

Testimony of Emily Hart-Holifield before the Senate Judiciary
Committee in support of Judge Clarence Thomas to be an Associate
Justice of the Supreme Court

September 17, 1991

Honorable Chairman Biden, and Honorable Senators of this great
Senate committee,

I am Emily Hart-Holifield, an educator employed by the
Compton Unified School District. I am a Compton Community
College Senior Trustee Member, further, I am the person who
seconded the Famous Motion on Saturday July 20, 1991 at a regular
meeting of the Compton Branch of the NAACP to support Judge
Clarence Thomas, President Bush's nominee for appointment to the
United States Supreme Court.

Mr. Chairman, little did I know that this action taken by
the NAACP Compton, California Branch would echo all around this
nation, waking people up and causing them to really think.

I have named this motion, Mr. Chairman, "A Candle, a Flame
for Mankind".

Mr. Chairman, I am supporting Judge Clarence Thomas because he will make an excellent United States Supreme Court Justice who will represent all the people of these United States. Judge Clarence Thomas is qualified, is a role model and has developed a philosophy of self help and self reliance.

Senators, at this time, I cannot think of a more timely cycle than now, for the Self Help and Self Reliance Program that United States Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas will be able to implement as soon as you, Honorable Senators here confirm him to this appointment.

Honorable Senator Kennedy, I would like to say to you that your namesake has a legacy in Compton. I live about a mile and a half from Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School in Compton, California.

Senator Kennedy, when I go through this area each morning on my way to work, I am reminded, Senator, of the respectable work that your family carried out during the Civil Rights Movement. I am reminded, Senator, that you gave so much and that

your precious sacrifices can never be bought, paid for or forgotten. I am reminded Senator, that you and your family are winners, and I am also reminded that when Judge Clarence Thomas is confirmed, he too will also be a winner in the nineties, and he too, will also have a legacy, one that he so well deserves.

To all Senators here today, I would like to say to you - I do not believe that Judge Clarence Thomas could have come from his impoverished background, and forget his background. I do not believe that Judge Clarence Thomas will forget his Mother or his sister and other unfortunate groups. I do not believe that he will forget the struggles that he has experienced to get him where he is today, soon to be a United States Supreme Court Justice when you confirm him, and Senators, I do not believe that Judge Clarence Thomas will forget the trust that you put in him.

With these points in mind, I believe that Judge Clarence Thomas will be the Judge to help guide us through the United States Supreme Court into the next century and far beyond the year 2000.

Honorable Senators, when I seconded the Motion on Saturday July 20, 1991, to support Judge Clarence Thomas at the regular Compton Branch NAACP meeting, never dreamed that this Seconded Motion would be unanimously supported by all members present with a 32 vote in favor of, and a 0 vote against the motion. I never dreamed that the echoes from this action would be widespread reaching all areas of our great nation. I never dreamed that this action on behalf of Judge Clarence Thomas by the NAACP Compton Branch would cause so many people to re-activate their Critical Thinking Skills.

Honorable Senators, I never dreamed that this little Cotton Picker from the plantations of Louisiana would ever be able to present herself on behalf of anyone, and especially in front of the members of the United States Senate.

Honorable Senators, I want to thank you for the golden opportunity, for listening to me today, Wednesday, September 17, 1991. Senators, I am proud of you, as I am proud of Judge Clarence Thomas, and thankful to President George Bush.

As I have previously stated, Senators, the NAACP Compton Branch in July voted to support Judge Clarence Thomas for appointment to the United States Supreme Court, and this action sparked a very positive interest in people thinking all over the nation, regardless of color, regardless of ethnic background, or even regardless of gender.

I would like to say, Honorable Senators, that I am in the process of writing the transcript for a book, and that because of this issue of Judge Clarence Thomas' appointment to the United States Supreme Court, which is symbolic of "a candle, a flame for mankind" that was sparked out of Compton, California, this book is estimated to sell at least thirty-two million copies based upon the 32 votes counted on July 20, 1991 for Judge Clarence Thomas at our NAACP meeting.

Honorable members of this great Senate, I have read articles and speeches by others and by Judge Clarence Thomas. I am particularly impressed by an article written by Margaret Bush-Wilson, who is an Attorney in St. Louis, who chaired the National

Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 1975 to 1984. This article appeared in the Washington Post news on Tuesday, August 6, 1991.

The article provides the opportunity for persons to know that Mrs. Bush-Wilson is acquainted with Judge Clarence Thomas. She moves forward to tell the warm hearted story of how she first heard of a bright young man from Yale University, who was about 20 years old at the time. She heard of Judge Clarence Thomas from his employer, Senator to-be John Danforth from Missouri who was Attorney General at the time. Mrs. Bush-Wilson stated that Mr. Danforth hired young Clarence Thomas, and asked if she knew of a place that this young man could live for the summer while studying for the Missouri State Bar.

Mrs. Bush-Wilson indicated that her son Robert, was a law student with plans to work that summer in Washington. She invited young Clarence Thomas to stay in her son's empty room. Mrs. Bush-Wilson said that she did not recall seeing another young person as disciplined as Clarence Thomas. First thing everyday, he

would exercise with her son's weights, and then went off to his studies. She said that she asked of him only one thing -- that she prepare his dinner, and that he show up on time. She went on to describe how they would eat together every night, often with one or two friends or relatives and talk about any and all the problems of the world.

Mrs. Bush-Wilson further stated the Judge Clarence Thomas was a conservative even then, but was impressed, Mrs. Bush-Wilson went on to say, with one so young, whose reasoning was so sound. She must also admit, she states, that his arguments, both legal and logical, forced her to rethink some of her own views! She said that Judge Clarence Thomas knew how to listen as well as talk. Even when they disagreed, she said she found him to be a sensitive and compassionate person trying to do what is right, and working to make the world a better place. She went on to say that back then she sensed that he would one day be in a position to have a larger impact, but had no way of knowing that this

determined young man might one day have the chance to tackle some of our country's problems on this nation's highest Court.

Mrs. Bush-Wilson states as a Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas will continue to defend and protect the rights of the needy, that he does not permit anyone to think for him and he is intellectually honest.

Honorable Chairman, the record must reflect that the former NAACP National Board Chair respectfully disagrees with the NAACP's present position.

Honorable Senators, I do not know Judge Clarence Thomas personally, but I feel that I do, based not upon his color, but rather focusing upon his qualifications as a Judge who is uniquely qualified to represent everyone as a United States Supreme Court Judge, a man of quality, who happens to be black and who will represent all people regardless of their ethnic origin.

Honorable Senators, you cannot afford to select a Judge to represent only black citizens in these United States. The United States Supreme Court Judge must represent all the people.

Honorable Senators, I believe, and I feel, that Judge Clarence Thomas should not be prevented from serving his country as a Supreme Court Justice just because he is obviously black, President George Bush's nominee, and is forty three years old.

At a General Meeting of "Women Employed" on March 30, 1983, Judge Clarence Thomas on his stand of Affirmative Action stated "But with the exception of quotas, I support Affirmative Action remedies because the remedies which are truly necessary to make individual rights a meaningful reality are either not yet on the books, or have not been traditionally used."

Judge Clarence Thomas has indicated that Affirmative Action should be revised and his appointment to the United States Supreme Court will give Affirmative Action a plan and a new direction for this nation.

Honorable Senators, you are important, and you mean so much to millions of people across the United States. Your votes will be counted for confirming Judge Clarence Thomas' successful appointment to the United States Supreme Court, making it possible for him to move with his work, help straighten out Affirmative Action, and thus making it possible for Affirmative Action to work in these United States across the board, and in order for everyone to have a chance to prosper.

Honorable Senators, I would like to remind you of a brief few statements made by Judge Thomas at the National Institute for Employment Equity on May 26, 1984, where he stated "I have heard it said over and over again, that we as a nation, have done enough, and that the doors of opportunity for women, blacks, hispanics, and those of other National Origins and religion have been opened. That the laws against injustice are on the books, and the people are tired of the plight of minorities. Well no one is more tired of the plight than the nation's minorities. No one is more worn out by the fight to stay decent and respectful.

To stand in the midst of the squalor of East Harlem and look out toward the towering spires of power in Manhattan, less than thirty, or forty blocks away, and say there the doors of opportunity are opened to say nothing. The question is how do I get there? Those forty blocks, those short forty blocks are for many a life time journey".

Honorable Senators, you have the answer in your hands for Judge Clarence Thomas to become a United States Supreme Court Justice. All the Honorable members of this great Senate have to do is just push him, and Judge Thomas will fall through the door, he is close enough. Yes it would be nice when you hold his hand and walk him through that door, but I beg of you Senators, just push him, he will fall through the door, he is willing to fall inside the door. I personally would like to see him walk through the door with dignity and pride but I will also challenge a push with the same magnitude of pride.

I am further impressed by Tony Brown's Comments July 25, 1991 in the Nationally Syndicated Column by an article titled

"Clarence Thomas Could Save Black Colleges If Blacks Don't Get Him First". In vowing to destroy Judge Clarence Thomas' career and deny a black man a seat on the United States Supreme Court. Somewhere I learned, or read, that the "Congressional Black Caucus" consisting basically of all one party flopped its wings like Eagles, and flew into the shadows of partisan color lines, stood up, and proudly denounced our able Judge Clarence Thomas for appointment to the United States Supreme Court. By the nature of this action, the Black Caucus members are declaring themselves out in space and out of touch with the problems and issues as they relate to Black Americans today. Honorable Senators, twenty six blacks in Congress do not represent 30 million people anymore than 26 whites in Congress who represent 200 million white people, not ignoring every other ethnic group.

During a speech at Compton Community College on February 14, 1986, Judge Thomas stated "Do not become obsessed with all that is wrong with our race. We are not beggars or objects of Charity. Rather, become obsessed with looking for solutions to

our problems." "Be tolerant", Judge Thomas stated, "of all the positive ideas, their numbers is smaller that the countless number of problems to be solved. We need all the hope and help we can get."

Honorable Senators, I wholeheartedly agree with Judge Thomas' statements. Senator, I hope that you will become more tolerant of a man who has been appointed by the United States Senate to serve, and he has on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and also to serve as Jude, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit Court from 1990 to the present.

Honorable Chairman, Judge Thomas is a role model for our youth, and our country. He will be a good United State Supreme Court Judge, representing everyone throughout these United States on scales of fairness with Justice.

Honorable Senators, I cannot believe that in the wee hours of the night Judge Clarence Thomas will not remember his path from poverty as he climbed the hills from Pinpoint, Georgia. I

cannot believe that Judge Clarence Thomas' successful appointment that you will make happen by your votes for him will become a vote that is outside Americas's future, and outside the trust that you put in him. I cannot believe that Judge Thomas will forget in the quietness of the night, that he was born an Afro-American, a man whose family is black. I do believe that Judge Clarence Thomas will carry the banner in these United Sates, for motivation and inspiration for our youth, the banner of dreams and hard work are realities for youth, and the banner of hope, faith, fairness and justice for all for everyone throughout this nation. He will carry the banner for fairness and justice for one and for all as a Judge of the United States Supreme Court.

Honorable Senators, I see Judge Clarence Thomas holding his position that you will appoint him to as Judge of the United States Supreme Court. Honorable Chairman, we are closer to our Supreme Court Judge now, and I know that his Self Help and Self Reliance philosophy will not serve as a negative that will hinder

his appointment by you for the next Judge of the United States Supreme Court.

Honorable Senators, Judge Thomas has come a long way from back in Georgia. He pulled himself up by his boot straps, and I see nothing wrong with that.

His appointment to the United States Supreme Court represents hope for the majority of Black Americans, he is a role model.

Success, successes, he is a man of quality. Judge Clarence Thomas, Assistant Attorney General in Missouri, 1974-77, Lawyer in Monsanto, Co. 1977-79, Legislative Assistant to Senator John Danforth (R. Mo.) 1979-81, Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights, United States Education Department 1981-82, Chairman, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 1982-90, Judge Clarence Thomas is not a perfect man, nor do I believe he ever will reach a perfect plateau, but I do believe that he will be fair and will always represent and carry the banner for equal justice for all.

Honorable Chairman and Senators, I want to thank you for
your time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. We are proud of your testimony. I realize that this is an imposing room, and with everyone watching us on television, it is not necessarily an easy thing to pop in and say, by the way, I have got a few words I want to say.

Ms. HOLIFIELD. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate it. You have done it well.

Ms. Bryant, take your time, be at ease, do not worry about it, but when that little red light goes out, the seat will reject you into the sky. [Laughter.]

I am only teasing you, but try to keep it close to 5 minutes.

Ms. BRYANT. I will.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF EVELYN BRYANT

Ms. BRYANT. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Evelyn Bryant, and I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak in support of my friend Judge Clarence Thomas.

I live in Liberty County, GA, and serve as president of the Liberty County NAACP chapter. I appear here today not in my capacity as president of our local chapter, but as a friend of Clarence Thomas. I do believe that my comments reflect the opinion of the vast majority of black Americans, including my friends and my neighbors.

While Judge Thomas grew up in Pin Point, near Savannah, his grandparents owned a farm near Sunbury, in eastern Liberty County. He spent much of his youth on that farm developing the values which have become a hallmark of his life and achievements. I have not had the pleasure of knowing Judge Thomas for a long period of time, but have developed a great respect for him during the short time we have been friends.

It was a proud day for the citizens of southeast Georgia, black and white, when President Bush nominated Judge Thomas to the Supreme Court. This man, a product of the marshlands of the Georgia coast, the son of a section of the country rich in colonial history, at age 43, has accomplished so much.

Clarence Thomas was born into and grew up in a segregated society. His early years were spent in poverty. He lived his early life in an environment that exposed daily to the abuses of social and economic systems based upon the separation of black and white citizens in all aspects of life.

He is a person who has lived the black experience to the ultimate, yet, rather than blaming the system for any stumbling blocks to personal achievement, has, through hard work, discipline, commitment to strong values and his belief in our system of government, risen from his humble beginnings to the nomination by our President to the Nation's highest court. His sense of values were born and nurtured in a strong home and religious environment. Truly, this is an extraordinary man who conquered deprivation, without self-pity or complaint.

Judge Thomas has acknowledged that he has received a helping hand up from time to time in his educational and professional journey. He has graciously acknowledged this help and has expressed