

More on JUDGE THOMAS

10/28/91

Possibly one of the most effective items used by the White House and its collaborators to pressure the Thomas nomination through the Senate was an oped page article by Juan Williams, of the Washington Post. Williams is black. His article, loaded with severe condemnations of virtually all those opposed to the nomination, has more impact because he is black.

Too late the ~~Post~~ ^{Post} acknowledged that sexual harassment charges, plural, had been filed against Williams. While I do not recall that it said so, this alone should have disqualified him from writing on the subject. It also should have impelled the Post not to assign it or if it had not, if the article was his idea, it should ^{not} have ~~precluded publication~~ ^{published it}. He was just too much involved in a similar situation. But, were none of this true, then had he and the Post intended honesty, the paper would have reported that similar charges had been made against Williams and were pending.

The Post supported Thomas, which can explain its willingness to depart from, indeed to violate traditional American journalistic standards. *(Williams made Thomas the victor.)*

What else the Post did compounds its abandonment of principle and of honesty. This was not apparent until today's issue. It has an oped page article by Ralph G. Neas, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. In plain English it castigates Williams as a deliberate liar in his piece *after Williams' was published.*

By content this Neas response was written immediately. Thomas had not been confirmed. Had this article appeared when it should have, before the Senate GOPs were able to ~~issue~~ ^{miss} the Williams column, it would have had considerable impact and it would have made a record that the GOPs for Thomas were using lies, as they were in any event, to avoid confronting the actual issues involved in the controversy.

What the Post, in this instance Greenfield, and/or those under her, is unconscionable.

Having printed gross lies and having been informed that they were ~~gross lies~~ ^{gross lies} it delayed even a gesture at rectification until long after the Post's ~~political objectives~~ ^{political objectives} served by the lies it published, had been achieved. If it had not, ~~they~~ ^{Thomas} might not have been achieved. *confirmed.*

Best
Harold

Ralph G. Neas

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We Didn't Get or Leak the Affidavit

The article by Juan Williams titled "Open Season on Clarence Thomas" [op-ed, Oct. 10] might better have been titled "Open Season on the Civil Rights Community." Williams hurled a series of allegations at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights that are malicious, ugly and untrue. He charged that the Clarence Thomas nomination has been marked by "indiscriminate, mean-spirited mudslinging" by unions, civil rights groups and women's organizations that "have been mindlessly led into action . . . by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights." He further alleged that the revelation of Prof. Anita Hill's claim of sexual harassment was a "slimy exercise orchestrated in the form of leaks of an affidavit to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights."

The specific charge is false, as The Post would have learned if it had practiced journalistic fairness by seeking to ascertain the basis for Williams's allegation or by asking the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights for its comments before printing the accusation. We flatly deny that

the Leadership Conference received the affidavit prepared by Prof. Hill, and we do not believe Juan Williams has any shred of evidence to substantiate his charge.

The broader accusations of mudslinging and sleazy tactics are equally unfounded. The Leadership Conference is a coalition of some 185 organizations committed to working together in the cause of equal opportunity

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and equal justice. Decisions of the Leadership Conference are taken only by consensus among the constituent organizations. To suggest that organizations such as the AFL-CIO, NAACP, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Council of Churches and the Women's Legal Defense Fund, all of whom joined in the consensus to oppose Judge Thomas, would take such action "mindlessly" and without the au-

thority of their own governing bodies is ridiculous on its face.

The Leadership Conference is proud of the many civil rights victories it has achieved in its 41-year history—victories that have benefited all Americans.

Many of those victories were secured in the courts and, accordingly, the composition of the judiciary has always been a matter of concern. Challenging a president's nominee to the Supreme Court is a difficult and unpleasant task and one that the Leadership Conference does not take lightly. It has done so seldom and only when we have been convinced that the nominee lacked a commitment to dispensing equal justice under law. But as daunting as the task may be, the Leadership Conference would be remiss in our obligations if we failed to oppose any such nominee. The lives and liberties of people who we in the civil rights community have worked to protect are literally at stake in the nomination of every new person to the Supreme Court.

Our opposition to the confirmation of Clarence Thomas, Robert Bork and others has been based solely on their records, their writings, their speeches and on characteristics of integrity and judicial temperament. Where information about a nominee's record has been presented to us, the Leadership Conference has sought corroboration according to standards that are at least as rigorous as those employed by reputable journalists. Where other relevant personal information about a nominee has been offered, we have directed people to the Senate Judiciary Committee, where the claims could be investigated and evaluated.

To reiterate, in the case of the charges of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas, the Leadership Conference neither received the affidavit nor disclosed the charges. The further allegation by Sen. Orrin Hatch (using the Williams column as presumed support) that unnamed lawyers in the civil rights community helped Prof. Hill "concoct" a story of sexual harassment is a monstrous lie that defames both Prof. Hill and lawyers who work for civil rights organizations.

The Leadership Conference is proud of its efforts to ensure that members of the Supreme Court have a demonstrated commitment of equal justice under law, and we intend to continue our participation in the confirmation process, adhering scrupulously to our principles of fairness. Indeed, the process would be diserved if the First Amendment rights of people in the civil rights communi-