

BLACK EXPO Chicago

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My name is Rev. Bernard Taylor, and I am Chairman of Black Expo Chicago, an Illinois-based corporation involved in a host of activities to support the development of black business enterprises including an annual exposition that brings together black-owned businesses of all types to display their products to black consumers. The most recent of these was held this past July in which over 400 businesses exhibited to hundreds of thousands of consumers.

I am also an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal church, the oldest Black church denomination in America, a church that was organized because of discrimination; and serve as associate pastor at Grant Memorial AME church.

I am a graduate of Roosevelt University with a B.A. degree in sociology and Psychology and Chicago Theological Seminary with a M.A. in Theology.

Senators, I am here in opposition to the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court.

PERSONAL HISTORY

I. Clarence Thomas' personal history is NOT REMARKABLE

Most African-Americans who have grown up in this country have experienced poverty, whites who have disrespected our elders, family members who have been and remain in in what is now known as the "underclass", and been personally affronted with the most virulent and vicious expressions of racism. We can identify with, and are still pained by the descriptions punctuated by Thomas'

muffled sobs during the Confirmation Hearings. Most African-Americans have been or have known parents or grandparents or other relatives who have been disrespectfully addressed and treated. e.g (called boy, girl, nigger, or worse). Thomas' Pin Point Georgia experience is very familiar to most African-Americans, one we can readily identify with.

The notions of self-help and self-reliance are not concepts that are foreign to African-Americans. In fact, Booker T.

Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute,, wrote extensively on the need for passive resistance and self-help.

On the contrary, W.E.B. DuBois wrote of the need for progression via the talented tenth paving the way for the rest of the race.

We contend that a blend of those views must carry the day. While we need self-help, we also need access to the avenues that will prepare our "talented tenth" to provide guidance to our people. It is undisputed that self-help alone will not propel disadvantaged persons into the mainstream of American society. No person who presently enjoys a position of power or authority has attained that position without assistance, be it governmental or otherwise. That type of assistance has been and remains necessary if persons are to succeed in this society.

Judge Clarence Thomas, who has been a beneficiary of seminary training should be able to demonstrate human compassion. Yet, we see him denigrating those who would take advantage of the well-earned largesse of government.

African-Americans are and have been long-standing and faithful taxpayers, and deserve to participate in every existing governmental benefit. The benefits of Affirmative Action are not handouts, but, rather the well-deserved

fruits of the labors of ourselves and our predecessors, borne of scores of years of efforts toward achievement.

Those commentators who marvel at how Thomas overcame such obstacles should recognize that his experiences are neither unique nor unusual. Many of us can identify with the challenging, humiliating treatment and difficult circumstances faced by persons who are minority and, as a result, disadvantaged.

INCONSISTENCIES

II. Thomas' inconsistencies abound. Clarence Thomas claims to have "NO AGENDA" in seeking the role of Justice of the United States Supreme Court. He further and frequently asserts the difference in the role of Justice and his former role as spokesperson for the Administration as a reason why his earlier statements, speeches and writings should be disregarded or given a limited amount of credence. In fact, he frankly disavows many of the statements he previously made.

Yet, Judge Thomas has not, in his years of public service conducted himself as one who can think clearly for himself. His record demonstrates that he will not only carry out the intentions of, but will actually parrot the views of those to whom he appears to be beholden. Few can forget Ronald

Reagan's repeated references to totalitarianism. Predictably, Thomas' speech to various groups reflected Reagan's baseless verbiage, offering none of the substance which would be expected of a legal scholar.

III. Judge Thomas has made several references to "that type of Affirmative Action", alluding to quotas. He has further stated that he was never a beneficiary of "that type of Affirmative Action". As Chairman of EEOC, Thomas should have recognized that quotas have never been a part of statutory Affirmative Action. Affirmative Action, with its attendant goals and timetables, provided both a security interest for present beneficiaries of the status quo, and an expectancy interest for potential future beneficiaries of Affirmative Action. The expectancy interest provided by goals and timetables simply represents Affirmative Action (or limited replacement) by attrition. Such a scheme is gradual and, based on current projections, represents a recognition of the future composition of the relevant work force.

Thomas represents that he favors individual rights over group rights in the area of adjudication of discrimination claims. He says this in 1991 when he is, and most informed members of the public are aware that the Court, in 1989, severely curtailed the rights of both groups and individuals in adjudication of cases related to discrimination.

The Clarence Thomas who has presented himself to the public for the past ten years should not be appointed to the United States Supreme Court.