

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

PRESENTATION TO THE COURT  
OF THE PORTRAIT AND CELEBRATION OF  
42 YEARS ON THE BENCH OF  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE  
MYRON H. THOMPSON

FRANK M. JOHNSON, JR. UNITED STATES  
COURTHOUSE COMPLEX  
ONE CHURCH STREET  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

3:30 P.M.

(Call to Order of the Court.)

JUDGE MARKS: Good afternoon.

You may have noticed that we have three courtroom deputies here with us today. We are honored to have Ms. Marie Thurman, Judge Myron Thompson's first courtroom deputy and former Chief Deputy Clerk of Court.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: We have also Ms. Sheila Carnes, Judge Thompson's former courtroom deputy.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And Mr. Anthony Green, Judge Thompson's current courtroom deputy.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: We are obviously and most certainly in good hands with the three of them with us today.

We will start this proceeding with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Judge Thompson's cousin, McKenna Elise Kelley. Ms. Kelley.

(Pledge recited.)

JUDGE MARKS: Thank you, Ms. Kelley.

We will now have an invocation by Reverend Raymonda Speller, Pastor, Community Congregational United Church of Christ.

REVEREND RAYMONDA R. SPELLER: Good afternoon. As we gather on this momentous occasion, let us go to God in prayer.

Oh, Great God of Justice, we invite Your presence in this place. You who inspired the law of Moses and who writes the laws of kindness, decency, and equity upon the tablets of our hearts. As we gather ensconced here in this chamber of justice, hallowed by the memories of so many who have come to this very room for relief, mere feet away from where Freedom Riders spilled their blood, in this very place where Dr. King and Congressman Lewis and Mrs. Parks and so many unnamed seekers of justice came in good faith long before this day, in this moment, oh, Lord, make us worthy heirs of the sacrifice.

Lord, grant us this day not only minds that celebrate one wise servant of justice in the person of Judge Thompson, but also grant us faithful and fruitful hearts and hands that are committed to continuing the legacy we are gathered here to honor. Meet us powerfully in this time of commemoration and reflection, we pray, and, Holy One, get the glory out of our lives, we submit to You. Now, Precious God, as we experience this unveiling, allow every moment of our lives to be unveilings of Your image; embodiments of Your love and Your justice.

We ask all of this in Your Holy and matchless name.  
Amen.

JUDGE MARKS: Thank you, Reverend Speller.

On behalf of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, I welcome you all here for the remarkable and very happy occasion of Judge Thompson's official

portrait unveiling and celebration of his 42 years on the bench.

My name is Emily Marks, and I am the Chief District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama. With me here on the bench are my district court colleagues. To my right is District Judge Austin Huffaker, to my far left is District Judge Harold Albritton, and to my immediate left is District Judge Keith Watkins.

You are all such honored and welcomed guests, both here and with the benefit of Zoom, but there are a few people I would like to recognize.

First, I want to recognize Judge Thompson's family. And I must start with Judge Thompson's wife, Ann.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: As many of you may know, Ann is a master gardener with a gift for growing things and creating beautiful floral arrangements. She is involved in the development of Montgomery's botanical gardens at Oak Park and works tirelessly at Lilly's Garden at Forest Avenue Elementary School, which is designed and dedicated in memory of Judge and Ann's daughter, Lilly. While there are many beautiful flowers in the garden, the highlight is Lilly's Smile, a lily hybridized in memory of Lilly Thompson.

Ann is also an active member of the Friends Group of the Freedom Rides Museum and was a member of Class 11 of Leadership Montgomery.

And Ann also has a long history of tolerance, tolerating Judge Thompson's never-ending service to the Court. Judge Thompson has been heard to say that he is the only judge in the country who took senior status and then had his caseload increase. We are grateful to Ann for so graciously sharing Judge Thompson with us. Thank you.

Also with us today are Judge Thompson and Ann's children. If you all would stand, please, when I state your name, and remaining standing.

Lawrence Miles Thompson, Jason Walter Thompson, and Jaylan Austin Thompson.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: We are also joined by Judge Thompson's brother, Lawrence Julius Thompson.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Also with us is Judge Thompson's sister-in-law and Ann Oldham's sister, Claire Oldham Flennoy.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: I would also like to recognize Ms. Lillian Thomas, Judge Thompson's long-time secretary. She served him from 1980 to 2014.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Also with us are Judge Thompson's cousins. If you are a cousin of Judge Thompson, if you would please stand.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: We have Judge Thompson's nieces and nephews. If you would please stand.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And many of Judge Thompson's close family friends. Thank you all very much for being here.

We are also honored to have judges here today with us who I have not yet introduced.

Judges, as I call your name, please just raise your hand up to be recognized.

From the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Andrew Brasher.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Judge Joel Dubina.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: From the Bankruptcy Court in the Middle District, we have Chief Judge Bess Creswell.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And Judge Chris Hawkins.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: United States Magistrate Judges here from the Middle District, Judge Jerusha Adams.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Judge Kelly Pate.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Judge Chad Bryan.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: We also would like to recognize the Honorable Michael Chertoff, Former United States Circuit Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and the husband of former Judge Thompson law clerk Meryl Chertoff.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Also with us are former law clerk to Judge Thompson, the Honorable Cindy K. Chung, nominee for United States Circuit Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Another former law clerk to Judge Thompson, the Honorable Herman N. Johnson, Jr., United States Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Alabama.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And now we will have a welcome from the Thompson family by Judge Thompson's sons, Jason and Jaylan Thompson.

MR. JASON THOMPSON: Good afternoon. First I want to thank everyone for taking the time to join us in person and on line for those who weren't able to fully make it. I wanted to give a special thanks to my mom and all the law clerks who made this possible for us to come and celebrate my father. As I look

around this room, I see a lot of people that I recognize and a lot of people I don't recognize just due to age.

Dad, I want to congratulate you on this accomplishment, because very few people get to celebrate this achievement while alive with their family and their friends.

When thinking about what this painting would look like, I was left with a lot of questions. The main worry was which one of the stress spots I may have caused, as should some of you who have helped create some of the stories we all remember, like teaching us that if you pull someone's finger, it makes a noise. Telling us the secret nickname, Judgey Wudgey, that y'all gave my dad. And then the biggest one would be losing the Judge's son at the inauguration. But this should also show you how much of an impact my dad has had on everybody's lives, because it was two law clerks who actually found my little brother at the inauguration.

But before I pass it over to my little brother, little brother, I just need it to be known that a young boy named Jason Thompson was actually the first person to have a painting hung up here in the courthouse.

Dad, I'm proud of you. I'm glad I was able to make it. And I'll give it to my little brother.

(Applause.)

MR. JAYLAN THOMPSON: Good afternoon. I again welcome you. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. It is an honor



to be here celebrating Judge Myron Thompson -- Dr. Judge Myron Thompson. And with that, I do want to say thank you for letting us, Judges, be a part of this program. Thank you for letting us be a part of this family.

I do want to say thank you to the clerks that are here. We have definitely had some fun times together, especially one sitting over there. We mentioned that incident already at the inauguration. I do want to say I did know where I was going, and we made it safely.

Also I did want to say I enjoyed our times driving to Savannah, singing our hearts out, you know, with several people. I do have one clerk that loves Ohio State. I did want to mention that, that that's terrible. Roll Tide.

But I do want to say thank you again from the bottom of our hearts for everything that you've done for us, what you've done for the community, and what you've done for the nation. You've made an impact on everybody, and everybody that we have here is now part of our family. Thank you.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Now we will hear from Judge Keith Watkins.

JUDGE WATKINS: Distinguished Guests and Court Family, welcome to America's courtroom. In this first remark, I speak not as a judge, nor for the judges. I speak as a witness.

Alabama entered the 1950s unreconstructed. Justice had

stumbled in the street. For almost a hundred years, our state had resisted allowing anything more than a facade of freedom for one fourth of our population. Make no mistake about it, Jim Crow was codified in the heart of every institution that held sway in this state. Because Jim Crow was at base a legal construct, thus it was the only effective way to deconstruct it was by law.

When our honoree, Judge Thompson, speaks in here, he often talks about the importance of place in our collective conscience. For instance, the reason we have in here a star on the face of justice -- that would be the balcony -- is because Judge Thompson was against the idea of having it removed from the courtroom when it was renovated. It's a reminder of where we were.

We don't have to agree on everything to agree on the most important things. For the last 67 years, this place has been a haven of justice. One place in Alabama, as Dr. King said, where you could go to get justice.

For the last 42 years, over four decades, the proprietor of this place has been His Honor Judge Myron H. Thompson. Now, in this country we don't use the monikers His Highness or His Majesty or His Excellency, except in his chambers.

What I'm about to say is the collective conclusion of Judges Marks, Huffaker, and Albritton, as well as all the judges

Myron has ever served with over these 42 years. I have eight minutes to say it and, to paraphrase Dr. Joe Reed, I can't clear my throat in eight minutes. My remarks are personal and directed primarily to the court family, especially the nearly one hundred law clerks and their families who are here, but the rest of you are welcome to listen.

Now, he got here by a peanut farmer, and I came from behind the bush. How is it that in today's public atmosphere that I address you? Well, for one thing, Myron asked me to. He said, You believe in free speech? I said, Of course. He said, Good. I want you to give one.

For another thing, he and I have many things in common. We grew up 50 miles apart in rural Alabama in the turbulent 1950s and 1960s. We both attended segregated schools in segregated communities, and we both went north to college. He went to New Haven, and I went to Auburn, which is north of Troy.

And finally, I speak because he is a great man and a wonderful friend to his colleagues, especially to me.

His appointment coming in his 33rd year, he occasionally had clerks older than he was. On one occasion shortly after he took the bench, someone tried to stop him from taking the stage at a public event with the other judges. He was told that law clerks had to sit in the audience.

Four decades later, I don't have to tell you of the important cases from Dillard to Dunn, the thousands of well

written, tightly reasoned opinions, the many nights and weekends of hard work, and the many trials.

Speaking of writing opinions, Myron told me once in all candor that he's been affirmed by the circuit court so many times in 42 years that he's lost all respect for them. I wouldn't have said that if Judge Pryor was here.

And I don't have to remind you clerks that Judge Thompson demands your best; and that your best, if that's what it is, is good enough. And even if it isn't, he still loves you unconditionally.

When colleagues or other members of the court family suffer a loss, generally the first person they hear from is Judge Thompson. Before I joined the court, the person who was to become my courtroom deputy lost her husband in a tragic workplace accident. She later told me that it was Judge Thompson who sought her out, hugged and comforted her, even though she did not work directly for him.

You see, Judge Thompson is unique in many ways. Being a judge is some, S-O-M-E, of what he does, but it is not the S-U-M, sum, of who he is. He is a much bigger package than that.

To Ann and the boys, he's a rock. To his colleagues, he's a true friend. To his clerks, he's a mentor, teacher, friend, and for many, the presider over their marriages and other important life events. To Yale, he is an honored alumnus

many times over; to the state and national legal communities, a frequent speaker and teacher; to the local communities, a quiet but effective leader; and to those on the inside, he is warm, caring, and funny.

On that last adjective, I need to account for a minute. We're having such fun for such a serious place.

Judge Thompson was challenged to a duel by a pro se litigant several years ago. After considering it for a while, he referred the challenge to a magistrate judge with some advice: Remember, by the law of dueling, the person challenged gets to select the weapons, and I recommend Roman candles.

Nor in this crazy state is he a football fan, but to his credit, he did enjoy watching the boys play sports. He even confided one time that at the last game, he had a good seat near the 50-yard dash.

Former Attorney General Bill Baxley once asked him in a very important case to continue the case because he, Baxley, predicted Alabama would be playing for the national championship that day. Judge Thompson agreed to continue the case if Alabama were playing Yale for the national championship.

Finally, it may come as a surprise to some of the older clerks but not so much the more recent ones that Judge Thompson bought a pickup truck. Now, I was used to seeing him ride back and forth to work on a bicycle. He is a Yale, after all. But the idea of a pickup truck was almost unbelievable. In fact, I

didn't believe it until I saw it.

Next thing you know, he'll be listening to the local classic music station, 109.3, The Possum, where just last week I heard these catchy lyrics: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, feed Jake. He's a good dog.

In closing we, the Court, welcome you and trust you will enjoy the festivities. Today is neither a memorial nor a coronation. It is simply the celebration of a good man and, to his colleagues, a true friend.

At the end of the day, the tangible remembrance of the celebration will be a beautiful portrait. May it be blessed to hang in these halls for hundreds of years as a reminder of justice and of the character of the man who stood strong to protect it.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Next we will hear from former United States Magistrate Judge Vanzetta McPherson.

JUDGE MCPHERSON: One of my roommates at Howard University was a young girl named Ann from the Bronx, New York. We drifted amicably through our sophomore year, but by our junior year, I couldn't find her. I assumed that she became intolerant of the many distractions at a major university located in the capital of the world.

Two decades later, I received a call from my friend

Myron Thompson who bragged audaciously about this woman in his life. Having grown accustomed to the fact that cerebral matters almost singularly triggered his passion, I was anxious to meet this human stimulus of his emotion. After all, after seven years at Yale, he had to be reminded by two shameless nurses that he still had some romantic appeal. He should have gone to Columbia.

In any case, imagine my delight when I ultimately met or was reunited with Ann Nicole, a/k/a Nickie, Oldham, the girl from the Bronx who for the past 40 plus years has been the fulcrum of Judge Thompson's achievements as a lawyer and a judge, his devoted partner in marriage, his co-anchor in parenting, and his very able executive assistant in nurturing his law clerks. Accordingly, our observance today is also a tribute to her steadfast accommodation of all things judicial, her discipline, and the independence with which she has pursued a life of her own in our city.

Now, as for Judge Thompson himself, I believe that history should be recorded and preserved. Absent that conviction, instead of donating the files I personally maintained as president of the Alabama Black Lawyers Association to that organization, I would have retained the remarks I made exactly 42 years ago in this spot, in this courtroom, in October 1980. I recall focusing in those remarks on the virtue I regarded as potentially consequential to the success of a judge,

that is, the ability to walk in the shoes of so many of the litigants, lawyers, and parties who would appear before him. I believed then, as I do now, that the universality of his pre-judicial experience provided him with a useful, professional empathy and respect for the practice and challenges that lawyers encounter and the issues encountered by plaintiffs and defendants, especially when money was not the object of the litigation.

During the many pre-judicial conversations that we had, I could tell that he was quite concerned about the extralegal impact of his decisions, the often tedious but indispensable work of institutional staffers such as deputy clerks and bailiffs, and his ability to shepherd the careers of those who would become privileged to serve as apprentices in his chambers. His four decades on the bench have actualized my belief. Today, with the advantage of hindsight, another more salient virtue of his service has emerged. That is the significant influence on the state of the law due in no small part to demonstrable qualities on stark display in his body of work.

First, his commitment to the Constitution as guardian of individual rights is palpable;

Second, his self-perception as student judge compels his zeal for personal research and analysis which in turn produces two outcomes: The soundness of his opinions, and second, a high rate of affirmances in appellate courts, even



when his decisions are controversial;

Third, his regard for the reasonableness and feasibility of implementing the directives that flow from his decisions have imposed an appropriate restraint to his exercise of power. Judge Thompson has appreciated the necessary duality between law and public policy, not law and popularity. And in crafting decisions, he has been mindful of the ultimate goodness, if you will, of judicial outcomes for the litigants themselves and for society at large;

Next, the unfailing respect he shows to lawyers and litigants who appear before him is exemplary, at least most of the time. His respect for them bolsters their conviction that he is a fair judge;

And finally, his quite serious, nearly parental relationship with his law clerks constructively clones all those other qualities I mentioned and portends an army of similarly led lawyers and future judges.

As a colleague and friend, I congratulate Judge Thompson on his official memorial and this official memorial to his quite consequential presence on this Court and in this building.

Finally, I express on behalf of Judge Thompson, his family, clerks, and friends, my genuine appreciation for the variance in the portrait hanging rules as applied to District Judges. My own portrait, inexplicably smaller than that one,

hangs on the fifth floor, and it was put there when I retired in 2006. Were the retirement prerequisite applied to Judge Thompson, his portrait might never be hung. For litigants and the integrity of the law, that variance in the portrait hanging rules is probably a good thing.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Next we will hear from the Executive Director of the Federal Defenders for the Middle District of Alabama, Ms. Christine Freeman.

MS. FREEMAN: Good afternoon. I was going to say may it please the Court, but you know what? I don't have to please the Court today, so here we go.

Judge Thompson appointed a committee of lawyers in 1994 to look into whether or not there should be a Federal Defender Program in the Middle District of Alabama. He was chief judge at the time, so this was within his authority to do so, and he appointed a committee. That committee became the first board of directors of the Federal Defender Program, of which I am a part.

At the time we opened in July of 1995, Judge Walker, who had been on the committee, was our first president of the board. Others of you in here I am confident had some involvement. I know that Judge Huffaker's father was also on the board. And I'm grateful that she does not disclaim it, but Judge Marks was also on our board and was president of the board for quite a while.

We have benefited a great deal from Judge Thompson's ideas and from the kindness and support of this courthouse, and I appreciate that.

When we opened in July of '95, we had four lawyers, two administrative people, and one investigator. And today we have 16 lawyers, eight investigators, 37 employees total. We represent people on Alabama's death row in all three federal districts in this state, and we have represented thousands -- I actually looked it up, over thousands -- of defendants in this courthouse.

I hope that you view this as an accomplishment, Judge Thompson. We appreciate your good ideas, and I certainly think it's an accomplishment.

So I want to talk about something else for a moment, just because I get this podium, and because portraiture is my absolutely most favorite art form. I am a huge fan of all things involving portraits. And I don't know if it's that fact or just my very good luck that I was seated next to Mr. McIntosh, the artist, today.

So I want to talk a little bit about portraiture and about its meaning and its importance to communities and to institutions.

Portraits have been included in the earliest known paintings. The hand prints in the cave paintings in Europe are a form of self-portrait. The Aruba realistic sculptures are

believed to have been portraits of actual people. The ancient Greeks and Romans, of course, made portraits of leaders and of warriors. And in ancient and medieval times, the wealthy began to gather collections of portraits to describe their society and also for another purpose.

So I'm going to get really nerdy here. Hang with me. It's really short.

In 1521, the Bishop of Nosara wrote to his good friend the Duke of Mantua about his 400-plus collection of portraits and said that he hoped to, quote, stimulate to virtue, unquote, those who saw the portraits.

In 1856 the founder of the British Portrait Museum told the House of Lords that the purpose of the collection was to commemorate those who had benefited the nation as warriors, statesmen, and scientists.

In 1790, Charles Willson Peale, an American artist, created the Gallery of Illustrious Personages -- that's the title -- in Philadelphia, and it just happened to include a number of his works. I'm sure they were for sale at the time.

Today the National Portrait Gallery itself, my most favorite museum, describes itself as a history museum. Not as an art collection, but as a history museum. And it says in its publicity and brochures that if you walk through its collection, you will have walked through all of American history.

So your portrait today is an entry in this tradition;

part of the description that this Court and this community has given itself about what it's about. I'm proud that my clients will have the opportunity to see that portrait hanging in this courtroom.

Others have already spoken of your consequential decisions, but I want to point out that you already had portraits available, and those portraits were in your published decisions and in the cases that you have decided. Literally the thousands of opinions that you have written over 42 years.

The part of your portrait that I care about most, part of that portrait, is actually not the consequential decisions.

I'm not that nerdy. I'm sorry.

What I care about the most are the decisions in which you wrote about individuals like Greg Ruff, Artemis Terry, Ulysses Oliver, in which you recognized the humanity of these individuals and the full story of their lives. And you placed both their offenses and their punishment in that context, and I appreciate that more than I can say in words.

So no portrait is complete, however. Each portrait is something just about a moment in time of the subject. And something is always missing from the portrait, no matter whether there are little objects or symbols or mottos across the top as there have been in some of the ancient portraits. So people who know you and know Ann know that there is something missing from this portrait, even though we haven't seen it yet. Ann has in

so many, many ways, not just through her support, but made it possible for you to do the work you do and, frankly, for you to be the judge you are and the man that you are. And we all know that. And so when I look at that portrait, I will know that actually, Ann's portrait is included as well.

So this portrait I am confident is a beautiful picture by a gifted artist. Thank you for presenting it to the Court. I am grateful that I will be able to see it on a daily basis, and I appreciate and am quite grateful for the opportunity to participate today. Thank you.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Now we will hear from Professor Pamela Karlan, the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Professor of Public Interest Law and Co-Director of the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic at Stanford Law School.

MS. PAMELA KARLAN: May it please the Court. I want to assure you all that there's been no ex parte contact among the speakers today, because I think you'll think, you know, never have a banjo act follow another banjo act after this.

It's such an honor to be with you here today. And as Christine said, portraiture is a very important art form; but it's impossible, I think, for a portrait to capture what makes a judge great. Words, not images, are the medium in which judges show themselves most.

I've been asked to say a few words about the litigation

in which I think I would approximate Judge Thompson wrote more words than any other litigation that he sat over, and that's the Dillard lawsuits. I had the privilege as a brand new lawyer of working on the Dillard lawsuits. I began working on them in 1986 and finished with a brief in opposition at the Supreme Court in 2008 in the Green against Chilton County piece of the litigation. Appearing before Judge Thompson spoiled me for all the litigation I've done since then. I have never appeared in front of a judge or a justice I admire more than him.

The Dillard lawsuits began in 1985 with a complaint challenging under the Constitution and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act the use of at-large elections to choose the members of nine Alabama county commissions. By the time the litigation ended nearly a quarter century later, it had transformed this state.

In the first major opinion written in the case in 1986, Judge Thompson found that the at-large systems that were in front of him reflected, in his words, "The state's unrelenting historical agenda, spanning from the late 1800s to the 1980s, to keep its Black citizens economically, socially, and politically downtrodden from the cradle to the grave."

No judge has done more than Judge Thompson, not just in the voting rights cases but also in his other structural reform cases over the years, to change that system. His finding in that case, that the election systems in the individual counties

were the product of what he later described as the "racially inspired enactments of the Alabama Legislature," opened the door to one of the most innovative aspects of the litigation. The judge's decision not only to certify a class of Black citizens -- because let's face it, any judge in America can certify a plaintiff class -- but also to certify a defendant class of more than 180 municipalities, counties, and county school boards that were then using at-large elections.

All but a handful of those jurisdictions ultimately settled the suits against them, but along the way Judge Thompson wrote dozens of opinions. Opinions that explained how to think about causation and what it means for a minority group to be sufficiently large and geographically compact to meet the first prong of the test the Supreme Court announced for vote dilution cases in *Thornburg against Gingles*, an issue that's back in front of the Supreme Court today.

And Judge Thompson's opinion is the only district court opinion by a single district judge that appears in the leading case book on the law of democracy. Opinions upholding a variety of innovative remedies ranging from a noncontiguous district to limited and cumulative voting in places where those systems could provide equal opportunities for Black citizens to elect representatives of their choice and an opinion enforcing a *Dillard* settlement to ensure that the commissioner elected from a majority Black district would have a fair share of the



county's governance.

The remedies that Judge Thompson oversaw transformed local government in Alabama. When the case began, there were fewer than 40 Black commissioners in the state's 67 counties. There were fewer than 200 Black city council members in a state that had more than 400 municipal governments. Within essentially one election cycle after the Dillard remedies came into place, those numbers had more than doubled. And by the time Judge Thompson closed the last of the Dillard cases, there were more than 750 Black elected officials in local jurisdictions across the state.

Moreover, the Dillard litigation remedies diversified Alabama's government in another important way. Many of the candidates elected from these newly created single-member districts, both majority white districts and majority Black districts, were women for the first time. Alabama's governing bodies today are far more representative of its people because of the Dillard litigation.

But statistics do not fully capture the sweep of Justice -- I wish -- of Judge Thompson's work. To me that requires another art form as well, poetry. Don't worry, I'm not going to give you an originally crafted poem.

Many of you have heard the phrase "Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee." You probably remember it as the title of Dee Brown's book about how this nation betrayed and destroyed its

native peoples during the nineteenth century, but those six words originate somewhere else. They actually come from the last line of Stephen Vincent Benet's 1927 poem, "American Names." The poem begins, "I have fallen in love with American Names" and contains a lyrical list of American places from the well known, like Deadwood, which was a town before it became a series, to Santa Cruz, which was a place before it became a lemonade, to Nantucket Light, which is actually a lighthouse and not just a beer, to the obscure like French Lick, which was obscure until Larry Bird came from there, and Painted Post.

As I was thinking about what to say today, I remembered as a young lawyer working on the Dillard litigation how the names of the defendant jurisdictions captivated me, and I realized that I could give you a sense of the reach of Judge Thompson's work here by reciting just a sample of those places that the litigation touched. Some of them could have been anywhere in the world that William Wordsworth in a poem about a different revolution called "The very world which is the world of all of us." Jurisdictions like Cuba or Geneva or Elba or Florence or Detroit or Houston. Some of them summoned images of trees, living things that grow to the light, places like Cottonwood and Maplesville or Myrtlewood or Pine Apple, which is both two trees, not one, and actually was part of Subclass A, so we never did find out what was going to happen to them. And places that seemed deeply rooted in the earth of Alabama, places

like Limestone and Irondale and Carbon Hill.

But let me end with those that bring to mind the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., some of whose greatest work occurred only footsteps away from this courthouse and in whose church we celebrated Judge Thompson's 25th anniversary on the bench. In the speech he delivered four days after the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks, he announced the determination here in Montgomery, in his words, "To work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream."

So let us remember the remedies Dillard provided in places with names like River Falls and Riverside and Town Creek and Bay Minette and Wedowee, which comes from the Creek word for old water, and Wetumpka, which comes from their word for rumbling waters. The Dillard litigation that Judge Thompson superintended was a powerful example of justice and righteousness for which we should all be grateful, no matter where we live.

And so, in the words of one of America's greatest legal philosophers, Yogi Berra: Judge Thompson, thank you for making this day necessary.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Now we will hear from Judge Thompson's career law clerk, Marion Chartoff.

(Applause.)

MS. CHARTOFF: Thank you, Judge Marks. I can't believe

I have to follow Pam Karlan.

It was about eight years ago that Judge Thompson asked me if I wanted to be his career law clerk. Initially, believe it or not, I wasn't sure I wanted to leave the practice of law and come to clerk for him. I had clerked for a judge for a year in the late nineties, but I hadn't had the full Judge Thompson experience because he spent much of that year as a visiting scholar at NYU going to jazz clubs at night in the West Village.

But saying yes to Judge Thompson's offer was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Judge Thompson is brilliant, kind, passionate about his work, and committed to doing justice. And I feel incredibly lucky to work with him.

Now, everyone knows that Judge Thompson has a brilliant legal mind, but what you may not know is that he is brilliant in many other ways, too. For example, he has an incredible memory of seemingly every book, every novel he's ever read, and every movie he's ever seen. And he can discuss them in depth and connect them to discussions of daily events and to cases. Working for him is like getting a second education in classic movies and literature. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had a discussion about a book he read in high school, and high school was a pretty long time ago for him.

Judge Thompson is also an incredible storyteller. From eavesdropping on civil rights strategy sessions as a kid in his stepfather's church, to talking about what happened on those

nights in the West Village, to the ins and outs of various important cases, Judge loves to regale his clerks with tales from his fascinating life, and we love hearing them.

But perhaps the best part of working with Judge is seeing how he approaches his work. Judge Thompson is immensely dedicated to his job and passionate about the law. He finds every case interesting, from civil rights cases down to insurance disputes. And he works incredibly hard. He starts before sunrise each day and finishes after five, often working on the weekend and at night as well. I do think he's slowed down a little bit recently, in that he doesn't come into the office every weekend anymore, instead working from home sometimes.

As 42 years of law clerks have experienced, Judge is incredibly thoughtful about each case that comes before him, regardless of whether it impacts thousands of people, like the Dillard case, or just a few. Even after all of these years on the bench, he never just goes with his gut, and he always goes through a careful and methodical decision-making process. And he takes the time to explain his thought process to me and the other clerks. We have all learned an immense amount as a result.

Judge Thompson embodies the principle that each case affects real people who are entitled to respect and to a fair application of the law. He is never disrespectful to the

parties who appear before him, regardless of what they may have done or how they act.

Judge also feels an obligation to use the power he has to help people who come before him. This plays out in his handling of each sentencing. Judge cares about how crime impacts victims in the community, and he also cares about each defendant. He sees each individual defendant as a unique human being with problems that he can use his power to address.

Many defendants who come before him have horrible histories of deprivation, abuse, and mental illness. Judge Thompson takes the time to develop creative sentences that uphold the rule of law, impose appropriate punishment, and also ensure that these defendants receive individualized treatment to address their mental illness, addiction, and trauma. He uses his power to give defendants a fighting chance at a better life.

Of course, one of the best things about Judge is Ann, his wife. Ann is one of the kindest, most thoughtful people I have ever met. She not only welcomes all of Judge's clerks to Montgomery and into the clerkship family, but she also welcomes their parents, children, and significant others into her home. And she's been very helpful to me in putting this event together.

And it can't be easy being married to someone who works as hard as Judge does. A few years ago when Judge and Ann took a trip to Paris, he ended up spending much of the time working

on an opinion, which I assume was not what Ann had planned for their vacation. I am sure Judge could not have accomplished what he has without Ann's unwavering support.

There's just one more thing I want to mention about Judge. One of his greatest strengths is his ability to connect with people from all walks of life. About four or five years ago when Judge was in Montreal to give a speech for a trial lawyer's group, he took a taxi ride to pick up a tuxedo. The taxi driver was an immigrant who had escaped from the war in Syria. During that ride, Judge learned the taxi driver's life story and how much his life had changed for the better as a result of coming to Canada.

That very afternoon, Judge changed his speech to incorporate the man's story. It was a truly powerful speech, and it so moved the audience that he received a rousing standing ovation. Throughout the rest of the conference, people kept telling me how lucky I am to work for Judge Thompson, and I could not agree more.

Judge, it has been a great privilege to clerk for you. Thank you for letting me be a small part of your incredible life and career.

Ann, thank you for all of your kindness over the years and your immense support and patience during the planning of this weekend's events.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Next we will hear from Judge Thompson's oldest son, Lawrence Miles Thompson.

(Applause.)

MR. MILES THOMPSON: Good afternoon. On behalf of the Thompson family, I would like to thank everyone for coming.

Now, much has been said about my father that has worn the black robe for more than 42 years, but I want to give a little inkling about the man behind the black robe.

While some of the most historic landmark decisions have been handed down in this very courtroom, there have been a lot of historic decisions handed down at home. Decisions ranging from who's going to be able to watch TV tonight; who can use the car to go out in high school; and the biggest and perhaps longest running decision is, what are he and my mother going to split at dinner when they go out?

It has been said that children tend to turn into their parents. And while my dad and I have stark differences in such that I'm a big fan of football and, as it was mentioned earlier, my dad denied continuance of a case due to a football game, he and I both have a love for jazz and the arts.

But there are qualities that he instilled in all three of his sons: Love, family, and confidence. To love yourself and to love others unconditionally and to share that love whenever you can, as well as the ability to find goodness in everyone. And to show love not just with gifts, but with



unconditional time, your heart, and the spread of joy.

As I said before, my dad taught me about family. Family always comes first. We love as a family, we have fun as a family, and as we all have gathered here today as one big family, share achievements together as a family.

Over the years, our family has grown by three people every single year through the rotation of law clerks, which my brothers and I used to refer to as our babysitters. To those law clerks that served that duty, on behalf of the children, we thank you, and we apologize for any harm that may have come upon you.

And lastly, confidence. To do what is right, sometimes when it's either unpopular, and also as well when it's uncomfortable. I would not be the man that I am today without the confidence my father instilled in me. I would not be able to have ventured back out to Colorado to do what is uncomfortable and what is exciting.

Besides this event, one of the most important special moments was this past May. My father received an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Yale Law School. And while he was -- while I was beaming with pride seeing him receive that degree and that standing ovation, the moment that meant the most to me was actually prior to that. Prior to walking down the procession, my father walked up to me to ask me to walk him down the procession aisle, jokingly saying it would be a one- or

two-mile walk. To his unfortunate surprise, it actually was a one- or two-mile walk. But the look in his eyes, the beam on his face as we walked those steps probably meant the most to me, and to see him smile as he is today. So well deserved.

So I tell this to you: The black robe did not make my father. My father made that black robe.

Not just by your legal mind and your integrity, but being the father, the husband, the friend, and the family man that you were, are, and you always will continue to be. I love you. Congratulations.

That's all I have.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Next we will hear from Peter C. Canfield, who was Judge Thompson's first law clerk and is a long-time partner at Jones Day. He has a special message to read for Judge Thompson.

MR. CANFIELD: Thank you, Judge Marks.

This is a letter from Jimmy Carter.

"To Judge Myron Thompson: Rosalyn joins me in congratulating you on your 42nd year on the federal bench. In September 1980, more than four decades ago, I was pleased to nominate you to a seat on the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. You were swiftly confirmed and received your judicial commission that same month. Since then, you have honorably discharged the duties of your office and

emerged as a national leader in the effort to guarantee that all litigants receive equal justice before the law. I commend you for your enduring commitment to fairness, civil rights, and protecting the rule of law. I am grateful for your esteemed service to the federal judiciary. With warm best wishes to you and Ann on this special day, and throughout the years ahead, sincerely, Jimmy Carter."

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Now, Judge Thompson, lest you think we are incapable of surprises, we have a surprise guest who is not in the program. If you all will turn your attention to the video monitor, we have a special message for Judge Thompson.

JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR: Congratulations, Myron. Forty-two extraordinary years of service to the federal bench and a lifetime of commitment to civil rights.

I recently in a conversation with Ann, your wife, asked her whether you were thinking of slowing down a bit, taking less cases, or perhaps even retiring or doing something else. And she looked at me, and she said, oh, no. He is so passionate about his work. He loves what he does.

That answer is such a testament to the kind of person you are. In every endeavor, you give your all. Whether it was as the director of the Alabama Legal Services Corporation, or later in your role as Chief Judge of your District Court, in all of your other endeavors, you have shown absolute passion,

commitment to doing what is right, and to doing your work as well as any human being can.

My friend, I so admire you. You are a man of principle and integrity. We are so lucky on the federal bench to have you as a member and for the many decades of service that you have given. Thank you for caring and thank you for keeping that youthful passion alive. We all need it. And looking at you fills me with hope, because I know that there are judges out there, like me, who believe in justice and who continue working every day passionately at its pursuit.

Have a fun time at your party. I'm sorry I can't be there to celebrate with you, but know that I am there in spirit.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: Now we have Judge Thompson's former law clerk, Orion Danjuma, who will introduce the portrait artist, Wayde McIntosh, and then the presentation of the portrait.

MR. DANJUMA: Good afternoon, everyone.

So much of the comments this afternoon have focused on the extraordinary person we are honoring today, but, of course, the occasion of today's festivities is the unveiling of a piece of art.

A piece of art is a partnership between the artist and the subject. And it is my sincere pleasure and honor to introduce the artist, Wayde McIntosh, who is responsible for creating this piece of art that you will see. Wayde is the

person who painted this vivid, powerful portrait and has worked with the judge to create a fine work of art.

Wayde is deeply talented as a painter and an artist and has been recognized in various forms for his outstanding work. But before discussing some of that work, I wanted to tell you a bit of an origin story about the artist; a portrait of the artist as a very young man.

Wayde was born in Jamaica and immigrated to the United States as a young child at the age of seven. Like many young people, and particularly immigrants, Wayde found it hard to speak in the new environment that he found himself in and to make himself heard. He came to understand in those circumstances that his primary mode of communication could be drawing and painting.

His friends, his family, his imagination, he learned that he could connect with those around him without being verbal, as he told me. He was lucky enough to have parents and a family that supported that mode of expression and allowed him to find a stronger and deeper voice. Wayde says that whenever he stopped making art as a young person, he felt like he hadn't finished speaking.

Wayde continued to develop his talents, first at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and then at the Yale School of Art for grad school.

I asked him about his strongest artistic influences,

and he acknowledged that all artists, all people, are partly a collection of the many influences that shape him. But he said that he had been most strongly shaped by the visual conversations he had had with his colleagues, classmates, and friends, seeing how his peers see the world, reacting to that vision, responding, experimenting, growing from that visual discussion.

This is powerful to me because it reconfigures our relationship to art, to Wayde's painting, and to other forms of art. And I would invite you to consider Wayde's painting as an invitation to a conversation; to try to see what the artist and the subject are saying; to feel what you would say in response.

In 2019, Wayde was awarded a prize at the prestigious Outwin Boochever Art Exhibition. His winning submission was a portrait of his friend and fellow artist, Jordan Casteel. The painting is small, much smaller than the portrait that we're seeing today. It was eight by ten inches, about the size of a piece of paper. It's extraordinary as a painting for its intimacy. It portrays his friend Jordan reclining on a couch next to a bookshelf. You can sense the connection and the communication between the artist and the subject. Each immaculate detail is like the first page of a deeper story about the person at the center of that painting and the relationship between that person and the artist themselves. The same is definitely true about the portrait you will see today.

Earlier this afternoon, Wayde, the judge, and myself met to discuss the process of creating this piece of art, and excerpts of that discussion will be posted on the website for you to listen to in future. But one of the most extraordinary parts of that process is the year-long communication between Wayde and Judge that led to the creation of this piece of art.

A relatively small portion of that time was spent studying the subject in person and physically painting. A large majority of that period was hearing stories about the judge; learning about his life; learning about his past; learning about his experience growing up; learning about his love of swimming; what he experienced as a five-year-old in Tuskegee and having that become the source of the components and details of this piece of art.

Now, I end by saying that this is a moment where -- an unveiling of a piece of art like this is a moment where there is a merger between art and law. And perhaps unlike Wayde, many of the people in this room are much more verbal communicators than visual communicators. But I think we can gain inspiration from the type of communication that Wayde has expressed in this form of art and learn from it how to better express the humanity, the dignity, and the gravity of the circumstances that face the people that come before this Court and to understand the extraordinary history of this Court and the extraordinary history of the individual at the center of it who has been doing

work for justice for decades.

So with that, I will introduce the artist, Wayde McIntosh, for any comments that he would like to share with us.

MR. WAYDE MCINTOSH: Thank you, Orion, for such a beautiful and wonderful introduction.

As he stated, I am not a gifted orator, and even less likely so because of my braces, so bear with me.

Congratulations, Judge. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your long and storied history, just being a fragment of that. As an artist, I always hope that my piece speaks volumes and that it communicates with those around to see it.

I hope that I have done some justice in providing a small glimpse into the judge and his life and his personality. So thank you and enjoy.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And now for the moment we've all been waiting for. Judge Thompson's portrait will be unveiled by his sons, Miles, Justin, and Jaylan.

(Portrait unveiled.)

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: I'm going to have to wait a minute because I can't see it, but I will.

And now we'll hear from Judge Thompson and Ann.

(Applause.)



JUDGE THOMPSON: Typically Ann gets the last word, but she let me do that today. Ann.

MS. ANN OLDHAM: Good afternoon, everybody. This is such a beautiful, beautiful occasion.

I want to give my side of the 42 years on the bench. When I was 25 years old, I would have never believed that I would be standing before a crowd this size who came from near and far to support and to celebrate my husband. My husband's 42 years of service in the federal judiciary.

I remember so well the day that Myron told me the news. We'd been married a little bit more than a year when he told me about his possible appointment to the bench. Our lives were forever changed after October 9th, 1980.

In preparing for this event, I reminisced a little about the last 42 years. Some of our first experiences involved the marshals who drove us between Montgomery and Dothan a few times until we made our final move here. Many of the places we went together, there was always somebody else around, just enough to make us feel not alone. At the movies, at a restaurant, seeing friends. Now, that was a challenge, having someone always around.

But later the marshals took on an unexpected role. They became magicians. They took all kinds of coins from behind our children's ears. They played hand tricks and who knows what else. The marshals became the children's best friends and, of

course, ours.

I chuckle when I picture our middle son, Jason, standing on the curb in front of the marshals's car alongside them with his little orange water gun in his pocket. He was part of their team.

The judges' wives also embraced me by inviting me to their many gatherings when I first came to town. Later these wonderful women were very caring and supportive when we had our children. These ladies helped us celebrate our twins' first birthday at one of the federal judicial conferences.

And then there was the small -- there was the calm but official voice of, "Judge Thompson's chambers" whenever I called the office. "May I help you?" Mrs. Thomas always made sure that I had all the details about any activity, from the programs that we were involved in to the attire for each event that included the judges' spouses. But more, I will always be grateful for her volunteering to keep our very young children a number of weekends when we needed to get away.

Now Mrs. Thomas is retired, and Marion Chartoff is in the front office. And I cannot say how grateful and how wonderful that Marion, along with the Chief Clerk, Debbie Hackett, and the deputy clerk, Trey Granger, have pulled this magnificent celebration together. A court celebration like no other. You have brought us all here together, and I thank you for wanting and producing the best for my husband and our

families, the clerks, and our friends.

The clerks were and continue to be our wonderful extended family.

I don't know what measuring stick you use to select your clerks, Myron; but in addition to being so bright, it's truly their character and personalities that won me over. They were always ready to lend a hand, from washing dishes after our meals together to offering to help out in any situation that they could.

I will tell you a few stories that I remember. When we first had our twins, there were two young men who were there at Baptist South Hospital bringing Myron breakfast on the day the twins were born. That includes Miles. In fact, there's a good chance that those two clerks saw our babies before I did.

And one night a clerk came to our kitchen door to see Myron. The children were in bed, so I was using that opportunity to scrub the kitchen floor. I had a mop and a bucket. This was before the Swiffer was invented. The clerk commented as he came through that door that I was using something that must hurt my back, as I was doing a lot of bending. He offered to finish the job for me, but I assured him I would be fine.

Much later, he came by with homemade pumpkin bread and a bright red mop bucket that I still use to this day. Those were my birthday presents. With this new-fangled bucket, I

could wring out the mop without bending down.

This clerk also came to the house many Saturdays to make bread and cookies with the kids, Jason and Jaylan, and then joined them in watching football games. They all loved it, and we did, too.

Another time our youngest son had just entered kindergarten. This is Jaylan. And he was having a bit of a time sitting still in class, so his teacher was monitoring his behavior. One of our clerks heard us discussing the matter and thought he would offer to take Jaylan out for some ice cream after school if he had a successful week. Jaylan got his ice cream.

August is the end of the year for us because that's when the law clerks leave the job and new ones begin. I recall one year specifically when I had to distract my children when the law clerks dropped by the house to say good-bye. Our daughter just lost it. All year long, she had called her father's office the minute she came home from school. Lilly cried so hard that we had to find a way to distract her.

So you see, the clerks have always had a great impact on our family and have been a part of almost every facet of our lives. Our children have always felt that Myron's clerks were their clerks; their playmates. There are many stories that I could tell, but I trust that the clerks know that all our times together have enriched all of our lives.

The events that I have been reminiscing about would not have happened had Myron not been appointed. And that brings us to the celebration of today, of 42 years of service with the unveiling of his portrait. The artist I believe beautifully captured Myron's demeanor on the bench. And I did not understand the other portions of this portrait until I heard the interview about all the other parts of Myron in addition to his being on the bench. All the other parts of his life.

Our lives together, Myron and mine, have not been easy, but the journey together, no matter the challenges, have been enriching and fulfilling. Many ask, is he retiring? Definitely not. He absolutely loves what he does. Would I choose this life again? With him, yes, I would.

I, too, am so proud of his impact on the lives of so many. Thank you for being here.

(Applause.)

JUDGE THOMPSON: I think she just did have the last word.

Before I begin, I want to thank Peter for reading that letter from Jimmy Carter. I hope that it puts to rest the rumor that I was appointed by Lincoln.

I would first like to thank each and every one of you who spoke today. I kept wondering if each of you had the wrong person.

But first I would like to thank Chief Judge Marks and

Judge Huffaker. Since 1980 when I became a member of this Court, I have served with a number of district judges, some now deceased: Judge Truman Hobbs, Judge Ira DeMent, and Judge Robert Varner.

A cherished tradition of this Court was congeniality. That tradition lives on with you two. And Judge Marks, I want to say specially to you, thank you for all the work you did on this. In fact, Judge Marks was down here yesterday, personally supervising what was going on in preparation for this event today.

And as to you, Judge Albritton, our years together have been and continue to be a delight. Together we achieved two things that are dear to me: First, the establishment of the Federal Defender program. You were a civil lawyer, and I think the first time you ever appeared in court in a criminal case was after becoming a judge.

His knowledge about criminal law was so limited that in calling the docket for his first criminal case, he said, United States versus LNU, which means last name unknown. He looked around the courtroom. LNU? LNU? But it was the Federal Defender program that he steadfastly believed in, because he believed in fair justice for all, regardless of their ability to pay.

The second thing was the funding, design, and building of the new courthouse. We both labored as chief judges with

that.

Those two projects are the crown jewels in what I consider my throne. And for Judge Albritton, thank you. Thank you so very much.

Judge Watkins, what you have done with the Frank M. Johnson Institute is remarkable. Your belief in outreach education for the community as a part of the responsibility of this Court has affected this community if not this nation. You also steered this Court through some very troubled times when our judge power was, to say, meager. Your leadership left me in awe.

In these 40 years, I have been fortunate enough to work with a wonderful staff, from Jane Gordon to Debbie Hackett and Trey Granger. I know many of you are watching this perhaps on Zoom, these staff members. You have made my coming to work something that I could look forward to every day. You made my work a pleasure. And I know many of you know, to say that coming to work is a pleasure is not something that all people enjoy. To all the staff in this courthouse, I say, thank you.

My courtroom deputies who are sitting here, Ms. Marie Thurman, Ms. Sheila Carnes, and Mr. Anthony Green, you have had and continue to have a professionalism and commitment to excellence that is the envy of virtually all other judges. I must say, though, that sitting in the front row here and looking at you was the first time in my life that I saw you from the

front. I could tell who was serving me from the back.

And I must tell this story about one of you. And I'm going to let you sweat as to which one it is.

Ms. Carnes always addressed me throughout her stint as my courtroom deputy as the Court. She never called me judge. What time would the Court like to begin proceedings this morning? What is the Court's pleasure as to this and that? But one time she said to me, Our time, I think, is approaching. What time would the Court like to open court this morning? And I responded, Ms. Carnes, I think the Court needs to go to the bathroom.

True story; right, Sheila?

And without missing a beat, Ms. Carnes responded, as the Court wishes.

Lillian. Ah, Lillian. She joined me at the beginning, 40 years ago. She was always steadfast, loyal, hardworking, kind, always a smile on her face. In short, she spoiled me. And she always kept Ann informed of all the things, just in case -- and there was really no "in case" about it -- I forgot to take the message home.

The clerks. Many judges say that law clerks make this job worthwhile. For me, this is not just a saying. It is true. Each of you has made me who I am, good or bad. With your youth, each year you challenged me on the law and kept me from getting set in my legal thinking. You made me grow as a judge. And of



course, I was always able to find clerks who were smarter than I. I think you heard me often say that if you were only as smart as I am, I didn't need you because I could do it myself.

Of course, Marion has a special place. She has been with me through the good and the bad. Her excellence has made me shine. And unlike me, she's actually smarter than I am.

Finally, as Ann and Miles and the rest of the family have said, you have all become extended family for all of us. I thank you for being you; for becoming part of me and giving me this undeserved occasion.

My family. For many years when I would go to hold court in Dothan, a small federal courthouse in Dothan, Alabama, I would often stay with my aunts and uncles, not only for my own pleasure, but also so that my law clerks could get to meet them. My aunts and uncles were proud of me, and I was proud of them. They've all passed away, but with me today are a host of cousins in all degrees. I can never quite figure out what a second, third, or fourth cousin is, but I think I've covered the gamut here. And of course, I have also nieces and a nephew. And your presence here reminds me of that support, that wonderful support that my aunts and uncles gave me throughout my life that made me treasure those trips to Dothan; that made me treasure those moments when I could hug them; that made me treasure seeing an uncle who used to lift me up and I felt like I could fly, or an aunt whose lap I fell asleep in on a regular basis, so much so

that whenever I smell talcum powder, I remember falling asleep in my aunts' laps.

My brother, Lawrence Thompson. Of course, I call him Bootsy. Sorry about that. I know he probably doesn't want that said today. He has spent a lifetime giving meaning to and saying to me through his words and actions the phrase -- and I mean this from the moment I was born to my difficulties in childhood -- he ain't heavy, he's my brother. He lifted me up and he carried me from the beginning, and he continues to do so today, sitting right here.

My sons. Jaylan. I call him Mr. Personality. He brings so much laughter and joy to our family. It's just a joy to be around him. And because the other two boys are out of town, if I need something, he is there. He's my rock in that sense.

Jason. I sometimes think you work too hard, but then I remember that working hard isn't exactly bad for you. And when he isn't looking in the mirror at himself, I think that eventually he will settle down and find a happy life.

And then there's Miles, who has the heart the size of the universe. He is the emissary of his family. He welcomes all. When Dad isn't there, he is the anchor.

My wife, Ann. And many of you have spoken about her, and actually, I don't think I can add much. She is the love of my life. She is my foundation. If I am worthy of this

occasion, it is because she has made me so. This occasion is important in another way, for it has given me the opportunity to acknowledge before all of you here -- the words still fail me -- how much I love her and how much she has done for me, for my clerks, and for my sons. Thank you, Ann.

The portrait. Wayde and I spent a year or so talking and preparing for his painting of me.

I want to first explain why I chose Wayde. I chose him because he was young. I was young. And I thought, you know, this is a young man that, together -- of course, I'm 75 and you're, what, 12?

MR. MCINTOSH: Close enough.

JUDGE THOMPSON: We could start out together. And I just saw him, this brilliance, this talent, and I wanted to be a part of that. I also chose him because he is talented. And then, of course, there was the fact that he was from Yale.

Why talented? I had done a little bit of research, Ms. Freeman, on portraiture myself. And one of the things I really like about paintings is how artists paint drapery. You know, where the folds seem to almost come out of the painting.

And Wayde, I had seen some of your pictures of drapery. And I knew that I would be in a robe, and I wanted to make sure that the painting captured the robe itself, the drapery -- as, you know, ala Holbein -- the beautiful drapery.

And secondly, I wanted someone who could paint a

portrait and not a picture. I could get a photographer to do a picture. But with the help of this Court, I was able to get a portrait. I wanted something more than a picture reduced to brush strokes. I wanted the painting to have some meaning, meaning for me, and I found all of this in you, Wayde.

And I'm going to mention some parts of the picture and why they're there. Wayde and I discussed this.

First of all, we have two artists in this courtroom. There is Wayde, and there is Mrs. Easter Ardis seated right here. I don't know if you can see her. She has the hat on. Mrs. Ardis was my first client, and she paid me with a pillow that she had made by herself, and that is the pillow which I have today upon which I am seated in the portrait. Her handmade pillow. I still sit on that pillow to this day. Ms. Ardis was a seamstress also, she made dresses, and she worked for me. She made hats as well.

And I remember, as we marched into court, she as my client, we marched in proudly -- that is, me proudly with her on my arm, wearing -- I believe it was a yellow dress -- I don't know if you remember, Ms. Ardis -- and a yellow hat. And I was so happy and proud to have you there with me. We won, but I'm not sure whether it was because of me or you.

The chair. You know, Wayde and I debated at length about the chair. I was wondering whether I should have something very elegant that would sort of convey sort of a sense

of the dignity of the portrait, or I should have something very heavy, like a judge's chair, that would convey the heaviness of the position that I held.

And I decided that I wanted a chair that did something else. The chair in the picture is a chair I sit on today, and it is my grandfather's chair. That chair my grandfather, who was born in the late 1800s, sat on every day of his life in an office that he held. My grandfather, who had only a third-grade education, started a high school for Black kids because under separate but equal, that meant a high school for only white kids. So he had to start his own high school. It was the source of my pride in my life. And as I said, I sit on that chair every day. And even now, I still feel unworthy to sit there.

The stars. As you can probably tell, the stars in the painting are from the background from behind the bench. But more than that, the coloring of each star is from a quilt that my daughter made. That's why they're not a flat color, but several colors out of that quilt in the painting.

Also for me those stars don't represent just the states of this union. They are you, my many clerks, those stars are, each of you and every one of you, shining there behind and down upon me as I sit behind this bench. You remind me of the wonderful quote from Shakespeare, you clerks do: "When he shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars, and he will make

the face of heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with the night and pay no worship to the garish sun."

It is hard to believe that over 42 years ago, Attorney Fred Gray and Dr. Joe Reed approached me and asked me to allow President Carter to appoint me to this position. I said no. Ann and I had been married, as Ann mentioned, only one year, and I was simply enjoying life as a young man too much to assume these responsibilities.

But then Mr. Gray came back again, as did Mr. Reed, and reminded me of something I think our kids don't often understand: That we have obligations beyond ourselves.

Isn't that amazing, that I turned down a judgeship because I thought it was an obligation that I didn't want? My mother thought I was stupid. But aside from that, Mr. Gray reminded me that I had an obligation beyond myself. And finally, I relented and said yes.

I think, Mr. Gray, in fact, you said that I had been catapulted into this job, not climbing into it.

I believe that Attorney Gray and I think Mr. Reed are both here today.

All of us do these what ifs. After 42 years, I can now honestly say, I made the right decision.

But to the extent you honor me here today, the honor must be fully shared with all of those who are here today and the many, many others who are not here. Those who made me who I

am. And of course, the big person who made me who I am, Ann.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

JUDGE MARKS: And now we are all in for a very big treat. Mrs. Novelette Seroyer, who is an accomplished soloist and happens to be married to our own U.S. Marshal, Jesse Seroyer, will sing for us, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

(Song performed.)

JUDGE MARKS: Thank you.

And now on behalf of the Court, we would like to invite you all to join us for a reception honoring Judge Thompson and Ann Oldham and their family immediately following this ceremony on the second floor rotunda area of the court annex building. If you do not know where that is, just follow the crowd.

Please note that there are multiple identical refreshment stations throughout the second floor rotunda area, so please do feel free to move about.

This concludes our ceremony. Thank you all so much for being here, and we are adjourned.

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## REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Patricia G. Starkie, Registered Diplomate Reporter and Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, do hereby certify that the foregoing 55 pages contain a true and correct transcript of the Presentation to the Court of the Portrait and Celebration of 42 Years on the Bench of United States District Judge Myron H. Thompson on September 30, 2022.

In testimony whereof, I hereunto set my hand this 24th day of March, 2025.

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PATRICIA G. STARKIE, RDR, CRR  
Official Court Reporter