

somewhat illuminating about what still amazes me after so many years of getting less than equal treatment in this country. Black Americans did what I suspect almost no one else would do. Upon the announcement of Mr. Thomas to be the nominee, notwithstanding the fact that he was black, over 60 percent of black Americans had an open mind—over 60 percent, from all the polls I read, said “We’re not sure; let’s see what he has.”

Now, I have not made my judgment on him yet, but I think that is astounding. Everyone likes to assume the point that you made, Congressman Washington, in such an articulate fashion, that you point out is not true—that blacks all think alike. Here, a black man was appointed to the bench, and almost two-thirds of black America said, notwithstanding that, “I am going to withhold judgment until I find out more about him.” I thought that was astounding and quite a compliment.

Mr. LEWIS. Let me just add, Mr. Chairman, I think you make the point that as American and as black American—I think as a people—we are very considerate. We are kind, we are compassionate, and we have a great deal of pride. And I think a lot of blacks supported Thomas when they heard that he had been nominated because they were proud of the fact that a black was nominated. And when they got more information, they started looking and moving the other way.

Another point I want to make is that the National Baptist Convention, which came out against Clarence Thomas, represents more than 10 million African Americans. The black church is probably the most powerful, most influential group in the African American community, and this is the largest black religious institution.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Specter—oh, I’m sorry, I beg your pardon, Senator Grassley. I thought you were finished.

Senator GRASSLEY. I’m done, except I want to make one statement to clarify that the poll I referred to of 58 percent black Americans’ support for Thomas was taken the 13th to the 15th, so it was after he had been testifying before us for 4 days. So these people have had an opportunity to view his philosophy as well as just his name and who he is.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Specter.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I join with my colleagues in welcoming you, our fellow members of Congress, to this hearing. The brief exchange between Senator Thurmond and this caucus, I think, was historical in a sense, and an underlying sense that touched some very, very important feelings.

The issue of affirmative action, I think, is a big one, and I have expressed before my regret that we didn’t do more about it substantively, but that’s what I would like to discuss with you gentlemen for a few minutes today.

I believe that these hearings have had the benefit of having people focus on a substantive issue, not as much as I would have liked, but Judge Thomas has advocated a position in opposition to affirmative action on the grounds that as to the minorities which it purports to help, that he feels that it is in fact harmful. He feels it fosters a notion that the minorities are disabled, fosters a notion that the minorities are in need of handouts and takes away self-