

Benjamin F. Shobe (1920-)

Benjamin F. Shobe is a retired Kentucky circuit judge and civil rights attorney who served as a counselor to Lyman T. Johnson in the lawsuit that forced the University of Kentucky to integrate. Shobe served on the Jefferson County Circuit Court bench from November 1977 until his retirement in January 1992. This accomplished trial attorney and pioneering judge was the son of educators born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on October 2, 1920.

Shobe received a bachelor's degree from Kentucky State College in 1941 and his Law degree from the University of Michigan School of Law in 1946. Shobe had wanted to attend the University of Kentucky or University of Louisville Law schools, but blacks were not allowed to attend graduate or professional schools in the state of Kentucky at that time. Kentucky paid Shobe's tuition at the University of Michigan under the Anderson-Mayer Bill. This bill paid tuition for black students to attend out of state schools to pursue educational opportunities that were offered only to white students in Kentucky.

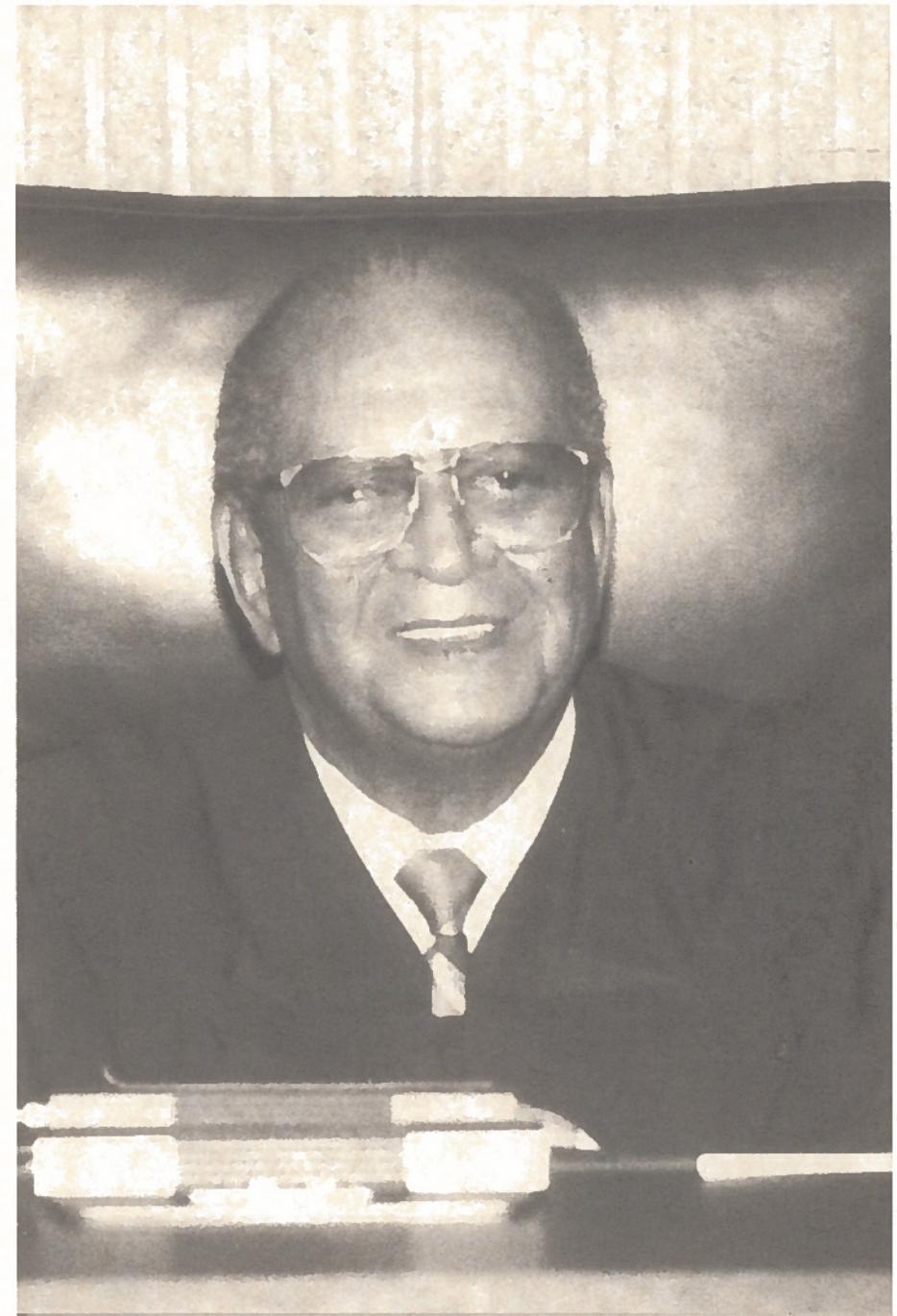
In 1946, Shobe began his career in Kentucky. Before becoming a judge, he was an accomplished trial attorney, who in 1949, participated with Justice Thurgood Marshall, James Nabritt, and James A. Crumlin in the celebrated higher education desegregation case of *Lyman T. Johnson v University of Kentucky*. This successful lawsuit ended segregation at the University of Kentucky graduate schools and forced them to admit minorities to its graduate and professional schools.

On Jan. 6, 1953, Shobe became the first African American since Reconstruction to serve on the circuit court in Kentucky. In 1976, Gov. Julian Carroll appointed Shobe to the 15th Division of the Jefferson Circuit Court where he served until his retirement in 1992. For two of those years, Shobe was the first ever African American chief judge of the Jefferson Circuit Court with its 16 divisions.

In 2006, The Louisville Bar Association and the Louis D. Brandeis American Inn of Court at Louisville association developed the Judge Shobe Civility and Professionalism Award to recognize Louisville Bar Association members "whose lives and careers embody professionalism, civility, honesty and courtesy" all trademarks portrayed by Shobe throughout his career, association officials said.

When asked about the many obstacles in his path that he overcame throughout his life, Shobe is quoted as saying: "I was always willing to try. I was never going to back down. I was willing to take the challenge, win, lose, or draw."

Currently Judge Shobe is an Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist with the Retired Judges and Associates.



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