
Birthright Citizenship Revisited

Link:

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-birthright-citizenship-revisited/>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. What is birthright citizenship?
3. What amendment of the U.S. Constitution addresses birthright citizenship?
4. When was the 14th Amendment ratified?
5. Ali Velshi told the story of Wong Kim Ark. Why was Wong Kim Ark initially not allowed into the United States in 1895?
6. According to the Heritage Foundation, what was the specific intention behind the 14th Amendment?
7. According to Ali Velshi, what was the San Francisco district attorney's argument against Wong Kim Ark's citizenship?
8. According to the Heritage Foundation, what is the "critical, conditional phrase" of the 14th Amendment?
9. According to Ali Velshi, Wong Kim Ark's legal strategy was to tie his fate to the children of European immigrants, whom the supreme court's decision stated had "always been considered and treated as citizens of the United States." Do you think there's an ethnic component to the birthright citizenship debate? Why/Why not?
10. According to the Heritage Foundation, Sen. Lyman Trumbull said "'subject to the jurisdiction' meant not owing allegiance to any other country." What did he mean by this?
11. Ali Velshi said that when the Supreme Court upheld the Chinese Exclusion Act, it cited "an Oriental invasion" that was "a menace to our civilization." Are there any parallels between that rhetoric and the current rhetoric surrounding immigrants and birthright citizenship?

12. The Heritage Foundation video explained two types of jurisdictions: partial territorial jurisdiction and complete political jurisdiction. What are the differences between these categories?
13. Ali Velshi said: "To undermine the constitution's guarantee of birthright citizenship in any way would be a return to some of our nation's darkest days, and a surrender to the worst impulses in American history." What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
14. What are the virtues of birthright citizenship?
15. What are the drawbacks of birthright citizenship?
16. If the constitution doesn't provide birthright citizenship on a wide scale, should it be amended so that it does provide it? Why/Why not?
17. If the constitution does provide birthright citizenship on a wide scale—including to the children of undocumented immigrants—should it be amended so it no longer provides it? Why/Why not?
18. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
19. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
20. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
21. What else would you like to learn about this topic?
22. For more on this topic, see "[Both Sides: Birthright Citizenship](#)."