

# commentary

## Editorials

### Nip It In The Bud, Now!

Ms. Susai Denceen Jones of Chapel Hill is dead at the age of 27 years. She paid the ultimate price because two boys threw a 60 pound boulder off a bridge on to her car October 12.

The 16-year-old is free on a \$60,000 bond pending trial. The 14-year old accomplice admitted to involuntary manslaughter for his part in the tragedy and authorities are already talking about "training school" for him.

While we sympathize with Ms. Jones' relatives in this senseless waste of her life, that is simply not enough.

While we feel sorry for the parents of the boys for the inconveniences and heartaches their wanton act must have caused, that is not enough.

We have heard of numerous other incidents in Durham of young boys throwing rocks at passing cars. In fact, we've been hit on Chapel Hill Boulevard by two boys who ran back into the wooded area near apartment houses when we slowed to see where the rocks came from.

It is not enough that these two be slapped on the wrist for what they did. The book ought to be thrown at them and they ought to be made to pay dearly for what they did. Then, the parents, the schools, the churches, the newspapers — everybody — ought to publicize that fact, ad nauseum, until everybody, especially young boys, be made fully aware of the seriousness of the crime of throwing anything at or on moving vehicles.

It is not enough that the court, juvenile or adult, let these two off without severe punishment. Forget that rubbish about "youthful offenders." Their act needs to be nipped in the bud right now. If not, we're going to see and hear of more of this kind of foolishness; including injuries and loss of life.

### We Should Help!

On Saturday, September 28, one man organized, produced and paid for out of his pocket a most meaningful event in Durham. It was the African American Achievement Day, when several Hillside High School graduates who have achieved nationally and internationally were honored with a parade, a spectacular presentation ceremony, luncheon, and football game.

The one man responsible for the whole affair — which included the presentation of plaques to each of the honorees — was Herman L. Rollins.

We have found out that expenses ran very close to \$10,000. This is too much to ask one man with foresight to bear alone. All of us OUGHT to chip in and send Mr. Rollins any amount we can, if for no other reason, than the fact that these individuals who have gone so far professionally send a message to our youth that they, too, can achieve whatever they set their minds to.

There was Major General Harvey Williams, U.S. Army (Ret.); there was Wilbert "Bill" Tatum, publisher, CEO and Editor in Chief of the New York Amsterdam News, America's largest black owned newspaper; there was George W. Jones, M.D., F.A.C.S., noted urologist; there was Nathaniel Sutton, senior vice president, Citicorp Citibank; there was Benjamin Ruffin, vice president, corporate affairs, RJR Nabisco; James M. Hubbard, Jr., D.D.S., M.P.H., dental surgeon; J.J. "Biff" Henderson, Jr., associate producer of the David Letterman Show, NBC-TV. Several others were unable to make the trip back to Durham for the event.

So successful was this first "Achievement Day" that many people are still talking about it and looking forward to its becoming an annual observance. Perhaps the best thing we all could do at this time is to dole out some cash to Mr. Rollins and encourage him to make the event an annual celebration. We're sure it would go a long way with him. It surely could be beneficial to our youth to see role models of their skin color in the flesh.

Come on, Durham, we can do it!

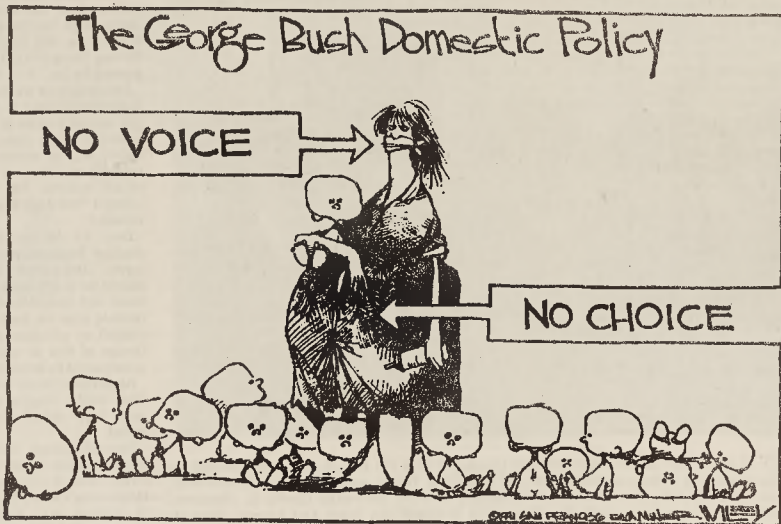
Make payable and address contributions to Herma L. Rollins, B-145, 3020 Pickett Road, Durham, N.C. 27705.

### How Clarence Thomas Won

By Dr. Manning Marable

The debates surrounding Clarence Thomas's nomination and appointment to the Supreme Court provoked some of the sharpest political debates in recent years. The fact that Thomas was confirmed by the narrowest margin of any Justice in the twentieth century indicates the bitterness and sharp emotions which his confirmation hearings produced. Beneath the headlines was a conflict between three fundamental issues which characterize much of the general crisis in American politics and government. They are the crisis of liberalism, the politics of gender, and the politics of race. Each of these issues worked in complex and contradictory ways both to illuminate and to obscure the actual character of American power. They explain how and why Clarence Thomas won.

From the beginning, President George Bush's justification and defense of Thomas was essentially a series of unambiguous falsehoods. No one seriously believed that Thomas was the "best qualified" jurist in the nation to sit on the high court. No one was convinced by Bush's assertion that the nominee's race had nothing to do with the decision to replace the only African-American member of the court, the liberal former Associate Justice Thurgood Marshall. Thomas had brief experience as a federal justice, and before that, an undistinguished public record as a bureaucrat in the Reagan administration. His legal decisions and his published articles indicated at best a mediocre mind. If Bush genuinely had desired to nominate a qualified, black Republican judge, he would have skipped Thomas and selected Amalye Kearse, an African-American currently serving on the federal appeals court in New York. But Bush's real



objective was to make political capital at the expense of the Democratic Party and particularly liberals, by appointing a narrowly conservative apologist for Reaganism to the Supreme Court, who happened to be black.

We should recall that other Republican presidents, when considering Supreme Court appointments, have chosen quality over partisanship. Dwight Eisenhower appointed two of the most liberal Supreme Court justices in American history—Chief Justice Earl Warren and Associate Justice William Brennan. Gerald Ford appointed Justice John Paul Stevens to the court, who is viewed today as a liberal. Even Reagan nominated Sandra Day O'Connor, who is essentially a moderate conservative. Bush's goal was not judicial excellence. He wanted a nominee who was opposed to a woman's freedom of choice on abortion, an ideologue with slim qualifications who would attack the liberal agenda from the court for the next thirty years.

When Professor Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment began to circulate, Thomas's supporters wanted to suppress the evidence and to rush a vote through the Senate. To their shame, white Democrats also refused to halt the proceedings, until a firestorm of criticism from women's groups and the public generally forced new hearings. On balance, the testimony of Professor Hill about Thomas's sexual harassment of her in the workplace was credible and persuasive. Witnesses corroborated her testimony.

Hill's charges against Thomas were devastating, in part, because the experience of sexual harassment is commonplace within our society for women of all races, classes and ethnic backgrounds. According to a recent New York Times/CBS News poll, about four out of ten women stated that they have been "the object of sexual advances, propositions, or unwanted sexual discussions from men who supervise you or can affect your position at work." Only one out of eight women who were sexually harassed identified in this poll actually reported the incident. Like Professor Hill, they knew that without hard evidence, their assertions were unlikely to be believed. Their professional careers would suffer. Interestingly, even one half of all men polled admit that they have "said or done something which could have been construed by a female colleague as harassment."

But it was here that the liberals, such as Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Joseph Biden, let Thomas off the hook. Biden and the liberals viewed Hill's accusations in the context of a criminal trial, with the presumption of innocence resting with Thomas. But this was erroneous. This was not a trial, but a political hearing to determine the fitness of Thomas to serve on the country's highest court in a lifetime appointment. Even if Anita Hill did not exist, there was sufficient evidence to reject Thomas's nomination. With Hill's convincing and credible statements, enough doubts about Thomas should have existed which should have demanded his outright rejection.

As the Democrats equivocated, the Reaganite Republicans smelled blood and circled for the political kill. The Senate's leading demagogue, Alan Simpson of Wyoming, vowed that Hill would be "destroyed, belittled, hounded and harassed." With dark innuendoes, he claimed to have faxes and letters attacking Hill's credibility "hanging out of my pockets," warning him to "watch out for this woman." Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina declared Hill's allegations to be "totally without merit," even before listening to her testimony!

In a racist, sexist society, it is relatively easy for white men with power to discredit and to dismiss a black woman. The media projected the controversy as part-soap opera, part-public trial, and accepted the interpretation that Thomas merited the presumption of innocence. In this context, it was not terribly surprising that the majority of Americans witnessing the spectacle concluded that Thomas was telling the truth, and that Hill was lying. But for those who still continue to smear Anita Hill, for possessing the courage and dignity to step forward, I would ask—Why does she lie? What does she actually gain from her actions? Politically a conservative and identified with her tenure in the Reagan administration, she clearly is not a liberal. Conservative politicians, ideologues and sexists will attack her personal integrity and professionalism for decades to come. Her career goal of becoming a federal judge is probably lost forever. As University of Maryland law professor Tanya Banks observed, Hill probably "would not have taken this step without full consideration of consequences."

But at the moment of truth, the liberals lacked the courage of their convictions. They sacrificed their principles before the volatile politics of gender and race. They physically recoiled when Thomas, in a moment of desperation, cynically charged "racism" and declared himself to be the

tragic victim of a "high tech lynching." They refused to acknowledge the reality that Anita Hill, not Thomas, was the real victim of lynching—not once but twice: the first time a decade ago, when she was sexually humiliated and harassed in private, and the second time on Capitol Hill before the eyes of the world.

What do you call—a man who violates the rights of women? Unfortunately, for years to come, we may call him Clarence Thomas.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Political Science and History, University of Colorado, Boulder. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 200 publications internationally, and a radio version of this series is distributed to stations across the United States.

### It's OK To Change Your Mind

By Tony Brown

Al-Nisa Barbara Banks, Dr. Preston Wilcox and I go back to the days of the dawning of today's black-consciousness.

All of us, although agreeing on the central premise of black unity, are highly independent in our applications of that belief.

Ms. Banks is the editor and publisher (and the soul) of The Challenger newspaper in Buffalo, Dr., he prefers "Brother," Wilcox runs Afram, an information service of black issues (great research material: 212/289-9155) in New York. He lists his address as "Harlem, N.Y." and signs his letters "Harlem Lover."

Everyone who knows Brother Wilcox loves him because we all know how he has shunned ego-fame and corrupt-Negro fortune to share his mind and wisdom with those in most need of self-respect.

I haven't talked with either of my friends since Justice Clarence Thomas's nomination and subsequent confirmation. However, I suspected they would not support his confirmation.

In a letter to Justice Thomas, Wilcox confirmed my suspicions.

"I'm the same guy who earlier opposed your appointment, but when you chose to confront Anita Hill's specious charges" you made me an offer I could not refuse."

Wilcox added: "You join a long line of African-American men who had the wherewithal to say 'NO' to those who would call upon you to celebrate your own oppression and to assign to them the responsibility for defining your own human nature. You used your intelligence as a weapon - and you didn't separate thinking from feeling and action."

"You were not sitting there alone in the Senate Caucus; David Walker, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., etc., were there with you."

"The attacks upon you were presented as charges of sexual harassment in order to conceal the rope in a public lynching. Thanks for exposing the hole card of those who leaked the report and those Democrats who used party politics as a smokescreen to conceal their own racism."

Ms. Banks joined 70% of the black population in her editorial: "There were a lot of African-Americans who opposed Thomas from the day George Bush nominated him. But that opposition was based on his record of 'conservative' views. I don't think even his harshest black critic would have wished upon him the public humiliation he suffered, just to see him defeated and certainly not at the hands of a black woman."

May I, in part, disagree with my friend. Black operatives of the white liberal left and feminist groups were slinging dirt with the best of them.

Banks continues: "Feminists and liberals all over the country are calling Anita Hill a heroine. But a heroine she is not. A pawn is more like it. A tool, and in an extreme sense, a traitor to her race is more accurate. A black woman who is obviously suffering from historical amnesia best describes her condition; a condition which made it easy for her to be used by bra-burning white girls who don't have the guts to castrate the real sexual harassers. No. It's easier to let Yale-trained Anita do it to Yale-trained Clarence for all the world to see."

"The tragedy of Professor Hill's decision to share her freakish accusations with the nation is that she played into the pervasive stereotype of black male sexuality. And whether she realized it or not black women as well."

One man in a letter to an extremely left New York black paper wanted to know where the black leaders hid after they threw Thomas to the lynching tree of White Democrats and feminists.

"Clarence Thomas was lynched publicly and with blacks fashioning the noose. Only because he expresses a view not popularity held!" he explained.

Theodore Kirkland wrote in The Challenger: "While the United States Senate's Judiciary Committee, composed of all white males, lynched Judge Clarence Thomas, President Bush's choice for the Supreme Court on national prime-time television, the NAACP, the Congressional Black Caucus, Jesse Jackson and other black national leaders stood by trying to convince the black masses that what they were witnessing was not a racist lynching but politics."

Now that the polls are out and it's safe, Jesse Jackson and his ilk know what's safe to say.

But when we needed integrity, we had to turn to those who stand for something. Wilcox and Banks were there. I'm glad I was there with my friends.

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL TV Series can be seen on public television in Durham on Channel 4 (WUNC). Please consult TV listings or phone station for air time.