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Here is the information we are going to base our discussion on today. See you soon! Karoline



Cory Booker gets emotional over Ketanji Brown Jackson's nomination

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# Opinion: The eloquent moment that cut through the GOP's ugliness in the Jackson hearings



By Eugene Robinson

Yesterday at 3:49 p.m. EDT

Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) speaks to Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson on the third day of her confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 23. (Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post)

The confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson have been rife with racism, sexism, feigned outrage and general ugliness. But Wednesday's proceedings brought one moment of such powerful eloquence that it brought Jackson, and me, to tears. Thank you, Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), for speaking truth and for celebrating this historic moment as it deserves to be marked.

Booker's turn to question Jackson came toward the end of the session. She had been badgered all day by Republicans who pretended to be outraged by the sentences she imposed in several child pornography cases when she was a U.S. district court judge. Republican Sens. Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.) and Ted Cruz (Tex.) had been particularly obnoxious, interrupting Jackson repeatedly and trying their best not to let her defend herself.

Booker greeted Jackson with a broad smile. "Your family and you speak to service, service, service," he began. "And I'm telling you right now, I'm not letting anybody in the Senate steal my joy. ... I just look at you, and I start getting full of emotion." The senator said he had been jogging that morning when an African American woman, a stranger, "practically tackled" him to explain how much it meant to her to see Jackson sitting in the witness chair.

"And you did not get there because of some left-wing agenda," Booker said. "You didn't get here because of some 'dark money' groups. You got here how every Black woman in America who's gotten anywhere has done. By being, like Ginger Rogers said, 'I did everything Fred Astaire did, but backwards, in heels.' And so I'm just sitting here saying nobody's stealing my joy. Nobody is going to make me angry." Booker noted that he was just the fourth African American to be popularly elected to the Senate, rather than appointed to his post or elected by a state legislature. He said that during his first week at the Capitol, an older Black man who worked on the cleaning crew came up to him and began crying. "And I just hugged him, and he just kept telling me, 'It's so good to see you here.'"

He said Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.), who also is African American, understood what he meant. Booker and Scott are at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum — Booker a progressive Democrat, Scott a far-right Republican — but he credited Scott with having given “the best speech on race — I wish I could have given as good of a speech. ... Talking of the challenges and indignities that are still faced. And you’re here.” Booker recalled that during a meeting at the White House when President Biden was trying to decide whom to nominate, he and Vice President Harris exchanged the same “knowing glance” that they used to share when Harris was a senator and she sat next to Booker at Judiciary Committee hearings.

It is a glance that every successful African American is familiar with. It says: I know what you went through to get here. I know the hoops you had to jump through, the hurdles you had to surmount, the obstacles thrown into your path. I know you saw less talented White colleagues rise smoothly and steadily to the top while you had to prove your excellence time and again. I know that you could never let your bosses and colleagues see you get angry, never let them see you sweat.

Booker told Jackson that he knew she was “so much more than your race and gender” but could not look at her without seeing his mother or his cousins, “one of them who had to come here to sit behind you ... to have your back.” He told Jackson that when he looked at her “I see my ancestors and yours. ... Nobody’s going to steal that joy.” The senator noted that Jackson’s parents, despite the oppressive racial discrimination of their times, “didn’t stop loving this country, even though this country didn’t love them back.” He quoted from the Langston Hughes poem, “Let America Be America Again.” He spoke of the struggles of Irish and Chinese immigrants and members of the LGBTQ community, who also loved this country and had to demand that it love them in return. He recounted the life story of Harriet Tubman and told of how she looked up at the North Star as a harbinger of hope. “Today you’re my star,” he told Jackson. “You are my harbinger of hope.”

The attacks from Republicans would continue, Booker said. “But don’t worry, my sister. Don’t worry. God has got you. And how do I know that?” Booker’s voice cracked with emotion. “Because you’re here. And I know what it’s taken for you to sit in that seat.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/24/cory-booker-doesnt-let-gop-ugliness-tar-ketanji-brown-jacksons-historic-moment/>

## **Ketanji Brown Jackson**

(1970–)

**MAR 7, 2022**

Ketanji Brown Jackson is a federal judge, former federal public defender and the first Black woman nominated to become an associate justice on the Supreme Court.

## **Who Is Ketanji Brown Jackson?**

Ketanji Brown Jackson, born Ketanji Onyika Brown in 1970, is a federal judge and former federal public defender nominated by President Joe Biden to become an associate justice on the Supreme Court. She is the first Black woman to be nominated for a seat on the high court. Jackson grew up in Miami and shared in her high school yearbook her goal to eventually receive a judicial appointment. She obtained both her undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard and is married to a fellow Harvard alum.

## **Supreme Court Nomination**

On February 25, 2022, President Biden announced he was nominating Jackson to fill the Supreme Court seat left open by the retirement of Justice Stephen Breyer.

If confirmed, Jackson would become the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court. She would also be the first federal public defender to sit on the court, and the first justice since Thurgood Marshall to have represented criminal defendants.

## **Legal Career**

Though Jackson worked for several private law firms, she spent most of her legal career as a public servant. After earning her law degree from Harvard in 1996, she clerked for two federal judges. She held a Supreme Court clerkship for Justice Breyer during the 1999-2000 term.

Jackson took a job with the bipartisan U.S. Sentencing Commission in 2003, the first of her two stints on the commission. From 2005 to 2007, she worked as an assistant federal public defender in Washington, D.C. Her caseload included representing indigent clients and some detainees held at Guantanamo Bay.

Jackson returned to private practice before being selected to serve as vice-chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission in 2010. She was seen as a consensus builder in shaping federal sentencing policy at a time when

federal prisons were over capacity. The commission came to a unanimous agreement to lower federal drug sentences and granted this relief retroactively.

## **Ascension to the Bench**

In 2012, Jackson was nominated by President Barack Obama to join the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. The Senate confirmed her by voice vote in March 2013.

On this court, Jackson's notable cases included a 2019 ruling that President Donald Trump's former White House counsel could not use executive privilege to avoid a congressional subpoena. Her decision noted, "Presidents are not kings."

On April 19, 2021, President Joe Biden nominated Jackson to join the U.S. Court of Appeals. Her Senate confirmation hearing had some contentious moments, such as when one senator asked if Jackson had been concerned that her role as a public defender had returned criminals to the streets. Jackson answered that her work had been a crucial part of the justice system.

In March 2021, Jackson was confirmed with a 53-44 vote, with the support of 50 Democratic senators and three Republicans.

## **When Was Ketanji Brown Jackson Born?**

Ketanji Onyika Brown was born on September 14, 1970, in Washington, D.C. Her parents, Johnny and Ellery Brown, wanted to honor their ancestry and asked a relative serving in the Peace Corps in West Africa for a list of African names for their daughter. The name they selected, Ketanji Onyika, means "lovely one."



## Childhood and Education

Jackson did well in school while growing up in Miami. At Palmetto Junior High, she was selected as a school "mayor." She became president of her class at Miami

Palmetto Senior High School, was voted "most likely to succeed" and stood out on the school's vaunted speech and debate team.

Jackson excelled at oratory, traveling across the country for speech competitions and becoming a national champion. Her visit to Harvard University for one competition inspired Jackson to apply to the Ivy League school. She enrolled there in 1988.

Jackson's college experience included joining an improv troupe, On Thin Ice. She also performed in a production of Little Shop of Horrors and was once a scene partner to Matt Damon in drama class.