

## Spotlight on the Judiciary

### THURGOOD MARSHALL

The first African-American justice of the Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall, served for 24 years (1967-1991) on our nation's highest court.

Marshall, a graduate of Howard University (1933 magna cum laude), had been denied admission to the University of Maryland Law School because of his race. The young lawyer began his practice in Baltimore, then took a job with the NAACP. In his first major court case, he successfully defended another well-qualified undergraduate, Donald Murray, who like himself, had been denied entrance to the University of Maryland Law School.

Attorney Marshall spent more than two decades with the NAACP, gaining his greatest fame for the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. The class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of a group of black parents in Topeka, Kansas whose children were forced to attend all-black segregated schools. When the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," Marshall and the NAACP won a great victory for civil rights.



In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Marshall a judge for the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals. In that role for four years, Marshall issued 112 rulings, none of which was overturned by the Supreme Court.

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Marshall to serve as the first black U.S. Solicitor General, where he represented the federal government before the Supreme Court. In his two years as Solicitor General, Marshall won 14 of the 19 cases that he argued before the Supreme Court.

Then in 1967, President Johnson nominated Marshall to serve on the bench before which he had successfully argued cases so many times before—the United States Supreme Court. In his two decades on the Supreme Court, Marshall demonstrated his unwavering commitment to universal civil rights, argued that the death penalty was unconstitutional in all circumstances, and opposed any government regulation of speech.

This month we salute a champion of the judiciary. Thurgood Marshall left a legacy of using the law and the Constitution to fight for the rights of all people.



*"The legal system can force open doors and sometimes even knock down walls, but it cannot build bridges. That job belongs to you and me."*

### Thurgood Marshall Trivia

Born July 2, 1908, in Baltimore, Maryland

His grandfather, a slave, escaped from the South during the Civil War

Died January 24, 1993

Buried in Arlington National Cemetery

Texas Southern University School of Law was renamed in his honor in 1976

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