Thurgood

February 22—March 19, 2023

Production Guide

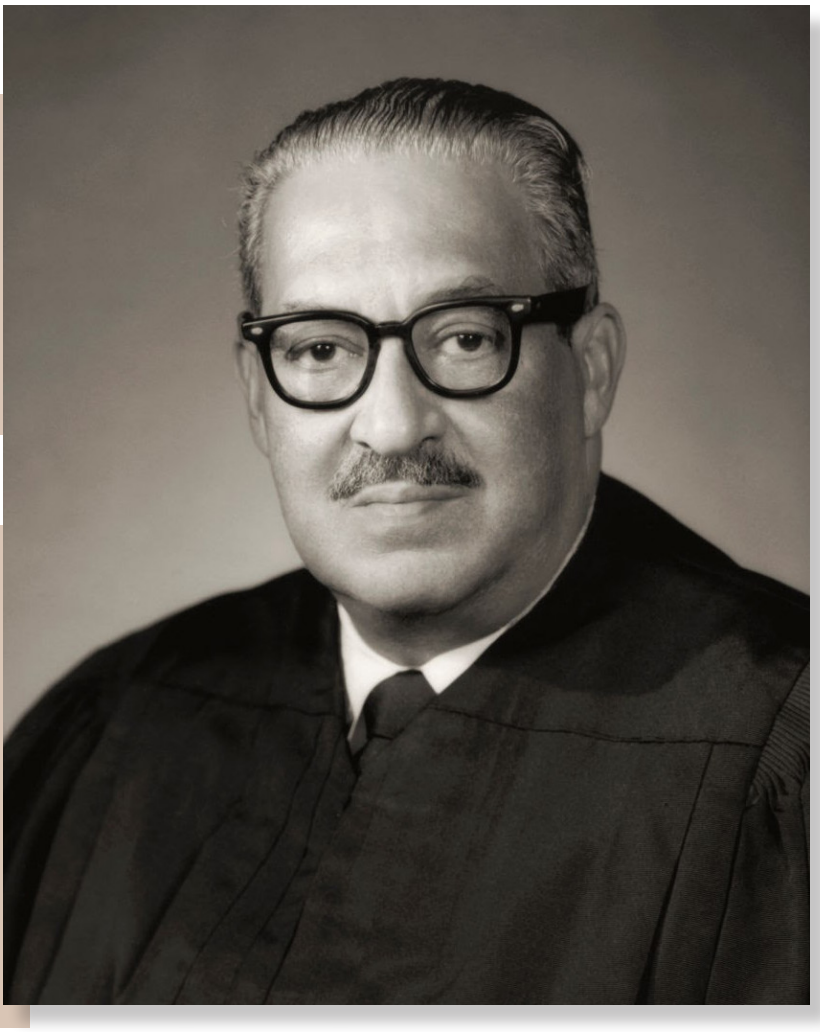
People's Light

"I've always believed the whole thrust of our Constitution is people to people. Strike them and they will cry; cut them and they will bleed; starve them and they will wither away and die. But treat them with respect and decency, give them equal access to the levers of power, attend to their aspirations and grievances, and they will flourish and grow... and, yes, join together to form a more perfect union."

- This quote, and others *in matching font*, comes from the script of *Thurgood* by George Stevens Jr. Look for excerpts from the play throughout these pages.

"Before Thurgood Marshall, 'All men are created equal' were just hollow words, he gave them meaning."

—Sherrilyn Ifill, head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund from 2013–2022.



"Marshall's vision of equality wasn't limited to African-Americans, but to any individual or minority group oppressed by the majority or by the government, and that included women, the physically challenged, and criminal defendants."

—Sheryll Cashin, former law clerk and Georgetown University professor.

"He had this vision for transforming society, which I think will be around for a long time, there wouldn't be gay rights, there wouldn't be the Loving case without Marshall. Marshall was future-focused. He thought the best way of achieving an inclusive society was through integration and presented himself as being part of the system or within the system while at the same time transforming the system."

—John A. Powell, Director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California-Berkley.

1908 Thurgood Marshall, whose given name was Thoroughgood Marshall, is born in Baltimore, Maryland.

1925 Thurgood graduates high school and enrolls as a freshman at Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania.

1929 Thurgood marries Vivian (Buster) Burney on September 4th.

1930 Marshall graduates with honors from Lincoln University.

1933 Marshall graduates cum laude from Howard Law School.

1935 Marshall wins his first major civil rights case, *Murray v. Pearson.*

1936 Marshall becomes legal counsel for the NAACP. In October, he moves to New York City.

1940 Marshall takes Charles Houston's place as special counsel to the NAACP. Later that year, Marshall would win his first Supreme Court victory with *Chambers v. Florida.*

1954 Marshall wins *Brown v. Board of Education*. Shortly after the victory, his wife Buster is diagnosed with cancer, the disease that will take her life.

1955 Marshall marries Cecilia (Cissy) Suyat.

1956 The Marshalls' son Thurgood Jr. Is born.

1958 The Marshalls' son John is born.

1961 President John F. Kennedy appoints Marshall as a federal circuit judge.

1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson appoints Marshall as U.S. Solicitor General.

1967 President Lyndon B. Johnson appoints Marshall as the first African American Supreme Court justice.

1991 Marshall retires from the Supreme Court.

1993 Marshall dies at the age of eighty-four.

Young Thurgood

"When I was growing up in Baltimore we had to use separate drinking fountains, separate park benches and separate public toilets."

Growing up: Environment

When Thurgood Marshall was born, Baltimore was a deeply segregated city with the 4th largest urban Black population in the US, after Washington DC, New York and New Orleans. There was only one school for Black students to attend which led to overcrowding; the school day had to run in shifts from 8:30am to 1pm and 1:15pm to 4:45pm. Students had to share desks, and the library was in the school halls.

School inequity would eventually become a milestone issue of Marshall's career, but it was part of his personal experience as soon as his education began. In *Thurgood Marshall: The Making of America,* author Teri Kanefield writes about a striking memory Marshall often described looking back on his youth; theatre audiences watching *Thurgood* will hear the same memory brought to life by the actor.

> *"Thurgood's seat in one classroom was by a window, giving him a view of the Baltimore police station. He watched as suspects, mostly African American, were brought in by officers on the all-white police force. Thurgood knew from stories in the neighborhood that African American suspects who were questioned about crimes were often hit with a club or brass knuckles to get them to talk. Thurgood later explained that when the classroom windows were open, he could hear police officers beating people, saying 'Black boy, why don't you just shut your mouth, you're going to talk yourself into the electric chair.'"*

Growing up: Influential people

Marshall would credit his father with making him an advocate by stimulating his interest in competitive debating and confronting injustice. Marshall said of his father, *"He did it by teaching me to argue, by challenging my logic on every point, by making me prove every statement. He never told me to be a lawyer, but he turned me into one."*

"My father was the noisiest and loudest, but my mother was by far the stongest." Thurgood's mother worked extremely hard to make sure that he got a quality education. She was a school teacher, and active in several women's clubs that raised money for the local branch of the NAACP.

Marshall also gained inspiration from his teachers. One of his classmates reminisced *"Mr. (Gough) McDaniels, our history professor, also was very active in the NAACP. He was the type of person who was willing to confront any type of discrimination. For a number of years, he imbued us with this spirit of Black peoplehood, way back in those days."*

Marshall was accepted to Lincoln University, where his brother also attended college, but it was a challenge for the family to afford tuition. His father was a waiter, his mother was a teacher, and money could be tight for them. His mother often wrote letters to the registrar in the summer promising that money would be coming so that her sons could return to school. She eventually pawned her engagement ring to help pay for law school. Marshall often spent the summers working as a waiter with his father in order to save money.

"We had our first Negro professor within a year, and I learned something from Langston [Hughes] – one person can make a difference. He got me committed. I put away the comic books, stopped playing pinochle, started reading history and joined the debate team."

Education & Entering the Law

Thurgood Marshall went to all-male, all-Black Lincoln University, the United States' first degree-granting HBCU, in Oxford, PA. Among his many fellow classmates was the poet, Langston Hughes. Marshall never intended to be lawyer, because of all the challenges he saw. He initially thought he would listen to his mother and become a dentist, which was considered to be a safe, well-paying job. He found a lot of success on the school's debate team, and realized his gift for oration and the law. By the time he graduated he decided to follow his passion and become a lawyer. Marshall graduated with honors in 1930.

Black lawyers at the time may have been small in numbers, but in Baltimore they made a huge impact. The first Black lawyer to argue a case at the Supreme Court (*Jones v. United States* in 1890), Everett Waring, was from Baltimore.

Marshall didn't even bother applying to the University of Maryland Law School because he knew he would be rejected. Instead, he applied to Howard University in Washington DC. Because he couldn't afford to live on campus, he had to wake up at 5am every morning to catch the train, and often wouldn't get home until 9pm because of his job working in the library. All the hard work started to pay off and he finished his first year with the top GPA in his class.

While doing research for Howard University, Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood's mentor was traveling around the country to assess the quality and quantity of Black lawyers in the US. While most of his findings were disappointing, he took pride in his legal colleagues in Baltimore, as well as the students he was training:

"I am here to make Howard into the West Point of Negro Leadership…. You will be in competition with a highly trained white lawyer, and if you expect to win, you'd better be better than he is. If I give you five cases to read overnight, you better read eight. And when I say eight, you better read ten. You go that step further and you just might make it."

An auditorium at Howard University is the setting for the play, *Thurgood*. The respected justice reaching the end of his career has returned to his school to give a talk to the current university students. Because this is a work of theatre, this imagined presentation is really given to every audience member watching the performance.

- **In 1928 (Marshall's college years before entering law school), there were 1,230 Black lawyers in the US.**
- **That calculates to 1 lawyer for every 9,677 people**
- **In some parts of the South the ratio could be closer to 1:200,000.**
- **For white lawyers at the same time the ratio was 1:695.**
- **Maryland allowed only white lawyers until 1885.**
- **When Marshall passed the bar on October 11, 1933, there had only been 60 Black lawyers in Maryland before him; only 33 were actively practicing.**

Cases as a lawyer

"Like Charlie Houston said, the law is a weapon."

Traveling nearly 50,000 miles each year, mostly by train, often alone, his life threatened too many times to count, Marshall took Jim Crow apart plank by plank, state by state, federal ruling by federal ruling. Overseeing hundreds of cases as director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for 21 years, Marshall set precedent after precedent, not just in the arenas of education and criminal law, but across every sector of public life—voting, housing, transportation, equal pay, taxpayer-funded services, military justice, higher education, and the rights of minorities to serve on juries.

Thurgood Marshall and Donald Murray circa 1935–1936. Marshall won Murray's case for admission to the University of Maryland School of Law in 1935. (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Visual Materials from the NAACP Records.)

Murray v. Pearson (1935)

Donald Gaines Murray was denied admission to the University of Maryland School of Law in 1935. The rejection letter stated, "*The University of Maryland does not admit Negro students and your application is accordingly rejected.*" The letter noted the university's duty under the *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of separate but equal to assist him in studying elsewhere, even at a law school located out-of-state.

The case was one of the first in the nation to attack the 'separate but equal' doctrine established by *Plessy*. Rather than claiming that separate schools were unjust, the plan was to prove that the separate schools were not equal. Charles Houston and Thurgood Marshall, in one of his earliest cases for the NAACP, won his major first civil rights case in this ruling. That meant that the University of Maryland had violated the rights of Donald Gaines Murray when they denied his admission to their law school. Marshall argued, "*What's at stake here is more than the rights of my client. It's the moral commitment stated in our country's creed.*"

https://aaregistry.org/story/murray-v-pearson-ruled/

Chambers v. Florida (1940)

Marshall kept implementing the multi-pronged attack to end segregation as well as racially discriminatory criminal justice practices. Marshall was just 32 years old when he won his first Supreme Court victory in *Chambers v. Florida*, in which the Court overturned the convictions of four black men who had been beaten and coerced into confessing to a murder. This established that convictions of murder obtained in the state courts by use of coerced confessions are void under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/309/227/

Smith v. Allwright (1944)

Four years later, in what he considered one of his most important precedent-setting cases, *Smith v. Allwright*, Marshall convinced the Supreme Court to strike down the Texas Democratic Party practice of excluding blacks from primary elections of political parties, which had previously been viewed as private organizations. The Court reasoned that the rule restricting primary voters to whites denied equal protection under the law in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. By delegating its authority to the Democratic Party to regulate its primaries, the state was allowing discrimination to be practiced, which was unconstitutional.

https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/321us649

Between 1940 and 1961, he won 29 of the 32 cases he argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. Meanwhile, one of Marshall's toughest tasks and moral quandaries became deciding where to put his effort. As Marshall was following his and Houston's grand strategy to poke holes in *Plessy v. Ferguson*—the 1896 Supreme Court decision that gave birth to the legal doctrine of "separate but equal"—pleas kept coming to the NAACP to aid in capital punishment cases.

"You do what you think is right and let the law catch up."

"Eventually, almost all of the criminal cases that Marshall gets involved in are death-penalty cases. He's having to pick and choose his cases wisely. On one hand, he's got a strategy he's following to tear down segregation. But he's also trying to step in where he has a chance to save someone's life."

https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/historypolitics/justice-for-all-50-years-after-thurgood-marshall-supreme-court-confirmation/

Brown v. Board

"I came to believe that children sitting in classrooms learning alongside one another was the best hope for our country."

In 1951 the NAACP received a request from students in Richmond, Virginia. Barbara Johns, a sixteen-year-old student, informed them that the students at the segregated school had walked out in protest of the unequal conditions. At that time, the all-black Moton High School was an overcrowded leaky shack made of tar paper and wood.

The NAACP had just decided they were no longer going to file lawsuits demanding equal facilities and only pursue lawsuits that demanded full integration.

They anticipated a tough challenge in getting the students and parents to agree to this. The community agreed to sue the county for full integration. Even after a cross was burned on the school grounds, everyone stood firm and filed a lawsuit demanding full integration. However, this case would lose at the district court level. Which meant it would have to be appealed at the Supreme Court.

Marshall was also working on a similar case in Clarendon County, South Carolina. He used psychological studies to prove the harmful effects segregation had on African American children. Clarendon County's response was that if they were forced to provide equal facilities for African American children, they would go broke and not be able to offer education to any children.

Marshall was victorious and Clarendon County was ordered to provide equal facilities for the African American children. However, they did not respond to the question of whether segregation was legal itself. Since a district court must follow precedent set by the supreme court, this gave Marshall a clear path to have the court overrule *Plessy*.

By the time the NAACP filed its appeals to the Supreme Court for the Virginia and South Carolina cases, they could join them with two other similar cases from Kansas and Washington DC. The plaintiffs were listed alphabetically, which put the father of Kansas student Linda Brown first. The consolidated cases were called *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the NAACP was demanding full integration which would make *Plessy* unconstitutional.

Marshall's plan was not universally praised. Many felt that they were already on a path to equal education, and the wrong decision could not only halt that progress but reaffirm the standards that the *Plessy* decision created. Many also feared that schools would not hire African American teachers or principals, so fully integrating would put them not only out of a job but out of the profession entirely. The arguments took five days to conclude. Months after awaiting a decision the court issued questions to the lawyers on both sides: Did the supreme court have the power to abolish school segregation? Did the framers of the fourteenth amendment intend to end school segregation? How would integration be managed if the court voted to mix African American and white schoolchildren?

In the second round of arguments Marshall made the point that segregation came from a desire "*to keep people who were formerly in slavery... as near that stage as possible.*"

Six months later, the court issued its unanimous decision with Justice Warren saying "*We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine*

of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." It turned out that the decision had taken so long because Warren spent months working to bring all nine justices together. He knew a unanimous decision would be so powerful that it could put an end to Jim Crow. Marshall's first words after the decision were "*We hit the jackpot*."

President Dwight Eisenhower stated his opposition "*I do not believe that prejudices .... will succumb to compulsion. Consequently, I believe that Federal law imposed upon our States...would set back the cause of race relations a long, long time.*"

The legacy of *Brown* can be complicated. In the essay "*The Whole United States is Southern"* Payne writes: *"The ugliest aspects of white supremacy had to be relinquished – unrestrained racist violence, the constant degradation of blacks, their complete exclusion from formal citizenship – but that didn't necessarily call for fundamental shifts in power and privilege, certainly not at the elite levels.*"

Southern whites were most concerned with preventing social equality – which, in this context, can be taken to mean unregulated cross-racial contact – Blacks were primarily concerned with access to jobs, housing, and schooling and least concerned with anything like social inequality. One 1955 poll found only 53% of Southern blacks agreed with Brown. Segregation in and of itself was not the key issue: Sitting with whites, for most black riders, was never a critical issue: rather, African Americans wanted more space for themselves, they wanted to receive equitable treatment, they wanted to be personally treated with respect and dignity, they wanted to be heard and possibly understood, they wanted to get to work on time, and above all, they wanted to exercise power over institutions that controlled them or on which they were dependent.

Marshall's intent with this case was not to have children of different races sitting next to each other, but to achieve equality with access to resources. If you consider tactics such as gerrymandering and redlining used by politicians, and which schools receive funding based on property taxes, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve equality in terms of access to resources.

Watch this!

Sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the question of how far we've come in eliminating segregated education is not a simple one. Gwen Ifill leads a discussion with Cheryl Brown Henderson of the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, Sheryll Cashin of Georgetown University, Catherine Lhamon of the Department of Education and Ron Brownstein of Atlantic Media.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2YQ3XqrA9I

Listen up

A landmark Supreme Court case. A civil rights revolution. Why has everyone forgotten what happened next? *Brown v. Board of Education* might be the most well-known Supreme Court decision, a major victory in the fight for civil rights. But in Topeka, the city where the case began, the ruling has left a bittersweet legacy. In this podcast, Revisionist History hears from the Browns, the family behind the story.

https://www.pushkin.fm/podcasts/revisionist-history/miss-buchanans-period-of-adjustment

The Supreme Court

"Sitting on that bench listening to cases being argued, my mind often went back to the howls of those prisoners in the Northwest Baltimore Police Station. Which is why I did everything in my power to protect the civil rights of every American citizen."

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Marshall to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Marshall said: "*I've always felt the assault troops should never occupy the town, I figured after the school decisions, the assault was over for me.*"

Four years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him U.S. Solicitor General and, in 1967, associate justice of the Supreme Court.

Marshall's nomination became a summer-long fight before he was finally confirmed on August 30. The final vote was 69–11 with Johnson persuading 20 senators, who feared a vote for a black man to the Supreme Court would cost them a subsequent election, to abstain.

Marshall joined the generally like-minded liberal Warren Court, but then became known as "the great dissenter" as the court shifted to the right under chief justices Warren Burger and William Rehnquist.

https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/historypolitics/justice-for-all-50-years-after-thurgood-marshall-supreme-court-confirmation/

How the Court Works

The Supreme Court plays a very important role in our constitutional system of government. First, as the highest court in the land, it is the court of last resort for those looking for justice. Second, due to its power of judicial review, it plays an essential role in ensuring that each branch of government recognizes the limits of its own power. Third, it protects civil rights and liberties by striking down laws that violate the Constitution. Finally, it sets appropriate limits on democratic government by ensuring that popular majorities cannot pass laws that harm and/or take undue advantage of unpopular minorities. In essence, it serves to ensure that the changing views of a majority do not undermine the fundamental values common to all Americans, i.e., freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and due process of law.

https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/about

Supreme Court justices hear oral arguments and make decisions on cases granted *certiorari* (a writ or order by which a higher court reviews a decision of a lower court). They are usually cases in controversy from lower appeals courts. The court receives between 7,000 and 8,000 petitions each term and hears oral arguments in about 80 cases.

In addition to deciding these cases, each justice is responsible for emergency applications and other matters from one or more of the 13 federal circuits. Therefore, justices are sometimes asked to halt the implementation of a circuit court order, set a bond for a defendant, or stop the deportation of an alien. Justices also act on applications for requested stays of execution.

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/publications/after-the-bar/essentials/how-does-the-supreme-court-work/

Miranda v. Arizona (1966)

Ernesto Miranda was arrested and taken to the police station where he was questioned for two hours. Police obtained a written confession from Miranda which was admitted into evidence at trial despite the objection of the defense attorney and the fact that the police officers admitted that they had not advised Miranda of his right to have an attorney present during the interrogation.

The jury found Miranda guilty. On appeal, the Supreme Court of Arizona affirmed and held that Miranda's constitutional rights were not violated because he did not specifically request counsel. The Fifth Amendment requires that law enforcement officials advise suspects of their right to remain silent and to obtain an attorney during interrogations while in police custody. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the 5–4 majority, concluding that the defendant's interrogation violated the Fifth Amendment.

https://www.justia.com/criminal/procedure/miranda-rights/

This led to the creation of warnings that officers must recite to criminal suspects when they place them under arrest. These warnings, known as Miranda warnings or Miranda rights, identify some of the basic constitutional rights protected by the Fifth and Sixth Amendments. Failure to "Mirandize" a suspect could result in any statements that he or she makes during or after an arrest being ruled inadmissible in court. This includes statements or confessions made by a person during an interrogation in police custody.

https://www.oyez.org/cases/1965/759

Marshall was the Solicitor General for this case and task of the Office of the Solicitor General is to supervise and conduct government litigation in the United States Supreme Court.

https://www.justice.gov/osg#:~:text=The%20task%20of%20the%20Office,actively%20conducted%20by%20the%20Office.

Police Department of the City of Chicago v. Mosley (1972)

Earl Mosley had been picketing Jones Commercial High School by walking along the sidewalk holding up a sign charging the school with "black discrimination." When Mosley heard about a Chicago ordinance preventing all picketing within 150 feet of a school, except for peaceful picketing related to a labor dispute, he called the police department to ask how it would affect him. He was informed that his picketing must stop, or he would be arrested.

The majority opinion, written by Justice Thurgood Marshall, ushered in the Court's content discrimination principle, which became the Court's chief methodological tool for deciding free expression cases. The content discrimination principle determined whether a regulation discriminated against speech because of the

content of its message. In *Mosley*, Marshall pointed out that not only did the ordinance distinguish between classes of speakers, but it did so on the basis of the content of the speakers' messages, which is constitutionally impermissible.

Marshall wrote, *"But, above all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content."*

https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-87

https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/485/police-department-of-chicago-v-mosley

San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez (1972)

In addition to a state-funded program designed to establish a minimum educational threshold in every school, Texas public schools rely on local property taxes for supplemental revenue. Rodriguez, acting on behalf of students whose families reside in poor districts, challenged this funding scheme by arguing that it underprivileged such students because their schools lacked the vast property tax base that other districts utilized. The reliance on assessable property, the school districts claimed, caused severe inter-district disparities in per-pupil expenditures.

In a 5–4 decision, the Court refused to examine the system with strict scrutiny since there is no fundamental right to education in the Constitution and since the system did not systematically discriminate against all poor people in Texas. Justice Powell argued that on the question of wealth and education, "*the Equal Protection Clause does not require absolute equality or precisely equal advantages.*"

https://www.oyez.org/cases/1972/71-1332

In his dissent, Justice Marshall wrote:
"The Court today decides, in effect, that a State may constitutionally vary the quality of education which it offers its children in accordance with the amount of taxable wealth located in the school districts within which they reside. The majority's decision represents an abrupt departure from the mainstream of recent state and federal court decisions concerning the unconstitutionality of state educational financing schemes dependent upon taxable local wealth.

More unfortunately, though, the majority's holding can only be seen as a retreat from our historic commitment to equality of educational opportunity and as unsupportable acquiescence in a system which deprives children in their earliest years of the chance to reach their full potential as citizens.

The Court does this despite the absence of any substantial justification for a scheme which arbitrarily channels educational resources in accordance with the fortuity of the amount of taxable wealth within each district. In my judgment, the right of every American to an equal start in life, so far as the provision of a state service as important as education is concerned, is far too vital to permit state discrimination on grounds as tenuous as those presented by this record. Nor can I accept the notion that it is sufficient to remit these appellees to the vagaries of the political process which, contrary to the majority's suggestion, has proved singularly unsuited to the task of providing a remedy for this discrimination.

I, for one, am unsatisfied with the hope of an ultimate 'political' solution sometime in the indefinite future while, in the meantime, countless children unjustifiably receive inferior educations that 'may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.' I must therefore respectfully dissent."

https://searchblackandeducation.com/stories/2020/10/13/thurgood-marshall-his-most-famous-dissent-oct-1972#

Language & History

CONTENT ADVISORY: The play *Thurgood* includes multiple instances of racial slurs and language that can provoke deep discomfort today.

Playwright George Stevens Jr. included derogatory language, including the n-word, in the script of *Thurgood* to reflect Marshall's own speech, as well as the historical time periods depicted. In addition to portraying Thurgood Marshall in the play, the actor also embodies other characters and voices from Marshall's memory – including those with the deliberate intent to demean and insult.

Please help student audiences to understand that they will hear this language, and prepare for how your group can avoid further harm by not repeating it in other contexts.

The evolution of a word

We know, at least in the history I've looked at, that the word started off as just a descriptor, "negro," with no value attached to it. … We know that as early as the 17th century, "negro" evolved to "nigger" as intentionally derogatory, and it has never been able to shed that baggage since then—even when Black people talk about appropriating and reappropriating it. The poison is still there. The word is inextricably linked with violence and brutality on Black psyches and derogatory aspersions cast on Black bodies. No degree of appropriating can rid it of that bloodsoaked history.
–Neal A. Lester, dean of humanities and former chair of the English department at Arizona State University

Further discussion at Learning For Justice: https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2011/straight-talk-about-the-nword

It's a question that comes up again and again in discussions of race: Why can't white people use the n-word, even as many black people use it, particularly in rap songs and other media?

Author Ta-Nehisi Coates points out that it is normal in our culture for some people or groups to use certain words that others can't. For example, his wife calls him "honey"; it would not be acceptable, he said, for strange women to do the same. Similarly, his dad was known by his family back home as Billy — but it would be awkward for Coates to try to use that nickname for his father.

"*That's because the relationship between myself and my dad is not the same as the relationship between my dad and his mother and his sisters who he grew up with*," Coates said. "*We understand that.*"

Excerpted from a longer article, with video discussion, available at: https://www.vox.com/identities/2017/11/9/16627900/ta-nehisi-coates-n-word

"One day he sat me down… 'Thurgood, if anybody calls you a n----, you have business with them right then and there. Either win or lose right then and there."

In the play, Marshall describes many instances when someone did use the slur to refer to him, and how he responded. Observing how he responded, how times have changed, and how others might now respond differently in a similar situation can all be part of understanding the progress of history and markers of social change.

The Individual Sponsors of *Thurgood* at People's Light are Nicole Sakowitz & Bill Pikounis.

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Upcoming Opportunities for Educators & Students

SummerBLAST registration is open for students entering grades 2 through 8 to participate in our summer theatre programs.

Spring Theatre School for ages 5-18 and adults begins April 15

Teacher Appreciation Dinner & Educational Preview for 2023-24
Save the Date!
Wednesday,
May 11
Dinner at 5pm
Show at 7:30pm

National Playwriting Opportunity for ages 13-19
Enough! Plays to End Gun Violence
Submissions for 10 minute plays written by teens will be accepted through April 20
https://www.enoughplays.com/

Interested in any of these offerings?
ArtsDiscovery@peopleslight.org
610-647-1900 x187