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Public Charter
 High School

Advocate

SPECIAL EDITION / SPRING 2006



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 Spring 2006

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Portfolio Presentations—Come see our programs in action!
 Each year Thurgood Marshall Academy concludes the school year with Portfolio Presentations—all students exhibit their year’s work to a panel including teachers, parents, peers, and community members.

Senior Portfolios—May 8 – 13
 Grades 9 – 11—May 22 – 26

Reservation required/times vary—please call 202-204-6652 or e-mail
 tfoster@tmapchs.org

Graduation—Save the date!
 Please be our guest at Graduation
 June 7, 2006, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
 Invitation to Follow

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer Speaks with Students Court TV Films Event and Grants Scholarship

Three-quarters of an hour into his dialogue with Thurgood Marshall Academy’s students, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer encountered the question that most puzzles young people and gave an answer that returned one of the most exalted men in America to his youth..

“How did you know what you wanted to be?” tenth-grader Vincent Long asked. “What inspired you to be a lawyer?”
 “My father was a lawyer,” Justice Breyer replied. “He worked for the school board in San Francisco for forty years. I have his watch.”

And with that, he took his wristwatch off, turned it over, and read the inscription aloud:

“Irving Breyer, San Francisco Unified School District, 1933 – 1973. I’m sure that’s what influenced me.”

Justice Breyer was silent for half a beat and then went on to describe how he had wanted to help people, to use the law to solve their problems, and, eventually, to try to make decisions for the good of the country from the bench of its highest court.

It was a glimpse into the character of a Supreme Court justice—and thus into the legal system—that few Americans will ever be granted. Thanks to Court TV, however, on February 16th, 125 Thurgood Marshall



Dialogue: Thurgood Marshall Academy sophomore Darryl Tibbs asks U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer about his work on the Supreme Court as Fred Graham, Senior Anchor at Court TV, moderates.

Academy students were given the chance to learn what motivated a Supreme Court justice and to experience the workings of the law through his eyes.

Segments of this dialogue will air on Court TV to mark the nationwide launch of the network’s educational initiative, *Careers in Justice*. The initiative is the latest in the cable network’s ambitious program to

provide young people nationwide with free resources to understand the social and legal issues that shape their lives. And when it comes to finding out the details of legal careers, what better place to start than at the top, and what better venue than a law-themed high school? So Court TV asked U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer to come to Thurgood Marshall Academy to talk about his job.

According to Court TV Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Education Lee Tenebruso, Justice Breyer had appeared in a Court TV videotaped event with students two years ago commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

“He was so real, so engaged with the students,” Tenebruso said. “We saw then that all you have to do is have him in a room with young people and turn on the cameras.”

Photo by Holly Eaton.

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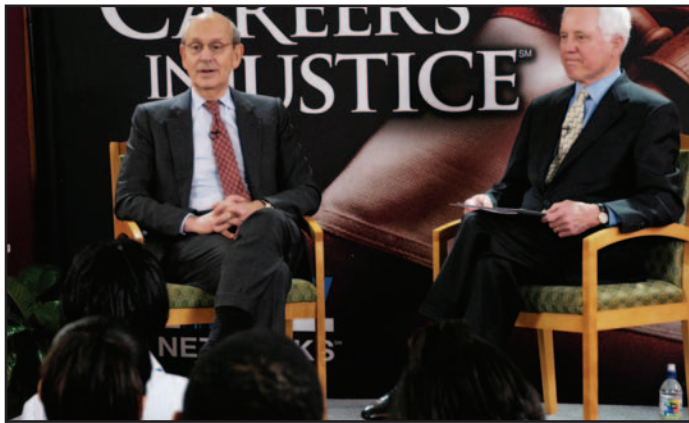


Photo by Kyle Samperton.

To make that possible, Court TV created a television studio within Thurgood Marshall Academy's Cafritz Foundation Library. Shortly after security officers and a bomb-sniffing dog completed a sweep of the room, Justice Breyer took the stage with Fred Graham—Senior Anchor at Court TV and a venerable attorney and journalist with forty-five years' experience at outlets such as *The New York Times*. Thurgood Marshall Academy President Joshua Kern introduced Court TV Chairman and CEO Henry Schleiff, who would in turn introduce Justice Breyer and Graham.

First, though, Schleiff announced that Court TV was donating a \$20,000 scholarship for Thurgood Marshall Academy to award to a graduating senior in support of her or his four years in college. The gift, he said, was in keeping with his company's goal "to give inspiration to youth to stay the course of education" and the beginning of a "mutually rewarding alliance with Thurgood Marshall Academy for many years to come."

With that, the program began in earnest. Senior Anchor Fred Graham announced that he was there "to be a traffic cop" moderating the discussion, whereupon Justice Breyer took away his whistle and personally directed a running, hour-long dialogue with students.

"Would you like to know what I do every day on the Court?" he asked his audience. "Mostly I read, and I write at a word processor." In short, Justice Breyer explained, he does homework!

Justice Breyer then described the layers of the vast legal system over which the Supreme Court presides and the daily grind of reaching a decision on the 75 to 80 cases—out of 8,000 requests for rulings—it hears each year.

"Every week, I get a stack of memos from my clerks like this," he said, holding his hands 12 inches apart, "as well as all the briefs filed in the case. There are usually 12 to 14 briefs, sometimes more. The affirmative action case had 120 briefs."

Justice Breyer then explained the Court's schedule of oral arguments and the process by which the justices decide cases. When choosing which cases to hear as well

as decisions following arguments, the justices gather alone in the conference room. Justice Breyer said he played a special role in those meetings: "For the last 11 years, I've been the junior member of the court.... If anyone knocked on the door, I'd open the door!"

Their discussions are unfailingly polite, Justice Breyer said, as befits a system that allows people to solve arguments in the courts rather than the streets:

"I've never heard a voice raised in anger in that room...or heard anybody say anything mean or deprecating. We get along well personally even when we disagree strongly on the merits of cases. It's possible for human beings to get along personally even when they think the other person is out of his mind."

Justice Breyer also discussed the path of clerkship, legal practice, and scholarship that led him to the Supreme Court. Inevitably, his remarks included comments on the career of Thurgood Marshall. Justice Breyer declared that, in his opinion, no twentieth-century figure "has changed America for the better more than Thurgood Marshall."

Justice Breyer never knew Justice Marshall personally, but he heard an interesting story from Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who served with him and knew him well. She told Justice Breyer that, one day toward the end of Justice Marshall's tenure on the court, she dropped into his office and found the old civil rights lion at his desk "looking rather low." When she asked him what was wrong, Justice Marshall questioned the value of his contributions to the court and the country.

Justice O'Connor listened to him for a while and then told him, "Snap out of it! Of the nine people on this court, there's only one who would be an American hero even if he hadn't been on the Supreme Court of the United States, and that's you." ■



National Launch of Court TV's Careers in Justice Education Initiative

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer and Court TV visited Thurgood Marshall Academy to mark the nationwide launch of Court TV's education initiative *Careers in Justice*. Thurgood Marshall Academy is among the first of numerous schools across the country that will benefit from free resources. As Court TV Chairman and CEO Henry Schleiff explained, the initiative seeks to "introduce teens to the watershed social and judicial issues that transform society" to inspire them to succeed in school and "pursue fulfilling careers in the fields of justice and law enforcement." *Careers in Justice* includes Court TV documentaries; discussions by leaders in the field of justice such as Justice Breyer; and a Web site—www.court.tv/careers_justice—where teachers can download model lessons and resources.

Ready for Prime Time



Thurgood Marshall Academy student Stephanie Douglass asks a question.

"Beautiful," Fred Cambria said to no one in particular as he walked into Thurgood Marshall Academy's Cafritz Foundation Library. "This is perfect."

Most people are impressed with the library's soaring windows and the sleek maple columns framing expansive views of the city. Cambria, Vice President and Senior Producer of Court TV, saw a set.

It was the day before U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer's question-and-answer session with Thurgood Marshall Academy's students, and between the columns directly across from the library doors a carpeted platform had already been assembled. Banners with logos for Court TV and Thurgood Marshall Academy formed an apparently seamless backdrop. Electric cables as thick as a person's wrist snaked around the room, through a window, and down to control room trucks parked behind the building.

A steady stream of equipment had been arriving since 9:00 in the morning. Everything had to be as perfect as it would be in a New York studio, so Cambria came to make certain everything was ready. Cameras, lights, chairs, sound equipment, and ladders were stacked throughout the room, with more arriving on dollies every few minutes. Technicians, camera operators, and electricians worked calmly amid what appeared to be chaos. They systematically built a television studio within the library.

The first thing that had to be tamed was light. Sunlight may make life on earth possible, but it's not something a director wants on a TV set. "Over-saturates the colors," a light technician explained. So a team covered the library's soaring windows with vast sheets of charcoal-colored plastic film called ND, for neutral density, which darkens a room without changing the spectrum of colors found in natural sunlight. Another group applied similar violet-colored plastic to the top of all the hanging fluorescent light fixtures in the library. This "minus green gel" blocked the sickly

pale color of the fluorescents, making everyone look warm and healthy, even without makeup.

With the sun under control, the crew began to erect lights to take its place. Four large chimera lights—named for a creature in Greek mythology that combines a lion, a goat, and a snake—provided background light. These lamps, which are surrounded by four-foot-square boxes, combine all the colors of the rainbow into even, balanced light. "What's nice about chimeras is that the light's diffused, softer," Cambria explained.

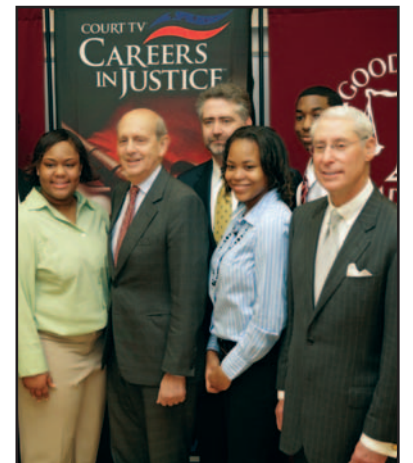
Lights were then beamed onto the platform where U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer and Fred Graham—Senior Anchor at Court TV—would sit, and the technicians began to make miniscule adjustments. Members of the crew took turns serving as stand-ins for the justice and the anchorman. From the control truck came instructions to move a light up an inch, down a half inch, left or right by increments until, shortly after 8:00 at night, all the lights fell on the platform and banners in perfect balance.

Earlier, the students who would question Justice Breyer were brought in for a look. Cambria ran through the schedule for the program until he reached the frightening part: how to grill a Supreme Court justice. It would be easier than the students thought, he said, because Justice Breyer is both easy-going and interested in what they think. "He loves the law and he loves to talk about it with young people. He may be on the Supreme Court, but he's a very approachable man."

When the program was over the next day, the students sat talking among themselves about Justice Breyer. Once again, technicians swarmed around them, this time to disassemble everything and take it out. But unlike the day before, the students paid little attention to the TV people, and talked instead of Justice Breyer.

"He knows how to talk to young people," said Theodora Walker. "I thought I'd be scared, but he put me at ease."

"He seemed like he was just being himself," added Steven Simms. "You'd never know he was famous." ■



Pictured (left to right): Student Lucreatia Williams, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer; Kevin Downey, Board Chair, Thurgood Marshall Academy; students Theodora Walker and Joey Hudson; and Court TV Chairman and CEO Henry Schleiff. Photos by Holly Eaton.