Two communities joining together
Marshall legacy endures in new school

In joining two long-standing high school communities (Colonel White and Roth), Thurgood Marshall High School stands as a testament to the legacy of its namesake, the first African American to serve on the United States Supreme Court.

In 2005, the Colonel White High School Class of 2008 spearheaded a school naming campaign. The goal: Find a namesake who would resonate with the current generation of students. Thurgood Marshall was chosen in a schoolwide election and presented to the Roth and Colonel White communities in June 2005; the selection was approved by the Dayton Board of Education in February 2006.

The foundation of Thurgood Marshall’s long and distinguished career was the 20 years he spent as director and counsel with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. In 1954, he argued – and won – the case of “Brown v. Board of Education,” a victory that is historically honored as the end of the “separate but equal” system of racial segregation. As a federal appeals court judge appointed under President John F. Kennedy, Marshall wrote 112 opinions while serving, none of which was overturned on appeal; several of his dissenting opinions were adopted as majority opinions by the Supreme Court.

As Solicitor General, he was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967. Known by colleagues as “The Great Dissenter,” Marshall often stood alone in support for cases involving affirmative action issues. In addition, he dissented in all cases where the court upheld the death penalty, and wrote more than 150 dissenting opinions on cases where the court refused to hear death penalty appeals.

One of his best-known dissents involved school funding. In 1973, following a 5-4 vote “which upheld that the Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection was not violated by the property tax system used by Texas and most other states to finance public education,” Marshall argued the the right to an education should be fundamental, and that state policies that effectively discriminate based on wealth should be closely examined.

“In my judgment,” he wrote, “the right of every American to an equal start in life, so far as the provision of a state service as important as education is concerned, is far too vital to permit state discrimination on grounds as tenuous as those presented by this record.”


Colonel White
• Opened in 1927 and dedicated in 1930 as a junior high, serving grades seven, eight and nine.
• In 1940, Colonel White was combined with Fairview High School; Colonel White served ninth- and 10th-graders, while Fairview served 11th- and 12th-grade students.
• In 1957, a new addition to the Colonel White building was dedicated, allowing the school to serve ninth through 12th grades. The addition wrapped around what was the front of the older building.
• Colonel White eventually became a performing and visual arts magnet. The school added an academic magnet academy in 2003.

Roth
• Opened as a high school in 1959; became a middle school in 1982.
• Was named a professional studies magnet in 1990.
• Was closed at the end of the 2004-2005 school year; eighth-grade students attended school in the 2005-2006 school year at the former Gardendale Elementary (known as Roth at Gardendale).
• Roth was demolished in 2005 to make way for the new Thurgood Marshall High School.