



Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary

By Juan Williams

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This New York Times Notable Book of the Year, 1998, is now in trade paper.

From the bestselling author of *Eyes on the Prize*, here is the definitive biography of the great lawyer and Supreme Court justice.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Washington Post correspondent and TV commentator Juan Williams has produced an illuminating look at a true giant of 20th-century American politics. Williams retells the story of Thurgood Marshall's successful desegregation of public schools in the U.S. with his victory in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, followed by his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1967 for a 24-year term. But he also recounts how W.E.B. Du Bois, then the head of the NAACP, gave a cold shoulder to the younger Marshall (who eventually helped oust Du Bois from the organization), and describes the tug of war between Marshall and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, as well as the mind games Lyndon Johnson played on Marshall before nominating him for the Supreme Court. Readers also learn about Marshall's relationship with his replacement, Clarence Thomas, which was surprisingly civil given their contrary views on affirmative action. Williams has captured many examples of Thurgood Marshall's heroism and humanity in this comprehensive yet readable biography of a complex, combative, and courageous civil rights figure. --*Eugene Holley Jr.*

From Publishers Weekly

Thirteen years before becoming the first African-American justice on the Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall's place in American history was secured, with his victory over school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Williams (*Eyes on the Prize*) offers readers a thorough, straightforward life of "the unlikely leading actor in creating social change in the United States in the twentieth century." Although he was denied access to the files of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where Marshall devoted more than 40 years of his law career, and worked without the cooperation of Marshall's family, Williams has managed to fill in the blanks with over 150 interviews, including lengthy sessions with Marshall himself in 1989. Marshall is portrayed as an outspoken critic of black militancy and nonviolent demonstrations. Williams mentions, but does not dwell on, Marshall's history of heavy drinking, womanizing and sexual harassment. But his private contacts with J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, even while that organization was working to discredit Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, receives critical attention. This relationship "could have cost him his credibility among civil rights activists had it become known," writes Williams. Likewise, it would appear that his extra-legal activities and charges of incompetence and Communist connections would, if publicized, have kept him from the Supreme Court, as he himself admitted. Nevertheless, this work will stand as an accessible and fitting tribute to a champion of individual rights and "the architect of American race relations." Photos not seen by PW. Author tour.

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From Library Journal

These two books about a giant in U.S. legal and political history mirror each other in myriad ways, detailing the history of the NAACP, the rise of Jim Crow, lynchings, etc. Ball's (political science, Univ. of Vermont) study contains more legal lingo, which makes for a less interesting read, while Williams's portrait is more revealing of the private side of the justice.

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Users Review

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Martha Wilson:

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