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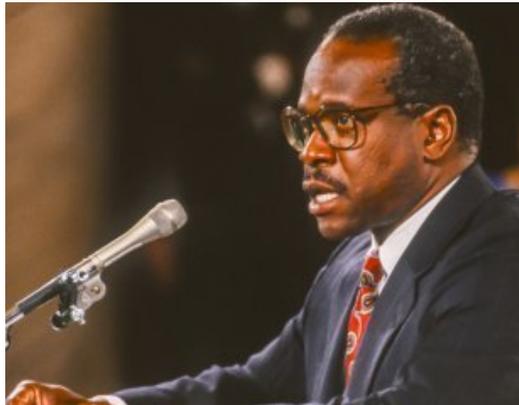
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# Clarence Thomas Must Resign

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Utah Republican Orrin Hatch called “bullcrap” on Ohio Democrat Sherrod Brown last week. The Senate Finance Committee lion tore into Brown for “spewing” that the Republican tax plan to transfer a trillion dollars to the rich was in reality a Republican tax plan to transfer a trillion dollars to the rich.

I got my first dose of Hatch during the wall-to-wall coverage of the confirmation of Clarence Thomas, George H.W. Bush’s Supreme Court nominee.



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Hatch was the Republicans’ designated questioner of Anita Hill. She was called to testify because she’d told the FBI that Thomas had sexually harassed her ten years earlier, when he was her boss at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Education.

Sitting behind her were her mother, Erma (“who is going to be celebrating her 80th birthday”); her father, Albert; her sisters, Elreatha, Jo Ann, Coleen and Joyce; and her brother, Ray. No way she was going to lie to the committee, or to us, in front of them.

Hill testified that Thomas had repeatedly asked her out, and that she repeatedly refused. So he demeaned her. He told her someone had once “put a public hair” on his Coke can. He said porn star Long Dong Silver had nothing on him in the endowment department.

Hatch called her charges “contrived” and “sick.” He claimed she’d stolen them. The pubic hair, she’d taken from page 70 of “The Exorcist.” Long Dong Silver, she’d lifted from a Kansas sexual harassment case.

Hill agreed to a polygraph test, and passed. Thomas refused. He called the hearings a “high-tech lynching for uppity blacks.”

It was painful to watch Hatch slime Hill. Women who’d also been sexually harassed found in the hearings no reason to be less fearful of telling their stories. Nor, later, could they take comfort in how Bill Clinton’s accusers were reviled. Or Bill O’Reilly’s. Or Roger Ailes’s.

But something changed. The tipping point may have been Donald Trump bragging to Billy Bush about assaulting women. Sixteen of his victims had the courage to say he’d harassed or groped them.

I wouldn’t be surprised if Trump’s escape from accountability for that predation contributed to the decisions by Harvey Weinstein’s victims to talk on the record to Jodi Kantor and her *New York Times* colleagues and to Ronan Farrow at *The New Yorker*. Before long, more than 80 women attested to Weinstein’s assaults as far back as 1990.

Then nine women gave the *Washington Post* detailed accounts of Alabama Republican senatorial candidate Roy Moore’s history of pedophilia and abuse. They knew the blowback would be brutal. They did it anyway.

Still, Moore won’t quit. Why would he? Kay Ivey, Alabama’s Republican governor, says she’ll vote for him even though she believes his accusers. Better to elect a pedophile than a Democrat who’d vote against a Supreme Court nominee who’d overturn *Roe v Wade*.

Now Senator Al Franken is in the crosshairs. The Minnesota Democrat offered an apology to Leann Tweeden for “completely inappropriate” behavior in 2006, which she accepted, and he asked for an ethics investigation of the incident. Calls for his resignation illustrate the fallacy of false equivalence; they’re the witch-hunt Trump claimed had victimized him.

Hill was a thoroughly credible witness. Thomas has no stronger case for his innocence than do Trump, Moore or Weinstein. Pressed to defend Trump’s sexual improprieties, his press secretary said the American people “spoke very loud and clear when they elected this president.” No to put too fine a point on it, but she’s spewing bullcrap. Elections don’t decide culpability.

In the wake of the Hill/Thomas hearings, a record-breaking 117 women made it onto the federal ticket in the 1992 election. The 24 women elected to the House that year was the largest number in any single House election, and the three elected to the Senate tripled the number of women senators.

That sharp uptick didn’t persist. If you think that today’s 80% male Congress isn’t good enough, check out [Project 100](#), which is working to elect 100 progressive women to Congress by 2020, the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote. Full disclosure: [my daughter](#) is a co-founder. As her dad, and as the onetime speechwriter for the first presidential candidate to pick a woman as his running mate, you can imagine how proud of her I am. And how hopeful she and her young teammates make me feel.