

Justice Hugo Black



Hugo Black served as an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1937 to 1971.

Prior to his 34-year career on the Supreme Court, Black represented Alabama as a United States Senator from 1926 to 1937. In 1923, he joined the Ku Klux Klan although he openly opposed their activities, but he understood that support from the KKK was necessary for political success in Alabama. His affiliation with the Klan led to backlash from the public, and he was met with protests outside of the Court on his first day as a justice. As a Senator and a Supreme Court Justice, Black was viewed as a liberal activist and a staunch supporter of New Deal legislation.

Although Justice Black interpreted the First Amendment literally, he did not believe that the Amendment's protections extended to symbolic speech and recognized that the government has the power to deny people the freedom to express any opinion and any time. In his dissenting opinion in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, he argued that the Des Moines Independent School District was well within its right to discipline the students because the armbands distracted students from their work and detracted from the school official's ability to perform their duties.

To learn more about Justice Black's history with the Ku Klux Klan and the complicated path to his Supreme Court nomination, we recommend the History Channel's article 'How an Ex-KKK Member Made His Way onto the U.S. Supreme Court.' The link is listed with the other sources used for writing this biography.

Sources: [britannica.com/biography/Hugo-L-Black](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hugo-L-Black)
[oyez.org/justices/hugo_l_black](https://www.oyez.org/justices/hugo_l_black)
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