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# SEPARATE IS NOT EQUAL

## BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION

### Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall, one of the leading legal figures of the 20th century, grew up in a nurturing African American environment in segregated Baltimore. His father was a railroad dining-car porter and steward at a country club. His mother, a homemaker, was a graduate of the historically black Coppin Normal School. After graduating from all-black Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, he enrolled in Howard University's law school.

In 1934 Marshall began practicing law in his hometown and immediately was drawn into the local civil rights movement. Soon after graduation, he took the case of Donald Gaines Murray, an African American student seeking admission to the University of Maryland School of Law. This case went to the state supreme court and successfully challenged segregated education in Maryland. Afterwards, in 1936, Thurgood Marshall moved to New York and joined the NAACP legal staff. In 1938 Marshall took over the leadership of the NAACP legal team from his mentor, Charles Hamilton Houston.

Thurgood Marshall was the lead attorney in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and it was he who announced the shift in the NAACP's strategy in 1950 from equalization to desegregation. He coordinated the legal campaigns of the various local and New York attorneys who participated in the four "state cases," and remained in close touch with the attorneys in the Washington, D.C., case. In South Carolina, he met with local leaders, and presented some of the arguments in the federal district court himself. He also coordinated the legal research for the group of cases when they were presented before the U.S. Supreme Court, and led the presentation of oral arguments. After the *Brown* decision, Marshall continued to head the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for several years, until he was appointed to the federal bench.

On September 1, 1967, Thurgood Marshall took the oath of office to become the first black Supreme Court justice. His appointment was the culmination of a lifetime devoted to using the American legal system to provide equal opportunity for all. Marshall continued that mission until he resigned from the court in 1991. He died on January 24, 1993.