTANDING THE PHRASE IN CONTEXT

THE PHRASE, "CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED," REFLECTS THE COURT'S ASSERTION THAT THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION NEVER ENVISIONED BLACK PEOPLE—FREE OR ENSLAVED—AS PART OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL COMMUNITY. THIS STATEMENT WAS USED TO JUSTIFY THE EXCLUSION OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS FROM CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS AND TO UPHOLD THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BLACK AMERICANS

THE DECISION HAD PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS:

- IT DENIED BLACK PEOPLE ANY CLAIM TO CITIZENSHIP OR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.
- IT REINFORCED THE NOTION THAT BLACK PEOPLE WERE INHERENTLY INFERIOR AND OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF AMERICAN POLITICAL RIGHTS.
- IT EMBOLDENED PRO-SLAVERY ADVOCATES AND HEIGHTENED TENSIONS LEADING UP TO THE CIVIL WAR.

LEGAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS AFTER DRED SCOTT

IMPACT ON CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION

THE RULING INVALIDATED EFFORTS TO LIMIT OR ABOLISH SLAVERY THROUGH LEGISLATIVE MEASURES IN THE TERRITORIES AND SET BACK CIVIL RIGHTS ADVANCEMENTS FOR BLACK AMERICANS.

KEY CONSEQUENCES:

- THE DECISION WAS USED TO JUSTIFY THE EXPANSION OF SLAVERY INTO NEW TERRITORIES.
- IT UNDERScoreD THE NEED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO SECURE RIGHTS FOR BLACK AMERICANS.

REVERSAL AND LEGACY

THE DRED SCOTT DECISION WAS EFFECTIVELY OVERTURNED BY THE 13TH AND 14TH AMENDMENTS:

- THE 13TH AMENDMENT (1865) ABOLISHED SLAVERY.
- THE 14TH AMENDMENT (1868) GRANTED CITIZENSHIP TO ALL PERSONS BORN OR NATURALIZED IN THE U.S., EXPLICITLY INCLUDING FORMER SLAVES.

HOWEVER, THE LANGUAGE AND IDEAS FROM THE DRED SCOTT DECISION CONTINUED TO INFLUENCE RACIAL ATTITUDES AND POLICIES FOR DECADES.

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS AND LESSONS

HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF THE DRED SCOTT DECISION

LEGAL SCHOLARS AND HISTORIANS WIDELY CONDEMN THE DECISION AS ONE OF THE WORST IN SUPREME COURT HISTORY, CITING:

- ITS BLATANT RACISM.
- ITS ROLE IN PERPETUATING SLAVERY AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.
- ITS FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THE HUMANITY AND RIGHTS OF BLACK PEOPLE.

LESSONS LEARNED

THE CASE UNDERSCORES THE IMPORTANCE OF:

- JUDICIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD JUSTICE AND EQUALITY.
- RECOGNIZING AND CHALLENGING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM EMBEDDED IN LEGAL SYSTEMS.
- THE ONGOING NEED FOR CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM TO RECTIFY HISTORICAL INJUSTICES.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- THE DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD CASE WAS A LANDMARK SUPREME COURT DECISION IN 1857.
- THE COURT RULED THAT BLACK PEOPLE—BOTH ENSLAVED AND FREE—“CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED” TO BE CONSIDERED CITIZENS.
- THIS DECISION DENIED BLACK AMERICANS BASIC RIGHTS AND JUSTIFIED THE EXPANSION OF SLAVERY.
- THE PHRASE HIGHLIGHTS THE COURT’S ASSERTION THAT THE CONSTITUTION DID NOT RECOGNIZE BLACK PEOPLE AS PART OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY.
- THE RULING WAS EVENTUALLY OVERTURNED BY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, BUT ITS LEGACY PERSISTED IN RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

CONCLUSION

THE PHRASE ASSOCIATED WITH THE DRED SCOTT DECISION ENCAPSULATES A DARK CHAPTER IN AMERICAN LEGAL HISTORY, REFLECTING THE SYSTEMIC DENIAL OF RIGHTS TO BLACK PEOPLE BASED ON RACIAL PREJUDICE. UNDERSTANDING THIS CASE AND THE LANGUAGE USED HELPS US APPRECIATE THE STRUGGLES FACED BY BLACK AMERICANS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE. IT ALSO SERVES AS A REMINDER OF THE POWER OF THE JUDICIARY AND THE NECESSITY FOR VIGILANCE IN SAFEGUARDING CIVIL RIGHTS FOR ALL CITIZENS.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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- LEVINSON, SANFORD. REVOLUTION AND THE CONSTITUTION: A STORY OF CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS. HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2013.
- THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: DRED SCOTT DECISION ANALYSIS
- UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT HISTORICAL OPINIONS

NOTE: THIS ARTICLE AIMS TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF THE SUPREME COURT CASE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PHRASE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND LAW.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT SUPREME COURT CASE ESTABLISHED THAT BLACKS, BOTH SLAVES AND FREE, WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE CITIZENS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION?

THE CASE IS *DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD* (1857), WHERE THE SUPREME COURT RULED THAT BLACKS, WHETHER ENSLAVED OR FREE, COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

HOW DID THE DRED SCOTT DECISION IMPACT THE LEGAL STATUS OF BLACK AMERICANS?

THE DECISION DECLARED THAT BLACKS HAD NO RIGHTS WHICH THE WHITE MAN WAS BOUND TO RESPECT, EFFECTIVELY DENYING THEM CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS UNDER THE LAW.

WHAT CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES DID THE SUPREME COURT CITE TO JUSTIFY ITS RULING IN *DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD*?

THE COURT BASED ITS DECISION ON INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION THAT CONSIDERED BLACKS AS OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF CITIZENSHIP, EMPHASIZING STATES' RIGHTS AND PROPERTY RIGHTS RELATED TO SLAVERY.

WHAT WAS THE LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DRED SCOTT RULING IN AMERICAN HISTORY?

THE RULING HEIGHTENED TENSIONS LEADING UP TO THE CIVIL WAR AND WAS EVENTUALLY OVERTURNED BY THE 13TH AND 14TH AMENDMENTS, WHICH ABOLISHED SLAVERY AND GRANTED CITIZENSHIP TO ALL PERSONS BORN OR NATURALIZED IN THE U.S.

WHICH LANDMARK SUPREME COURT DECISION DIRECTLY CHALLENGED AND OVERTURNED THE PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED IN *DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD*?

THE 14TH AMENDMENT (1868) OVERTURNED THE *DRED SCOTT* DECISION BY GRANTING CITIZENSHIP TO ALL PERSONS BORN OR NATURALIZED IN THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING FORMER SLAVES.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHAT SUPREME COURT CASE FOUND THAT BLACKS, BOTH SLAVES AND FREE - "CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED"

THE HISTORY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES IS MARKED BY LEGAL DECISIONS AND SOCIETAL ATTITUDES THAT HAVE SHAPED THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AMERICANS ACROSS CENTURIES. AMONG THESE, A LANDMARK SUPREME COURT CASE PROFOUNDLY ARTICULATED THE NOTION THAT BLACK INDIVIDUALS—WHETHER ENSLAVED OR FREE—WERE NEVER INTENDED TO ENJOY THE SAME RIGHTS AND STATUS AS WHITE CITIZENS. THIS CASE NOT ONLY REFLECTED THE DEEPLY INGRAINED RACIAL PREJUDICES OF ITS TIME BUT ALSO INFLUENCED LEGAL AND SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVES FOR GENERATIONS. UNDERSTANDING THIS CASE PROVIDES CRUCIAL INSIGHT INTO THE ROOTS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY.

THE CONTEXT BEFORE THE CASE: A NATION DIVIDED ON RACE AND RIGHTS

BEFORE DELVING INTO THE SPECIFICS OF THE CASE, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTAND THE BROADER HISTORICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT. THE UNITED STATES, FROM ITS INCEPTION, WAS A NATION DIVIDED ALONG RACIAL LINES, WITH SLAVERY ENTRENCHED IN THE SOUTHERN STATES AND A GROWING ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT IN THE NORTH. THE CONSTITUTION ITSELF INCLUDED COMPROMISES THAT IMPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGED RACIAL HIERARCHIES, SUCH AS THE THREE-FIFTHS COMPROMISE, WHICH COUNTED ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS AS A FRACTION OF A PERSON FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSES.

HOWEVER, DESPITE THESE COMPROMISES, THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK AMERICANS REMAINED TENUOUS. LAWS AND CUSTOMS OFTEN EXPLICITLY DENIED THEM RIGHTS GRANTED TO WHITE CITIZENS, AND SOCIETAL ATTITUDES JUSTIFIED THEIR SUBJUGATION. IT WAS WITHIN THIS ENVIRONMENT THAT THE SUPREME COURT'S UNDERSTANDING OF RACE AND CITIZENSHIP WAS FORMED, CULMINATING IN LANDMARK DECISIONS THAT WOULD REINFORCE OR CHALLENGE THOSE SOCIETAL NORMS.

THE SUPREME COURT CASE: DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD (1857)

THE CASE THAT MOST NOTABLY CEMENTED THE IDEA THAT BLACKS, WHETHER ENSLAVED OR FREE, "CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED" TO BE AMERICAN CITIZENS IS DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD (1857). THIS CASE IS OFTEN REGARDED AS ONE OF THE MOST INFAMOUS DECISIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE U.S. SUPREME COURT AND HAD PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RIGHTS OF BLACK AMERICANS.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

DRED SCOTT WAS AN ENSLAVED PERSON OWNED BY DR. JOHN EMERSON, A U.S. ARMY SURGEON. WHILE SCOTT WAS IN FREE TERRITORIES—SUCH AS ILLINOIS AND THE WISCONSIN TERRITORY—HE ARGUED THAT HIS RESIDENCE IN THESE AREAS MADE HIM A FREE MAN. AFTER EMERSON'S DEATH, SCOTT SUED FOR HIS FREEDOM, CLAIMING THAT HIS TIME SPENT IN FREE STATES HAD EMANCIPATED HIM.

THE CASE EVENTUALLY REACHED THE SUPREME COURT, WHICH FACED THE CRITICAL QUESTION: COULD A BLACK PERSON, FREE OR ENSLAVED, BE CONSIDERED AN AMERICAN CITIZEN WITH THE RIGHT TO SUE IN FEDERAL COURT? THE COURT'S DECISION WOULD HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES FOR THE LEGAL STATUS OF BLACK AMERICANS.

THE COURT'S RULING

CHIEF JUSTICE ROGER B. TANEY DELIVERED THE MAJORITY OPINION, WHICH DECLARED THAT:

- BLACKS, WHETHER FREE OR ENSLAVED, "WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE INCLUDED" UNDER THE PHRASE "CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES" IN THE CONSTITUTION.
- THEY "HAD NO RIGHTS WHICH THE WHITE MAN WAS BOUND TO RESPECT."
- PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT "WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE INCLUDED" AS CITIZENS WHEN THE CONSTITUTION WAS WRITTEN.

THE RULING EFFECTIVELY STATED THAT:

> "THEY [BLACKS] HAD NO RIGHTS WHICH THE WHITE MAN WAS BOUND TO RESPECT."

THIS DECISION DECLARED THAT BLACK AMERICANS, WHETHER FREE OR ENSLAVED, COULD NOT BE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THEREFORE HAD NO STANDING TO SUE IN FEDERAL COURTS. IT ALSO NULLIFIED THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE, WHICH HAD ATTEMPTED TO RESTRICT SLAVERY IN CERTAIN TERRITORIES, THUS OPENING THE DOOR FOR THE EXPANSION OF SLAVERY INTO NEW TERRITORIES.

THE LEGAL AND SOCIETAL IMPACT OF THE DECISION

THE DRED SCOTT DECISION WAS DEVASTATING FOR BLACK AMERICANS. IT INSTITUTIONALIZED THE NOTION THAT THEY WERE INHERENTLY INFERIOR AND OUTSIDE THE PROTECTIONS GRANTED BY THE CONSTITUTION. THE RULING HAD SEVERAL IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS:

- LEGAL DENIAL OF RIGHTS: BLACK INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR FREE OR ENSLAVED STATUS, WERE DENIED ACCESS TO FEDERAL COURTS AND THE PROTECTIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.
- LEGITIMIZATION OF SLAVERY EXPANSION: THE DECISION SUPPORTED THE EXTENSION OF SLAVERY INTO THE TERRITORIES, AGGRAVATING TENSIONS THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO THE CIVIL WAR.
- RACIAL HIERARCHIES REINFORCED: THE RULING REINFORCED RACIAL HIERARCHIES BY EXPLICITLY STATING THAT BLACKS WERE NOT INTENDED TO BE INCLUDED AS CITIZENS OR POSSESS RIGHTS EQUAL TO WHITES.

THE DECISION WAS MET WITH WIDESPREAD OUTRAGE IN ABOLITIONIST CIRCLES AND AMONG FREE BLACK COMMUNITIES.

CONVERSELY, IT WAS CELEBRATED BY PRO-SLAVERY ADVOCATES AND THOSE SEEKING TO PRESERVE RACIAL INEQUALITIES.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE RULING: AN EXAMINATION OF TANEY'S ARGUMENT

CHIEF JUSTICE TANEY'S OPINION WAS ROOTED IN A PARTICULAR INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION AND SOCIETAL NORMS OF THE TIME. SOME KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- HISTORICAL CONTEXT: TANEY AND THE MAJORITY ARGUED THAT THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION DID NOT INTEND FOR BLACK PERSONS TO BE INCLUDED AS CITIZENS. THEY POINTED TO THE FACT THAT BLACK PEOPLE WERE CONSIDERED PROPERTY AND NOT PERSONS UNDER THE LAW IN MANY STATES.
- LEGAL PRECEDENT: THE COURT RELIED ON EARLIER CASES AND LEGAL TRADITIONS THAT EXCLUDED BLACK INDIVIDUALS FROM CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS.
- ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NORMS: THE DECISION REFLECTED THE PREVAILING SOCIETAL VIEW THAT BLACK PEOPLE WERE INHERENTLY INFERIOR AND DESTINED FOR SUBJUGATION, A VIEW REINFORCED BY SLAVERY AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

THIS INTERPRETATION, HOWEVER, WAS HEAVILY CRITICIZED FOR ITS HISTORICAL INACCURACIES AND FOR IGNORING THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE ENSHRINED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE CONSTITUTION.

THE LEGACY AND REPERCUSSIONS OF DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD

WHILE THE DRED SCOTT DECISION WAS EVENTUALLY OVERTURNED BY THE 13TH AND 14TH AMENDMENTS—ABOLISHING SLAVERY AND ESTABLISHING BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP—THE CASE'S LEGACY PERSISTED IN SHAPING RACIAL ATTITUDES AND LEGAL INTERPRETATIONS.

LEGAL AND CULTURAL AFTERMATH

- THE RULING EMBOLDENED PRO-SLAVERY FACTIONS AND DEEPENED SECTIONAL CONFLICT.
- IT BECAME A SYMBOL OF RACIAL INJUSTICE AND A RALLYING POINT FOR ABOLITIONISTS.
- THE DECISION INFLUENCED SUBSEQUENT LEGISLATION AND COURT RULINGS THAT UPHELD SEGREGATION AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND MODERN REFLECTIONS

THE DRED SCOTT CASE SERVES AS A STARK REMINDER OF THE DANGERS OF LEGAL INTERPRETATIONS THAT DENY BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS BASED ON RACE. IT UNDERSCORES THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS AND THE ONGOING NEED TO CHALLENGE SYSTEMIC RACISM WITHIN THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

CONCLUSION: RECOGNIZING THE ROOTS OF RACIAL EXCLUSION IN U.S. LAW

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD DECLARED, IN ESSENCE, THAT BLACKS—BOTH ENSLAVED AND FREE—"CANNOT BE, NOR EVER WERE INTENDED" TO BE RECOGNIZED AS CITIZENS WITH RIGHTS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION. THIS LANDMARK CASE NOT ONLY REFLECTED THE DEEPLY INGRAINED RACIAL PREJUDICES OF ITS TIME BUT ALSO INSTITUTIONALIZED THEM, SHAPING AMERICAN SOCIETY'S APPROACH TO RACE AND RIGHTS FOR DECADES.

UNDERSTANDING THIS CASE IS VITAL FOR APPRECIATING THE LONG AND ARDUOUS JOURNEY TOWARD RACIAL EQUALITY. IT HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL AND SOCIETAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAST INJUSTICES AND REMINDS US OF THE ONGOING STRUGGLE TO REALIZE THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROMISE OF EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL. AS HISTORY SHOWS, LEGAL DECISIONS MATTER—THEY CAN EITHER UPHOLD INJUSTICE OR SERVE AS CATALYSTS FOR PROGRESS. RECOGNIZING THE ROOTS OF RACIAL EXCLUSION IN CASES LIKE DRED SCOTT IS A CRUCIAL STEP TOWARD BUILDING A MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE FUTURE.

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