

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 253

Celebrating the life of Cecilia Suyat Marshall.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 12, 2023
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 16, 2023

WHEREAS, Cecilia Suyat Marshall, former legal secretary of the NAACP, esteemed civil rights activist, devoted wife of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and a beloved member of the Falls Church community, died on November 22, 2022; and

WHEREAS, born in Maui, Hawaii, to Philippine immigrants, Cecilia "Cissy" Marshall went to live with relatives in New York in 1948, where she attended night classes in stenography at Columbia University; and

WHEREAS, Cissy Marshall began her professional career at the NAACP shortly thereafter, working as a stenographer and as the private secretary to then deputy executive director Dr. Gloster B. Current, who managed approximately 15,000 branches of the organization nationwide at that time; and

WHEREAS, Cissy Marshall took on greater responsibilities by supporting what was then known as the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the arm of the NAACP that became Legal Defense Fund (LDF), including typing briefs for landmark school desegregation cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and accompanying NAACP lawyers on perilous trips to the Deep South; and

WHEREAS, on December 17, 1955, shortly after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Cissy Marshall and Thurgood Marshall, the lead attorney in that case, founder, and then director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, were married in a wedding at the historic St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Harlem; and

WHEREAS, Cissy Marshall and her family relocated to Falls Church in 1965 after Thurgood Marshall was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve as U.S. solicitor general; after his confirmation to the United States Supreme Court two years later, they made the Commonwealth their home for many years to come; and

WHEREAS, with her husband burdened by the considerable professional duties before him, Cissy Marshall spearheaded the guidance and care of her sons, Thurgood, Jr., and John, who would go on to hold prominent positions in state and national government; and

WHEREAS, in later years, Cissy Marshall fostered her husband's legacy as the first Black American to serve on the United States Supreme Court through her work with the Supreme Court Historical Society, on which she served for many years as vice president of the organization's executive committee; and

WHEREAS, after her husband's death, Cissy Marshall kept his legacy alive through interviews, speaking engagements, and service on LDF's Board of Directors, which she joined in 1988; proud of what her husband and his colleagues achieved, she always emphasized the work that was left to be done; she remained an active member of LDF's board of directors for many years and served over the tenure of five of the organization's eight presidents and directors-counsel; and

WHEREAS, Cissy Marshall was the recipient of numerous awards from LDF and lent her name and support to their efforts to support young civil rights lawyers, most recently through the launch of LDF's Marshall-Motley Scholars Program; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband, Thurgood, Cissy Marshall will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her sons, Thurgood, Jr., and John, and their families; and by numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Cecilia Suyat Marshall, a cherished member of the Falls Church community whose outsized role in the civil rights movement impacted countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Cecilia Suyat Marshall as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

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