

Thurgood Marshall

U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908, in Baltimore, Maryland. He gained an appreciation for the U.S. Constitution at an early age from his father and also from his school principal, who had him memorize sections of the Constitution when he misbehaved in school.

Marshall graduated from high school in 1925 and then went to college at Lincoln University in Chester, Pennsylvania. Marshall's classmates at the historically black college included many future African American leaders such as Langston Hughes, Cab Calloway, and the future president of Ghana. Hughes also met and married his first wife while he was at Lincoln. Their marriage lasted 25 years, until her death from cancer in 1955. After graduating from Lincoln, Marshall entered Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C., and graduated in 1933.

Marshall entered the law profession specializing in civil rights cases. He continued in that specialty over the course of his long and distinguished career. He began to work for

the NAACP in 1936 after several years of private practice and became the NAACP's head counsel by 1938. He was an

accomplished and respected litigator, but the case for which he received the most acclaim was *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In this historic case, Marshall successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court that so-called separate-but-equal schools for races were discriminatory to black students. As a result of Marshall's arguments, the Supreme Court ruled that all schools in the United States be desegregated.

Marshall's accomplishments led to his appointment as a judge in the U.S. Court of Appeals. The highlight of his distinguished career was his appointment to the United States

Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967. With this appointment, Marshall became the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court. He remained on the Court until his health caused him to resign in 1991.

Marshall died in January 1993.



Activities

1. Define desegregation.
2. Discuss the impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on the racial makeup of schools today.