

## **STATEMENT OF RICHARD B. ROSENTHAL, ESQ.**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the distinct honor of appearing before you today. Just a few weeks from now, I will marry my beloved fiancée, Ana. And today I get to testify in support of the nomination of my lifelong friend, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, to be on the Supreme Court. So I feel especially blessed these days.

Senators, I have known Ketanji for nearly 38 years. We first met in 1984, as students in our public junior high school in Miami, Florida. I was 12 years old and Ketanji was 14. We were friends back then, right away, and now 38 years later, we still remain dear friends.

From the very first day I met Ketanji, I knew she was special. In my entire life, I have never met anyone like her.

In junior high, and then again at our large public high school, Ketanji was seemingly everywhere and everything: the President of the student body; the upbeat voice delivering the morning announcements over the school's Public Address system; the graduating Senior voted Most Likely to Succeed. And, in our Speech and Debate program, she was literally the National Champion in her event. Through it all, she was the one student who stood out as universally loved and admired by everyone -- her fellow students, teachers, and administrators alike.

Ketanji's incandescent brilliance was obvious to all of us from Day One. But even more importantly, she has always been one of the kindest, warmest, most humble, and down-to-earth people I've ever met. All this, while still possessing boundless charisma, drive, maturity, and grace. For all of these remarkable characteristics to somehow reside in the same one person -- well, I suppose you can understand why everyone who knows Ketanji believed she was destined for greatness.

I could go on and on describing Ketanji's amazing qualities, but instead, let me relate two stories from our high school days:

First, Ketanji wasn't just a supernova National Champion from our Debate squad, though of course she was. She was also the unofficial leader of our tight-knit debate family, acting basically as a student-coach and mentor for all the younger students. Outside in the grassy area between the school's hallways, we would sit cross-legged on the ground, all of us in rapt attention while Ketanji would stand and explain to us the keys to success, in particular the need for preparation, poise, discipline, and, above all, hard-work. She was a born leader.

No matter how high she would climb, she always threw ladders down to the rest of us, and encouraged us and helped us make our own upward climb, to the best of *our* abilities. In 1998, for just a few weeks, Ketanji's path and my path overlapped again, as we both served as law clerks for Judges on the same court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. She was finishing up her one-year appellate clerkship and I was just beginning mine. For those few weeks, I confess that I felt a surge of excitement and satisfaction, because I had actually accomplished something that Ketanji had accomplished.

But for her part, Ketanji has never been about comparing herself to anybody else's accomplishments. She simply sets her own goals and then works tirelessly to achieve them. In the nearly 40 years that I've known Ketanji, I can't remember ever hearing her say an unkind word to anybody -- or even an unkind word *about* anybody. That's just not her nature. And it's not how her amazing parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, raised her.

That leads me to my second story about high school. It was the Fall of 1987. I was a Sophomore and Ketanji was a Senior. In our Latin American History class, I sat in the seat next to hers. But on this particular day, her chair was empty. Then our school Principal came on the PA system and announced that a handful of our Senior Class had just been accepted to Harvard College that day -- a huge

achievement for our large, and often underfunded, public high school.

As fate would have it, at the very moment the Principal announced Ketanji's name, Ketanji happened to open the door and enter our classroom. The entire class immediately leapt to its feet, exploded in applause, and ran over to Ketanji to embrace her. It was one of the most genuine, heart-warming moments I have ever seen. Every student was so happy for Ketanji and so proud of her accomplishment. Nobody was jealous, nobody was resentful . . . and nobody was at all surprised. *Because she was Ketanji.*

And now, some four decades later, the President of the United States has nominated Ketanji to be a Supreme Court Justice. It seems fitting. After all, this is what great Americans are supposed to do: they're supposed to achieve great things. And Ketanji Brown Jackson is a great American.

Personally, I feel blessed to have been born in a country that can produce such an extraordinary person. My grandparents were Jews who escaped persecution in Nazi Germany, and they, along with my parents, always reiterated to me and my siblings what an amazing country this is, because in America, *anybody* can succeed, no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they come from. My grandparents and my parents were right. In America, a great person like the Honorable Ketanji Brown Jackson *can indeed* succeed, and can ascend to positions of great trust and great responsibility.

Members of the Senate, by confirming this extraordinary woman to a seat on the Supreme Court, you will honor everything that is good and right about America. For the good of our country -- and for the good *in* our country -- I hope that you will. Thank you.