

# [***Justice Clarence Thomas Deserves Recognition as an Icon of Black History | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B9V-36Y1-JBR6-900G-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** As we honor Black History Month, we should celebrate Thomas' towering achievements, admirable resilience, and unrivaled contributions to our country.

**Body**

It's a lingering stain on this country that one name is consistently absent from Black History Month celebrations each February: [*Supreme Court*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/supreme-court?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Justice [*Clarence Thomas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/clarence-thomas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). Based solely on our skin color, many prefer African Americans adopt certain ideological positions. When we don't, the attacks can be relentless.

Because of his originalist jurisprudence, Justice Thomas has long been the target of unfair denigration by the political Left, dating back to his nomination as the second black Justice to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court in 1991. Through it all, he has confronted these attacks with grace, dignity, and determination.

Amid the onslaught, his profound contributions have too often been overlooked or diminished.

Clarence Thomas has been breaking barriers from a young age—overcoming homelessness, racial bias, and financial hardship. Drawing inspiration from his grandfather, Thomas rose from humble beginnings to achieve remarkable success. From being the first black student at St. John Vianney boarding school to ascending from the Missouri Attorney General's office to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Thomas' resilience propelled him as a conservative force shaping American laws and liberties.

From the outset, liberal journalists [*dismissed*](https://reason.com/2023/01/07/dont-underestimate-clarence-thomas/) Thomas as an "intellectual lightweight who took his marching orders from the late Justice Antonin Scalia," and a "failed crank who would leave no 'footprints' on the law." Referring to Thomas' nomination to the EEOC, legal pundit Jeffrey Toobin even went so far as to [*claim*](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/11/12/unforgiven) "it's clear that [Thomas] was given the job because he was black."

These biased attacks on the Justice's intelligence and legal mind were wholly unfounded and morally wrong.

In *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the first Supreme Court case examining the Second Amendment in decades, Justice Thomas made [*critical contributions*](https://www.oyez.org/justices/clarence_thomas) to Justice Scalia's opinion, as the Court narrowly upheld Second Amendment rights in a 5-4 decision. Thomas later authored the majority opinion in *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, asserting that a public school's denial of a religious club's meeting space violated the First Amendment.

In his 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* dissent, Thomas echoed Justice John Marshall Harlan's dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, stating, "our Constitution is colorblind." In last year's affirmative action ruling, Thomas reiterated this sentiment, concurring that race-based admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina were unconstitutional.

Most recently, in the groundbreaking *Dobbs v. Jackson* case, he upheld his originalist jurisprudence, overturning *Roe v. Wade.*

In no uncertain terms, Thomas' insightful legal mind has helped guide our country through some of the most contentious and consequential legal decisions in its history. Even late Justice John Paul Stevens—a liberal—[*said*](https://reason.com/2023/01/07/dont-underestimate-clarence-thomas/) the nomination of Thomas brought about "the most important change in the Court's jurisprudence that took place during my tenure."

Given this track record, it's understandable that Thomas emerged as a monumental threat to the political Left. His originalism put him in the crosshairs and his failure to conform to the Left's identity ***politics*** amplified attacks. They cannot accept that judicial philosophy transcends skin color, and have stopped at nothing to undermine his influence.

Most recently, the Left has set its sights on the Justice's financial disclosures. Left-wing media [*falsely accused*](https://www.aei.org/op-eds/false-leftist-attacks-on-justice-thomas-are-part-of-pressure-campaign-to-undermine-supreme-court/) Thomas of ethics violations. Conveniently, they overlook that it was only *after* he took the trips that the federal judiciary required disclosures.

And, in a new low, the Left sought to [*exploit*](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/01/31/is-ginni-thomas-a-threat-to-the-supreme-court) the political engagement of Thomas' wife, Ginni, as a justification for removing him from the Court altogether. It's important to note that nowhere does the law, or Code of Conduct for Justices, state that a spouse's views legally implicate a Justice's impartiality. If it did, Third Circuit Judge Marjorie Rendell would've had to recuse herself numerous times given her husband Ed served as mayor of Philadelphia, governor of Pennsylvania, and chairman of the Democratic National Committee. She didn't.

Despite the slings and arrows, Justice Clarence Thomas remains on the nation's highest Court, resolutely focused on protecting the freedoms of all Americans. He has inspired me, and countless others, with his incalculable impact on American law, public life, and liberty.

Justice Thomas is a person of immense historic importance not only within the black community, but in our country and the world. As we honor Black History Month, we should celebrate his towering achievements, admirable resilience, and unrivaled contributions to our country.

*Ken Blackwell is the former Secretary of State and State Treasurer of Ohio, and the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2347941/clarence-thomas.jpg)

**Graphic**

Clarence Thomas

Alex Wong/Getty Images

WASHINGTON, DC - OCTOBER 07: United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas poses for an official portrait at the East Conference Room of the Supreme Court building on October 7, 2022 in Washington, DC. The Supreme Court has begun a new term after Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was officially added to the bench in September.

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