

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much.

Ms. Alvarez, we will be glad to hear from you. This yellow light means you just have about a minute left. The red light means your time is up. And we have to be strict today because we have so many witnesses.

Ms. ALVAREZ. I understand.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much. Your whole statement can go in the record, though, whatever you have.

You may proceed.

#### STATEMENT OF J.C. ALVAREZ

Ms. ALVAREZ. Let me tell you about the first time I met Clarence Thomas. It was 13 years ago in some cramped offices in an annex building that no longer exists today. I had been with Senator Danforth a few months, undoubtedly out of place in an industry that employed very few minorities. If there were a half a dozen of us on the Senate side at that time, that was too many.

Almost daily I heard comments about the fact that I had been hired only because of my minority background. It never occurred to me to flaunt my bachelor's degree from Princeton and my master's degree from Columbia in defense of my presence on the Hill. Affirmative action was like a cloud that kept people from looking directly at my abilities, and I bore it like a scarlet letter of shame.

I was young, 23 years old, and thought perhaps that they were right. I was almost apologetic that I wasn't a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male or that my daddy had not made some enormous financial contribution to some campaign. And then one day a big black guy with a booming voice comes into the office as the newest addition to Danforth's staff.

Although everyone in the office knew he had worked with Jack before and that he had degrees from Holy Cross and Yale, one cynical staffer decided to challenge him directly by saying, "Let's face it. The only reason you are here is because you went to Yale, and the only reason you got into Yale was not because of your ability, but because of affirmative action."

Clarence turned to him, took a deep breath that filled out his broad shoulders, looked at him straight on and said, "You know, I may have been lucky enough to get in, but I was smart enough to get out."

From that day forward, my life was changed. I would never be ashamed again to be a minority, to be a Hispanic. I had nothing to apologize for, I realized. Most importantly, Clarence that day gave me a confidence that I had never felt before. I realized that affirmative action was perhaps just a minority's version of the same nepotism that had gotten that staffer his job.

OK, perhaps I had been fortunate enough to have had doors opened for me, but I alone had been smart enough, capable enough to walk through those doors.

It has been 13 years, and to say that I know Clarence well is probably an understatement. Although politically and professionally Clarence has grown and developed over the years, the basic character of the man has never changed in all the time that I have

known him. And this is critical to consider when reviewing his appointment to the Supreme Court.

Clarence is a brutally honest man, an independent thinker who is careful and deliberate in making decisions. He is not egotistical enough or presumptuous enough to think that he alone knows everything. Far from it.

When making decisions, I can recall seeing Clarence surround himself with all types of people, from the book-smart people to the people with experience about those specific issues. He always wanted to be sure not just to get the fact, but to get some real-life perspective so that he could make the right decision.

Take, for instance, when Clarence was appointed to head the EEOC. He asked me to join his staff to address the issues of two particular protected classes who had long been neglected by the EEOC: The Hispanics and the handicapped. He pulled out all the stops. There was no limit to the communication or the meetings that he would hold to learn about the issues that were important to these groups.

I can recall at the time how bitter many Hispanic leaders were because they had been ignored or shut out by the EEOC under the previous administration. And they obviously expected no more from Clarence and the Republicans. I arranged meetings between Clarence and these Hispanic leaders, almost expecting to hand out flak jackets at each meeting because they came in loaded for bear, as we say in the Midwest; and they had a good reason to feel that way.

But in every instance I can recall, the Hispanic leadership was shocked and amazed at the reaction and the response of the chairman. He was genuinely sincere in his concern for their cause. He solicited their views and their experiences, shared his perspective, and ultimately responded to the recommendations to address the issues. In every instance, they walked into his office as his enemy and left as his ally.

I must admit that listening to the criticism levied against Clarence last week about his lack of commitment to the Hispanic community sort of shocked me, and I prepared this statement, which I ask be submitted as part of the record.

Senator THURMOND. Your entire statement will be admitted in the record. Mr. Palmer, yours too.

Mr. PALMER. Thank you, Senator.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Alvarez follows:]