



Pilgrim Rest  
MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
Preaching, Teaching and Reaching for  
Transformation and Liberation

## “CONSCIOUS AND INTENTIONAL MINISTRY: DOING WHO I AM”

Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:

THE PASTOR’S PEN March 20, 2022

# Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson



Ketanji Brown Jackson is a federal judge, former federal public defender and the first Black woman nominated to become an associate justice on the Supreme Court.

### Who Is Ketanji Brown Jackson?

Ketanji Brown Jackson, born Ketanji Onyika Brown in 1970, is a federal judge and former federal public defender nominated by President [Joe Biden](#) to become an associate justice on the Supreme Court. She is the first Black woman to be nominated for a seat on the high court. Jackson grew up in Miami and [shared](#) in her high school yearbook her goal to eventually receive a judicial appointment. She obtained both her undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard and is married to a fellow Harvard alum.

### Supreme Court Nomination

On February 25, 2022, President Biden announced he was nominating Jackson to fill the Supreme Court seat left open by the retirement of Justice [Stephen Breyer](#).

If confirmed, Jackson would become the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court. She would also be the [first](#) federal public defender to sit on the court, and the first justice [since Thurgood Marshall](#) to have represented criminal defendants.

“I am passionate about making sure that people who are powerless in our society and are being mistreated are heard by the system and are able to get their grievances heard and are treated fairly.”

—Ketanji Brown Jackson

### Legal Career

Though Jackson worked for several private law firms, she spent most of her legal career as a public servant. After earning her law degree from Harvard in 1996, she clerked for two federal judges. She held a Supreme Court clerkship for Justice Breyer during the 1999-2000 term.

Jackson took a job with the bipartisan U.S. Sentencing Commission in 2003, the first of her two stints on the commission. From 2005 to 2007, she worked as an assistant federal public defender in Washington, D.C. Her caseload included representing indigent clients and some detainees held at Guantanamo Bay.

Jackson returned to private practice before being selected to serve as vice-chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission in 2010. She was seen as a [consensus builder](#) in shaping federal sentencing policy at a time when federal prisons were [over capacity](#). The commission came to a [unanimous](#) agreement to lower federal drug sentences and granted this relief retroactively.

### Ascension to the Bench

In 2012, Jackson was [nominated](#) by President [Barack Obama](#) to join the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. The Senate confirmed her by [voice vote](#) in March 2013.

On this court, Jackson's notable cases included a 2019 ruling that President [Donald Trump](#)'s former White House counsel could not use executive privilege to avoid a congressional subpoena. Her decision [noted](#), "Presidents are not kings."

On April 19, 2021, President Joe Biden nominated Jackson to join the U.S. Court of Appeals. Her Senate confirmation hearing had some contentious moments, such as when one senator [asked](#) if Jackson had been concerned that her role as a public defender had returned criminals to the streets. Jackson answered that her work had been a crucial part of the justice system.

In March 2021, Jackson was confirmed with a 53-44 vote, with the support of 50 Democratic senators and three Republicans.

### **When Was Ketanji Brown Jackson Born?**

Ketanji Onyika Brown was born on September 14, 1970, in Washington, D.C. Her parents, Johnny and Ellery Brown, [wanted](#) to honor their ancestry and asked a relative serving in the Peace Corps in West Africa for a list of African names for their daughter. The name they selected, Ketanji Onyika, [means](#) "lovely one."

### **Childhood and Education**

Jackson did well in school while growing up in Miami. At Palmetto Junior High, she was selected as a school ["mayor."](#) She became president of her class at Miami Palmetto Senior High School, was voted ["most likely to succeed"](#) and stood out on the school's vaunted speech and debate team.

Jackson excelled at oratory, traveling across the country for speech competitions and becoming a [national champion](#). Her visit to Harvard University for one competition [inspired](#) Jackson to apply to the Ivy League school. She enrolled there in 1988.

Jackson's college experience included joining an improv troupe, On Thin Ice. She also performed in a production of Little Shop of Horrors and was once a [scene partner](#) to [Matt Damon](#) in drama class.

In addition, Jackson focused on her studies and future legal career. Her senior thesis was "The Hand of Oppression: Plea Bargaining Processes and the Coercion of Criminal Defendants." She graduated magna cum laude in 1992.

### **Law School**

Prior to law school, Jackson spent a year working for Time magazine and serving as an [intern](#) for the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem. In 1993, she entered Harvard Law School. She became an editor on the law review and graduated cum laude in 1996.

### **Marriage and Children**

Jackson married Patrick Graves Jackson in 1996. The pair met while they were both undergrads at Harvard. Though their backgrounds were [different](#)—Jackson was a Black woman whose guidance counselor had [discouraged](#) her from setting her sights on Harvard, while Patrick was a white man whose family members had attended the university for generations—they fell in love.

Jackson and her husband, who became a surgeon, have two daughters: Talia and Leila. In 2016, Leila wrote a letter to President Obama [recommending](#) her mother for the Supreme Court vacancy that resulted from the death of Justice [Antonin Scalia](#).

Through her marriage to Patrick, Jackson became related to Republican politician Paul Ryan: Ryan's wife's sister is married to Patrick's twin brother. Ryan [introduced](#) Jackson to the Senate when she was nominated to join the U.S. District Court. He has [said](#) of Jackson, "Our politics may differ, but my praise for Ketanji's intellect, for her character, for her integrity, is unequivocal."

### **Family Background**

Jackson's [interest](#) in pursuing a legal career stretches back to seeing her father leave his job as a history teacher to enroll in law school. As her father studied legal texts, a preschool-age Jackson colored next to him.

Jackson's father obtained his law degree and went on to be the chief attorney for the Miami-Dade school system. Her mother was also a teacher before she became the principal of a magnet public high school.

Jackson's younger brother served as a police officer and in the military before also becoming a lawyer. An uncle was Miami police chief in the 1990s.

Jackson has another uncle who got involved in drug-related crime. By [1989](#), he'd received a life sentence thanks to a [three-strikes law](#). His sentence was [commuted](#) in November 2016. Jackson referred her uncle to a law firm known for handling clemency petitions, but otherwise was [not involved](#) in the commutation of his sentence.

### Fact Check

We strive for accuracy and fairness. If you see something that doesn't look right, [contact us](#)!

### Citation Information

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## WORK FOR THE WEEK

### MARCH MEMORY VERSE

<sup>14</sup> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

Esther 4:14

### MARCH MEDITATION QUOTE

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor"

Bishop Desmond Tutu

### TODAY'S STUDY QUESTIONS AND MEDITATION:

What is my definition of success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do I need to do to rethink how I think about success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### FOR THE YOUTH

Is winning at everything that I do success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If not, how would I define success? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_