

agreed and disagreed, but speaking of character, one could never question his, nor that of the other gentleman.

So, I thank you very much and appreciate your taking the time to be with us this morning.

Mr. EDLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, we will move to the next panel. Our next panel, Sister Mary Virgilius Reidy, former principal of a school attended by Judge Thomas, St. Benedict's, in Savannah, GA; Father John Brooks, president of Holy Cross College; Hon. John Gibbons, former chief justice of the third circuit, and now professor of law at Rutgers University; and Dr. Niara Sudarkasa, president of Lincoln University.

I appreciate you all being here. Dr. Sudarkasa does not know, but she and I are almost neighbors. Lincoln University is sort of in my backyard, or I am in their front yard.

I want to thank you all. Let me acknowledge ahead of time, Sister, when you are speaking, if I find myself involuntarily saying "yester" or "noster," it is purely that, involuntary. Father Brooks, if I say something to you that appears to be contentious, will you give me anticipatory absolution, and if you could write a little note to my brother-in-law, who is a graduate of your university, that I treated you nicely, regardless of how it goes, I would appreciate it.

With that, with all kidding aside, let me begin, I assume in the order that we began. Sister, welcome. It is nice to formally have you before us, and please begin with your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF A PANEL CONSISTING OF SISTER MARY VIRGI-
LIUS REIDY, FORMER PRINCIPAL, ST. BENEDICT'S, SAVANNAH,
GA; FATHER JOHN BROOKS, PRESIDENT, HOLY CROSS COL-
LEGE; HON. JOHN GIBBONS, PROFESSOR OF LAW, RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY; AND NIARA SUDARKASA, PRESIDENT, LINCOLN
UNIVERSITY**

Sister VIRGILIUS. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to introduce myself. I am Sister Mary Virgilius Reidy, a member of the Institute of Missionary Franciscan Sisters.

We, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters have a long history among the black people of Georgia, a history of which we, the so-called "nigger nuns," are justifiably proud. Our foundress, a few years after establishing a first foundation in Minnesota in 1873, having heard of the poverty and oppression of the recently freed Negro in the South, moved courageously and quickly to open a training school for girls in Augusta, and one later in Savannah. After the turn of the century, we opened other schools in both cities and continued to educate black children at primary and high school levels, until laws concerning integration caused their closure.

From my lived experienced in Georgia for 13 years, during which time I first met Clarence Thomas as a fifth grade student, I can readily empathize with any youngster who grew up as a second-class citizens in the hard days of segregation.

Clarence Thomas was no stranger to the indignities suffered because of the Jim Crow laws. It was not easy to have to swim at a beach for blacks only, to be served food through a hatch at the back of a restaurant in the pouring rain, a restaurant only whites

could enter, or to be required to pay for that food before it was given, to ride always in the rear of the bus, and to see their parents suffer like indignities. Such treatment could easily leave a person embittered and scarred, but such is not the person we meet in Clarence Thomas.

Even in his early years, Clarence was an independent thinker, one who challenged the status quo. Is it any wonder, then, that at a young age, he questioned the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, which ensures liberty and justice for all, when neither liberty nor justice was available to black children? Do we perhaps begin to see here the early beginnings of a judicial mind, so ably demonstrated at these hearings?

I taught Clarence Thomas in the eighth grade. He was a regular fun-loving boy. He was cooperative and studious, willing to give a helping hand to those less able than himself. He was always grateful to those who provided a home for him and to the Sisters who taught him. He seemed to recognize and appreciate the sacrifices others made for his betterment.

Even in later years, after his appointment as Chairman of the EEOC, Clarence Thomas showed his gratitude by making a special visit to Boston to thank me and the other Sisters who had taught him. I might add that the 1,000 or more young people, who over several years graduated from my class, Clarence was one of the few who came to say "thank you."

His question on that occasion was a searching one: Why was it that you Sisters could do for us black kids what nobody else could or did do? My answer had to be that, as followers of our founders, who, like St. Francis, loved God and his poor, we too would love God in the person of these children put especially in our care.

During these hearings, much has been said about certain speeches and writings of Judge Thomas. One speech with which I am familiar has not been referred to thus far. I am referring to a speech delivered to the Franciscan Sisters in a fund raising appeal. It is dated April 5, 1986, for your easy reference and reading, and I highly recommend it.

What has since become a national concern was then a grave concern for Clarence Thomas. He said, and I quote:

What we had yesterday is precisely what we need now, as a bare minimum, as an indispensable starting point, that is, God, values, morality, and, of course, education. The Sisters accepted our equality without a Civil Rights Act, they accepted equality of education without a Supreme Court decision, they lived in the inner city with us before we knew that it was the inner city.

Judge Thomas has not forgotten his roots. He lived day by day the cruel story of discrimination. He knows the results of being on the wrong side of the law, not because of what one has done, but because of the color of one's skin.

I am most grateful for having this opportunity to testify in favor of Judge Thomas' confirmation as a Justice of the Supreme Court. The road from the unpaved streets of our part of Savannah to these hallowed halls cannot have been an easy one to travel, but Clarence Thomas has demonstrated that he has overcome obstacles that might have defeated a lesser man.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Sister.