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**TESTIMONY OF J.C. ALVAREZ  
BEFORE THE SENATE IN SUPPORT OF THE  
NOMINATION OF CLARENCE THOMAS TO U.S. SUPREME COURT**

Let me tell you about the first time I met Clarence Thomas. It was 13 year 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 dozen of us on the Senate side at the time, that was too many). Almost daily I heard comments that I had been hired only because of my minority background. It never occurred to me to flaunt my bachelors degree from Princeton or my masters degree from Columbia in defense of my presence on the Hill. Affirmative action was 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 they were right. I was almost apologetic that I wasn't a white anglo-saxon protestant male or that my daddy had not made an enormous financial contribution to some campaign.

Then one day this big black guy with a booming voice comes into the office as the newest addition to Danforth's staff. Although everyone knew he had worked with Jack before and he had degrees from Holy Cross and Yale, one cynical staffer decided to directly challenged him by saying: "Let's face it, the only reason you're here is because you went to Yale, and the only reason you got into Yale is not because of your ability, but because of affirmative action." Clarence turned to him, took a deep breath that filled out his broad shoulders and 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. First, I would never be ashamed to be a minority, to be a Hispanic again. I had nothing to apologize for. Second, and more importantly, Clarence's answer gave me a confidence that I had never felt before. I realized then that affirmative action was just a minority's version of nepotism that had gotten that cynical staffer his job. Perhaps I had been fortunate enough to have had the door open for me, but I alone had been smart enough, capable enough to walk through that door.



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I realized that it was time for me to start to think and analyze what I truly felt about my life, my philosophies, and my future. I would not let affirmative action either be a crutch or hang like a dark cloud over my head because I was going to have to rely on my own individual abilities to succeed. Needless to say, in case it is not obvious, I have succeeded and I am very proud of it. After only 2 years with Anheuser-Busch Companies in St. Louis, I was made the first Hispanic female beer distributor in the country with ownership of my own 100 employee business in Chicago. Without even realizing it, Clarence set down the first cornerstone to my success.

It's 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 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 he alone knows everything. Far from it.

When making decisions, I can recall seeing Clarence surround himself with all types of people, from the booksmart people, to the people with experience about specific issues. He always wanted to be sure not just to get the facts, but to get some "real life" perspectives so that he could make the right decisions.

Take for instance when Clarence was appointed to head the EEOC. He asked me to join his staff to address the issues of 2 protected classes who had long been neglected by the EEOC: Hispanics and the handicapped. He pulled out all the stops. There was no limit to the communication or the meetings he would hold to learn about the issues that were important to these groups.

I can recall how bitter many Hispanic leaders were at the time because they had been ignored and shut out by the EEOC under the Democrats and Eleanor Holmes Norton, 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 vests at each meetings because these people came in "loaded for bear", as we say in the Midwest, and they had good reason to feel that way.

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

I must admit that listening to the criticism levelled against Clarence last week about his lack of commitment and responsiveness to the Hispanic community surprised me. It prompted me to prepare a statement which I submitted last week and I would like to ask that it be entered here as part of the record. It specifies in detail the level of activity with the Hispanic community during my time with the Chairman.

Anyone who knows Clarence, knows that he does not make a half-assed effort toward a goal. The goal is committed to 500 percent or not at all. The handicapped issue is another example. If I may take time to show you. Clarence wanted to truly demonstrate his commitment to this community and their concerns. As his liaison, I had to learn how to use sign language to be able to communicate with the deaf employees we had working at EEOC -- not communicate in my language, but in theirs. That is the level of commitment Clarence demonstrated in his performance at EEOC and that was what he demanded of his staff.

I told you before about the first time I met Clarence -- let me tell you about the last time I saw him. It happened to be his last week at EEOC -- coincidental that I happened to be there during his first week at EEOC and I was in D.C. visiting during his last week there.

What a surprise to find out that the EEOC was no longer housed in the dungeon, the ghetto that we had been in during Clarence's first years with the Commission. Clarence proudly took me on a tour of his "dream come true" -- things we had talked about trying to achieve during those first few weeks in 1982.

Gone were the beat-up, bargain priced computers that had been obsolete when they were purchased by the previous administration. Charges taken in the field were now directly entered on-line into the system and within seconds could be retrieved in Washington D.C.

The furniture was top of the line. The building was modern and breathtaking, the people were well-dressed. The atmosphere was professional -- pride, enthusiasm, and productivity effused from every corner. Honestly, it was hard to distinguish this "federal government agency" from the infamous "private sector" I had now become a part of.

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As we say at Anheuser-Busch/Budweiser, Clarence didn't "hope it happened" -- he "made it happen". At that moment, no one could have been prouder of Clarence than perhaps his granddaddy -- or me. I know what he wanted to achieve. I know the dreams he had dreamed. And I knew at that moment the future impact of the legacy he had left at EEOC. He had left the EEOC with pride, commitment and performance -- the 3 keys to any successful business.

I have known Clarence Thomas as the Chairman, boss, and co-worker. I have known Clarence Thomas as a friend, confidant, and advisor. I have spent time with Clarence "the politician" as well as Clarence "the single parent." I have sat with him at the head table making speeches and I have sat next to him at the movies watching "Bambi". I have seen him laugh and cry, win and lose, be angry and be happy, fight and acquiesce, struggle, deliberate and take a stand.

But more than that, I understand Clarence. We share much in common, having both come from impoverished minority backgrounds, he Black, I Hispanic, yet both "pull up from your bootstrap", strong, driven, determined, and Ivy League educated. I know and I understand what it has taken to make and mold the character of this man. I can empathize with Clarence because I have lived the Hispanic female version of his life.

I have heard many comments over the past few weeks about his abilities -- whether he is the best and the brightest, whether he is the best man for the job. I am not a lawyer, so I cannot comment about his legal expertise. But I don't think anyone can question his ability to learn the facts about anything that is in the law books or presented before the Supreme Court. You can't deny it. Clarence is a smart man.

But more importantly, Clarence is a wise man. He has a wisdom that comes from having experienced life. Trust me, I know -- Clarence is a summa cum laude graduate of the "School of Hard Knocks". We need that kind of perspective on the Supreme Court.

Remember this -- it is not only what is in Clarence's brain that qualifies him as the best and the brightest. It is what is in his heart and his soul -- the things that he has learned from life that make him the best man for the job.

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Among Clarence's friends his nickname was: " a real American". His whole life is an example of what anyone with the dreams and determination can achieve in America. But no matter how far he has gotten, Clarence has not forgotten from where he came. He is a fair man, a compassionate man, and a man who is willing to listen, to argue, to learn, to think through an issue in the most intimate detail to insure the right decision is made.

I say it's time to put Clarence Thomas -- the "real American"-- on the Supreme Court.

Thank you.

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