

Testimony of Crystal Good
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Nomination of the Honorable Amy Coney Barrett to be an Associate Justice of the
Supreme Court of the United States
October 15, 2020

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, members of the committee: Thank you for having me.

My name is Crystal Good, and I am a sixth-generation West Virginian, a writer-poet, a small business owner, a graduate student at West Virginia University, and an advocate for survivors of sexual abuse. I am the daughter of a white mother and a Black father. And I am the proud mother of three brilliant children. These identities are all parts of me. But not all of me.

Who I am today is only possible because, at 16 years old, I had access to an abortion. As a minor in a state with a parental consent requirement, that access was dependent on a judge, because, without a shadow of a doubt, the adults closest to me would not advocate for me and I could not trust them

From the age of five until I was 15, I was sexually abused by my white stepfather, who preyed on multiple girls. He wasn't convicted until 2012 — more than 30 years after the abuse began. When I told grown folks in my life, they didn't believe me at first and then refused to hold my abuser accountable once the truth was out.

Later, at 16, while in a relationship that brought me joy and made me feel safe, I had an unintended pregnancy, just like 2.7 million Americans every year. Immediately, I knew that I wanted an abortion. A very safe medical procedure that 1 in 4 U.S. women will have in their lifetime.

For many reasons, I couldn't tell my mother. She had not believed me about my stepfather's abuse and then failed to do anything once she did finally believe me. I also knew that although she had me — a Black child — there might be consequences for my boyfriend who was Black. My white family had always tried to convince me to try and pass for white.

Instead, I sought a judicial bypass. My only instructions from the clinic were to call the judge and set up an appointment. So I did.

The fate of my future — whether or not I would become a parent at 16 — rested in the hands of one judge. My journey to seek an abortion started first with making sure I had my homework done. I then had to navigate not only how to get to the judge but how to do so on a school day. I had no idea what I should wear or what information he would want. I thought I was going to court like on TV, but instead, I was ushered to his chambers. I remember his chambers being dark, with lots of books. He, of course, was wearing his black robe. It felt very intimidating.

I told him I was a good student. I was a leader at my school. I had opportunities that many young women from West Virginia didn't. I wanted to go to college, to be a writer. I said, your Honor, I have a future. I

want an abortion. Thankfully, he granted permission. It felt like a miracle, that an adult believed ME; an authority figure deemed ME to be in charge of my own body and my own future.

I still think about what might have happened if I didn't have that list of accomplishments, or if the judge didn't think I was competent enough to decide when to start my family, or if he believed the harmful stereotype I was raised to believe — that Black girls were “fast” and promiscuous. Access to abortion should not depend on our GPA, the color of our skin, where we live, or the luck of the draw. It should not depend in any shape, form, or fashion on who our governor is or who is sitting on the Supreme Court.

My entire childhood, every adult in my life had failed me. None of them deserved to make a decision about my body. I needed compassion and trust from my government. All I got was another barrier.

There are thousands like me who are sexually abused by parents, guardians, and grownups who are supposed to support them. And then, we're expected to ask their permission to get an abortion. Today, 37 states require parental consent or notification for a minor to access abortion. Most young people do involve their parents in their decision. But for those like me who cannot, these kind of restrictions make abortion hard to get, because we have to travel, miss work or school, save up for weeks, and pay out of pocket.

Government restrictions on abortion — especially those not based in science or medical necessity — harm those of us who have fewer resources. The impact of restrictions are harder on people of color, young people, people who are undocumented, people with disabilities, people living in rural areas, people with low incomes, and/or LGBTQ people.

The restrictions make our abortions more expensive because we have to travel great distances, miss work, and save up money for our care. The average per capita income in West Virginia is \$25,479. That's one-seventh of your Senate salaries. In central Appalachia, Black and low-income white people struggle to access health care, including abortion, and to have their decisions respected.

The Supreme Court has made historic decisions that uphold our rights and freedoms: my right to abortion, the integration of my public schools, the Affordable Care Act that ensures I have health insurance, and workplace protections for my transgender daughter. As a parent and a Black woman who had an abortion, I have put my faith in the Supreme Court, and with this nomination, I am losing faith.

Although the way I've chosen to create my family is demonized by some politicians, the reality is that we're like most families across this nation. I had an abortion. I have two sons and a daughter who is trans. I love my children. We are a proud Affrilachian family — that's African American Appalachian.

We deserve to have leaders who hold sacred their duty to follow the Constitution and the established legal precedent that protects our most fundamental rights. Sixteen year old Crystal — the young woman I was then — deserved leaders like that. People who have abortions all across America deserve leaders who believe them, too. Right now.

Today, there is a law in West Virginia, known as Erin Merryn's Law. It created a state task force on the prevention of child sexual abuse, which created trainings for all West Virginia public school personnel on how to recognize and report child sexual abuse. I, along with other survivors, pushed that law and that training into existence with the force of our voices. For decades, it felt like no one could hear me, no matter how many times I cried out for justice. But I found my voice. I built a life and a family and a career, and helped create something that will ensure our children in West Virginia are heard and protected.

I did all of that, because I had an abortion. I went to college, I've raised three children and raised them well because I was ready to be a mother. I am here today with the support of my family, including my mother, whom I have come to build a trusting relationship with in understanding that she, although not excusable, was under the influence of a church that said she should forgive and protect my abuser. I am here today too, with the support of my Pastor and so many from the hills and hollers. Because I had an abortion.

This is my story. Every abortion story is different, but I share my story with you to be clear that only the person who is pregnant should be making this decision, because only they know their lives and their circumstances. None of you have walked in my shoes in central Appalachia, a region that I believe offers insight into the challenges of America as a whole. My story is my own but represents so many people left out from Supreme Court Nominee Hearings — an entire caste of people.

President Trump has been clear that he would only appoint justices who would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Unfortunately, through learning about Judge Barrett's record, I understand why the President believes she passes that test.

Please, listen to people who have abortions. Hear us when we ask you, do not confirm this nominee. Our futures, families, and lives depend on it.

We, too, are America.