



# Supreme Court Decisions: 20 Landmark Cases Summarized and Explained

*U.S. Department of State*

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The text of this Kindle edition, equivalent in length to a physical book of approximately 32 pages, originally appeared in the U.S. Department of State publication “Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy.” Learn about eighteen landmark Supreme Court cases, including *Marbury v. Madison*, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and *University of California v. Bakke*.

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*Marbury v. Madison* (1803)  
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*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978)

### Sample passage:

There is no question that the ruling in “*Brown v. Board of Education*,” which struck down racially enforced school segregation, is one of the most important in American history. No nation committed to democracy could hope to achieve those ideals while keeping people of color in a legally imposed position of inferiority. But the decision also raised a number of questions about the authority of the Court and whether this opinion represents a judicial activism that, despite its inherently moral and democratic ruling, is nonetheless an abuse of judicial authority.... But J. Harvie Wilkinson, who is now a federal circuit court judge, dismisses much of this criticism when he reminds us that “*Brown*” “was humane, among the most humane moments in all our history. It was...a great political achievement, both in its uniting of the Court and in the steady way it addressed the nation.” With this decision, the nation picked up where it had left the cause of equal protection more than eighty years earlier, and began its efforts to integrate fully the black minority into full partnership in the American polity.

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