

Marbury vs Madison

The US Supreme Court case, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, that established the concept that courts have the right to look at acts of officials and laws, when challenged, to determine if they are ok (constitutional) or whether they are not ok (unconstitutional).

Plessy vs Ferguson

In a 7-1 decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Ferguson. The majority put its stamp of approval on the doctrine of "separate but equal." The dissent, written by Justice John Marshall Harlan, disagreed, arguing that segregationist laws indoctrinate society with the belief that the two races are not equal.
Source: landmarkcases.org

Brown vs Topeka Board of Education

Ended the concept of "separate but equal" in schools...

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Brown. The Court found the practice of segregation unconstitutional and refused to apply its decision in Plessy v. Ferguson to "the field of public education." Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the opinion for the Court.
Source: landmarkcases.org

Miranda vs Arizona

In a 5-4 opinion, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Miranda. The majority opinion, written by Chief Justice Earl Warren, concluded that defendants arrested under state law must be informed of their constitutional rights against self-incrimination and to representation by an attorney before being interrogated when in police custody. Justices Clark, Harlan, Stewart and White dissented.
...Created the Miranda rights...
Source: landmarkcases.org

Tinker v. Des Moines

John and Mary Beth Tinker of Des Moines, Iowa, wore black armbands to their public school as a symbol of protest against American involvement in the Vietnam War. When school authorities asked that the Tinkers remove their armbands, they refused and were subsequently suspended. The Supreme Court decided that the Tinkers had the right to wear the armbands, with Justice Abe Fortas stating that no one expects students to "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

McCulloch vs Maryland

Federalism, Supremacy Clause, Elastic Clause

Facts of the case:

The state of Maryland had a desire to limit the powers of the federal government. A tax was placed on all notes the originated with banks chartered outside of the state. The Second Bank of the United States, a federal entity was the target of this attack. When James McCulloch refused to pay the tax and the court eventually went before the Supreme Court. The Court decided that the Second Bank of the United States was "necessary and proper" for the federal government to exercise its duties. Therefore, the bank was constitutional and the state of Maryland could not tax its activities.

Significance of the case:

This landmark case declared that the United States government had implied powers as well as those specifically listed in the Constitution. The decision provided the avenue for the federal government to expand or evolve its powers to meet an ever-changing world.

Source:

<http://americanhistory.about.com/od/judicialbranch/p/McCulloch.htm>

Korematsu v. United States

After Pearl Harbor was bombed in December 1941, the military feared a Japanese attack on the U.S. mainland and the American government was worried that Americans of Japanese descent might aid the enemy. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order forcing many West Coast Japanese and Japanese Americans into internment camps. Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American, relocated and claimed to be Mexican-American to avoid being interned, but was later arrested and convicted of violating an executive order. Korematsu challenged his conviction in the courts saying that Congress, the President, and the military authorities did not have the power to issue the relocation orders and that he was being discriminated against based on his race. The government argued that the evacuation was necessary to protect the country and the federal appeals court agreed. Korematsu appealed this decision and the case came before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court agreed with government and stated that the need to protect the country was a greater priority than the individual rights of the Japanese and Japanese Americans.