

commentary

The People's Preacher

Don't Believe The Hype

By Rev. Al Sharpton

In the recent debate on the nomination to the Supreme Court by President Bush of Clarence Thomas, the usual litmus test hysteria has been introduced again into national politics. Mr. Thomas will not be judged on his judicial record, or lack thereof, but he will be judged on his statements that he admired Louis Farrakhan. This particular part of the debate is most troubling, since no politicians, or public officials, or jurists, other than blacks, are subjected to such a ridiculous and demeaning form of a litmus test. As one who clearly opposes the Thomas nomination, I am just as unequivocally opposed to a litmus test being introduced here in the name of the Louis Farrakhan.

First of all, Farrakhan is a religious leader of great respect in black America, and around the world. Farrakhan has been maligned, distorted and in many ways castigated by the white media for his uncompromising and courageous stands on behalf of black people and people of color around the world. Because he has done the unheard of by questioning Jewish authority in certain fields of American life, he has been labeled anti-Semitic, which is the way for those who sin and are members of the Jewish faith to try to purge themselves of examination by clouding the issue with a non-issue, when the issue is whether they have acted in an unsavory and unprincipled manner politically and/or economically, and not be discriminated against because of their faith or their heritage.

No white religious or political figure, no matter how extreme their views are perceived to be, has been a litmus test for white politicians or white officials. Ronald Reagan was endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan, and announced his election campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Philadelphia, Mississippi's only claim to fame, is the place where Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner were killed during the civil rights movement. Yet no one asked him to repudiate Philadelphia, Mississippi, where he strangely chose to announce his candidacy, nor to repudiate the KKK's endorsement. Nor has anyone asked the National Republican chairman to repudiate David Duke, or George Bush to repudiate David Duke's support. And these people are clearly practicing, violent racists, whereas Louis Farrakhan clearly is not.

I think that it is again the double standard and triple play of the white media to try and reinforce this "bogey man" image on the Farrakhans of this world, and to make those in the black community who want to rise to positions of power feel that in order to do that, they must make sure they distance themselves from those that dare to cry for freedom. The subtlety here is that if you want to advance, you've got to have nothing to do with liberation or liberation fighters. For that precedent to be established and unquestioned is dangerous to black America, dangerous to white America, and dangerous to the freedom and liberty of all people.

Mr. Thomas should admire Farrakhan because Farrakhan represents a self-empowerment, self-economic, and self-sufficiency program unequalled by any national black leader today. It is nothing that Thomas ought to apologize for; it is probably the only positive thing I've heard about him since his nomination. But the issue is not even Thomas, the issue is the white media and white power structures continual branding of certain forceful, aggressive, uncompromising leaders as unacceptable, or as some anathema that must be shunned by those who seek power and positions and postures of influence in this society. This must be unilaterally rejected and not accepted by all conscious, thinking Americans.

I'd much rather see us operate across the board or not at all. When the people are not maligned for identifying with fascists like Jerry Falwell or admitted racists like David Duke, then how can they in any way try to use us a litmus test a man who has taken junkies and alcoholics and transformed the responsible family men and citizens? It would seem to me that if there are some who ought to be shunned based on their demagoguery, their racism, and their ill effects on society, we ought to re-evaluate all those who ran around and enjoyed the endorsement of the Moral Majority from some TV evangelists, half of which are now finishing their second year in federal prison for defrauding the public and ripping off old ladies.

But if they will not be questioned for being aligned with some gospel thieves and some religious rip-off artists, then certainly we cannot bear this litmus test using a man who has operated above the worship houses of ill repute.

Along The Color Line

Why Integration Has Failed

By Dr. Manning Marable

When George Bush nominated black conservative Clarence Thomas to replace liberal jurist Thurgood Marshall on the Supreme Court, most African American leaders vigorously opposed the nomination. Most members of the Congressional Black Caucus quickly recognized that Thomas was an uncompromising opponent of affirmative action and civil rights. However, at the moment of decision, the NAACP flinched. Its refusal to take an immediate stand against a longtime Reaganite illustrated the limitations of its ideology and strategy for black advancement.

For half a century, the NAACP's basic orientation has been for racial "integration." Integrationism has usually meant the elimination of all structural barriers which prohibited blacks from full participation within the mainstream of American life. Culturally, the goal was the achievement of a "color-blind society," which in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., would mean that blacks "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." For the integrationists, there was an implicit faith in democracy, American-style. The system could be made to work, they believed, if only people of color and others victimized by discrimination and poverty were brought to the table as full partners. This could be realized by expanding the number of African Americans, Latinos, women, low income people and others into positions of authority within the existing structures of power in business, labor, government and the media. When one encountered resistance, the integrationist strategy relied heavily on the intervention of a "benevolent" federal judiciary, which could be counted on to defend civil rights and civil liberties. Internationally, integrationists sympathized with the anti-apartheid struggle, but they failed to grasp the fundamental linkage between the battle against racism abroad and their own situation within the United States.

Integrationists placed great faith in the power of the political system. After the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, integrationists believed that all members of society now had an equal access to the process of democratic decision making. The central flaw of this political reasoning was the fact that democracy is only really possible when all participants have roughly equal resources as they enter the electoral field of competition. Both major political parties had a vested interest in "managing" if not eliminating the electoral participation of blacks, the

Tony Brown's Comments

Clarence Thomas: Black Masses Say Yes, Black Elite Says No

By Tony Brown

During my speech at the dedication of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, I asked the audience: "Which would you prefer — a white conservative or a black conservative as the next Supreme Court nominee? Because you're going to get a conservative."

And if federal appeals judge Clarence Thomas is not confirmed as a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, a white woman or Hispanic who will make Jesse Helms look like a liberal will likely be his replacement. Anyway, the sitting high court is going to further erode affirmative action and abortion rights either 6-3 or 5-4, with or without Thomas. Justice Thurgood Marshall couldn't outvote a majority and Thomas won't either.

In spite of those facts, some in the black elite savage the nominee at every opportunity. For example, the Harvard psychiatrist Alvin Pouissant, whose clinical diagnosis of Thomas is right out of voodoo psychiatry, says that because black people like Thomas were raised in poverty, they are so angry that they displace their hostility by opposing affirmative action. And Harvard law school professor, Christopher Edley, Jr., called Judge Thomas a "quota" in his *Washington Post* op-editorial. Using Edley's logic, he is a Harvard quota. And on June 13, 1967, Lyndon Johnson definitely introduced Thurgood Marshall as his quota when he named him as the first black to the high court.

Whatever the liberal elitists think, the regular black Joe and Jane approve of the Pinpoint. Georgia native's nomination by 54% — for the

unemployed, low income workers, and others. In national politics, the Republicans had become by the 1980s an upper-to-middle class white united front, for all practical purposes. Two-thirds of all whites, and three-fourths of all upper class whites voted for Reagan in 1984. The Republicans saw few advantages by encouraging the electoral participation of constituencies which were highly inclined to vote Democratic. But the Democrats also had problems with black and low income voters, for several reasons. Increased black electoral clout would be translated into organizational influence within the Democratic Party's structure, which would shift the ideological axis of the party to the left. Most white Democratic officials were convinced that the Democrats had to move to the right, incorporating elements of the Reagan agenda into their own programs. Consequently, throughout the 1980s the actual influence of African Americans as a group declined within the mainstream of both parties.

But the major problem with integration was the widespread belief that the elevation of more blacks or other minorities into positions of power as a group would increase their clout.

This perspective claims that it was preferable to have a black, Latino or woman conservative, rather than a white affluent male with the same political views. This sort of "symbolic politics" in effect permits the white corporate and political establishment to select its own "minority leaders," such as Linda Chavez, Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, and Thomas, who have virtually no constituencies among people of color and who vigorously reject affirmative action and civil rights. Since the vast majority of African American community-based leaders have little to no access to the media, little dialogue really exists between working class and inner city black communities and representatives of the white elite. Of course, no dialogue was really being sought by the latter; the object is to "manage" the unpredictable and volatile urban masses of blacks, Latinos and the unemployed, by elevating small numbers of nonwhites into positions of authority.

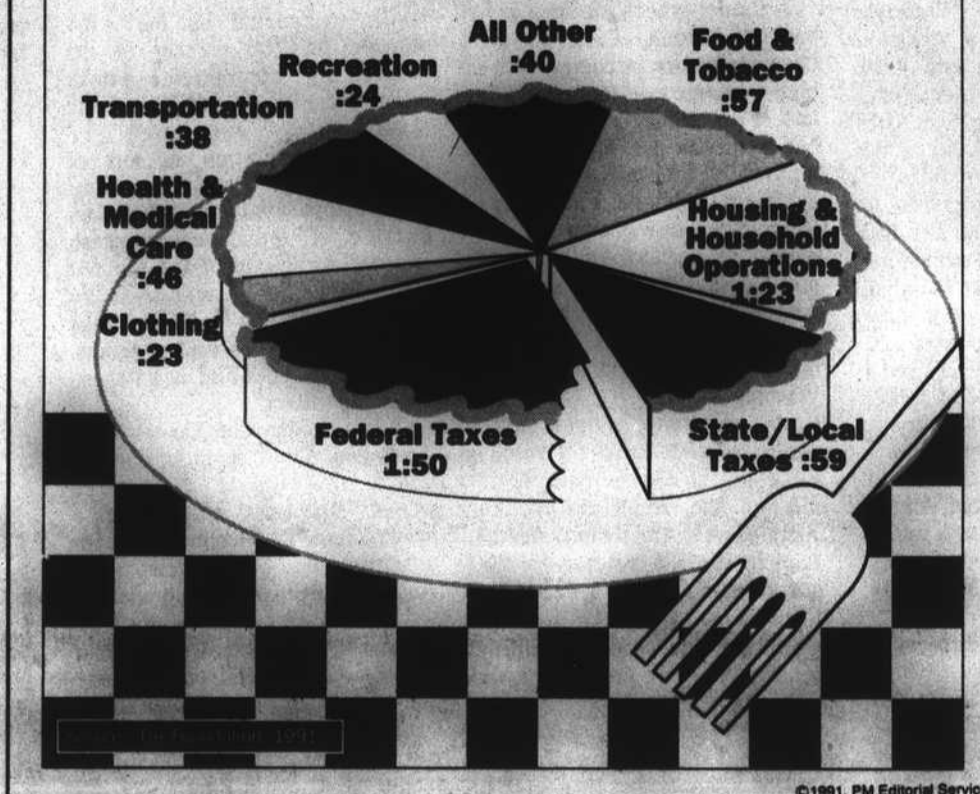
The African American community has reached an impasse in its pursuit of political freedom, due to the flaws in its leaders' philosophy. A new approach to politics and empowerment must be initiated, challenging the system more effectively. The policies which succeeded in ending legal segregation a generation ago are no longer applicable to our current conditions.

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 is also broadcast over radio stations throughout the U.S.

FASTFACTS

The Tax Bite From Eight-Hour's Pay

(in hours and minutes)



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same reason they supported and voted for Jesse Jackson for President, although, unlike the 43-year-old Judge Thomas, he was clearly unqualified. The masses of blacks are proud of any black who can climb out of a rural outhouse, outsmart racism and get nominated to the Supreme Court.

But that hasn't stopped a black thought-police assault force from making dog meat out of the man who believes in the twin virtues of self-help and black pride. Blacks may not do a lot of things well, but we have certainly learned how to destroy one another.

While many black liberals reflect legitimate concerns, some have resorted to whispering campaigns that portray Thomas as a fanatical Catholic, a mindless, ingratiating conservative and an Uncle Tom. All of this about the man who founded the Black Student Union at Holy Cross College and was an unabashed black nationalist ("Do for self," he said.) and an avid reader of Malcolm X at Yale Law School.

In a *USA TODAY* Poll, 52% of blacks do not believe he represents their view (24% say he does). However, by a 54% majority, they approve of President George Bush's choice (17% do not). Unlike most of his black critics, this symbol of self-help overcame a dark skin in a 1948 color-conscious black community, poverty and a vicious state-supported segregation.

Now it's the viciousness of another hue from many frustrated Democratic-led liberal black leaders and intelligentsia, the engineers of a disastrous policy of integration, that threatens Thomas as he ascends to become the most powerful black in America, a most unsettling reminder of the failure of their agenda.

In his op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, Haywood Burns, dean of the CUNY law school, went beyond the pale when he compared Thomas to a "snake" that should be beaten to death with "a sharp hoe." At least, Gov. Douglas Wilder apologized for suggesting that if Thomas is confirmed, the pope will write his abortion decisions.

Of his critics, the NAACP, divided over his nomination, has shown the most mature leadership and the greatest restraint, although it will probably oppose him in the end, reluctantly.

Judge Thomas is not innocent of mistakes and deserves some criticism. A Confederate flag on the wall of his EEOC office was immature and a slap in the face of the black people who made his job possible. He is also wrong when he admits there is no way to bypass racism and then rejects race-conscious remedies. Only reluctantly, has he acknowledged the debt he owes to black icons such as Thurgood Marshall and the civil rights movement.

And, like too many black professionals, he believed that he could distance himself from involvement with the causes of the black community. He's paying for his detachment now because it has torn distrust with the masses and gives his black political enemies a stick with which to beat him.

I have often observed among some black liberals a predisposition to a crude intellectual facism when another black strays from the liberal plantation and is not in lock-step with what they consider a black world view. Thomas' conservatism, combined with his intellectual independence, seems to particularly outrage them and threaten the ideological foundation of their power over other blacks.

Judge Thomas does oppose quotas. But he does not oppose remedies for the disadvantaged, black or white. He does, however, oppose quotas for advantaged, rich blacks who are taking bread out of the mouth of the black poor in the name of affirmative action and/or civil rights.

And like any intelligent person, he knows that blacks are foolish if they're waiting for whites and the myth of integration to deliver them.

You can see a candid government lawyer named Clarence Thomas in a rare 1983 interview with me during the week of September 6-13 on "Tony Brown's Journal" on public TV and read Part II of this column in this space next week when I explain how, if confirmed as a Supreme Court justice, because of his opposition to quotas, "Judge Clarence Thomas Could Save Black Colleges."

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

The government assured the public that the first postal trucks in 1899 were equipped so a mule could be hitched to them, should they fail to run.