

STATEMENT OF REVEREND  
DR. AMOS C. BROWN  
ON BEHALF OF  
THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, USA, INC.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Dr. Amos C. Brown, Pastor of the Third Baptist Church in San Francisco, California. Today, I am representing the membership of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., chaired by Reverend Dr. T.J. Jamison of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I serve as the chairperson of the National Baptist Convention Civil Rights Commission. The National Baptist Convention is an organization of 8.7 million African Americans and we are located in 49 states. Our membership consists of some 33,000 Baptist churches concentrated primarily in the Southern part of these United States. In other words, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the bulk of our membership is located in the deep South. Nearly 100,000 pastors are active members of our organization.

During our recent convention held in Washington, D.C., September 2-8, 1991, our membership voted overwhelmingly, after careful consideration, to oppose the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court.\* Our action is of particular significance because we are a religious organization that does not usually speak on matters such as these; however, we

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\*Attached is our Resolution on the Clarence Thomas Nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

could not in good conscience remain silent on the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas.

Why have we taken this position?

First, it is the position of the National Baptist Convention that the successor to Mr. Justice Marshall should also bring to the bar of justice the experiences and aspirations of African Americans who have been locked-out, looked-over and denied respect and equal opportunity in our society. In fact, Mr. Chairman, we have listened to the testimony of Judge Thomas and, despite his general proclamations and utterances, we believe that his approach to constitutional adjudication is one informed by a philosophy that ignores history and today's realities with respect to race discrimination, and would thereby undermine the constitutional and civil rights so important to African Americans.

Secondly, within the past five years, nominees to the Supreme Court confirmed by the Senate have established a majority of the Court and that majority has adopted positions that are antithetical to our interests as African Americans. Judge Thomas would seem to fit well within extreme factions of the Court that have been particularly unsympathetic. We say enough is enough.

We would like to see an African American on the Court, however, in our view Judge Thomas's legal philosophy and his views of the civil rights statutes reflect hostility toward the African American community; thus, his color offers us no solace.

Our national leader Dr. T.J. Jemison has been a champion of human rights and liberties and was a leader of the Montgomery bus

boycott. The National Baptist Convention would do a great disservice to support a nominee who has given every indication of being against the traditional commitment of black churches to the struggle of African Americans for equality, equal rights and justice.

Mr. Thomas has displayed a lack of understanding of the history of the African American Community and the contributions of African American men and women who risked all they had during the civil rights movement. Their sacrifices led to an increase in the opportunities for African Americans and opened the doors of Yale University to Judge Thomas. Yet Judge Thomas would deny similar opportunities to others. From his testimony it appears that he may be able to support as a policy matter some type of affirmative action which recognizes only the economically disadvantaged, but he declines to support affirmative action to address systemic race or sex discrimination.

Mr. Justice Thurgood Marshall's career was a constant rebuke to those who have misrepresented and distorted the civil rights movement. Judge Thomas contends that African Americans should pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, under the guise that this represents a new message rather than using this opportunity to be a witness that African Americans have always been the primary advocates of self-reliance. Justice Thurgood Marshall was an advocate of self-help within the community and he was a man who was willing to organize his people and marshal their efforts to confront lawfully and through the courts racial barriers that

permeate our day-to-day lives. In our view, Mr. Thomas has promoted an ideology that is muddled, confused, misinformed and yields benefits only unto himself.

As leaders in the African American community who constantly interact with millions of African Americans we do not choose to oppose Judge Thomas; however, we are morally called upon to be soldiers of the cross and Judge Thomas's record compels us to oppose him.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.