

Primary Source

Mississippi Constitution, 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

Poll tax	A tax individuals needed to pay before voting
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Building Context

In 1890, delegates met to create a new state constitution for Mississippi. While they addressed pressing issues of the day such as railroad regulation and flood control in the Mississippi River delta, the delegates also placed restrictions on Black education and suffrage. The Mississippi Constitution of 1890 was created in the age of Jim Crow segregation on railway cars and in public accommodations such as hotels. It segregated students of different colors into separate schools and purposely underfunded the Black schools. While the Fifteenth Amendment protected the right of Black men to vote, southern states created certain limits curtailing that right.

Mississippi Constitution, 1890

Source: https://www.alcorn.edu/uploaded/files/0aa/Mississippi_Constitution.pdf

<p>ARTICLE 8—EDUCATION</p> <p>Sec. 207. Separate schools shall be maintained for children of the white and colored races.</p> <p>ARTICLE 12—FRANCHISE</p> <p>Sec. 243. A uniform poll tax [a tax individuals pay before voting] of two dollars, to be used in aid of the common schools, and for no other purpose, is hereby imposed on every male inhabitant of this State between the ages of twenty-one and sixty years. The board of supervisors of any county may, for the purpose of aiding the common schools in that county, increase the poll tax in said county, but in no case shall the entire poll tax exceed in any one year three dollars on each poll. No criminal proceedings shall be allowed to enforce the collection of the poll tax.</p> <p>Sec. 244. Every elector shall, in addition to the foregoing qualifications, be able to read any section of the constitution of this State; or he shall be able to understand the same when read to him, or give a reasonable interpretation thereof.</p>	<p>Notes</p>
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Comprehension and Analysis Questions

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1. Why was it significant that the Mississippi Constitution segregated schools?
What effects might this have?

2. How did the Mississippi Constitution of 1890 limit voting rights?

3. What effect do you think these limitations had for Black American voters in Mississippi?