
“Thank you, Mother, for your inspiration, and for conveying to me your belief, conviction and faith in the system. You took a poor plantation boy and made him a judge.”
– Robert D. Glass

Robert D. Glass was born November 28, 1922, in Wetumpka, Alabama, to Isaiah and M.E. Davis Glass. Growing up on a farm with parents working as a farmhand and a domestic worker in the segregated Deep South, young Robert could not attend school since his parents were unable to afford the required books. When his cousin gave him a set of 4th grade books, he finally began school at the age of ten.

His mother, who worked for a judge, took home discarded newspapers and books and later borrowed law books for her son to study, dreaming that one day he, too, would become a judge. The judge encouraged Glass by taking him to court to observe proceedings and by discussing cases as he played golf and young Glass caddied.

After completing high school, Glass served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946 earning several medals while achieving the rank of sergeant.

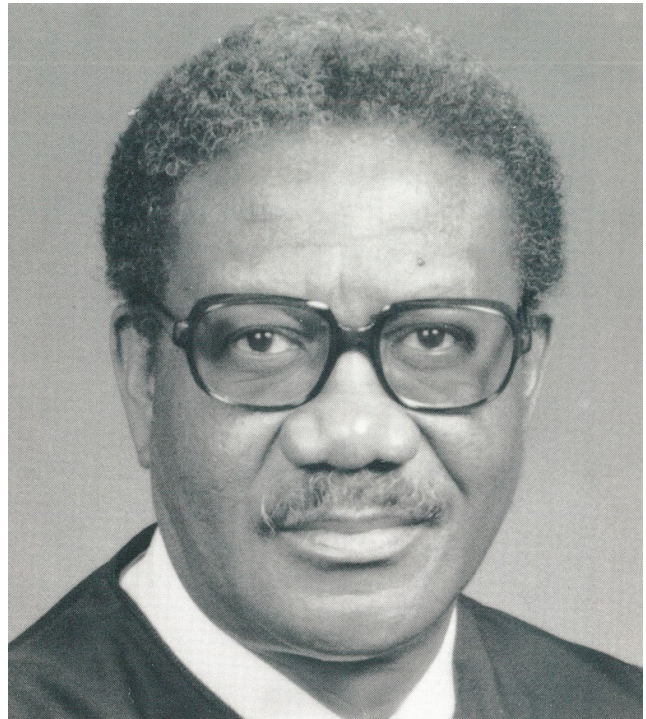
An accomplished athlete, Glass attended then all-black North Carolina Central University on a sports scholarship. Although he graduated magna cum laude, Glass was denied admission to the University of North Carolina Law School (UNC) due to his race.

Glass' undergraduate grades were so impressive that he was selected as one of two students to challenge the admission policies of the all-white UNC Law School. Future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall represented him and won the suit against the school. In 1951, Glass graduated at the top of his class from North Carolina Central University Law School and began practicing law.

In 1962, Attorney Glass moved his family to Waterbury, where he worked briefly in the United States Attorney's Office. In 1967, he became the first African American Juvenile Court judge in Connecticut, and in 1978 he was named a judge of the Superior Court. In recognition of his distinguished talents, he was appointed administrative judge of the Waterbury Judicial District where he served until his appointment to the Connecticut Supreme Court.

On June 26, 1987 Justice Glass, at the age of 64, was sworn in as the first African American Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, capping his distinguished career. At that time, he stated that this was not only his mother's dream, but the American Dream come true. He encouraged all young people to realize their dreams as well, urging them to answer life's challenges with, "Yes, I can! Yes, I can make it."

During his tenure on the court, Glass wrote 135 majority opinions, including one that set legal standards for courts to apply in criminal cases. Justice Glass stepped down from the court when he



reached the mandatory retirement age of 70. In 2008, the Juvenile Matters Courthouse located at 7 Kendrick Avenue in Waterbury was named the Honorable Robert D. Glass Courthouse.

Judge Glass actively led local civic organizations, participated in many national associations, was a 32nd Degree Mason and also received Doctor of Laws honorary degrees in 1988 and 1990. At 6 feet, 7 inches tall, Justice Robert D. Glass was an avid golfer and described as a giant of a man, both literally and figuratively. Deeply religious and patriotic, he always carried the Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi in his wallet as well as a copy of the U. S. Constitution. He passed away November 27, 2001, one day before his seventy-ninth birthday. He was survived by his wife, Doris Powell Glass, and three children, Robert D. Glass Jr., Roberta G. Brown, and Rosalyn D. Glass.

Chief Justice Ellen A. Peters said of him: *“Justice Glass has indeed made salient contributions to the work of this court that will continue to enlighten the development of the law long after he, regrettably, must leave us. The opinions that Justice Glass has crafted will stand as a legacy for generations to come. Yet it is not solely his legal acumen that is his legacy to us all. What we will also continue to remember, always, is his dignity, his wisdom, and his respect for each person, not only for what that person has been, but for what that person can become.”*