

Some Ironic (and Forgotten) Words From the Clarence Thomas Hearings

Last week was deja vu time for everyone old enough to remember the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill controversy. But in the midst of many striking parallels between the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings in 1991 and 2018, we have largely overlooked a very telling, quite ironic comment from Justice Thomas.

But first, some of the parallels.

Then and now, there were two compelling stories.

Then and now, there were two believable witnesses, a qualified male judge and a respected female professor.

Then and now, there were charges of sexual impropriety.

Then and now, there were concerns about political hit jobs.

Then and now, the judge was a conservative nominated by a Republican president.

Then and now, the woman was brought in by the Democrats.

Then and now, the male judge was hailed as courageous for his impassioned denial of the charges against him.

Then and now, the female professor was credited with helping to empower women who had suffered sexual abuse and harassment.

Then and now, the woman was reluctant to come forward and wanted to preserve her anonymity.

Then and now, the woman's anonymity was compromised by leaks to the media.

Then and now, the judge was considered to be a virtually certain appointee until the charges were leaked.

Then and now, the man felt his reputation had been tarnished for life.

Then and now, the man denied the accusations "unequivocally and categorically."

Then and now, the Republicans and Democrats voted along party lines.

Then and now, the hearings were brutal.

Then and now, the judge and the professor received death threats.

In fact, it was John Sununu, President George Bush's chief of staff and a supporter of Thomas, who knew that Bush's picking of a "true conservative" would result in a "knock-down, drag-out, bloody-knuckles, grass-roots fight."

Yes, the parallels are beyond striking, as indicated by these comments from Thomas in 1991 when asked by Senator Joe Biden if Thomas had anything to say to the committee.

Thomas remarked, "I think that this today is a travesty. I think that it is disgusting. I think that this hearing should never occur in America," referencing the "dirt" and "sleaze" that had been dug up (really, manufactured) against him "by staffers of members of this committee."

He continued, "I think something is dreadfully wrong with this country when any person, any person in this free country would be subjected to this."

Dreadfully wrong, indeed, and a sentiment echoed by Kavanaugh.

But here's the sad irony of all this. We have not learned our lesson, and the hopes of Clarence Thomas were not realized.

It was Senator Orin Hatch who asked Thomas if he had expected to go through the particular hell he endured as a result of his nomination.

Thomas responded, "Senator, I expected it to be bad. And I expected the awful treatment throughout the process. ... I expected to be a sitting duck for the interest groups. I expected them to attempt to kill me. And yes, I even expected personally attempts on my life. That's just how much I expected."

But, he added, "I did not expect this circus. I did not expect this charge against my name. I expected people to do anything, but not this."

And then the words that are so sadly ironic.

Thomas said, "And if by going through this, another nominee in the future, or another American, won't have to go through it, then so be it. But I did not expect this treatment. And I did not expect to lose my name, my reputation, my integrity to do public service."

Tragically, we have not learned our lessons. We have not improved our conduct. We have not become more civil.

Quite the contrary.

Through the tidal wave of social media and endless news outlets, through our increasingly divisive politics, we are on the verge of tearing ourselves apart. And if the Thomas hearings could be likened to a "circus," the Kavanaugh hearings can be likened to gladiatorial combat, with the bloodthirsty crowds cheering on. What in the world is coming next?

Recently, Rev. James Robison urged Bible-believers to, "Release the powerful weight of [God's] kingdom presence—right here, right now, for His glory and eternal kingdom purpose."

Nothing other than divine intervention will do. Nothing less than a great awakening will work.

America needs the Lord. Desperately.

So I pray, "Heavenly Father, have mercy on us, and come and heal and restore our broken nation."

Can I hear an amen?