

Judge Thomas Tells Teens to Think Independently

Supreme court justice says there's more to diversity than skin color

(AP) — The Supreme Court's only black justice said that he has been wrongly maligned for not embracing the views of black civil rights leaders.

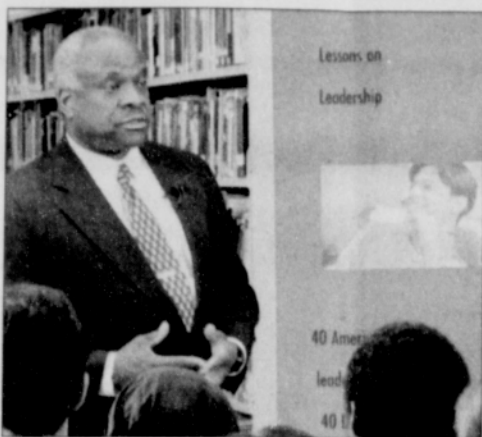
Justice Clarence Thomas, one of the court's most conservative members, told a group of students, most of them black, that he believes the death penalty is constitutional and that there's more to diversity

than skin color.

And he told the students at Benjamin Banneker High School in Washington that they don't have to base their beliefs on being black although "we've reached a point where people are very comfortable telling blacks what they ought to believe."

Asked about his disagreements with civil rights leaders, Thomas said: "I think they're struggling with me. I'm not struggling with anybody."

"I have my own opinions and my ideas. They're mine," he said. "I won't tell you you must believe certain things because of your skin color or because you're bad for not agreeing with me. That's all I can see, is that people are upset be-



Justice Clarence Thomas speaks to students at Benjamin Banneker High School in Washington. (AP Photo)

cause I disagree with them."

Thomas was quizzed by the students about his views on affirmative action; about his vote in Bush v. Gore, which ended candidate Al Gore's chances of winning the presi-

dency; and about replacing civil rights trailblazer Thurgood Marshall as the second black justice on the court. He repeatedly turned the subject to the futures of the high school students — as law-

yers, doctors and journalists.

Thomas talked about his unlikely rise from poverty in rural Georgia to his nomination to the Supreme Court in 1991 during the first Bush administration.

"I was a little nappy-headed little kid. That's what they called me 'nappy-headed little kid,' running around barefoot in Pinpoint (Georgia). Who would have known what was in there? Nobody knew," said Thomas, who considered becoming a Catholic priest before picking the law as a career.

Thomas said that with the encouragement of his grandparents, he worked hard and developed his own ideas. The justice said he still rises each morning at 4:30 a.m. because he can feel his grandfather's

spirit hovering over him, saying, "Get up, think you're rich?"

Thomas, who was participating in an educational series televised by C-SPAN, refused to discuss his views on affirmative action because of two cases pending at the Supreme Court that challenge the constitutionality of admissions policies that help minorities. He did mention a recent speech to a diverse college crowd.

"So often you go to universities and it's all white or predominantly black. I looked out there and it was a mix of everybody. And it's wonderful."

"But are you telling me you all can't learn in this group?" he asked the students. "Now you know you can."



Encouraging Adoption

Charlie Stiff, Diane Dukeshire and Kym Lamb, foster care specialists with the Oregon Dept. of Human Services, encourage area residents to help a child in need during the recent Mississippi Avenue Multicultural Fair. For information about adoption or offering care to foster children, call Stiff at 503-280-6993, extension 428.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Minority Contractors Win Parking Deal

Council decision will save Portland \$400,000 a year

The City Council finalized a much-anticipated decision last week to hire Star Park, a parking company in partnership with three minority business associations, to manage its downtown garages. The council voted unanimously

to end a contract with the Portland Business Alliance, in this David versus Goliath-type competition.

Officials with Star Park and the African American, Filipino and Hispanic chambers of commerce have vowed to meet the alliance's standard of garage safety and cleanliness, and pledged that janitors would receive a living wage.

The new contract, costing \$4.35 million over five years, saves the

city approximately \$400,000 a year.

A citizens review committee said that diversity was only a small factor when recommending Star Park for the job. The committee based its decision on the company's references, experience and financial benefit to the city.

Star Park officers assured downtown shoppers that the company has no intention of raising the current rate structure or changing the validation program.

Jefferson Plans Graduation Party

Chaperones, contributions needed for June 2 festivities

The Jefferson High School Parent Teacher Association is throwing an all-night party at a super-

secret location for high school graduates, following their graduation ceremony on Monday, June 2.

The night promises tempting food, exciting movies, impressive raffle prizes, rock climbing, basketball, dancing and swimming with no drugs or alcohol.

"We want these kids to know that all of us involved at Jefferson

are proud of them for accomplishing one of life's most important goals," said Dan Bell, of the event's planning committee.

To keep the night fun and affordable for all graduates, the PTA is asking people from the Jefferson community for donations. They are also seeking chaperones for the Grad Night Party from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Strides Against Breast Cancer



PHOTO COURTESY DESTON NOKES/PACIFICORP

Shalonda Page with baby Ashlie Walton (from left), Nyree Henderson and Letha Holley attend the recent Making Strides Against Cancer walk to support a co-worker who was diagnosed with breast cancer. The women work at Epic Imaging, which performs mammograms in northeast Portland. The American Cancer Society walk raised about \$175,000 for breast cancer research and programs.



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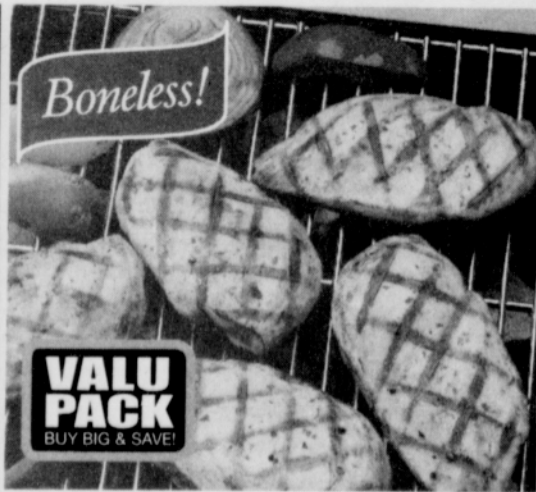
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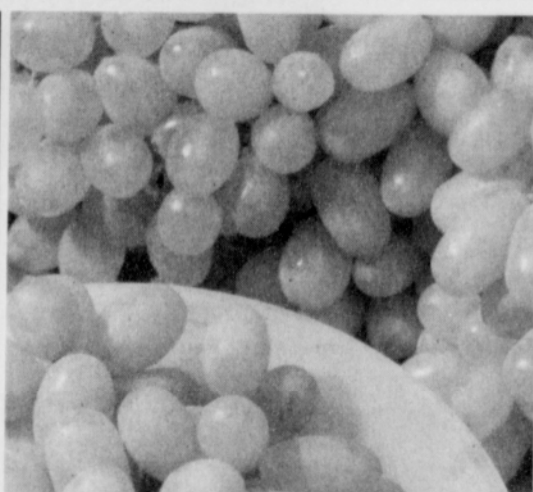


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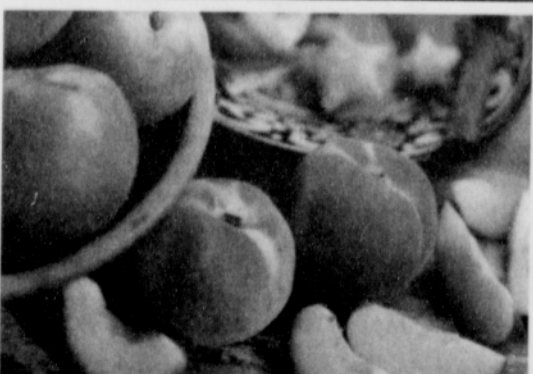
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