

**Opening Remarks to the
Joint Committee on Judiciary
by Judge Lubbie Harper, Jr.
Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT - Room 2C
March 11, 2011 - 11 A.M.**

Good Morning Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox and other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I am privileged and humbled to appear before you this morning as a nominee to serve as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Connecticut. I take this opportunity, once again, publicly to thank Governor Malloy for placing my name in nomination.

I am proud of the fact that I come from what most people would describe as a very humble background. I was born and raised in New Haven, and I attended New Haven public schools. My parents were hard-working factory employees who divorced during my teenage years.

During those formative years as an inner-city youth, I learned core values from my Mother and Grandmother, values that shaped my outlook on life and continue to guide me to this very day. I was shaped by my Mother's determination and grit, and by my Grandmother's unyielding faith in God. I learned to respect, understand and accept people based upon their character and not because of their race and ethnicity. I learned to value hard work, perseverance, self-respect, love of family and a fundamental respect for the dignity of all persons. I learned that I am a descendant of slaves. My Mother's grandparents, Amos and Jeremiah Blunt, were slaves in the southern state of North Carolina. I am proud to carry their legacy in all of my endeavors.

My Father died in 1984, having lived to see me become an attorney. I was blessed that my Mother lived

to see me become an Appellate Court Judge. I vividly recall the times that she visited me at court, and how much pride she took in my accomplishments. Those moments mean so much to me. She died in 2006, but I feel my parents' spirit with me today as they continue to look with joy, as only parents can, upon my life's journey.

I graduated from New Haven's Wilbur Cross High School in 1961, having learned the value of hard work in the classroom as well as the value of teamwork on the basketball court, the football field and the baseball diamond. I recognized the intrinsic benefits of a solid education, and I was the first in my immediate family to attend college. I graduated from the University of New Haven with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1965. I went on to attend the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut, and was awarded a Masters degree in 1967.

I attended Law School at the University of Connecticut, obtaining a Juris Doctor degree in 1975.

Early on, I had careers in social work and in education. In these positions, I encouraged young people to maximize their potential and to take the high road.

During my years as an educational administrator in the New Haven school system, I did not focus simply upon educational excellence, but upon issues of civil rights. I participated in mediation sessions with students, parents, teachers and coaches. I was actively involved in community affairs and developed a keen appreciation for the value of diversity of opinion.

I was engaged in the private practice of law for over twenty years. My diverse practice included litigation, municipal finance, labor law, administrative law, arbitration matters and contract negotiations. I represented the New

Haven Board of Education as its principal lawyer in matters related to labor relations and education law for many years. I am proud to have developed a reputation among both labor and management of being not just a tough negotiator, but of being fair, honest and trustworthy. I have carried all of these traits with me in my role as a judge.

On July 7, 1997, I was sworn in as a Superior Court Judge. I served in that capacity for nearly eight years in the Hartford, Fairfield and New Haven Judicial Districts. I was sworn in as an Appellate Court Judge on January 26, 2005. For the past six years, I have had the pleasure of serving on that court. I have embraced the intellectual nature of my responsibilities, resolving many complex issues in a manner that is legally and logically accurate. I participated in the resolution of issues related to criminal

matters, habeas corpus, zoning, administrative law, family law, contract disputes, torts and parental rights, just to name a few of the diverse subject matters that come before the court. I have worked hard to produce written opinions that clearly and accurately apply the law to the issues under consideration. To date, I have authored 224 Appellate Court opinions.

Unlike a Superior Court Judge, an Appellate Court Judge is called upon to resolve issues in collaboration with other jurists. Among the many things I have come to appreciate from my time at the Appellate Court is the collegial working environment among the judges who serve on that court. Such an environment is conducive to consensus building and a healthy respect for different legal views. I have every confidence that my tenure on the Appellate Court has prepared me for the demands of

being an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. I am experienced in the process of appellate review of decisions made in lower courts, with the rules and doctrines governing such review and in the complexities of opinion writing. I am accustomed to meeting the rigorous intellectual demands of a reviewing court jurist, of the complex decision making that must be undertaken to resolve appellate matters.

During my tenure as an Appellate Court Judge, I occasionally sat by designation on the Supreme Court. Currently, I am participating in the resolution of an appeal pending in that court. I have enjoyed these opportunities to serve by designation as a member of the Supreme Court.

I take a great deal of pride in my work as a judge not only because of my respect for our legal system, but

because I recognize the indispensable role that courts play in our society. Being a judge has been a challenging, rewarding and gratifying experience. One cannot help but feel awed by the responsibility of determining people's legal rights and, in some cases, their right to liberty. I have humbly accepted this responsibility because I believe it affords me an opportunity to contribute to society by dispensing justice with fairness and compassion and by treating all those who have appeared before me with dignity and respect. It is in our interest, as judges, to instill trust and confidence in the way in which we perform our role in government. We do this by performing our jobs in a fair, just, efficient and transparent manner. As a judge, I strive for perfection in my work, and I hope that, if confirmed, my tenure on the Supreme Court will strengthen the public's perception of the important work

that the court undertakes on a daily basis.

All of those in government, including judges, can be an example of excellence by the way in which they perform their duties. It is important to me that our judiciary not only performs its work to the highest standards, but that it reflects the society that it serves. Accordingly, I have taken a personal interest in identifying exceptional members of the bar from minority communities, and encouraging them to apply for judgeships. Judges must serve a diverse public and, therefore, should recognize the inherent and obvious value of a diverse judiciary.

I have a long history of social service and I am always happy to avail myself of opportunities to give back to the community and to serve as a role model for young people. Since May, 2006, I have been the Chairman of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal

Justice System. The commission's charge is to address the problem of disparate treatment of defendants based upon their race and ethnicity. Upon becoming chairman, I made a decision to focus the commission's work on initiatives to prevent youth and young adults from entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems. I am proud of the commission's work, and my time chairing the commission is but one way that I have found to address serious problems in our society. It pains me that so many young people in our cities know only the familiar effects of poverty and crime, despair and helplessness. I hope that, given the nature of my life's journey, my nomination is a source of inspiration to those young people who feel trapped by the difficulties of life -- a necessary reminder that, in our society, one's humble beginnings do not necessarily dictate a humble outcome in one's life.

Honorable members of this committee, I come before you proud of my record of accomplishments and with a great sense of humility as I consider the high office to which I have been nominated. Thank you for the opportunity for sharing some of my life's story with you this morning, and I am pleased to address any questions that you may have for me.