

biography of thurgood marshall answer key

Biography of Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall was a pivotal figure in American legal history, known for his tireless advocacy for civil rights and his significant contributions to the United States Supreme Court. He was the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court, where he championed the cause of equality and justice throughout his tenure. This article delves into his life, career, and lasting legacy, showcasing how his experiences shaped his commitment to civil rights and social justice.

Early Life and Education

Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908, in Baltimore, Maryland, to a modest family. His father, William Marshall, was a former slave who worked as a dining car porter, while his mother, Norma, was a teacher. Growing up in a racially segregated society, Marshall faced the harsh realities of discrimination and inequality from an early age.

Childhood Influences

Marshall's early experiences significantly shaped his worldview. He was exposed to the struggles of African Americans and the injustices they faced. His mother instilled in him a love for reading and education, encouraging him to pursue knowledge as a means to overcome societal barriers.

Higher Education

Marshall attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in

1930. He later enrolled at Howard University School of Law, a historically black institution, where he was mentored by the esteemed legal scholar Charles Hamilton Houston. Marshall graduated first in his class in 1933, equipped with a robust understanding of the law and a passion for civil rights.

Early Legal Career

After graduating from law school, Marshall faced challenges in finding work due to the pervasive racism of the time. He eventually secured a position at the Baltimore branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), where he would begin to make his mark as a civil rights attorney.

Key Legal Cases

Marshall's legal career was characterized by several landmark cases that challenged segregation and discrimination:

1. *Murray v. Maryland* (1936): This case successfully challenged the University of Maryland's refusal to admit Donald Murray, an African American. The ruling marked a significant victory in the fight against segregation in higher education.
2. *Smith v. Allwright* (1944): In this case, Marshall argued against the white primary system in Texas, which disenfranchised African American voters. The Supreme Court ruled that the primary system violated the 14th Amendment.
3. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954): Perhaps his most famous case, Marshall served as the lead attorney for the NAACP. The Supreme Court's unanimous decision to overturn "separate but equal" doctrine in public education was a monumental victory for the civil rights movement.

Supreme Court Justice

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Marshall as the United States Solicitor General, where he argued several cases before the Supreme Court. His reputation as a formidable advocate for civil rights led to his nomination by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the Supreme Court in 1967, making him the first African American to hold this position.

Judicial Philosophy

Marshall's judicial philosophy was rooted in the principle of equality. He believed in an active role for the courts in protecting civil rights and addressing social injustices. His opinions often reflected a commitment to individual rights, and he was a strong proponent of affirmative action, voting rights, and the rights of criminal defendants.

Notable Opinions

During his tenure on the Supreme Court, Marshall authored several significant opinions, including:

- *Roe v. Wade* (1973): Marshall supported the decision that a woman's right to choose to have an abortion is protected by the right to privacy under the Constitution.
- *United States v. Nixon* (1974): He played a critical role in the decision that led to the release of the Watergate tapes, reinforcing the principle that no one is above the law.

Personal Life

Marshall was a devoted family man. He married his college sweetheart, Vivien B. "V" Marshall, in

1929, and they had two sons, Thurgood Jr. and John. The couple faced personal challenges, including Vivien's battle with chronic illness, which ultimately led to her death in 1955. Marshall later married Cecilia Suyat in 1957, and they remained together until his death.

Legacy and Impact

Thurgood Marshall's legacy extends far beyond his legal victories. He is remembered as a trailblazer who fought tirelessly for justice and equality. His contributions to civil rights have inspired generations of activists and lawyers.

Influence on Future Generations

Marshall's work laid the groundwork for future civil rights advancements, and his commitment to social justice continues to resonate today. His philosophy of using the law as a tool for change has influenced countless legal professionals and activists.

Recognition and Honors

Throughout his life, Marshall received numerous awards and honors, including:

- The NAACP's Spingarn Medal (1939)
- The American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award (1992)
- Numerous honorary degrees from universities across the United States

Death and Commemoration

Thurgood Marshall passed away on January 24, 1993, at the age of 84. His legacy is commemorated in various ways:

- The Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in New York City was named in his honor.
- The Thurgood Marshall College Fund was established to support students at historically black colleges and universities.

Conclusion

Thurgood Marshall's life and career exemplify the struggle for civil rights and the pursuit of justice in America. As a lawyer, judge, and civil rights advocate, he dedicated his life to fighting against racial discrimination and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. His contributions not only reshaped American law but also inspired a movement that continues to impact society today. Marshall remains a symbol of hope and resilience, reminding us of the ongoing fight for equality and justice in our world.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Thurgood Marshall?

Thurgood Marshall was the first African American Supreme Court Justice, serving from 1967 to 1991, and was a key figure in the civil rights movement.

What landmark case did Thurgood Marshall argue before the Supreme Court?

Thurgood Marshall argued the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which declared

racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

What role did Marshall play in the NAACP?

Thurgood Marshall served as the chief counsel for the NAACP, where he successfully argued several cases against segregation and discrimination.

What was Thurgood Marshall's early life like?

Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908, in Baltimore, Maryland. He faced racial discrimination growing up, which influenced his commitment to civil rights.

When was Thurgood Marshall appointed to the Supreme Court?

Thurgood Marshall was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Lyndon B. Johnson and was confirmed on August 30, 1967.

What significant contributions did Marshall make during his Supreme Court tenure?

During his tenure, Marshall was a strong advocate for individual rights, affirmative action, and the rights of the accused, influencing many major decisions.

What educational institutions did Thurgood Marshall attend?

Thurgood Marshall graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and earned his law degree from Howard University School of Law.

What obstacles did Marshall face in his career?

Thurgood Marshall faced significant racial prejudice and discrimination throughout his career, but he persevered to become a prominent civil rights lawyer and judge.

How did Thurgood Marshall impact the civil rights movement?

Thurgood Marshall played a vital role in the civil rights movement by using the legal system to challenge and dismantle institutionalized racism and segregation.

When did Thurgood Marshall pass away?

Thurgood Marshall passed away on January 24, 1993, leaving behind a legacy as a champion for justice and equality.

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