

***The Advocate* Publishes Heather Lonian's Column on Why Justice-designate Ketanji Brown Jackson's Journey Resonates with her Own Story**

ATTORNEYS

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The Advocate published Heather Lonian's column on why Justice-designate Ketanji Brown Jackson's journey resonates with her own story. The column can be found on *The Advocate's* website [here](#) or the full column is below.

As an African-American woman and a graduate of Harvard Law School, it is not difficult to see myself in Justice-designate Ketanji Brown Jackson. We walked on the same campus and sat in the same classrooms. As the first post-Civil Rights generation of African-Americans, we benefited from the sacrifices of our forebearers, but still found ourselves navigating majority-white spaces throughout our higher education and professional careers. If we were not first minorities in majority-white spaces, we often found ourselves as the only minority in the room. Soon, Justice-designate Jackson will take her place as the first and only African-American woman on the U.S. Supreme Court.

As chief diversity officer at a law firm in the Deep South, I'm heartened by this appointment because it shows the progress we have made to create a more inclusive society where diverse representation exists even at the highest levels of power. But it also highlights the work that remains to be done.

When I was born, no woman had ever been nominated for the Supreme Court. Only one person of color, Justice Thurgood Marshall, had served as a Supreme Court justice. President Biden's announcement of his intention to nominate the first African-American woman to the Court ignited a backlash from politicians and pundits who questioned the qualifications of the nominee before her name had even been announced. (President Trump's announcement that he would nominate a woman following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg did not prompt any immediate handwringing over the prospective qualifications of the yet-to-be announced nominee.)

Upon her nomination, Justice-designate Jackson's impeccable credentials became a detriment. Perhaps she was "overly qualified," some pundits mused. Maybe it was time to have fewer Ivy League graduates on the Court. During her contentious confirmation hearing, she remained poised and calm, depriving her critics of the slightest flash of emotion that could be used to support the "angry Black woman" trope. She celebrated her confirmation by quoting the words of Maya Angelou: "I am the dream and the hope of the slave." It is through the struggles of our forebearers that she was able to come this far, and it is through her struggles that future generations will go even further.



IN THE NEWS

A little Black girl born today will grow up in a different world than Justice-designate Jackson and I did. In history class, she will study at least one Black president and vice-president. When she attends Harvard Law School, she will study opinions written by another Black woman who walked the hallways she walks and has sat at the desks where she sits. She will be the dream and hope of all that came before her.