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**Alabama Senator Linked to White Supremacists
Color of Law**

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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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With the recent announcement that Justice David Souter will retire from the U.S. Supreme Court, President Obama must now find a replacement. And over the next four years - eight years if there is a second Obama term - the president has the opportunity to shape the federal courts to reflect 21st century realities. Much damage has been done in the judiciary under the Bush administration. In his attempts to create an enduring legacy of radical conservatism on the bench, the previous occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue stacked the federal courts with corporate shills, Christian Taliban and torture enablers.

With only one woman on the Supreme Court, seven White men, and a Black justice who is the functional equivalent of a conservative White man, the high court does not look like modern-day America. Now with the winds of change blowing, there is a fighting chance that diversity - of backgrounds and life experiences, of gender, of ethnicity, of opinion, of law schools, and the like - will be a factor in the shaping of the court. Times must change. As someone who clerked for two African-American judges in the federal courts, I can appreciate the value of diversity on the bench, of having more than the usual "suspects" wielding the gavel.

But it seems unlikely that the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Jefferson Beauregard "Jeff" Sessions (R-Alabama), feels the same way. Sessions, it should be noted, was nominated by Reagan in 1985 to a federal judgeship, but was dinged by the Senate. Sessions was a critic of the Voting Rights Act. He had called the NAACP and the ACLU "[un-American](#)" and "[Communist-inspired](#)" groups that "forced civil rights down the throats of people." In addition, as a U.S. attorney in Alabama, he reportedly called a Black assistant U.S. attorney "boy", and told him to "be careful what you say to white folks." As a federal prosecutor, Sessions engaged in a voter-fraud witch-hunt against three Black civil rights workers, including a former aide to Dr. King. Moreover, during a 1981 KKK murder investigation, Sessions was heard by several colleagues commenting that he "used to think they [the Klan] were OK" until he found

out some of them were “pot smokers.”

As a senator, Sessions voted against expanding hate crimes to include sexual orientation. Based on [his voting record](#), he has a 0% rating from the Human Rights Campaign (he is anti-gay rights), a 7% rating from the NAACP (he is anti-affirmative action), and a 20% rating from the ACLU (he is anti-civil rights). And this is the person the Republicans have entrusted in a position of leadership in this important committee in the Senate. It speaks volumes about the GOP and the statement they are making here, particularly when one considers Sessions’ association with anti-immigration, White nationalist groups.

A lawmaker with a [solid anti-immigration record](#), Sessions is criticized by immigrants’ rights groups for his anti-immigration rhetoric, and for his close associations with three organizations: [the Federation for American Immigration Reform](#) (FAIR), [the Center for Immigration Studies](#) (CIS) and [NumbersUSA](#). The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which has designated [FAIR as a hate group](#), notes that all of these organizations “were founded and funded by John Tanton, a retired Michigan ophthalmologist who operates a racist publishing company and has written that to maintain American culture, ‘a European-American majority’ is required.” He has published writings by John Vinson, head of Tanton’s [American Immigration Control Foundation](#), and a devout White supremacist. Vinson has called for the secession of the former Confederate states in order to racially and economically protect Whites.

Tanton has been a driving force in the White nationalist and anti-immigration movements for years. His organizations and associates have affiliations with skinheads, neo-Nazis, and [the Council of Conservative Citizens](#), the modern-day reincarnation of the White Citizens’ Councils, the “white-collar Klan” of the Jim Crow era. And with financial support from the pro-eugenics [Pioneer Fund](#) - also designated a [hate group](#) whose members believe that [Black people have smaller brains and lower intelligence than Whites](#) - Tanton has been able to infiltrate, and unfortunately shape, the mainstream dialogue on immigration reform. And sadly, the mainstream media have helped to legitimize his organizations.

Senator Sessions often quotes Tanton’s groups and their sham reports, appears at their press conferences, and has [received recognition](#) and [campaign contributions](#) from them. And this individual will be sitting in judgment of nominees to the federal bench, including African Americans, Latinos and other judges of color? In recent years, the Republican Party has been reduced to a regional extremist party - all-White, Christian fundamentalist, uneducated and racist. And apparently, on judicial and criminal justice matters, Sessions is their standard bearer, the end product of a thorough barrel-scraping process. This is not surprising, but one must wonder what’s really going on here.

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