

# PPA SPOTLIGHTING



## Justice Thurgood Marshall

Born July 2, 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland, Mr. Thurgood Marshall graduated from Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Thurgood Marshall was excluded from the all-white law school at the University of Maryland. Later he brought successful lawsuits that integrated not only that school but also several other state university systems. He received his legal education at the law school of Howard University in Washington, D.C., the nation's pre-eminent black university, where he graduated first in his class in 1933 and made the personal and intellectual connections that shaped his future career.

Mr. Thurgood Marshall served as counsel and chief counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and argued the groundbreaking case of Brown vs. Board of Education before the United States Supreme Court which effectively made segregation of the races in public schools illegal.

As a civil rights lawyer, Mr. Marshall devised the legal strategy and headed the team that brought the school desegregation issue before the Court. An experienced Supreme Court advocate by that time, he argued the case himself in the straightforward, plain-spoken manner that was the hallmark of his courtroom style. Asked by Justice Felix Frankfurter during the argument what he meant by "equal," Mr. Marshall replied, "Equal means getting the same thing, at the same time, and in the same place."

He won many other important civil rights cases, including a challenge to the whites-only primary elections in Texas. This device was commonly used by white Southern politicians to disenfranchise blacks.

He also won a major Supreme Court case in which the Court declared that restrictive covenants that barred blacks from buying or renting homes could not be enforced in state courts.

In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson appointed him to the Supreme Court, replacing the retiring Justice Tom Clark of Texas. He was the first black to serve on the Court and was almost larger-than-life figure there.

Mr. Thurgood Marshall, pillar of the civil rights revolution, architect of the legal strategy that ended the era of official segregation and the first black Justice of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Marshall stepped down from the Court in July 1991 due to failing health and passed of heart failure on January 24, 1993 at Bethesda Naval Medical Center in Maryland.

Mr. Thurgood Marshall was a figure of history well before he began his 24-year service on the Supreme Court on Oct. 2, 1967.

During more than 20 years as director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, he was the principal architect of the strategy of using the courts to provide what the political system would not: a definition of equality that assured black Americans the full rights of citizenship.

Mr. Marshall's greatest legal victory came in 1954 with the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared an end to the "separate but equal" system of racial segregation then in effect in the public schools of 21 states.

Despite the years of turmoil that followed the unanimous decision, the Court left no doubt that it was bringing an end to the era of official segregation in all public institutions. Many questions lingered after so monumental a transformation, and the Court continued to confront issues involving the legacy of segregation even after Justice Marshall retired.

He won many other important civil rights cases, including a challenge to the whites-only primary elections in Texas. This device was commonly used by white Southern politicians to disenfranchise blacks.

Mr. Thurgood Marshall also won a major Supreme Court case in which the Court declared that restrictive covenants that barred blacks from buying or renting homes could not be enforced in state courts.

The article by Mr. Gewirtz, the Potter Stewart Professor of Constitutional Law at Yale Law School, stated: "He grew up in a ruthlessly discriminatory world -- a world in which segregation of the races was pervasive and taken for granted, where lynching was common, where the black man's inherent inferiority was proclaimed widely and wantonly. Mr. Thurgood Marshall had the capacity to imagine a radically different world, the imaginative capacity to believe that such a world was possible, the strength to sustain that image in the mind's eye and the heart's longing, and the courage and ability to make that imagined world real."

Justice Marshall was not satisfied with what he had achieved, believing that the **Constitution's promise of equality remained unfulfilled** and that his work was therefore **unfinished**.