

LEVELED BOOK • N

# Good for Thurgood!



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Written by Marvin Bird

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Thurgood Marshall was born in 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was African American, and his grandfather had once been a slave.



By the time Thurgood was born, it was against the law to own slaves. Even so, when Thurgood was a child, the **South** was still **segregated**. Black people were not allowed to eat in many restaurants that served white people.



Black people were not allowed to sit in the same train cars as white people.



Black children attend an all-black school in Kentucky in 1916.

Black children in the South were not allowed to go to school with white children.



Those laws were unfair. At the dinner table, Thurgood's family used to argue about what to do about those laws. Thurgood became very good at arguing.

### Do You Know?

Thurgood's parents named him "Thoroughgood." Because he didn't like having to spell his name, he shortened it to Thurgood in second grade. His nickname was "Goody."

After graduating from an all-black college, Thurgood wanted to go to the University of Maryland Law School. Because he was African American, the school would not let him in. Instead, he went to the all-black law school at Howard University. In 1933, he graduated first in his class and became a lawyer.



Howard University was founded after the Civil War to offer a college education to black men and women. It is located in Washington, D.C. Nowadays, students of other races can and do attend.



Thurgood (standing) gets ready for court in 1935.

In 1936, he won his first big victory for **civil rights**. It was against the University of Maryland Law School—the same school he'd tried to attend. Another black student was not allowed into the school because of his skin color. That student took the school to court, saying that keeping blacks out of the school was illegal. Thurgood argued the case and won.



Thurgood went on to argue many cases before the **Supreme Court**—the most important court in the United States. Thurgood argued a case about neighborhoods. He said that people of other races should be allowed to buy homes in white neighborhoods.



Thurgood traveled a lot in order to argue for the rights of black Americans.

Thurgood argued another case about segregation on buses and trains. He said that black people and white people should be able to ride together. Thurgood won these and many other cases for civil rights.

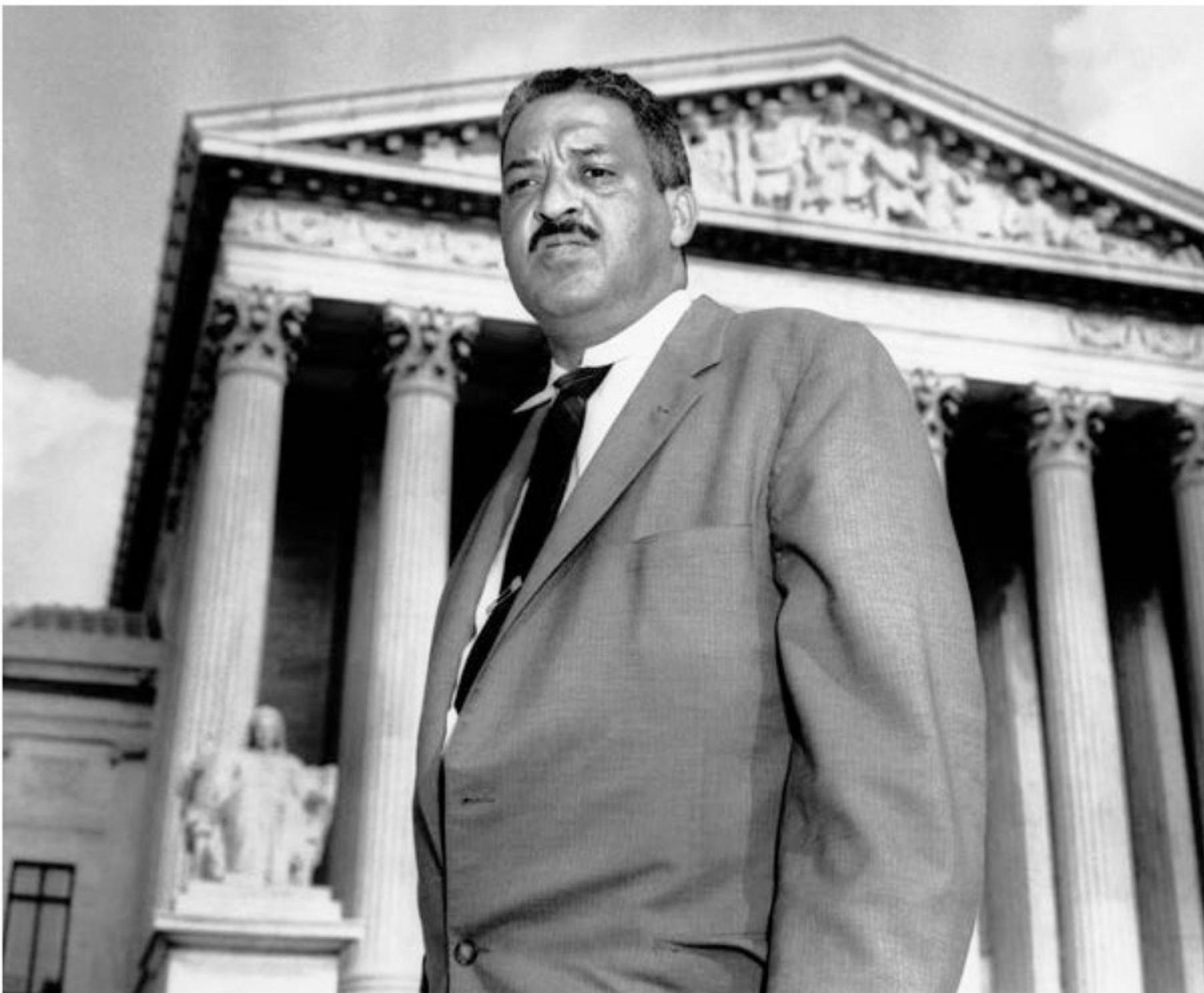
In 1954, Thurgood argued his most important case of all. In some states, black children had to go to all-black schools. Their parents thought this was wrong.



Thurgood's work helped make it possible for black, white, and Latino students to all say the Pledge of Allegiance together.

Thurgood argued that it was unfair to have separate schools for black children and white children. Separate schools were not equal, he argued. Instead, children of all races had to be able to attend the same public schools.

Once again, Thurgood won his case. Every **justice** on the Supreme Court voted to end segregation in public schools. The case inspired the civil rights movement and made Thurgood famous.



Thurgood stands in front of the Supreme Court.

In all, Thurgood argued thirty-two cases before the Supreme Court and won twenty-nine of them. In 1965, he became the first African American to argue cases for the U.S. government before the Supreme Court. Two years later, the president chose Thurgood to become the first African American justice on the Supreme Court.

# Who Serves on the Supreme Court?



The nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court gather for a photo in October 2010.

For many years, only white men served on the Supreme Court. Of the nine justices, there were no women and no people of color. Because the president appoints each justice for life, it took a long time to make things more equal. The first change came when Thurgood Marshall became a justice in 1967. Then the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, was appointed in 1981. In 2013, one African American man and three women served on the court, including one Latina woman.

Thurgood still got to argue a lot, and he always argued to make things fair. He upheld the rights of prisoners, children, women, and homeless people.

Thurgood served on the Supreme Court for twenty-four years. In 1991, he retired. At that time, reporters asked him if black people were better off than when he'd joined the court.

"All Americans are better off since I joined the Court," Marshall said.  
"All of them."

He died two years later.

Thurgood was a powerful voice for civil rights and a hero to everyone who believed in **equality**.

Good for Thurgood!

# Glossary

<b>civil rights</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	legal, social, and economic rights that guarantee freedom and equality for all citizens (p. 9)
<b>equality</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the condition in which everyone has the same rights (p. 15)
<b>justice</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a judge (p. 12)
<b>segregated</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	kept apart on the basis of group differences, such as race (p. 4)
<b>South</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the southeastern part of the United States, especially states that formed part of the Confederacy during the Civil War (p. 4)
<b>Supreme Court</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the highest court of law in the judicial system of the United States (p. 10)

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Back cover: Cecilia Marshall, widow of Thurgood Marshall, unveils a new postage stamp honoring her husband in 2002.

Title page: Thurgood Marshall smiles before becoming the first black member of the Supreme Court in 1967.

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