

Primary Source

Louisiana Separate Car Act, 1890



To what extent did Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice become a reality for African Americans from Reconstruction to the end of the nineteenth century?

- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice from the colonial era to the outbreak of the Civil War.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest to end slavery.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

Essential Vocabulary

Parish	A division of territory and local government in Louisiana, similar to a county in other states
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Building Context

Prior to the Reconstruction Era, Louisiana was a unique southern state. Slavery was common there prior to the Civil War, but differences in its colonial and cultural history meant Blacks and whites coexisted more peacefully in Louisiana than in other southern states. The end of Reconstruction assimilated Louisiana with the majority of southern states, and it adopted Black Codes and Jim Crow legislation to limit the rights of African Americans.

Louisiana Separate Car Act, 1890

Source: <https://www.studythepast.com/weekly/louisianacaract.html>

Section 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, That all railway companies carrying passengers in their coaches in this State, shall provide equal but separate	Notes
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accommodations for the white and colored races
... No person or persons shall be permitted to
occupy seats in coaches other than the ones
assigned to them on account of the race they
belong to.

Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, etc., That the officers
of such passenger trains shall have power and are
hereby required to assign each passenger to the
coach or compartment used for the race to which
such passenger belongs; any passenger insisting
on going into a coach or compartment to which
by race he does not belong, shall be liable to a
fine of twenty-five dollars or in lieu thereof to
imprisonment for a period of not more than
twenty days in the **parish** [county] prison and any
officer of any railroad insisting on assigning a
passenger to a coach or compartment other than
the one set aside for the race to which said
passenger belongs shall be liable to a fine of
twenty-five dollars or in lieu thereof
imprisonment for a period of not more than
twenty days in the parish prison; and should any
passenger refuse to occupy the coach or
compartment to which he or she is assigned by
the officer of such railway, said officer shall have
power to refuse to carry such passenger on his
train, and for such refusal neither he nor the
railway company which he represents shall be
liable for damages in any of the courts of this
State.

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What was the main purpose of this law?

2. What provisions did this law put in place to enforce “equal but separate accommodations” in railroad cars?