

Author-Meets-Reader Panel Proposal

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Author: Tomiko Brown-Nagin, Professor of Law & History, University of Virginia

Book: *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford, 2011)

Unsurprisingly, the doctrine of the U.S. Supreme Court and the perspective of the legendary Thurgood Marshall—the lawyer who litigated *Brown v. Board of Education* and other marquee civil rights cases—dominate much of the legal history of the civil rights movement. The author and readers propose to discuss *Courage to Dissent*, a new book that hopes to re-conceive how we think about the civil rights movement by making the doctrine of the U.S. Supreme Court and the work of Marshall and other NAACP lawyers less all-encompassing.

The book blends the legal and social history of the civil rights movement to produce an innovative, bottom-up perspective on constitutional history. Brown-Nagin discusses unsung civil rights lawyers and grassroots activists at the local level who sometimes had strategic disagreements with Marshall and the NAACP. She examines the competing priorities of three waves of dissenters from the racial status quo in Atlanta. Brown-Nagin argues that these local actors, no less than the better-known ones, shaped constitutional law and history.

The readers on the proposed Author-Meets-Reader Panel bring a range of expertise to Brown-Nagin's book project. Professor Laura Kalman, the chair of the panel, will moderate the session and situate Brown-Nagin's work within several genres of legal and history literature. Professor Mack will discuss how the work contributes to our understanding of the African-American lawyer and civil rights lawyering in the mid-twentieth century. Professor Countryman will examine how Brown-Nagin's work expands the community studies literature. Professor Lee will focus on the themes of gender and class in Brown-Nagin's work. Together, the readers and the author will provide invaluable insights on law and the postwar civil rights movement. The session should be of great interest to legal historians, an audience that should be all the more engaged because the session will take place in Atlanta—Brown-Nagin's point of departure.