

MY FRIEND, BILL

*Hon. Clarence Thomas**

I am honored to contribute a few words to this well-deserved tribute to Chief Judge Pryor. I first met Bill Pryor in 2005. He had just been confirmed to the Eleventh Circuit after enduring a brutal confirmation process. I admired from afar the way that Bill stayed true to his principles during that ordeal, no matter the costs. Upon getting to know him personally, I realized that was only the beginning of his admirable traits. Not only is Bill principled, he is also *deeply* loyal, caring, and compassionate. He has an endearing sense of humor and, though he takes his work seriously, he does not take himself seriously. Upon reflecting about this, it is obvious to me why we fast became friends. And, it explains why that friendship is so close.

Our paths converged when I became the Circuit Justice for the Eleventh Circuit in 2006, and our friendship began in earnest. Upon becoming the Circuit Justice, I immediately learned that only a few law clerks from the Eleventh Circuit went on to clerk at the Supreme Court—as I was told, it was one every blue moon. In my view, it is better for the Court, the law, and our nation to have talented law clerks from different parts of the country, different law schools, and different experiences. Bill shared this view. We both hold our law clerks to the same uncompromising standard when it comes to talent, character, and work ethic. Bill and I also recognize that outstanding law clerks can come from many backgrounds and law schools. From the beginning, he assured me that we could work together to make our vision a reality. After hiring almost twenty law clerks from Bill, I can say without reservation that he is a man of his word. Bill's law clerks have proven to be not only invariably bright and industrious, but also—as to be expected after a year under Bill's tutelage—clear and effective thinkers and writers. Over the years, we have had the shared joy of mentoring these young men and women.

This publication rightly overflows with praise for Bill as a man and as a judge. There is no one more deserving. For the past two decades, Bill has served on the bench with great distinction. He decides the cases before him by applying the rule of law, and he does not retreat from that role, even in the face of undeserved hostility and criticism. Bill faithfully applies our laws and Constitution, and does so in a manner that gives every litigant the respect he or she deserves. In addition to his judicial duties, Bill selflessly gives his time to teach law students, write scholarly articles, and speak at countless events. Anyone who knows Bill knows that he does not shy away from debate. And, I appreciate his leadership as a judge as well as his willingness to interact regularly

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with the legal community and the public. As chief judge, he has admirably led one of the busiest circuits in the country, including through the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps his only fault is his glaring lack of humility when it comes to Alabama football. But, in light of the Crimson Tide's unequalled success, even that is forgivable. In sum, Bill is an outstanding jurist and a dear friend. Here is to the next twenty years, my friend. Roll Tide!