

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

I write in support of President Biden's nomination of Kristen Clarke for Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. The neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville and the massacre in Pittsburgh have made clear that American Jews are more vulnerable today than we have been in generations. We need an effective ally in the fight against anti-Semitism leading the DOJ Civil Rights Division. Based on her record of the past two decades, Kristen Clarke is exactly who we need in this position.

In the absence of any real basis to challenge her nomination, opponents of Kristen Clarke have unearthed a December 1994 incident that happened during Clarke's sophomore year at Harvard, when she was president of Harvard's Black Students Association. Wellesley professor Tony Martin, after attempting to rescue his academic career from obscurity by publishing an anti-Semitic screed, invited himself onto the Harvard campus to promote it. In a decision that Clarke has publicly regretted, she agreed to BSA sponsorship of Martin's speech. This has been deployed to falsely tar Clarke as an anti-Semite by those who want Clarke's nomination to fail because they do not want the DOJ's Civil Rights Division to succeed.

Unlike those claiming outrage 26 years after the fact, I was there in 1994. As the Jewish community's representative to the Harvard Foundation for Race and Intercultural Affairs, these events impacted me personally. Martin's demagoguery was not a unique event. The early 1990s Harvard campus was a magnet for provocateurs pitching anti-Semitism as Black pride. Each time the scene prior to the speech was the same – Jewish demands for sensitivity, Black assertions of independence and two communities talking past each other. What was different in 1994 was the aftermath. Instead of the Black and Jewish communities retreating into mutual recrimination and sullen silence as in the past, after Martin's visit there were multiple dialogues co-sponsored by the BSA and Hillel to discuss what had happened and how to move forward. Kristen's leadership was essential to the healing that happened afterward.

It is clear from Kristen Clarke's subsequent career that the leadership she showed *after* Martin's visit was the true reflection of her character and predictor of her future career. Clarke has been a tireless advocate for civil rights for all. She has fought anti-Semitism just like she has fought all

forms of discrimination – with courage, compassion and skill. It is no wonder that Jewish organizations such as the ADL that have worked closely with her have endorsed her nomination without reservation. We must not allow bad faith claims of anti-Semitism deprive Americans of a public servant who will effectively wield the power of our hard-won civil rights laws to stem the rising tide of racism, Anti-Semitism and bigotry we face in in this critical moment.

Michael H. Pine (Goldenpine)
Harvard College, Class of 1995