

Mr. Civil Rights

Thurgood Marshall was born in 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland. He became a lawyer in 1933. Lawyers spend years learning about laws. Lawyers represent clients in court and clients pay lawyers to help them with the law. Another word for lawyer is attorney.

Thurgood started to work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1934. He helped the Association fight for equal rights for black people. Thurgood traveled all over the United States, fighting for for civil rights in courts all across the country. People began to call him Mr. Civil Rights.



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Thurgood won 29 of the 32 cases that he argued before the Supreme Court. Of the cases he won, the most famous is *Brown Versus Board of Education*, which desegregated public schools. Until then, black children had to go to separate schools. The law said that segregation was “separate but equal.” But it was not equal. The white schools were much better than the black schools. Thurgood proved that “separate is not equal” to the Supreme Court, which showed that segregation laws were unfair. He got the Supreme Court to change the law. In 1954, it became illegal to segregate schools.



Winning *Brown V. Board of Education* was a big deal—it made Thurgood famous. Many people respected him. Presidents gave him important jobs.

In 1967, President Johnson appointed him to the Supreme Court. Thurgood became the first black Supreme Court Justice.

There are nine Justices on the Supreme Court. The Justices listen to Supreme Court cases and vote to decide which side wins. Their decisions change laws for the whole country.

Thurgood was a Justice for 24 years. But working as a Justice was an uphill battle. Most Justices did not agree with his ideas. But Mr. Civil Rights never gave up. He always fought for what he thought was right.

