

I

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee: thank you for convening this hearing and for considering my nomination as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. I am humbled and honored to be here, and I am truly grateful for the generous introductions that my former judicial colleague, Judge Tom Griffith, and my close friend Professor Lisa Fairfax have so graciously provided.

I am also very thankful for the confidence that President Biden has placed in me and for the kindness that he and the First Lady, and the Vice President and Second Gentleman, have extended to me and my family.

Today will be the fourth time that I have had the honor of appearing before this Committee to be considered for confirmation. Over the past three weeks, I have also had the honor of meeting each member of this Committee separately, and I have met with 45 Senators in total. Your careful attention to my nomination demonstrates your dedication to the crucial role that the Senate plays in this constitutional process. And I thank you.

II

And while I am on the subject of gratitude, I must also pause to reaffirm my thanks to God, for it is faith that sustains me at this moment. Even prior to today, I can honestly say that my life had been blessed beyond measure.

The first of my many blessings is the fact that I was born in this great Nation, a little over 50 years ago, in September of 1970. Congress had enacted two Civil Rights Acts in the decade before, and like so many who had experienced lawful racial segregation first-hand, my parents, Johnny and Ellery Brown, left their hometown of Miami, Florida and came to Washington D.C. to experience new freedom.

When I was born here in Washington, my parents were public school teachers, and to express both pride in their heritage and hope for the future, they gave me an *African* name; “Ketanji Onyika,” which they were told means “lovely one.” My parents taught me that, unlike the many barriers that they had had to face growing up, my path was clearer, such that if I worked hard and believed in myself, in America I could do anything or be anything I wanted to be. Like so many families in this country, they worked long hours and sacrificed to provide their children every opportunity to reach their God-given potential. My parents have been married for 54 years, and they are here with me today; I cannot possibly thank them enough for everything they’ve done for me. I love you, Mom and Dad.

My father, in particular, bears responsibility for my interest in the law. When I was four, we moved back to Miami so that he could be a full-time law student. We lived on the campus of the University of Miami Law School, and during those years, my mother pulled double duty, working as the sole breadwinner of our family, while also guiding and inspiring four-year-old me. My very earliest memories are of watching my father study—he had his stack of law books on the kitchen table while I sat across from him with my stack of coloring books.

My parents also instilled in me—and in my younger brother Ketajh—the importance of public service. After graduating from Howard University, Ketajh started out as a police officer, following two of our uncles. In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, he volunteered for the Army, and became an infantry officer, serving two tours of duty in the Middle East. Ketajh is here today, providing his love and support as always.

And speaking of unconditional love, I would like to introduce my husband of 25 years, Dr. Patrick Jackson. I have no doubt that, without him by my side from the very beginning of this incredible professional journey, none of this would have been possible. We met in college more than three decades ago, and since then, he has been the best husband, father, and friend I could ever imagine. Patrick, I love you.

William—Patrick’s identical twin—is here as well, along with his wonderful wife Dana. Also here, from Salt Lake City, Utah, are Patrick’s older brother Gardie and his wife Natalie. And my very dear in-laws—the matriarch and patriarch of the Jackson family—Pamela and Gardner Jackson—have traveled here from Boston to be with me today.

And, of course, I am saving a special moment in this introduction for my daughters, Talia and Leila. Girls, I know it has not been easy as I have tried to navigate the challenges of juggling my career and motherhood. And I fully admit that I did not always get the balance right. But I hope that you have seen that with hard work, determination, and love, it *can* be done. I am so looking forward to seeing what each of you chooses to do with your amazing lives in this incredible country. I love you so much.

### III.

There are so many others who are not here today, but who I need to acknowledge. I have a large extended family, on both sides; they are watching from Florida, North Carolina, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, and beyond. I also have incredible friends—three of my college roommates came here today to support me—and I have so many other boosters, from Miami Palmetto Senior High School, Harvard undergrad, Harvard Law School, and all throughout my professional and personal life.

I have also had extraordinary mentors, like my high school debate coach, Fran Berger, may she rest in peace: she invested fully in me, including taking me to Harvard—the first I’d ever really thought of it—to enter a speech competition. Mrs. Berger believed in me, and, in turn, I believed in myself.

In the category of great mentors, it is also my good fortune to have the chance to clerk for three brilliant jurists who became my professional role models: U.S. District Judge Patti Saris; U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Bruce Selya; and Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

Justice Breyer not only gave me the greatest job that any young lawyer could ever hope to have, but he also exemplifies what it means to be a Supreme Court Justice of the highest level of skill *and* integrity, civility, and grace. It is extremely humbling to be considered for Justice Breyer’s seat, and I know that I could never fill his shoes. But if confirmed, I would hope to carry on his spirit.

IV.

On the day of *his* Supreme Court nomination, Justice Breyer said:  
<QUOTE> “What is Law supposed to do, seen as a whole? It is supposed to allow all people -- all people -- to live together in a society, where they have so many different views, so many different needs, to live together in a way that is more harmonious, that is better, so that they can work productively together.”<END QUOTE>

Members of this Committee: If I am confirmed, I commit to you that *I* will work productively to support and defend the Constitution and the grand experiment of American democracy that has endured over these past 246 years.

I have been a judge for nearly a decade now, and I take that responsibility and my duty to be independent very seriously. I decide cases from a neutral posture. I evaluate the facts, and I interpret and apply the law to the facts of the case before me, without fear or favor, consistent with my judicial oath.



I know that my role as a judge is a limited one—that the Constitution empowers me only to decide cases and controversies that are properly presented. And I know that my judicial role is further constrained by careful adherence to precedent.

Now, in preparing for these hearings, you may have read some of my more than 570 written decisions, and noticed that my opinions tend to be on the long side. That is because I also believe in transparency: that people should know precisely what I think and the basis for my decision. And all of my professional experiences, including my work as a public defender and a trial judge, have instilled in me the importance of having each litigant know that the judge in their case has *heard* them, whether or not their arguments prevail in court.

V.

During this hearing, I hope that you will see how much I love our country and the Constitution, and the rights that make us free. I stand on the shoulders of many who have come before me, including Judge Constance Baker Motley, who was the first African American woman to be appointed to the federal bench and with whom I share a birthday. And like Judge Motley, I have dedicated my career to ensuring that the words engraved on the front of the Supreme Court building—“Equal Justice Under Law” — are a reality and not just an ideal. Thank you for this historic chance to join the highest Court, to work with brilliant colleagues, to inspire future generations, and to ensure liberty and justice for all.

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