

Teacher’s Findings from the Record of the Congressional Debate on February 10, 1864

1. Summarize the resolution proposed by Senator Sumner. [For the District of Columbia to quickly consider and instate a law for de-segregating streetcars.](#)
2. Why did Senator Sumner propose the resolution? Identify and write a quote from his debate that you consider to be the strongest argument for the resolution. [Sumner noted Dr. Augusta’s ejection from the DC streetcar to be an outrage that should not have happened. A possible quote may be \(page 554, 1st column, at the bottom\): “...for it is an outrage; it is a disgrace to this city; it is a disgrace to this Government which sanctions it under its eyes. It is a mere offshoot of the slavery which happily we have banished from Washington.”; or \(page 554, 2nd column, third of the way down\) “...that the ejection of that Senator \[Hendricks\] from a car would not bring upon this capital half the shame that the ejection of this colored officer from the car necessarily brings upon the capital...”](#)
3. Write the names of those proponents and opponents of Mr. Sumner’s resolution and describe their arguments for being for or against the resolution. [Teachers may assign students to follow a specific senator—especially, Sumner, Hendricks, Grimes, Wilkinson, and Wilson—or students in groups can divide up the senators among themselves.](#)

Proponents of the Resolution (name of the person & arguments)	Opponents of the Resolution (name of the person & arguments)
<p>Examples: Wilkinson—outrageous treatment for an army major commissioned by the U.S. President</p> <p>Grimes—Hendricks is correct about there being segregated streetcars for colored people. But there aren’t many in the street, which makes false/irrelevant Hendricks’s point that both blacks and whites have ‘equal but separate’ access to streetcars.</p> <p>Wilson—The streetcar company doesn’t have the right to segregate its occupants “in the capital where all persons are free and equal before the law.” (Note: The District of Columbia Emancipation Act was declared in April 1862, in the previous year of this debate.) Wilson also recounts the story of his friend from Army, who while traveling with two colored men via military roads, he sat alone in a freight car with many empty seats while his two companions “were forced into a cattle car while he rode alone in a freight car” with many empty seats.</p>	<p>Examples: Hendricks—The outrage is that the white person’s right was invaded by a black person when streetcars are specially assigned and provided for colored people.</p> <p>Later in debate Hendricks says that the resolution’s true goal is “that the Senators have now declared the end to which we are to come, and that by the action of the Federal Government the social as well as the political equality of the negro is to be forced upon the white race.”</p>

4. Choose an argument that, to you, seems best supported by factual data. Explain why you find it to be the best supported argument.

Here students demonstrate their ability to critically evaluate a primary source and identify specifics to answer this question. In addition, they are to express their own reasoning in how and why they selected the argument, whether pro- or con-resolution. The debate record provides the examples and arguments used by both proponents and opponents. Students need to determine which of those are most convincing supported by concrete information and not by an opinion.

5. What attitudes towards African Americans and their contributions to the Civil War does this debate reflect?

Among the proponents of the resolution, they imply that those who fought for the Union should be treated with respect for the courage and sacrifice that they have made. Many proponents expand this necessity of equality to all men and women. Mr. Wilson on page 554, 2nd column, and about two-thirds of the way down, says, "The country will yet, however, be abolitionized and civilized and humanized, but it must be abolitionized before the high civilization or the high humanity will come."

6. From this debate record, make an inference about the extent to which efforts by African Americans to play a role in the Civil War seem to have changed others' perceptions of them and their roles in society?

Help students understand that even though many people recognized the right to equality for African Americans before the Civil War began, others must have fully recognized that only after they saw African Americans perform roles previously denied them, or Washington, D.C., would not still have had segregated streetcars before this incident, for example. It is also clear from the debate that even seeing someone such as Dr. Augusta did not change some people's attitudes, including those of some senators in the U.S. Congress.