

Case Brief

Student's Name
Institutional Affiliation



Brown et al. v. State of Mississippi

The U.S. Supreme Court in the case of 1936 *Brown et al. v. state of Mississippi* ruled that the involuntary confession of the accused person that was extracted by the police officers using violence cannot be regarded as evidence. Two men were convicted of murder. Own confessions made by these individuals were the only evidence in this case. However, it is important to mention that these confessions were obtained using violence during interrogation. The Court confirmed the ban on the use of brutal interrogation methods. It also pointed out that the confession was obtained as a result of violence and physical tortures; such actions violate the due process clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The white plantation owner R. Stewart was killed in the spring of 1934. The three tenant farmers of the African-American descent, Ellington, Brown and Shields, were detained for the murder (Finkelman, 2006). The confession of convicted farmers to the police was the basic evidence of the prosecution. These three men were charged with the murder and found guilty after the trial that was based only on the confession of every accused man. In the course of time, they pleaded not guilty. During the trial, the prosecution witnesses publicly admitted that the accused African-Americans confessed after the police officers brutally and fiercely beat them. In addition to the whipping, one African-American was hung by his neck by police officers who tried to coerce the confession. The facts were not only indisputable but proving to have been realized by the police along with other participants. The prosecuting attorney of the state and the presiding judge were aware of what had happened (*Brown et al. v. state of Mississippi*, n.d.). The confessions were considered as evidence to be used the next day. The jury condemned the African-American farmers and sentenced them to be hanged.

The Supreme Court of the Mississippi state confirmed the conviction. During the trial, the defendants claimed that their confessions were erroneous and extorted after violence and physical tortures. Afterwards, they decided to appeal to the Supreme Court arguing about violation of their rights as well as the 14th Amendment. The Supreme Court in the state of Mississippi confirmed the decision made by the trial court and unanimously reversed the defendants' conviction. The chief justice Hughes declared that the confession made by the accused individuals with the use of police violence cannot be regarded as the main evidence of the case since it violated the due process clause of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The Supreme Court of Mississippi pointed to the fact that the immunity from self-incrimination was not vital to the due process. Moreover, the trial court's failure to exclude the confession after introducing incompetent evidence particularly when the request for such exclusion was absent did not deprive the convicted men of liberty and life without the due process. Even if the trial court had wrongly dismissed a motion to exclude the confession, the ruling would have been a reversible error, but not a violation of constitutional rights.

The issue was whether the conviction, which rested only on confession shown to have been received by the state police using violence and great cruelty, was consistent with the due process required by the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution. After the state closed the case on the merits, appellants for the first time introduced important evidence that confession was not made voluntarily. African-Americans were forced to confess to the murder they did not commit because of the extreme brutality and cruelty of measures that the police officers used to extort their confession. If the defendants' guilt was proved, they would be hanged. The due process clause of the 14th Amendment was violated in the *Brown et al. v. state of Mississippi* case of 1936.