

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students apply the Biblical teaching that a ruler's role is to execute judgment and justice by reviewing five Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Amendment scenarios.

Instructions

- This activity may be done individually, or in pairs/small groups.
- Students complete the questions (give them 10–12 minutes); discuss as a class.

Suggested Answer Key

1. The state is forcing unemployed adults to work against their will under threat of fine and jail. This is exactly what “involuntary servitude” means. The “except as punishment for crime” clause does not apply because these people have not been convicted of a crime.
2. The Thirteenth Amendment explicitly exempts “punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” Prison labor is constitutional. The low wage (\$0.25/hour) might be unfair, but it is not a Thirteenth Amendment violation.
3. The Fourteenth Amendment says that “All persons born...in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof...are citizens.” The children of illegal immigrants are born to parents who are NOT “subject to the jurisdiction thereof.” The state should refuse to recognize birthright citizenship.
4. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees “equal protection of the laws.” A state law explicitly excluding left-handed citizens from juries violates this guarantee. It also might deprive the defendant of a fair trial.
5. Detention after school as punishment is not “involuntary servitude.” The Thirteenth Amendment was aimed at forced labor, not school discipline. The student is not being forced to work or provide labor.

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview: You're the Judge, Part 4

You are a federal district judge. The below cases have come before your court. For each case, decide whether the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendment has been violated.

Quick Reference: Key Clauses

Thirteenth Amendment:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States...”

Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1:

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States...and subject to the jurisdiction thereof...are citizens....”

“No State shall...abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens....”

“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.”

Case #1 – A state passes a law requiring all able-bodied unemployed adults to work on state road crews for 30 days per year at \$2 per hour. Refusal results in a fine and 90 days in jail. Was either amendment violated?

Case #2 – A man is convicted of fraud and sentenced to five years in prison. The prison requires him to work in a license plate factory for \$0.25 per hour. He sues, claiming this is involuntary servitude. Was either amendment violated?

Case #3 – A child is born in the United States to two parents who are citizens of Mexico and are in the U.S. illegally. The state government refuses to issue a birth certificate listing the child as a U.S. citizen. Was either amendment violated?

Case #4 – A state law says that only right-handed citizens may serve on juries in criminal trials. A left-handed defendant is convicted by an all-right-handed jury and appeals, arguing his rights were violated. Was either amendment violated?

Case #5 – A high school student is forced by the principal to stay after school for three hours every day for a month as punishment for cheating on a test. The student sues, claiming this is involuntary servitude. Was either amendment violated?