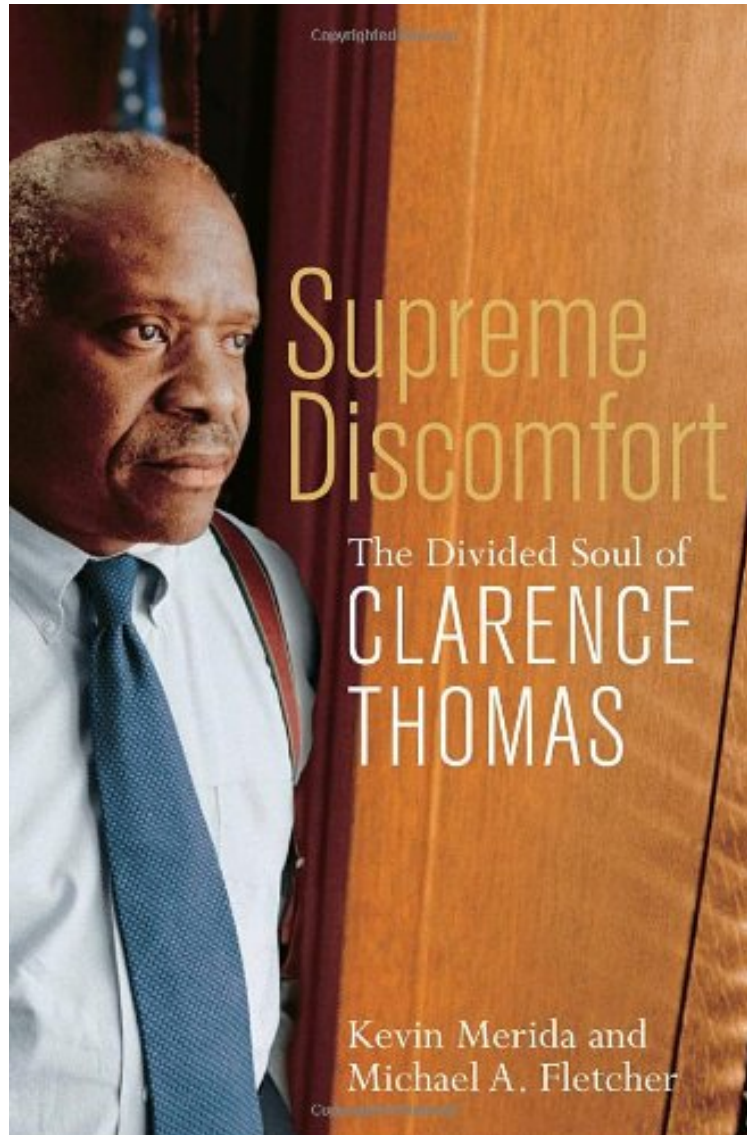


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Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas

Kevin Merida, Michael Fletcher

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Kevin Merida, Michael Fletcher : Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I like the book and find it very informativeBy Walt MaguireSince the death of Antonin Scalia, I've resolved to learn more about the US Supreme Court. This is the first book I read. The first thing I notice when I look for books about Clarence Thomas is that most of them are focused on the Anita Hill

controversy. This is one of the few books which seemed to be more generally about Clarence Thomas. Generally, I like the book and find it very informative. My main issue is in how the author characterizes Thomas as he ascends the ladder. The author seems to feel that Thomas has basically spent his entire life feeling insecure. I doubt very much that this is the reality. My theory is that only those who've been through an upbringing like the one Thomas went through can understand how it shapes people. And - contrary to myth - humble beginnings stay with successful people in a variety of ways. Not to oversimplify, but after reading about the first twenty or so years of his life, the rest all makes much more sense. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An Okay read, but....By wjbI am sure the authors did the best that they could without interviewing the Justice and the book is well written. However, I am not even sure I would read Thomas' own book which came out after this one. Justice Thomas is complex and you are never really sure where he is coming from. Friends argued a case a year or so ago at the U.S. Supreme Court, and I remember one attorney mentioning that Judge Thomas never said a word or asked one question. At least the authors had that part right. I will be donating this one to our local library. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting look at how minorities perceive "quotas"By rose 3Sometimes views diverge widely. The "quota system" is seen by Thomas as questioning his abilities to achieve on his own merit. When writing about the Anita Hill situation he parses his words very,very,carefully. I was interested in his perception of what was offensive vs. hers. His wife's description of his "writhing on the floor all night"seemed to me to be very telling.

SUPREME DISCOMFORT originated from a much-commented-upon profile of Clarence Thomas that appeared in an August 2002 issue of The Washington Post Magazine. In it, Kevin Merida and Michael Fletcher, both Post staffers, both black, crafted a haunting portrait of an isolated and bitter man, savagely reviled by much of the black community, not entirely comfortable in white society, internally wounded by his passage from a broken family and rural poverty in Georgia to elite educational institutions to the pinnacle of judicial power. He has clearly never recovered from the searing experience of his Senate confirmation hearings and the "he said/she said" drama of the accusations of sexual harassment by Anita Hill.SUPREME DISCOMFORT tracks the personal odyssey of perhaps the least understood man in Washington, from his poor childhood in Pin Point and Savannah, Georgia, to his educational experiences in a Catholic seminary and Holy Cross, to his law school years at Yale during the black power era, to his rise within the Republican political establishment. It offers a window into a man who straddles two different worlds and is uneasy in both and whose divided personality and conservative political philosophy will deeply influence American life for years to come.

From Publishers WeeklyThe conservatism of the nation's second African-American Supreme Court justice has made him a pariah in the black community, an irony that centers this probing biography, expanded from the authors'Washington Post Magazine profile. Thomas's rise from disadvantaged circumstances to Yale Law School, a meteoric government career and appointment to Thurgood Marshall's Court seat, Merida and Fletcher note, seems an affirmative action success story. Yet Thomas has opposed affirmative action, prisoners' rights, abortion and other planks of the liberal agenda, leading to ubiquitous complaints the authors cite black leaders, prison inmates, even Thomas's relatives that he's forgotten his roots. Merida and Fletcher present a lucid, well-researched account of Thomas's controversial life and jurisprudence, including evidence supporting Anita Hill's sexual harassment allegations, and a nuanced discussion of the politics of black authenticity. They portray Thomas as a conflicted man: a committed conservative with an ethos of self-reliance, who took advantage of affirmative action only to have his achievements tarnished by his own insecurities and others' suspicions of incompetence or hypocrisy. The authors' attempts to link his convictions to his psyche they make much of his alleged resentment of light-skinned black professional elites don't always click, but Thomas still emerges as a fascinating and emblematic figure. (Mar. 20) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistWashington Post reporters Merida and Fletcher interviewed Supreme Court justice Thomas' family members, friends, colleagues, former clerks, fellow conservative justice Scalia, and even former President Bush, who named Thomas to the court--but not Thomas himself. This unauthorized biography looks at the complexities behind the second black Supreme Court justice, the conservative who replaced the iconic civil rights defender Thurgood Marshall. The authors dissect the contradictions in Thomas' background: the careful campaign that harkened back to boyhood poverty, when Thomas mostly grew up middle class; the transformation of a campus radical into a conservative and avowed opponent of affirmative action. Beyond recalling Thomas' background, the authors delve into how Thomas was formed by the tumultuous period of desegregation and emerging radical black consciousness. Thomas' wounds are deep, evidenced in a box of rejection letters from law firms he continues to keep. Reviled by the black community and virtually an outsider in his own family, Thomas maintains an animated persona among black conservatives but is known for his silence and disengagement on the bench. The authors explore the dynamics behind the nomination of Thomas and the dramatic hearing that drew national attention as senators squirmed while parsing charges of sexual harassment by Anita Hill. Thomas' "high-tech lynching" remark, which turned the hearing, was scripted for a man who'd chosen to distance himself from racial identification. This is a thoroughly absorbing look at a conflicted man

whose views will impact American law and race relations for generations. Vanessa Bush Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Advance Praise for Supreme Discomfort: Clarence Thomas, even as the quiet justice, is a clanging symbol of politics and race in our time. I cant think of two writers Id rather have cut through the cacophony of the Thomas mythology than Kevin Merida and Michael A. Fletcher. In Supreme Discomfort, they have found the divided soul that divides a nation. David Maraniss, author of First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton Scrupulously fair and endlessly entertaining. Supreme Discomfort by Kevin Merida and Michael A. Fletcher is the definitive work on the Supreme Courts most elusive and fascinating personality. Jeffrey Toobin, author of The Run of His Life and Too Close to Call, legal affairs analyst for CNN, and staff writer at The New Yorker. An engrossing biography of a conflicted man . . . [Merida and Fletcher] have done a superb job with this both harsh and sympathetic life of Clarence Thomas . . . an unflinching look at success and race in America. Kirkus s (starred)