



# Figures of *Justice*

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## INFORMATION SHEET

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One of the most recognized legal symbols visible at the Supreme Court is the female figure representing *Justice*. Portraying *Justice* as a female figure dates back to depictions of *Themis* and *Justicia* in ancient mythology. *Themis*, known for her clear-sightedness, was the Greek Goddess of Justice and Law. In Roman mythology, *Justicia* (*Justice*) was one of the four Virtues along with *Prudence*, *Fortitude* and *Temperance*.

The representation of this symbol has changed over time. Some early depictions of *Justice* included scales to represent impartiality and a sword to symbolize power. During the 16th century, artists increasingly showed *Justice* with a blindfold. The origin of the blindfold is unclear, but there is some evidence that these early artists added the blindfold to indicate the courts' tolerance of, or ignorance to, abuse of the law. Today the blindfold is generally accepted as a symbol of impartiality, but may appear in political cartoons to signify these other traits.



At the Supreme Court, *Justice* is depicted in three sculptural groups and appears with and without a blindfold. In James Earle Fraser's *Contemplation of Justice*, adjoining the front steps to the left of the main entrance, there is a blindfolded *Justice*. Here, a seated female figure in a shawl studies the smaller statue of *Justice*, who cradles a set of scales in her arms (*above and left*). The figure of *Justice* in this marble sculpture is approximately four and one half feet high.

**James Earl Fraser's *Contemplation of Justice***  
(above) with detail of blindfold *Justice* (top left)

Another depiction of *Justice* is on the base of the lampposts located on the front of the building's plaza. In these examples, a *bas-relief* of *Justice* includes a blindfold. She holds scales in her left hand and a sword in her right. These lampposts were designed and modeled by the John Donnelly studio (*right*).



*Justice* without a blindfold appears in one of the Courtroom friezes by Adolph Weinman. In the frieze at the top of the west wall (at the back of the Courtroom), a robed *Justice* (*left*) is the focus of the allegorical story of the battle of **Good Versus Evil**. Her unencumbered gaze is set determinedly in the direction of the forces of Evil to her right. Her posture is defiant, as if ready to do battle to protect the forces of Good with her great sword. The sword remains sheathed, but her left hand rests atop the hilt ready to act should the need arise.

*Above: Blindfolded Justice on the base of the lamppost of the front plaza.*

*Left: Figure of Justice in the West Frieze.*