

began to understand that, yes, we affirm the progress of the civil rights movement, but the strategy is insufficient, that we must now define affirmative action differently so that it exempts the sons and daughters of the panelists here and people in my—my son—I have four children. My oldest boys have a better education than most whites. They went to Wilmington Friends School, Senator. Therefore, what we believe is that if affirmative action, as Clarence Thomas has said, should be redefined to apply to low-income people, white, black, Hispanic, whatever, since we only have a limited amount of resources, that we should concentrate those resources among the people who are in crisis.

And so Clarence Thomas, I think, brings that very important perspective to this issue, and therefore should be confirmed on the Court when the issue of the future of black colleges, public-supported black colleges are being destroyed in the name of integration, and they educate most black youngsters, not Harvard, Yale, or Stanford. Therefore, there are many issues that go beyond affirmative action that we think Judge Thomas is eminently qualified to sit in judgment.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Woodsen.
Mr. Jackson.

STATEMENT OF ALPHONSO JACKSON

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am Alphonso Jackson, the executive director of the housing authority for the city of Dallas, and a personal friend of Judge Clarence Thomas. I am here before you today to testify on his behalf.

I, too, like Judge Thomas, came from humble means, as the last of 12 children to Arthur and Henrietta Jackson. Although my mother was a high school graduate, my father was not, but he still managed to educate all 12 of his children. He taught us the value of giving back, not only to the society at large, but to the African-American community specifically.

In 1965, while a freshman in college, I left at the request of Rev. Bernard Lee, the top aide to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, to go to Selma and be instrumental in the voter registration drive.

I also, as many others did, participated in the march from Selma to Montgomery. Furthermore, I spent the summer of 1976 working for the NAACP, at my own expense, at the request of Margaret Wilson, then chairperson, and the Rev. Ben Hooks, the executive director.

Upon graduation from law school at Washington University, in St. Louis, I then met Attorney General John Danforth, who introduced me to Judge Thomas. We have remained steadfast friends for the past 18 years, and I dare say that both of us were enriched by Senator Danforth's kindness and wisdom.

Judge Thomas is the every man we strive to be. He is intuitive, insightful and highly proficient in the law, with extremely valuable hands-on experience in public policy. He possesses keen intellect and strong values that would benefit the Supreme Court.

The Clarence Thomas I know is a self-made man, who has worked enormously hard to get where he is today. He will serve the Supreme Court well, not through quick and simplistic means,

but through his own strength of character, perseverance and strong belief in the American dream.

As a public official working with low-income families over the past 6 years, I have seen Federal programs go astray. Programs that initially had good intentions have turned out to have devastating effects on low-income families. The overly-subsidized existence has killed the spirit and, in many instances, left these families hopeless.

It is painful to see the hopelessness that exists in many low-income communities. But what is more disillusion is to see the acceptance of this hopelessness. I often reflect back on my idealistic days when I, too, felt the programs would change the world, but my liberal vision has faded. I firmly believe that self-help is the road to salvation for all low-income people, especially African-Americans.

Clarence Thomas' view of self-help is one that I fully support and a view that is supported by most and many African-Americans. His focus has always been on moving individuals towards self-sufficiency. He understands the need for economic empowerment of all minorities, and to expand the education and economic opportunities, while emphasizing the importance of self-direction.

Clarence Thomas' life story reveals a more complex human being than the conservative label might suggest. Clarence was taught to never ignore discrimination. In addition, he was taught the way to defeat it was through hard work and education. I can tell you, from my discussions with him, he remembers the pain and humiliation of discrimination, as I do, and he vowed never to forget those incidents that ultimately shaped his life and mine.

Judge Thomas' nomination should remind us all in this country that every person can rise as high as he or her ability will take them, regardless of color. He symbolizes our continued commitment toward making the American dream a reality for every American.

Despite the serious and sincere disagreement between Judge Thomas and others in the civil rights movement to reach this goal, I firmly believe that Judge Thomas will be capable of recognizing racism when it comes before him on the Supreme Court, competent to judge critical issues and compassionate to rule on each of them according to the facts, and not politics.

The question should not be whether Judge Thomas is a liberal or a conservative, but, rather, does he have the ability to interpret the law fairly and judge with compassion. There is no doubt in my mind that he will be fair and equitable Justice of the Supreme Court. My question to you, Senators: Isn't that simply what we want? We want a Justice that will be fair and equitable.

I am elated that President Bush made a bold and decisive act of nominating Clarence Thomas for the next Supreme Court Justice. I am proud of the confidence that the President has placed in a man he trusts will act in a just and fair manner, regardless of political pressures.

I have traveled Africa, Asia and Europe, and each time that I land back on our shores, I simply say God Bless America. Even though we are still faced with an enormous amount of racism, this country is mine, and I too agree with Judge Clarence Thomas,

when he stated during President Bush's announcement of his nomination, that this could have only happened in America. Only in America, gentlemen, can a citizen be recognized for his or her achievement, regardless of their background, race or religion. Only in America, gentlemen, can a role model like Clarence Thomas show our children that, if they work hard enough, there is a better tomorrow and there is a pot of gold at the rainbow.

Finally, only in America, gentlemen, can an African-American such as myself have the honor of sitting before you today testifying on behalf of not only my good friend, but an individual whose credentials are above reproach and whose experience uniquely qualifies him to serve on the Supreme Court.

Lastly, I think it is important to say, when we get to the question, that I am truly, without a doubt, within the 1960 group that benefited from affirmative action programs, and I accept that fully. But I will say to you today that I practice affirmative action for my children by paying for their education.

I have a daughter that is an honor student at the University of Texas, who got there on her merits, who graduated third in her class, from one of the best prep girls schools in this country, and that is affirmative action, to me. I have a daughter who is in the top of her class at one of the leading prep schools in the country, and that is affirmative action.

I truly believe that we must practice affirmative action, but it must be for those who are most in need, not my children. Therefore, I say to you that I fully ascribe to Clarence Thomas' belief that affirmative action is important, but those of us who have made it must stop relying on excuses and begin to produce.

I close lastly by saying simply this: I am happy to be here. Last year, African-Americans in this country consumed \$380 billion. Anglo-Americans did not tell us how to spend one penny of that. I am saying to you today, some responsibilities we must take for ourselves.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

There are about 7 minutes left to vote. Rather than interrupt your testimony in the middle, because I am going to have to go vote, Reverend, I think maybe it would be wise for us to recess and come back.

Let me ask you, because we may start before I get back, because whoever comes back first will start, let me ask you a question, Mr. Jackson. I am a little confused by your testimony. You talk about the fact that there is this cycle of despair and expectation of the Government to help, that is, in the African-American community, that has been spawned by affirmative action programs and those kinds of programs. Then you say those of you who made it should stop relying on affirmative action. I don't imagine that is where the despair is, is it, among those of you who have made it?

Mr. JACKSON. Sure, I think the despair is between those of us who have made it, who consistently create excuses for others not making it. My position is simply this, that I practice affirmative action by making sure that my two daughters are educated well. There are others that are not in the position that either one of us at this table are in. Those persons clearly must receive affirmative

action, whether they be Anglo, Hispanic, African-Americans. There are a lot of poor people in the world, and when we discuss the largest—

The CHAIRMAN. Well, if they have affirmative action based on that basis—you said you are a beneficiary of affirmative action. I don't know in what circumstance, whether it was law school or college.

Mr. JACKSON. Law school, specifically.

The CHAIRMAN. Law school. You wouldn't have gotten into law school, even on affirmative action back in those days, if it had been a pool, not of merely black Americans and Hispanic Americans, but if it had been a pool of all Americans in need, because I expect my financial circumstance wasn't any better than your financial circumstance—I don't know that to be true. My father made \$12,000 a year, so I don't know what that was, with four children.

Mr. JACKSON. That is about what mine made.

The CHAIRMAN. So, I imagine we would have been competing with one another for affirmative action, along for every one of you, there were 15 of me or 10 of me, because there are ten times as many white folks as there are black folks, 10 times as many poor white folks as there are poor black folks. So, how would you have gotten into school?

Mr. JACKSON. I think at the time that affirmative action was being practiced, it is clear that there were very few African-Americans in this country that could afford the kind of education that exists today. That is not the case. I think that Mr. Woodson made it clear that our income has gone up over 300 percent.

The CHAIRMAN. I am not talking about that. I am talking about the black folks and minorities who can't afford it.

Mr. JACKSON. And I am saying that those are the people that we are speaking in reference to which should be given the opportunities, without a doubt.

The CHAIRMAN. But it should be in a pool—

Mr. JACKSON. That has not been the case, though.

The CHAIRMAN. But it should be in a pool of all Americans, not just black Americans.

Mr. JACKSON. All low-income Americans.

The CHAIRMAN. All low-income Americans. Well, you all know, in low-income Americans, you are outnumbered in a big way, don't you?

Mr. JACKSON. No, Senator, the very fact—

The CHAIRMAN. You are.

Mr. JACKSON. We are disproportionately represented there. Therefore, we will be disproportionately beneficiaries of whatever is done to that group of people.

The CHAIRMAN. As you know, that is not true, if you are talking about absolute numbers. If there are 100 spots open and, for the sake of argument, let's assume 80 percent of class A is disadvantaged and only 10 percent of class B is disadvantaged. If class B is 20 times as big as class A, you are still going to find yourself out of those 10 slots, most of them going to the folks in class B. That is the only point I am making.

I just think we should kind of get our facts straight. You all are the businessmen and I am just the politician. Let me stop here and you all think about that for a minute until I come back.

Senator Simon is here, let's continue. Reverend, why don't we begin with your testimony, and then I will come back and we will continue questioning for the whole panel.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF REV. BUSTER SOIRES

Reverend SOIRES. Thank you very much for having us.

I am the Pastor of First Baptist Church in Somerset, NJ. We have a membership of approximately 3,000 congregants, and I have been there for 10 months. Prior to accepting this call to this church, I spent 5½ years traveling throughout this Nation, speaking primarily to high school students, warning them about the dangers of drugs and immoral behavior and activities which would preclude successful futures.

Prior to that, I served as the national director of Operation PUSH. I reported directly to Reverend Jesse Jackson, who gave me unusual exposure and invaluable training in my efforts to become an advocate for people. In 1988, I ran as a delegate to represent Reverend Jackson at the Democratic National Convention.

I have come here, in light of my experience and exposure, to support the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. I believe that Judge Thomas has a knowledge of the Constitution, which qualifies him for membership on the Supreme Court. I believe that his personal integrity and demeanor bring to bear wonderful implications for mediation between the two branches of Government, the executive branch and the legislative branch.

Moreover, I believe that, as a pastor, that Judge Thomas reflects more character and personal integrity that display values rooted deep in the American tradition and in the black tradition. I have watched with great interest and listened with great intrigue to the discussion around Judge Thomas, and I would like to focus on the enigma factor.

I think, Senator, one of the important discussions that we should have is why this enigma factor, which I think you yourself have pointed to, seems to be so prominent.

I think, first, we should see the enigma that surrounds Judge Thomas within the context of the overall enigma in which we all live, the enigma of having voting rights, yet the majority of the Americans do not vote, the enigma of having civil rights, yet we have a disproportionate number of people who did not have civil rights still living in poverty.

Even beyond that, the legal enigma today—I listened with great interest to the prior panel, the Congressman from Houston, I am certain, will attest to the fact that in his city today, the No. 1 issue among the mayoral candidates is the issue of crime, and 25 percent of the cases that go before the Supreme Court have less to do with abortion or affirmative action than they do crime.

Crime has become such an enigma, that black people and black neighborhoods are afraid of black children. The root cause goes back for centuries, but the reality is this, that that is an enigma. It