

Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891-1974)

Earl Warren served as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court during one of the most controversial times in our history. During his tenure, the court decided cases involving civil rights, civil liberties, and the nature of the U.S. political system.

Warren was born in California and worked on the railroad as a young man. While working on the railroads, he encountered many ethnic groups, including Asians and Asian-Americans.

After graduating from law school, Warren served in the U.S. Army during World War I. After the conflict, he worked as district attorney for Alameda County, California. In this job, he fought to secure public defenders for people who could not afford one. He was named the best district attorney in the U.S. in 1931.

As attorney general of California between 1932 and 1941, Warren supported removing Japanese Americans to relocation camps during World War II. Later, he acknowledged this action was wrong.

Warren became governor of California and supported Dwight Eisenhower. Eisenhower rewarded Warren's loyalty by appointing him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1952. Warren took over a deeply divided court and was known to "massage" the court on difficult issues, including the *Brown v Board of Education* case - one of the first he had to deal with as Chief Justice. Warren made sure that, after the Brown decisions, the Supreme Court took a more active role in defending individual rights as no court before it had done. Warren considered this proper since, in his view, courts should be active, not passive.

While many criticize the Brown decision as lacking constitutional analysis, its finding was a key decision in American history and in support of the 14th Amendment. The decision emphasized common sense, justice, and fairness. Warren carved a powerful position for the Supreme Court as a protector of civil rights and civil liberties.