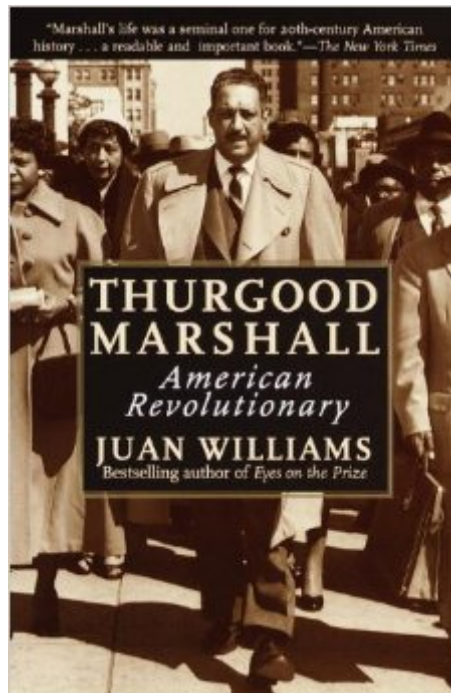


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Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the most wonderful books I ever read. Thurgood Marshall is one of the most dynamic figures of the Civil Rights Movement. Williams not only gives an excellent and engaging account of Marshall's life, he represents the time in a manner that easily imagined. I was not alive during this period of time, but reading Williams' book made me feel as though I had experienced it. So often, when an author truly likes and admires his subject, the work that results is biased and not well-rounded. You can tell when you are reading something that is one-sided and too tributary to be accurate. Williams' admiration for this great man shines through in his book; however, it is by no means a song to Marshall. Williams' is fair in his dedication to not only Marshall's courage and brilliance, but also his fallibility and humanity. This is what brings the history to life. When you finish reading this book, you will feel as though you know Thurgood Marshall.

Thurgood Marshall needs a better book than this one, but in the absence of a more comprehensive, analytical volume, that would be a lot longer & cover his thought and his life, this work will have to do. Juan Williams is a very good writer, the prose is "breezy" and the book is a fast read laden with

interesting characters & interesting gossip. It shows Marshall's central place in 20th century, indeed US historical, civil rights in various arenas, not just racial justice. He is a very appealing person as well ... someone any reader probably would enjoy having known. I noticed in the forward that Williams was prevented from talking to some of the people closest to Marshall, which is most unfortunate. The book is not an expose but a very favorable view of the man. Marshall's relatives should be kicking themselves for not having shared their views & experiences with Williams. The next biographer will almost certainly be a more critical writer than Williams. Where the book falls down is in its exposition of Marshall's thought & some of the details of his legal work. So we come away, unfortunately, not understanding that Marshall was an intellectual giant, not just a legal-oriented civil rights leader. I enjoyed this book very much but gave it only 3 stars because it is almost entirely missing Marshall's intellectual life.

Williams certainly understands the value of Marshall's great contributions to the long overdue advancement of African-Americans. Often overshadowed by King and Malcolm X, Marshall accomplished much with his work in the courts to pave the way for the end of segregation. The sections leading up to Brown were compelling and helped bring the reader back to time that is very different than today, but not too long ago. People unfamiliar with the reality of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s will find this book invaluable. However, the strength of this book is that it paints Marshall not only as a great man, but a man with flaws. His dealings with other leaders, especially his conflicts with other great African-American leaders, his late night drinking, his womanizing all make him more human and more compelling. Not only was Marshall a significant figure in the Civil Rights movement, but he was also human, a man that readers can relate to and understand.

Compelling; Historic fight for freedom. Thurgood Marshall was a hero in the fight for human rights for black humanity. Courageous and brave he took his fights to the courthouses and Supreme Court. This is a must read for all students of history of United States of America, if you are a human being. He was the legal voice of conscience for full integration against the "farce" of "Separate but Equal".

Although an informative book, Juan Williams' Thurgood Marshall is an all too common example of a biography where the strength of the subject is forced to shine through weak writing. It is unfortunate that publishers allow the prominence of radio hosts and television pundits almost free reign to chronicle the lives of important historical figures knowing full well that the combination of names will often outweigh the quality of the book. In this case, Thurgood Marshall is not done justice by

Williams. However, considering there are almost no viable alternatives for anyone researching the life of one of the most powerful black man in American history, we must make due. The chapter on the Justice's political maneuvering - Machiavellian Marshall - is particularly strong and interesting. The period after Marshall graduated from law school but before becoming lead counsel for the NAACP is also a crucial look at the formative part of his legal education. Those, I'm sad to say, are the only parts that really dive into what makes Marshall tick. The reader would be better served by more of them. *American Revolutionary* is by no means a fluff piece or a poorly written work. It is however fairly shallow and not the substantive biography that Marshall (and the public) deserve.

Justice Marshall's victories as the lead NAACP lawyer in dozens of civil rights cases, beginning in the late-1920s, are astounding when one considers that most of the cases were thought to be unwinnable, given that many took place in the South during Jim Crow. Marshall faced his share of death threats as he represented black defendants who were being accused of rape or murder and faced the death penalty. And most of the time he won. He was accomplishing these legal victories decades before Jackie Robinson and later Martin Luther King became national figures. Because of his excellence in the courtroom as well as his integrity, Marshall more than earned his appointments as a Federal Judge, Solicitor General and Supreme Court Justice. Marshall's life is worth celebrating and Juan Williams did an excellent job telling the Justice's story.

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