

Judge Thomas and Black Nationalism

by M.N.R.

In the process of combing through Judge Clarence Thomas' words and deeds over the years, some interesting anomalies have appeared. One is an apparent commitment to the concepts of "natural law" and "natural rights." Since everyone seems to be focused almost exclusively on abortion, the pro-choicers leapt on the question of whether this means that the fetus enjoys natural rights. More important, though neglected, is whether born persons have such rights. Nowadays, natural righters are considered leftistish, but in general and over the years, there is only one political position consonant with a full and complete commitment to the pre-constitutional natural rights of the individual, rights that are indeed constitutionally mandated by the forgotten Ninth Amendment. And that position is "libertarian." I am not of course concluding that Judge Thomas is a libertarian, but certainly one observer was correct when he concluded that a commitment to natural rights is scarcely consonant with the Frankfurter-Bork concept of "judicial restraint."

It also turns out that Judge Thomas once praised Louis Farrakhan for his stress on self-help by blacks. The result has been a storm over the question of black nationalism. Professional anti-anti-Semites, such as Henry Siegman of the American Jewish Committee and former New York

City Mayor Ed Koch, demanded that Thomas repudiate the alleged anti-Semitism of "Minister" Farrakhan. (How come Farrakhan is called "Minister" while everyone else is "Reverend"?) Oddly enough, when Thomas issued a ringing statement repudiating all anti-Semitism, whether of Farrakhan or anyone else, this statement was branded unsatisfactory by Siegman *et al.* It seems that Thomas is supposed to be duty-bound to repudiate *all other possible* statements by Farrakhan, since apparently anti-Semitism taints all statements by an anti-Semite, on whatever subject, beyond repair. This position strikes me as absurd to the point of idiocy. If, for example, Hitler or Stalin or Pol Pot or whoever once issued a statement that $2+2=4$, would that mean that none of us could hold this truth any longer?

It seems, then, that Justice Thomas might be something of an unknown quantity. Black separatism, or black nationalism, has long struck me as far more compatible with human nature, as well as far more libertarian, than the compulsory integration beloved of left-liberalism. Black nationalism has also tended to appeal to the dark-skinned black masses, as contrasted to the appeal of compulsory integration to the light-skinned (what used to be called "mulatto") Negro elite. So threatening have black nationalist leaders been to

those elites that they have been smeared and discredited, like Marcus Garvey, or murdered, like Malcolm X.

Black nationalism, however, has never been thought through satisfactorily. The problem is: in what land, on what soil, is that black nation supposed to have its being? Militant black nationalism within a nation that is only 20 percent black can only be a recipe for disaster. Black nationalism, then, is only viable on the land of

Black nationalism is more natural and libertarian than compulsory integration.

some separate black nation. Where is that supposed to be? One classic solution was proffered in the early twentieth century by Marcus Garvey: a return to Mother Africa. This, indeed, was the favorite solution of Abraham Lincoln and other anti-slavery Americans before the Civil War when the inevitable question arose: what is to be done with the freed-

men? The fact that black leaders, in one of those dazzling name changes they command us to perform every generation or so: from "colored" to "negro" to "black," now order us to use "African-American," might imply a yearning to return to the mother Continent. But the experiment of Negro repatriation to Liberia, launched with the purchase of that land by the American Colonization Society in 1821, did not turn out very well. American Negroes, already deracinated and detribalized, quickly formed a ruling elite oppressing the darker-skinned tribes in the area, Africa being a congeries of separate

and conflicting tribes. The rule by the hated American Negro minority was kept in place by the United States and by the Firestone Rubber Company. Only in the early 1980s did the black African tribes finally overthrow the hated rule of the American Negro elite, and Liberia has been a chaotic mess ever since.

The other possible plan was proposed by the Communist Party during its militantly radical period of the 1920s, before the Communist line got permanently corrupted into left-liberalism by the Popular Front era of the mid-1930s. This was the idea of the Black Nation, a separate black republic to be carved out of U.S. territory. The plan was to turn over the original slave plantations—the “Black Belt”—to the slaves or their descendants. Even by the 1920s, however, it was too late and too long after slavery for that plan to have any viability, or for the slaves and their old plantations to have any hope of being correctly matched. A modern, updated version of the Black Nation idea, however, has more plausibility. This plan would be to turn over to a new black nation all areas within the U.S. that now have a black majority: Harlem, Watts, East St. Louis, Detroit, Washington D.C., etc. Washington would be my preferred capital for the new black nation—to be called AfroAmerica?

This plan would have several supreme virtues. In the first place, it would set the American blacks free at last, free from what they see as white racism and what many whites see as parasitism over the white populace (through crime or welfare payments). Independent at long last, liberated from what they see as the institutional-

ized legacy of slavery, the blacks would finally be free to find their own level. It would indeed be a pleasure to see President Jesse Jackson holding forth from the Black (?) House. And secondly, the plan would have the even greater virtue of busting up the swollen U.S. imperium from within. Radical decentralization, the promise of the Tenth Amendment, genuine multiculturalism, would at last be secured. A precedent would then be set for another, Hispanic devolution, in which all the Spanish-speaking areas would at last achieve their own nation. *La Raza* liberated at last! Instead of desperately trying to expand the census counts of blacks or Hispanics, instead of gerrymandering districts to try to force-feed more Hispanic representatives, all could be represented in their own *Nueva Espana*. Yes! if Latvia deserves its own nation, if Slovenia should at long last be free of external conquerors, why not San Antonio or the South Bronx? What a vision! And Poppy can then preside over what's left of the American imperium from his redoubt at Kennebunkport. ●

“Tolerance,” Or Manners?

by M.N.R.

Like ladies' hemlines, there are changing fashions in libertarian writing. Libertarians, who pride themselves as individualists, are all too often lemmings following the latest trend. The very latest trend among libertarians is to write vehemently, indeed “intolerantly,” about the importance of tolerance, and how much they grrr, *hate* “intolerant people.” Every manjack

and his brother is denouncing “intolerance” these days, along with a lot of gaseous pseudo-philosophic hokum about the relationship between one's ideas and one's “tolerance” toward the ideas of others.

There is a curious anomaly here that has gone unnoticed. One of the things that strikes a person who first encounters Modal Libertarians is their surpassing rudeness, their overwhelming boorishness, their total lack of manners. It is libertarians, and only libertarians, who will call you up, as a perfect stranger, and proceed to denounce you for various deviations, or for alleged contradictions on page 851. It is only libertarians who, learning a few syllogisms about liberty, and having read next to nothing, consider themselves perfectly qualified to harangue learned men on their alleged errors. It is only libertarians who conclude, simply by virtue of announcing themselves as libertarians, that your house is their house and your possessions their possessions: an implicit assumption of communism of libertarian possessions. And oddly enough, or maybe not so oddly, the very people who are bleating most loudly against “intolerance” are some of the worst offenders. The “philosophy” is really a smoke-screen, for the real problem is decent manners and their lack of them; and when some of us react against those boors, we are of course denounced for being “intolerant.” The ill-mannered wish to ride roughshod over the rest of us, and then howl about “intolerance” whenever we decide to resist. Note the typical Modal ploy: shifting the focus of attention from manners and behavior to abstruse discussions of philosophy. This