

BIOGRAPHY

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an American lawyer and jurist, was famous for being a trailblazer and champion for equal rights for women. She served on the U.S. Supreme Court from 1993 until her death in 2020.

She was born in a working class neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York in 1933. Her mother, Celia Bader, was dedicated to young Ruth's education, and took her to the library often. Ruth attended James Madison High School in Brooklyn, which was made up of smaller schools, called "Houses." Ruth studied in the House called the Law Institute. She majored in government at Cornell University. There, she met another student, Martin Ginsburg, whom she married in 1954. Both Ginsburgs went on to Harvard University to study law. There, Ruth was one of only nine female students in a class of five hundred.



When Martin got a job in New York, Bader Ginsburg transferred to Columbia University so that they, and their baby daughter, Jane, could stay together. At Columbia, she completed her law degree, and tied with another student for first in her class. New law school graduates often gain job experience by working as a clerk, or assistant, to a judge. Though she was highly qualified, the first judge Bader Ginsburg applied to rejected her because of her gender. Later that year, however, she found a clerkship with a New York judge. Next, she learned Swedish to help write a book on Swedish law.

She worked as a professor of law at Rutgers University, then at Columbia University. For this position, Ginsburg was informed she would be paid less than her male colleagues because she had a husband with a well-paid job. When she began working at the university she was one of fewer than 20 female law professors in the United States. In 1970, she co-founded the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, the first law journal in the U.S. to focus on women's rights.

She also worked as a lawyer, arguing important women's rights cases in front of the Supreme Court. She quickly became well known for being a strong and vocal advocate for the equal and fair treatment of women. President Jimmy Carter appointed Bader Ginsburg in 1980 to the U.S. Court of Appeals, the second-highest court in the nation. In 1993, she was nominated and confirmed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

One of the most important Supreme Court cases she wrote the majority opinion for was the *United States v. Virginia* landmark case, which held that the Virginia Military Institute could not refuse to accept women. In 1999, she won the American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award for her contributions to gender equality and civil rights. She was the second female justice (after Sandra Day O'Connor) and the first Jewish female justice appointed to the position. In 2016 her memoir, *My Own Words*, came out and became a New York Times Bestseller.



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Directions: Answer the questions below. Use text evidence to support your answers.

1. What is the main idea of the text? Write it in your own words.
2. Describe an obstacle that Ruth Bader Ginsburg faced in her career and how she overcame it.
3. Find a quote from the text that supports the following statement:
Ruth Bader Ginsburg was an influential U.S. jurist because she fought against gender discrimination.
4. Choose a detail from the text and explain why you think it is important.
5. What inference could you make about Ruth's character based on the following sentence?
There (at Harvard University), Ruth was one of only nine female students in a class of five hundred.