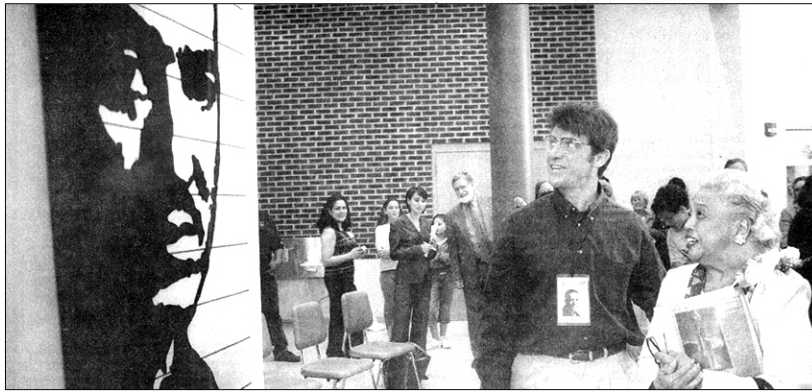


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Judicial giant: New Fairfield artist David Boyajian and Cecilia "Cissy" Marshall look at the portrait-sculpture Boyajian created of her husband, the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. The work was unveiled Friday at the new Thurgood Marshall Middle School for Social Justice at the Six to Six Magnet School in Bridgeport.



BRIDGEPORT — Cecilia "Cissy" Marshall, widow of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, was treated like royalty at the Six to Six Magnet School in Bridgeport Friday.

Marshall was serenaded by children and asked for her autograph. Her picture was taken perhaps a thousand times.

The reception was in stark contrast to the one for her late husband some 63 years ago when, as a young NAACP defense attorney, Thurgood Marshall tried a case in the Park City

It was 1941. As a black man, Marshall was required to have a white attorney speak for him in court. Banned from staying in downtown hotels because of the color of his skin, he had to spend his nights with people from a local church.

"We've come very far, but I still challenge us to think about how much farther we can go," said Leslie Alexander, principal of Six to Six, who hosted Marshall's widow during an afternoon-long celebration to dedicate the magnet-school's new Thurgood Marshall Middle School for Social Justice.

In its first year, the fifth through eighth grade middle school joins the pre-k through sixth grade school that is now in its 11th year.

Marshall, 76, was a special guest at a program called Journey for Justice. She helped dedicate a portrait-sculpture of her late husband in the new building's rotunda that was created by artist David Boyajian of New Fairfield. With U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd, she helped dedicate a tree. Later she toured the school and met with students,

parents and local officials.

Marshall said she was honored that the school was named after her late husband, who died in 1993.

"I hope everyone who comes to this school will be inspired by its name ... to do the best he or she can," she said.

Thurgood Marshall would have been 96 today. A civil rights attorney, he tried the history-making desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, before the U.S. Supreme Court. In its decision, the court unanimously struck down an earlier decision that allowed schools to be segregated based on race.

"His mission was to get everything for everybody at the same time. He said: 'I want what's right for everyone,'" she said.

Mayor John M. Fabrizi called it a momentous day for the city to host Marshall. It comes 10 days before the nation observes the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. BOE* decision on May 17.

"The impact of the *Brown v. BOE* is significant ... but we have some more work to do," he said.

Alexander, the school principal, said her school wouldn't exist without the work of Thurgood Marshall.

"Our school is dedicated to what the world could be," she told Cissy Marshall.

Open to urban and suburban children in the greater Bridgeport area, about 40 percent of its 410 students are white, and 60 percent minorities. Besides Bridgeport, the school draws from Fairfield, Trumbull, Monroe and Stratford.

Many of its students have been at the school since they were preschoolers.

By LINDA CONNER LAMBECK
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"If it weren't for Thurgood Marshall I wouldn't have the friends I have today," said Caroline Proto, 11, of Stratford.

She said her school is interesting because there are students of all colors.

Asia Wiggins, 13, of Bridgeport, said she likes having open-minded teachers. "If I was only in a school with black people I wouldn't be really out in the world," she said.

Eric Sanchez, 12, of Bridgeport, said he likes that race is discussed, not ignored. "We get to understand everybody," he said.

"People accept you for who you are," added Michael Bridgeforth, 11, of Bridgeport.

Alexander said the school's concept is more than just having a diverse population.

"It's really living the legacy of Thurgood Marshall, actively working on the issues of social justice," she said.

"Compassion." the sculpture dedicated at the school, includes a silhouette of Thurgood Marshall mounted on a wall-size yellow pad. On one side of the silhouette is a giant-size pencil; above, giant pushpins and below, a three-dimensional red parallelogram resembling an eraser.

Cissy Marshall told the gathering she was a secretary for the NAACP during the 1950s and was courting her future husband during the trial.

At the time, she said, it seemed to her to be just another case that she didn't think would be won, let alone have a unanimous decision. She said when the decision was announced, her future husband — they married in 1955 — celebrated for about an hour.

"Then, he said 'I don't know about you fools but our work has just begun,'" she said, adding, "he was right.

"We've come a long way but we're not there yet, unfortunately," she said.

Marshall now lives in Virginia. She has two grown sons. Thurgood Jr. is an attorney who worked for Al Gore. John, a former Virginia state trooper, now is secretary of public safety in Virginia. "He changed his father's opinion about police officers," Marshall said.