

# Clarence Thomas's wife asks Anita Hill for an apology over voicemail

Ginni Thomas, wife of Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, wants an apology from Anita Hill for her 1991 accusations

[Richard Adams](#) Tuesday 19 October 2010

SOURCE: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/richard-adams-blog/2010/oct/20/ginni-thomas-apology-anita-hill-voicemail-clarence-thomas>

In a bizarre postscript to the bruising 1991 Senate hearings in which Anita Hill recounted sexual harassment by US Supreme Court nominee [Clarence Thomas](#), Thomas's wife Ginni has telephoned Hill and asked that she apologise for "what you did with my husband".

Clarence Thomas with wife, Ginny



[According to ABC News](#), Ginni

Thomas confirmed that she had called Hill earlier this month and left a voicemail message asking her to apologise and to "pray about this" – but said she was offering an olive branch.

Hill, now a professor at Brandeis

University, said she

had received the voicemail message, which she initially reported to university authorities. The [message said](#):

"Anita Hill, this is Ginni Thomas, and I just wanted to reach across the airwaves and the years and ask you to consider something. I would love you to consider an apology sometime and some full explanation of why you did what you did with my husband. So give it some thought and certainly pray about this and come to understand why you did what you did. OK, have a good day."

In a statement last night, Ginni Thomas said:

"I did place a call to Ms Hill at her office extending an olive branch to her after all these years, in hopes that we could ultimately get passed what happened so long ago. That offer still stands, I

would be very happy to meet and talk with her if she would be willing to do the same. Certainly no offense was ever intended."

For her part, Hill said: "I have no intention of apologising and I stand by my testimony in 1991."

Hill told ABC News: "Even if it wasn't a prank, it was in no way conciliatory for her to begin with the presumption that I did something wrong in 1991. I simply testified to the truth of my experience. For her to say otherwise is not extending an olive branch, it's accusatory."

Hill's testimony in 1991 came close to derailing Thomas's nomination for the Supreme Court post after she [detailed her experiences working for Thomas](#), telling the Senate Judiciary Committee that Thomas had made repeated detailed sexual remarks and suggestions, which Thomas later denied. Hill herself was [the victim of repeated smears](#).

In recent months Ginni Thomas has been taking an active political role with the Tea Party movement and its Republican supporters, and last week [spearheaded a fundraising drive for conservative Republican candidates](#) ahead of the US midterm elections in November.

In this [online video for supporters](#), Ginni Thomas reels off a list of her favourite Republican candidates, exhorting people to donate money to them.

Earlier this month the [New York Times reported](#) that Thomas is the founder and head of a new right-wing group called [Liberty Central](#), dedicated to opposing what she describes as the "tyranny" of President Obama and the Democratic party. Liberty Central is funded by undisclosed donations.

As the wife of an associate justice of the Supreme Court, the highest judicial body tasked with interpreting and upholding the US Constitution, the anonymous funding of Ginni Thomas's group presents an ethical challenge.

Ginni Thomas's call to Hill's voicemail appears to have taken place on the same day as the New York Times printed its investigation into her fundraising and political activities.

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## Alive and kicking [Anita Hill]

Polly Ghazi Monday 6 August 2001

SOURCE: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/aug/07/gender.uk>

When Anita Hill accused a senior judge of sexual harassment, she was branded a liar - and lost her anonymity forever. Ten years on, Polly Ghazi tracks her down

For a world-famous woman who changed the face of modern America, Anita Hill has a surprisingly modest office: a few book-lined shelves, as befits a university professor, a plain desk and a couple of chairs. The only clue to her celebrity status is a prominently displayed photograph in which she stands, in a dazzling turquoise evening gown, alongside a beaming Bill and Hillary Clinton.

"I'm a very private person," she confides softly, hands folded in her lap. "Yet people often approach me and express their feelings about what happened - at the airport, at the Home Depot [a big US retailer], even in the ladies' bathroom."

[Anita Hill](#) lost her anonymity forever in October 1991 when she accused Clarence Thomas, a prominent fellow African-American, of sexual harassment. Thomas was the choice of then president George Bush for a vacancy in the US Supreme Court.

[...]

The potent mix of sex, gender and race caught the public imagination around the world. Thirty million viewers heard Anita Hill's testimony, sparking an intense debate about sexual harassment at work. When the virtually all-male, all-white Senate voted by a four-vote margin to confirm Thomas's nomination, women of every age, race and class were furious. In 1992, official complaints of sexual harassment rose by 50% and a record number of women were elected to Congress, many standing in part on an Anita Hill platform.



The toll on the woman at the centre of the storm, however, was unbearable. The hearings quickly degenerated into a trial in all but name: not for Thomas, but for Hill. She was accused by Republican senators of lying and being an erotomaniac, obsessed with fantasies about Thomas. Their henchmen even besieged students at the University of Oklahoma, where she had become the first African-American female professor, with fruitless inquiries about whether she was a lesbian.

Professor Anita Hill

In the months and years that followed, she received several death threats, and the vilification by rightwing politicians and commentators continued. In 1995 the New York Times referred to her as "Oklahoma's open wound". A year later, despite the support of fellow staff and students, she felt forced to leave her job, and consequently her home.

Today, in the calm, cloistered environs of Brandeis University, just outside Boston, Hill's turbulent past seems distant. She talks enthusiastically about her family and work - as a professor of law, social policy and women's studies - and happily confesses to being a "yoga bore".

And yet the past won't let go. The confession last month by rightwing journalist David Brock that he had made up much of a hostile 1993 "biography" of Hill made headlines in Britain and America. "I killed Anita Hill and I'm sorry," Brock facetiously declares in a press release for his new book *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*.

[...]

Hill's 1997 memoir, *Speaking Truth to Power*, interweaves her family's turbulent history with her own life story. Her account of how her grandparents fled white hostility in 1914 Arkansas in search of a better life in Oklahoma, found

instead the Ku Klux Klan, yet thrived against the odds, is deeply moving. Does she see parallels in her own struggle with the white, male, Republican establishment?

"Dealing with racial hostility has not just been a lifetime of struggle for me [she met prejudice from students in her first teaching posts], it has been a generational struggle for my family. The best thing that came out of the book was to talk to my family about our story and to share it with the public, because I think it's a true American story."

[...]

She says she doesn't think about Thomas much these days. But she is clearly dismayed that he is ruling on the key issues, such as last year's contested presidential election, that mould the American social and political landscape. "He got the benefit of the doubt from African-Americans and I don't believe he deserved it. None of the things he has done on the Supreme Court has convinced me that he'll be a champion of civil rights."

More positively, she is deeply proud of her contribution to bettering the lot of working women. Her testimony, she says, had an "immeasurable" impact on awareness of sexual harassment, forcing the male establishment to stop looking the other way. The figures bear her out: between 1991 and 1996, cases more than doubled, while payouts quadrupled to \$27.8m (£19.6m). "Women still have quite a way to go. But it's harder for an employer to get away with things these days."

[...]

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## The Smear This Time

### [Response from Professor Anita Hill]

By ANITA HILL OCT. 2, 2007

SOURCE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/02/opinion/02hill.html>

ON Oct. 11, 1991, I testified about my experience as an employee of [Clarence Thomas's](#) at the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

I stand by my testimony.

Justice Thomas has every right to present himself as he wishes in his new memoir, "My Grandfather's Son." He may even be entitled to feel abused by the confirmation process that led to his appointment to the [Supreme Court](#).

But I will not stand by silently and allow him, in his anger, to reinvent me.

In the portion of his book that addresses my role in the Senate hearings into his nomination, Justice Thomas offers a litany of unsubstantiated representations and outright smears that Republican senators made about me when I testified before the Judiciary Committee — that I was a "combative left-winger" who was "touchy" and prone to overreacting to "slights." A number of independent authors have shown those attacks to be baseless. What's more, their reports draw on the experiences of others who were familiar with Mr. Thomas's behavior, and who came forward after the hearings. It's no longer my word against his.

Justice Thomas's characterization of me is also hobbled by blatant inconsistencies. He claims, for instance, that I was a mediocre employee who had a job in the federal government only because he had "given it" to me. He

ignores the reality: I was fully qualified to work in the government, having graduated from Yale Law School (his alma mater, which he calls one of the finest in the country), and passed the District of Columbia Bar exam, one of the toughest in the nation.

In 1981, when Mr. Thomas approached me about working for him, I was an associate in good standing at a Washington law firm. In 1991, the partner in charge of associate development informed Mr. Thomas's mentor, Senator John Danforth of Missouri, that any assertions to the contrary were untrue. Yet, Mr. Thomas insists that I was "asked to leave" the firm.

It's worth noting, too, that Mr. Thomas hired me not once, but twice while he was in the Reagan administration — first at the Department of Education and then at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. After two years of working directly for him, I left Washington and returned home to Oklahoma to begin my teaching career.

[...]

Regrettably, since 1991, I have repeatedly seen this kind of character attack on women and men who complain of harassment and discrimination in the workplace. In efforts to assail their accusers' credibility, detractors routinely diminish people's professional contributions. Often the accused is a supervisor, in a position to describe the complaining employee's work as "mediocre" or the employee as incompetent. Those accused of inappropriate behavior also often portray the individuals who complain as bizarre caricatures of themselves — oversensitive, even fanatical, and often immoral — even though they enjoy good and productive working relationships with their colleagues.

Finally, when attacks on the accusers' credibility fail, those accused of workplace improprieties downgrade the level of harm that may have occurred. When sensing that others will believe their accusers' versions of events, individuals confronted with their own bad behavior try to reduce legitimate concerns to the level of mere words or "slights" that should be dismissed without discussion.

Fortunately, we have made progress since 1991. Today, when employees complain of abuse in the workplace, investigators and judges are more likely to examine all the evidence and less likely to simply accept as true the word of those in power. But that could change. Our legal system will suffer if a sitting justice's vitriolic pursuit of personal vindication discourages others from standing up for their rights.

The question of whether Clarence Thomas belongs on the Supreme Court is no longer on the table — it was settled by the Senate back in 1991. But questions remain about how we will resolve the kinds of issues my testimony exposed. My belief is that in the past 16 years we have come closer to making the resolution of these issues an honest search for the truth, which, after all, is at the core of all legal inquiry. My hope is that Justice Thomas's latest fusillade will not divert us from that path.

*Anita Hill, a professor of social policy, law and women's studies at Brandeis University, is a visiting scholar at the Newhouse Center for the Humanities at Wellesley College.*

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