

# Primary Source Analysis: *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*



Source: *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 1886.

Note: This Supreme Court case looked at whether a San Francisco city ordinance that refused to grant Chinese men Yick Wo and Wo Lee a permit to operate their laundry businesses violated their rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The Court decided unanimously (9-0) in favor of Yick Wo and Wo Lee. This was the first time the court ruled that a law that is race-neutral on its face, but is executed with discrimination, still violates the Equal Protection Clause.

The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is not confined to the protection of citizens. It says: "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." These provisions are universal in their application to all persons... without regard to any differences of race, of color, or of nationality, and the equal protection of the laws is a pledge of the protection of equal laws...

Though the law itself be fair on its face and impartial in appearance, yet, if it is applied and administered by public authority with an evil eye and an unequal hand, so as practically to make unjust and illegal discriminations between persons in similar circumstances, material to their rights, the denial of equal justice is still within the prohibition of the Constitution... The fact of this discrimination is admitted. No reason for it is shown, and the conclusion cannot be resisted that no reason for it exists except hostility to the race and nationality to which the petitioners belong, and which, in the eye of the law, is not justified. The discrimination is, therefore, illegal, and the public administration which enforces it is a denial of the equal protection of the laws and a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. The imprisonment of the petitioners is, therefore, illegal, and they must be discharged.

Historical Thinking Skill: Historical Significance

# THINKS Document Analysis

## T (Topic)

## H (Historical Context)

## I (Intended Audience)


Political

Economic

Social

Religious

Other

1. When was this document created and/or circulated? Who wrote it?

2. What events were occurring during the time this document was written?

1. Who was the intended audience of this document?

2. Whose voice or perspective is not shared in this document?

## N (New Vocabulary)

1. What words are new to you or need to be defined?


## K (Key Purpose)

1. How would you describe the author's perspective, or point of view?

2. Taking into account the author's perspective, why do you think this document was created? In other words, what is its purpose?

## S (Significance)

1. List two things or ideas that make this document historically significant.

2. Provide one quote from the document that demonstrates why it might be considered historically significant. Explain your reasoning.



# Primary Source Analysis

## *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*

Establishing Historical Significance

Historical Event

Who was affected?

To establish historical significance is to show that a historical event is worth remembering.

*Yick Wo v. Hopkins, 1886*

**Quantity:** How many people were affected?

**Profundity:** How deeply were people's lives affected?

**Durability:** For how long were people affected?

**Relevance:** How is this still relevant today?

In a nutshell: \_\_\_\_\_ is historically significant because:

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