
The Early Life and Times of Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall

I chose Thurgood Marshall for my research project because I really didn't know much about him and what I did know about him sounded very interesting. This man was a real hero because he fought for the rights of other people. He fought against segregation. Because of him blacks and whites can go to the same public schools. In my report you will learn about his life and how he fought for other peoples rights.

EARLY LIFE

Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908. He was named after his grandfather Thoroughgood. His real name was Thoroughgood but in the second grade he changed it to Thurgood. He and his family moved to Harlem, NY in 1909. They lived there for five years then moved back to Baltimore in 1914. He lived with his mother Norma, father William, and his brother Aurbey. Thurgood came from a family of fighters. His great-grandfather was a slave, his grandfather joined the Union Army, and his father fought with words. When Thurgood got in trouble at school he had to go into the basement and learn a part of the constitution. He learned many parts. His father once told him " son if anyone calls you a nigger you have my permission to fight him-you have my orders. When he was thirteen he once got arrested when he hit a white man who called him a nigger. Thurgood went to Fredrick Douglas High. He played football, and led a group of small teens. They pulled pranks and occasionally cut classes. He was very popular with girls. Thurgood graduated from Fredrick Douglas High in 1925. His mother wanted him to be a dentist.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

He studied pre-dentistry at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He also joined the debating team. Thanks to his father he was good at fighting with words. His nick-name was Wrathful Marshall because he could out debate his opponents so well they felt like they had been whipped. During this time he worked part time as a grocery clerk and a baker. During his senior year he married Vivian "Buster" Burey. Thurgood loved spending free time with her. He graduated from Lincoln University with honors in 1930. Thurgood decided he should study law. He applied to Maryland Law School but was turned down because of his race. He then applied to Howard University in Washington D.C. , and got accepted. He took the train there and back every school day. He graduated from Howard University with high honors in 1933.

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ADULTHOOD

Thurgood had no trouble passing the Maryland bar exam. He opened a small black law firm in Baltimore. One of his big cases was against Maryland Law School. He won and Maryland Law School was ordered to desegregate. In 1936 Marshall was appointed to the NAACP's assistant special counsel in New York City. The NAACP stands for National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The NAACP worked for the fair rights of African-Americans. When Charles Houston retired, Thurgood was named chief counsel for the NAACP. In 1946 the NAACP awarded him their highest honor, the Spingarn Medal. He had a very big case that went up to the Supreme Court. This case was *Brown vs. Board of Education*, in 1954. During this case a Supreme Court justice asked him what he meant by equal. He said "Getting the same thing, at the same time, at the same place." He often used this phrase during many of his segregation cases. He won the case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and America's public schools were ordered to desegregate. He thought it was his greatest victory for children everywhere. In 1955 Thurgood's wife of 25 years dies of cancer. He remarried to Cecilia "Cissy" Suyat. They had two children together. Their names were Thurgood Junior and John William. Thurgood was sent to London to help write the constitution for Kenya. JFK sent him to Sierra Leone as the USA's representative for their independence ceremonies. In 1961 JFK appoints him to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the second circuit, serving New York, Connecticut, and Vermont. In 1965 he is appointed U.S. Solicitor General by President Lyndon Johnson. As Solicitor General he argued 19 Supreme Court cases and won 14 of them. In 1967 Pres. Johnson appointed him to the Supreme Court. He was the first African-American to serve as a Supreme Court Justice. At first he was considered an easy judge because he didn't speak out but after a while he began speaking his opinion.

LATER YEARS

At nearly 83 years old Thurgood retires from the Supreme Court. On Independence Day, 1992 Thurgood visits Philadelphia's Independence Hall. He was the guest of honor for the Fourth of July celebration. In Philadelphia he received the Liberty Medal because of the things he has done in life. Only 3 other people have received this medal. Thurgood Marshall died of heart failure on January 24, 1993.

Thurgood Marshall was a very brave man because he fought for other people's rights. Now blacks and whites can go to the same public schools. He had a real effect on the world by showing blacks you can do what you want to achieve. He wanted to be a lawyer and he became one of the best ones. Thurgood Marshall is a real hero.

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