

# Forum

## Color prejudice a hazard

### ▲ It gave us Thomas, can give women cancer

Two horrible examples of the disappointments dark-skinned people in America face have taken place recently.

The first example applies to black women. They were told last week on television and in newspapers that skin lighteners and color whiteners are dangerous chemicals and can cause permanent skin damage and

dominated America's cultural landscape. Beauty products have been aimed principally at white women with money — women who could afford the various cosmetics and clothes designed to maximize female attractiveness. Photographs of white-skinned, "glamorous beauties" dominated the advertising media. However, the name of

appointment and anger expressed. But the anger is aimed at President Bush for nominating him instead of at those blacks who approved Thomas on the basis of his skin color alone.

Now they realize the stupidity of thinking the same way the prejudiced whites think about blacks — basing their evaluations and hopes on color of the person's skin. Thomas' bad record on civil rights was very well known.

Thurgood Marshall is light-skinned but he "thinks" as black as the blackest. Clarence Thomas has black skin but his actions show he thinks more like the "white power" advocates such as David Duke and the Ku Kluxers.

The irony of the whole thing is that blacks could have kept Thomas off the court by demanding that their Democrat senators oppose him. This was especially so in the South where the Democrat senators were uncertain about Thomas who was approved by a narrow 52 to 48 vote.

Now, blacks have a "rotten apple" in the so-called "black" seat on the Supreme Court and are stuck with it for the next 35 or 40 years.

Reagan gave us one Uncle Tom, Clarence Pendleton. Now Bush and some blacks give us another Uncle Tom, Clarence Thomas.

Black, like white, is not always beautiful.

In the case of black women, **BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL.**

But in the case of Clarence Thomas, **BLACK IS UGLY.**



### MINORITY REPORT

By JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D.

sometimes cancers.

The second applies to those black men who sang praises for Clarence Thomas. Now they learn that on the U.S. Supreme Court he betrayed them by first voting to approve the Louisiana police beating of a subdued, handcuffed and shackled man already in custody. Most of the white justices said this was wrong, but Thomas approved it.

Now back to the first example. Insofar as cosmetics are concerned, the idea that light-skinned women look better than dark-skinned women has been drummed into the American psyche for hundreds of years. Black women were victimized by the cruel, old lie that "if you're white, you're all right; if you're yellow, you're mellow; if you're brown, stick around; but if you're black, stand back."

This idea was reinforced for years by blacks who accepted the traditional white Anglo-Saxon Protestant values that

the game was money — big money.

If black women had been as financially strong as white women, the merchants certainly would have found ways to get some of that black money by glamorizing "black beauties" in order to sell expensive clothing, jewelry and other female-enhancing gimmicks and trinkets.

Today the new assortments of beauty products for the sultry, slinky, sexy, black Venus are growing along with her ability to plank down cash for glamorizing products of whatever sort. The hard truth is that no matter what the woman's skin color is, the more money and education she has, the more classy and attractive she becomes and her company is sought by various educated men of various races.

Regarding the Thomas example and those who approved Thomas "because he looks like me," I have heard dis-

## Cruel, unusual: The Thomas standard

Given the astounding high rate of incarceration of African-Americans in prisons across the nation, one would at least assume that Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas would have an ounce of sensitivity to the issue of cruel and unusual

work through the federal courts once Hudson sued McMillian and other prison officials for "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The majority opinion was

require a standard of human rights in regard to prisoner's rights issues. A society that allows the brutalization of its prisoners is a society in need of change.

Thomas appears to believe that a prison inmate is not entitled to the standard of constitutional protection from brutality. In his dissenting opinion, Thomas wrote, "Today's expansion of the cruel and unusual punishment clause beyond all bounds of history and precedent is, I suspect, yet, another manifestation of the pervasive view that the Federal Constitution must address all ills in our society."

This goes counter to the sentiments that Thomas testified to under oath during his confirmation hearing before the U.S. Senate. There Thomas had said that he wanted to be on the Supreme Court to "bring something different to the Court" in terms of an interest in helping the court to deal with the underprivileged, in particular the incarcerated.

Thomas had even said to the Senate, "I say to myself almost everyday, but for the grace of God, there go I . . . referring to groups of prisoners that he used to see. Well, it is our hope that brother Thomas does not have the misfortune to be imprisoned given his proclivity to support the right of prison officials to beat up inmates.

Justice O'Connor put it best in her response to Thomas' dissent. She stated, "To deny, as the dissent goes, the difference between punching a prisoner in the face and serving him unappetizing food is to ignore the concepts of dignity, civilized standards, humanity and decency."

written by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Even though Justice O'Connor is a judicial conservative, she voted to declare the kind of treatment that Hudson received in the Louisiana prison to be wrong and unconstitutional. O'Connor stated, "When prison officials maliciously and sadistically use force to cause harm, contemporary standards of decency always are violated. This is true whether or not significant injury is evident."

We know that one of the reasons why so many prisoners become repeat offenders is directly related to the manner in which they are treated in the prison system.

Brutalizing a defenseless prisoner will do nothing toward rehabilitation. Of course most prison officials know this and that is exactly why prison brutality is so pervasive and permissive in our society. Prison inmates sometimes are viewed as being less than human and thus are the victims of inhuman treatment.

It is said that a prison is a mirror image of the society that maintains the prison. It is important, therefore, that the courts



### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS JR.

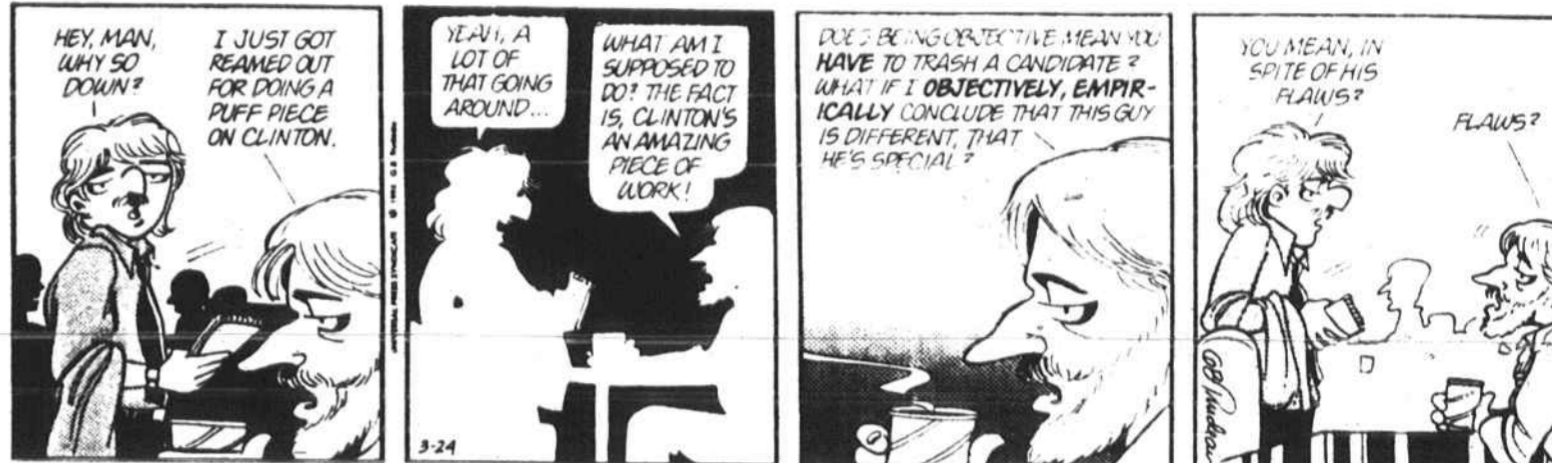
punishment toward prisoners in state and federal penal institutions. But, unfortunately, Justice Thomas has acted and ruled against the interest of those who are most often victimized in this society, that is those who are imprisoned.

In fact, it was another "embarrassment" for all communities who respect human dignity for Thomas to write such a ruthless opinion, which could be used to justify prison brutality. Fortunately though, the majority of the Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 that excessive force against prisoners is unconstitutional.

The case before the Court was Hudson vs. McMillian which arose out of an incident in Louisiana's infamous Angola State Prison. Keith Hudson was an inmate in Angola Prison and was beaten badly by correctional officer Jack McMillian. Hudson was beaten while handcuffed and shackled in leg irons and suffered bruises in his mouth, eyes, chest and stomach in addition to having his dental plate cracked as a result of a blow from McMillian. This incident happened back in 1983. It has taken all this time for the case to

# Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU



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