

The George Washington University

Student Leaders

June 30th, 2022

Mark S. Wrighton, Christopher A. Bracey, & Dayna B. Matthew,

Dear University Officials and Relevant Administrators,

We, the undersigned students of The George Washington University are profoundly outraged by not only Clarence Thomas's lack of humanity but also his official suggestion to reconsider the cases to which the right to contraception and the right to queer existence is protected. In response to yesterday's email, we do agree that professors should have "academic freedom" and "freedom of expression and inquiry"; but there is a great difference between the freedom of expression of professors and a Supreme Court Justice stating that it should be legal to strip his queer students of not only their expression but to allow their existence to be criminalized. As the Justice and Law professors may know, not all speech is protected; according to the U.S. Department of Education's Notice of Interpretation on June 16th, 2021, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is one of those instances in which speech is limited. Furthermore, additionally under Title IX, individuals cannot be discriminated on the basis of sex. We, the student leaders of the George Washington University, find it quite difficult to imagine Professor Clarence Thomas wouldn't be biased in the classroom if he is actively trying to strip individuals with uteruses of the right to medicine and queer individuals their right to legally exist.

In the Student Code of Conduct itself, the university tells us that they do not permit unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital or familial status, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and/or other characteristics protected by applicable law in any university recognized area of student life. Attending classes is a university-recognized area of student life; an area where students of such protected groups specifically have the right not to experience discrimination.

We strongly urge the administration to rethink not removing Clarence Thomas from his position on the basis that students will not be free from discrimination in his classroom considering he himself is trying to strip students with *protected characteristics* of their legal right to healthcare and existence merely on the basis that they exist with such *protected characteristics*.

Academic freedom means to learn freely and fairly- absent of discrimination. As members of the university, this open letter is our contribution to "the critical discussions that are foundational to our academic mission". The students of The George Washington University are the very foundation upon which the academic mission stands. Without it, not only would the academic mission not exist but neither would the university or payroll from which Clarence Thomas is paid. We ask the university to change its mind both because the students are calling for it and because it's the right thing to do.

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Signed,

Edyth Koenigs (S.A. Senior Policy Advisor, She/They)

Abigail Francis (Former S.A. Executive Secretary of Academic Affairs/Director of Community Service,
Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Cordelia Scales (S.A. Chief of Staff to the President, DC College Democrats Development Director and
Treasurer, She/They)

Izzy Brophy (S.A. Acting Executive Secretary of Dining Services, She/Her)

Zak Zethner (Director of DC Gov. Relations and Civic Engagement, S.A. Executive Secretary of Internal
Affairs, He/Him)

Witt Kolsky (S.A. Acting Secretary of Campus Services, He/Him)

Karina Ochoa Berkley (S.A. Director of Sustainability, She/Her)

Duc Than (He/Him)

Daria Nastasia (She/They)

Anita Ganesh (She/Her)

Rami Hanash Jr. (S.A. GWSB-U Senator, He/Him)

Christian Williams (S.A. CCAS-U Senator, He/Him)

Gabriel Young (CCAS-U, Chair of Undergraduate Education Policy, He/His/Him)

Dylan Basescu (S.A. Legislator General, He/Him)

Sakhshi Sharma (S.A. Acting Executive Secretary of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, She/Her)

Henry Deng (S.A. CCAS-U Senator, Chair of Diversity and Inclusion Assembly, He/Him)

Jack Longaker (S.A. CCAS-U Senator, He/Him)

Muskan Singh (S.A. GWSB-U, She/Her)

Lydia Miller (S.A. ESIA-U & Chair of Undergraduate Student Life, She/Her)

Sebastian Hartley (GW College Democrats President, He/Him)

Tyla Evans (GW College Democrats Executive Vice President, She/Her)

Anita Sagar (GW College Democrats Chief of Staff, She/Her)

Emmanuel Ching (GW College Democrats VP of Communications, He/Him)

Sarah Freeman (GW College Democrats VP of Political Affairs, She/Her)

Shivani Desai (GW College Democrats Campaigns and Activism Director, She/Her)

The George Washington University

Student Leaders

June 30th, 2022

Amartya Sharma (GW College Democrats Finance Director, He/Him)
Fatima Konte (GW College Democrats VP of Diversity and Inclusion, She/Her)
Jonathan Kay (GW Club Basketball VP, He/Him)
Christine Yared (GW Disabled Students Collective Treasurer, Women's Leadership Network VP, She/Her)
Maddie Billet (GW Disabled Students Collective DSS Liaison, She/Her)
Kendal Furman (GW Local Editor-in-Chief of Academics, She/Her)
Victoria Robertson (GW Women's Pre-Law Student Association President, She/Her)
Ellie Small (GW Women's Pre-Law Student Association President Director of Public Relations, She/Her)
Emma Hearn (GW ALCSI Founding Director of Engagement, She/Her)
Katie Miller (Vice President, She/Her)
Bella Kumar (Hub Coordinator of Sunrise GW, She/Her)
Pada Schaffner (Hub Coordinator of Sunrise GW, He/They)
Rio Diams (Sunrise GW Actions Deputy Staff, They/Them)
Emma Gallagher (Sunrise GW Art & Infrastructure, She/Her)
Sarah Burtnick (Sunrise GW Art & Infrastructure Deputy, She/Her)
Keigan McCullagh (Sunrise GW Communications, They/She)
Alyssa Smith (Sunrise GW Communications Deputy, She/Her)
Nzah Tajuddin (Sunrise GW JAEI)
Gabe Friedman (Sunrise GW Movement Finance Deputy, He/Him)
Freya Blackmore (Sunrise GW Recruitment, She/Her)
Aza Evans-Townsend (Sunrise GW W.R., She/Any)
Max Canning (Sunrise GW W.R., He/They)
Tia Hood (Sunrise GW T.R.S., She/Her)
Jacob Swenson (Sunrise GW T.R.S., He/They)
Catherine Graney (GWU Intercollegiate Equestrian Team Head of Finance, She/Her)
Emily Vogel (GWU Intercollegiate Equestrian Secretary, She/Her)
Grace Pederson (Vice President, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, GW Public Health Student Association Secretary, She/Her)
Grace Olivieri (Director of Friendship, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)
Maddie Segar (President, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)
Emma Klinge (Treasurer, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)
Alrina Sharra (New Member Educator/Panhel Delegate, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

The George Washington University

Student Leaders

June 30th, 2022

Sophia Rubbo (Personnel Chair, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Caroline Christian (Recruitment Chair, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Sezin Sakmar (DEI Chair, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Ellie Hassey (Director of Programming, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Brooke Cody (Secretary, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Gali Laska (Director of Social Events, Chi Omega Phi Alpha Chapter, She/Her)

Chandra Desai (Co-President of Class Council, She/Her)

Maddie Mangilit (Co-President of Class Council, She/Her)

Ava Pitruzzello (President of Persist GW, She/Her)

Michaela Bapis (Vice President of Persist GW, She/Her)

Andrew Dodd (BSU Executive Vice President, He/Him)

Joanna Destil (BSU VP of Marketing, She/ Her)

Ryan Titus (BSU Historian, She/Her)

Amara Payne (BSU VP of Community Outreach, She/Her)

Aza Evans-Townsend (1/3 of Sunrise GW's War Room, She/Her)

Lily Zahn (Deputy Director of Communications for GW Students for DC Statehood, She/Her)

Spencer Jones (Founder and Co-Leader of Divine Solidarity)

STUDENT LEADER.—The term “Student Leader” means a student enrolled at The George Washington University who currently holds a position on the executive board of any undergraduate or graduate student organization recognized by the Student Life Office.