



PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Welcome to this Special Session of the Superior Court of Delaware. Please remain standing for the Invocation by Pastor Darrell V. Freeman. Pastor Freeman.

(Invocation)

Thank you, Pastor Freeman.

First I want to thank Governor Michael N. Castle who is here and the Delaware State Senate for making this happy occasion possible. Your help in promptly filling the vacancy created by Judge Taylor's recent retirement is very much appreciated by this Court.

There will be a point in the swearing-in ceremony when Haile L. Alford will join us here on the bench as the fourteenth Judge of the Superior Court of Delaware.

Let me introduce those already seated here on this bench. To my immediate right is Chief Justice E. Norman Veasey, and to his right, Resident Judge Vincent A. Bifferato. To my immediate left is Judge Alex J. Smalls of the Municipal Court of the City of Wilmington.

Haile's family is here, and I would like to recognize them. Her son, Julian Moore, age fourteen, her daughter Kammy Moore, age twelve, are with her here today.

We have several family members from New York who have also joined her. They are Haile's mother, Eleanor Alford, her brother, William Alford and his son Billy. William, I understand is a probation officer in the Bronx. Her brothers Douglas Alford and Norris Alford, and her brother Harry Alford and his wife Esther.

Here all the way from Chicago, Illinois is Haile's cousin, Curtis Robertson, and from Bloomsdale, Michigan, her cousin Jonnie Woodard and her husband Cheslie. With my limited knowledge of mid-west geography, I will leave it to Haile to acknowledge who came the longest distance.

To each of you a very warm and special welcome.

Soon-to-be Judge Alford has already met with Superior Court Judges individually, and she attended at our invitation our Superior Court Judicial Conference last week. We have enjoyed her company already and have learned much about her.

Like Judge Susan Del Pesco, Haile's vocation before law school included teaching. She taught reading and math to troubled boys and girls within a detention school in Brooklyn, New York.

After law school at Rutgers, Haile joined the legal department at Hercules. She also served as an adjunct lecturer on business law to the students at Lincoln University. Her keen legal mind and her ability to address complex legal matters were already clearly shown during her tenure within the Hercules legal department and at Aqualon.

She has a strong community spirit and desire to serve the public. Her important work on organizations such as Headstart and also as a member of the Governor's Council on Labor shows that. Others will talk to you more about Haile, so I will defer to them for further detail.

I cannot resist pointing out to you that Haile's investiture comes at a time when there is a critical shortage of judges to address the backlog of cases before us. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this Court, we handle the most serious of criminal cases, the most important of civil cases, appeals from fifty administrative agencies and intermediate appeals from courts of limited jurisdiction.

The recent growth of our case load has been tremendous. Our criminal case load, for example, is up by 73.9 percent over what it was only four years ago. One

vacancy still remains in our presently authorized fifteen judgeships. The addition of two judges and support staff has been urged by the Delaware Superior Court Study Committee, the Long-Range Court's Planning Committee, the Delaware State Bar Association, the Delaware Trial Lawyers Association, the Criminal Justice Council, this Court, and most importantly, by the Chief Justice. We earnestly hope that the Governor and General Assembly will provide the reinforcements we need at the earliest possible time.

The strength of this Court is found within the integrity and quality of its judges, our special camaraderie and our common purpose to administer fair and equal justice to every litigant who comes before us without unnecessary delay. Haile L. Alford will clearly add to these strengths, and I am very confident that she will be a distinguished Judge of this Court.

So it is with special pleasure that we witness Haile's investiture today as our colleague on the bench. She will be sworn in by the Chief Justice of Delaware, E. Norman Veasey, after his remarks. It is my pleasure to ask Chief Justice Veasey to speak to you now. Chief Justice Veasey.

CHIEF JUSTICE VEASEY: Governor Castle,

Senator Holloway, President Judge Ridgely, Judge Bifferato, Judge Smalls, distinguished members and former members of the Delaware judiciary and distinguished members of the general assembly, members of Haile Alford's family, notable and distinguished citizens of the state and friends of this very capable person to whom we shall soon refer as Judge Alford.

As Chief Justice, I am honored to be part of this occasion and to bring you greetings from the Supreme Court. This is a very important event for the Alford family. Similarly it is an important and historic event in our Delaware judiciary.

Haile Alford is about to undertake the vital and sometimes onerous and awesome responsibilities of a Judge of the Superior Court. This overworked Court is our Court of general trial jurisdiction. The judges of this Court handle difficult, complex and extremely important civil and criminal litigation. The significance of the work of this Court cannot be overstated, both in human terms and in terms of the national importance of the work of the courts of this state.

Investiture ceremonies are unique and personal; for the person who is to be sworn in is the

person who designs the ceremony, and I know that when this ceremony has been concluded, we will all look back and say that Judge Alford designed a marvelous ceremony.

As many of you know, I was honored to be invested about a hundred days ago into the office I now hold. As is the case with this investiture, there were a number of distinguished speakers, many of whom such as the Governor are here today, and on that occasion, the Governor said, and I will quote you, Governor, "I think I can say without fear of contradiction in this room, and in my judgment, anyplace in the United States of America that the State of Delaware has the best judicial system of any state in this entire country."

Also on that occasion Harvey Rubenstein, the then President of the Bar Association made a number of interesting and poignant observations about the Supreme Court, but these observations would apply to the Superior Court as well.

Among other things, he said, "The Court rarely receives the gratitude it deserves and carries only the respect it earns every day by the integrity of its decisions, and while those decisions may make law, they must also make sense, and their intellectual force, their

pervading logic and their historical insight must be easily apparent not only to other judges but to lawyers and non-lawyers alike."

Haile Alford will soon embark on a new career often treading on unfamiliar ground as she renders decisions which not only will make law but which must make sense. I am confident that she will serve with distinction as part of the best judicial system of any State, in the Governor's words.

In a moment we will step down to the floor level to administer the oath. Mrs. Eleanor Alford, Julian A. Moore and Kammy M. Moore will hold the bible for the administration of the oath, and after the administration of the oath, President Judge Ridgely, assisted by the Honorable Alex J. Smalls, Judge of the Municipal Court of Wilmington, will assist Judge Alford in the robing. Then Judge Alford will ascend the bench.

Would you all please stand for the administration of the oath.

(Oath of office administered)

(Robing takes place)

Judge Alford, before you ascend the bench, we have some work for you to do. You and I have to sign the

oath. You sign right there please and I will sign under your signature.

(Oath of office signed)

JUDGE ALFORD: Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Please be seated. Haile, we welcome you to the Superior Court of Delaware.

JUDGE ALFORD: Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: I will now call upon the Honorable Michael N. Castle, Governor of the State of Delaware for his remarks. Governor Castle.

GOVERNOR CASTLE: Judge Alford, Judge Ridgely, thank you for your kind words of introduction.

The other distinguished jurists who are here, and there are many of you here, Reverend Clergy and Senator Holloway and distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Chief Justice was very kind to me just now when he referenced something else in my mind when he quoted my statement about Delaware having the best courts in the land which I firmly believe.

He did not politely quote the fact that I referred to him as the Chief Justice of the United States

in my eagerness of referring to how great our courts are. We are delighted to have him as Chief Justice of the State of Delaware which is where he belongs and where he does such a wonderful job.

As daunting as becoming a Judge can be, I am sure that Haile will tell you that everything seems a little bit easier after going through the Senate confirmation process. Not everybody makes it through the Senate confirmation process. She did it on the day of June 30th-July 1st which, if you know anything about the Delaware General Assembly, is the day that everything keeps going for about twelve or fourteen hours until we get all the work done, and she did a remarkable job.

Quite frankly, not everybody makes it over those hurdles as I have learned in the last three or four months, and you did a remarkable job in handling the general assembly. My staff reported that it was as effective a presentation as they have ever seen there.

They did cite one instance that your brothers may or may not have heard about which was when she was asked, "Can you handle the real tough problems when they come up," and she referred to the fact that, "Well, you know I was raised with three brothers" I believe it is,

and that was about enough of an answer right there. They understood immediately that she could handle all of those problems. And I am sure that she can. She showed tremendous ability and judgment and grace throughout that period.

In one sense I am honored to be celebrating Delaware's first woman African-American Judge, but in another sense I am keenly aware that this has been too long in coming, and my fervent hope is that children, students and young attorneys will use Haile's perservance, work and commitment as an inspiration and as the basis for believing that they too can break down any barriers before them and be successful, (applause) and hopefully the effect of all this will help create a larger number of women and minority candidates for judicial positions in the future.

I must say, Haile, you are joining an extraordinary group of individuals today, the past and present Judges of Delaware. I haven't changed my mind in the hundred days since Chief Justice Veasey became the Chief Justice of the State of Delaware. We still have the best judicial system in the United States of America and, in fact, even better for his ascending to the bench.

That's historically accurate, it is presently accurate and it is my hope that it will always be accurate as far as the future is concerned, and you are now a part of that.

Every Court has its own issues and every Judge has his or her own identity, but I may tell all of that you Haile has my confidence, the confidence of the State Senate, her friends and her family that she will be identified forever as a capable, caring and committed jurist for the people of the State of Delaware.

Congratulations and best of luck.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Thank you, Governor Castle. Our next speaker will be the Honorable Herman M. Holloway of the Delaware State Senate. Senator Holloway. Welcome to the Superior Court.

SENATOR HOLLOWAY: Reverend Clergy, Governor Castle, Mr. Chief Justice, Your Honors, distinguished members of the Delaware Supreme Court, President of the Delaware Bar Association, distinguished guests, the Honorable Judge Haile Alford, to her family, relatives and friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to reiterate what I said on the Senate

floor following Judge Alford's confirmation by unanimous vote. This truly is a historical event. It is truly solid racial progress in the purest sense in the minds of every thoughtful citizen throughout the First State.

Judge Alford told the members of the State Senate she hopes to bring honor to the State in the performance of her duties. She has already brought honor to the State in the practice of her profession, in her willingness to step into the white glare of publicity which beams on the judiciary, and in her determination to be a role model for those who aspire to achieve that, despite race and gender obstacles.

Governor Castle, please accept grateful and appreciative thanks on the part of the citizens in the Second Senatorial District, and indeed throughout all State of Delaware for this appointment based solely on competence and training. It is indeed a landmark in the progress of Delaware's racial harmony and determination to provide opportunity to all citizens and to eliminate bias in government.

To the honorable Judge Haile Alford, I congratulate and commend you as you take on new serious and important responsibilities in this state. I, along

with countless others, hope and pray for a long, enjoyable and meaningful tenure for you and your family.

Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Thank you, Senator Holloway. Our next speaker will be John F. Schmutz, Esquire, President of the Delaware Bar Association.

MR. SCHMUTZ: May it please the Court, members of the judiciary, Governor Castle, members of the legislature, distinguished guests.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Delaware State Bar Association at this swearing in for Judge Haile Alford.

As you all know and have had outlined for you by the Chief Justice and by the President Judge, the Superior Court is a key to the administration of justice in our state. In addition to the rapidly rising criminal case load, this Court must deal with an also increasing civil case load, and in recent years has become a very important Court for business litigation.

In those capacities it must deal with the products of the full range of our society's ills as well

as the rapidly changing picture in our society. To this challenge, I believe that Judge Alford brings an interesting background and a dedication to the betterment of our community.

As you have heard, Judge Alford was raised in New York City. She taught. She has had a variety of experiences that gave her first hand knowledge of many of the problems with which the Court will be faced. Her dedication to public service in addition to some of the things that have been outlined for you include also the Education Advisory Committee of the Diocese of Delaware as well as the Governor's Council on Labor and a member of the other things, the Headstart particularly here in Delaware. I believe that these provide an excellent basis for viewing some of the problems with which you will be faced.

Judge Alford also brings another important and different perspective which has been noted. She is the first black woman to sit on a constitutional Court in Delaware. As such, she brings perspective that has not been had before, and one I believe that will be helpful in dealing with the problems the Court faces in our rapidly changing society. I believe the judicial system and

society gain value and strength through diversity, and I look forward to Judge Alford's contribution.

Judge Alford, on behalf of the Delaware State Bar Association, I pledge our support and dedication to work with you and the Court for the betterment of justice in the State of Delaware. We welcome you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Thank you, Mr. Schmutz. Our next speaker will be the Honorable Joshua W. Martin III, former Resident Judge of the Superior Court and presently vice-president and general counsel for Diamond State Telephone Company. Judge Martin.

JUDGE MARTIN: Thank you, President Judge Ridgely. Governor Castle, Chief Justice Veasey, Senator Holloway, other members of the General Assembly, members of the bench and bar, Judge Alford, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to participate in this, the investiture of Haile Alford as a member of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware. It feels good to be back home again.

I have known Judge Alford since 1973 when as a third year law student I welcomed Haile to Rutgers to begin a significant stage in her preparation for the

challenges that she undertakes today.

In preparing my remarks for today, I recalled that at this earlier point in her life, Haile had a certain resolve, seriousness of purpose and remarkable composure under stress. It is indeed a testimonial to her professional commitment that she ascends to a responsibility where these traits, among others, will be put to great use.

Her law school classmates, including Judge Smalls, join me in recalling her calm demeanor under pressure and her remarkable composure in addressing very stressful situations that would have overwhelmed someone of less fortitude. I would expect those traits to be continually tested in the courtrooms of this building. She will be equal to the task.

Haile and I practiced law together when I was at Hercules Incorporated, she having joined the legal department in 1976. It was during this period that we collaborated on legal agreements involving computer hardware and software that I gained immense respect for her legal ability.

Having approximately fifteen years of experience addressing corporate matters of varying degrees

of complexity will give Judge Alford significant background to decide the increasingly complex matters which come before this Court.

Although the criminal jurisdiction of Superior Court gets a lot of attention, as it should, this Court, in recent years, has gained national attention because of some of the complex civil matters that are docketed here. Hopefully Judge Alford's expertise will be of value in not only addressing these matters but also in pursuing new and creative Court management approaches that will advance dockets and insure the administration of justice.

Delaware is fortunate that its trial Court of general jurisdiction is indeed such a collegial body where Judge Alford will have the opportunity to make a significant contribution in discharge of this Court's responsibilities.

But Haile Alford has more than demonstrated that she was just a competent lawyer and that she's intellectually qualified for this position. She is a sensitive human being and a dedicated mother with the knowledge and appreciation of inner cities and the reality of city life. She brings to this bench a fresh

perspective, rooted in the discipline of the law for addressing the challenges of this jurisdiction.

Shifting to another perspective that has been touched on already, it is with recognition of substantial progress and a great sense of shared accomplishment that I note that after today we need no longer look forward to the time when the first black male or female sits on the bench of a constitutional Court in Delaware.

Without diminishing the significance of this occasion, I would be remiss were I not to note that Judge Alford brings to this bench a distinguished career and a background of integrity and character which makes her eminently qualified to join this august tribunal.

But judging, my friends, is more than pomp and circumstance, more than the grandeur of courtrooms, majestic though they may be, more than the honor and acclaim that go with the appellation "Judge". In the words of Chief Justice Daniel Herrman, which I recall from a similar event in 1982, "No greater honor may come to a fellow citizen, no more serious responsibility may be undertaken by a fellow citizen and no more sacred duty may be entrusted to a fellow citizen than the honor and responsibility and the duty in sitting in judgment of his

or her fellow citizens."

Judge Alford, my friends, will be tested in this year. The awesome responsibility of this position will weigh heavily upon her shoulders. When this happens, when she struggles with weighing problems such as the forfeiture of one's property or the deprivation of one's liberty, when she alone must decide whether one will ever again see the light of day or be doomed to the eternity of penal darkness, or worse, it is then that her courage, her conviction, her resolve will give her strength.

We can be encouraged that she accepts this position ready to assume these tasks. She will always have our support, our good wishes, our prayers, but when she walks through those doors and the baliff chants "All rise", the power of that experience, in all its majesty, will symbolize, as it must, the essence of power tempered with true humility.

We have every reason to believe, and it is our hope, that she not be elevated beyond a clear vision of man, his failings, his frailty, that she benefit from the lessons of the past as this community charts a course for the future, that she understand the true meaning of this calling. We would hope that from this day, the day

of her investiture, she will demonstrate an integrity, dignity and professionalism that has been the mainstay of her life. We know she will.

Judge Alford, to you and your family, we wish you good health, good tenure and God speed. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Thank you, Judge Martin. Arnetta McRae, Esquire, counsel for E. I. duPont de Nemours & Company will next speak to us. Miss McRae.

MS. McRAE: Governor Castle, Chief Justice Veasey, President Judge Ridgely, distinguished members of the bench and bar, Reverend Freeman, family and friends of Judge Alford.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to witness the investiture of my friend, Haile Alford as Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware. It is indeed a historic occasion in that she is the first African-American woman to ascend to this distinguished position in the Delaware judiciary. I say "first" because I am confident that in the years to come she will be followed by many distinguished people of color.

Judge Alford brings to the bench a wealth of

experiences that I believe will serve her well in carrying out her duties. As speakers who preceded me have told you, she enjoyed a lengthy career in corporate practice, and during an earlier period in her life, she devoted her energies to the challenge of educating the so-called throw-away behaviorally disruptive children in the New York school system.

As a mother of two engaging children, Julian and Kaamilah, she is tuned in to the issues and concerns on the minds of the upcoming generation and can help to shape a society that is responsive to their needs. Also, growing up as the only girl in a family with four boys, she knows what it takes to stand up for her convictions against awesome odds, and is not likely to retreat from the task of rendering tough decisions when warranted, however unpopular they may be.

The experiences I briefly touched on, along with many others that are too numerous to mention here, have allowed Judge Alford to develop the wisdom, compassion and sense of fair play that she will draw upon in carrying out her duties as a jurist.

I have every confidence that she will enjoy the respect and trust of all citizens in Delaware who

place a high premium on a just and equitable judicial system. Congratulations and best wishes to my dear friend, Judge Alford.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: I now have the privilege of calling upon our new Superior Court Judge, Haile L. Alford.

JUDGE ALFORD: Thank you, President Judge Ridgely. Chief Justice Veasey, Governor Castle, Senator Holloway, distinguished members of the bench and bar, Pastor Freeman, my wonderful family and friends who have come from far and near and guests. Thank you very much for all of your support.

I am so touched at this moment, and I'm also warned that I should enjoy this moment when everyone is saying all these wonderful things about me because that may soon change once some decisions come from the bench. But I'll enjoy this day for the rest of my life.

But let me first and foremost thank Almighty God without whose blessings I would not be here before you today; my wonderful mother whose loving and guiding heart and hands have guided me so well throughout my years on this planet, who is not only my mother but also my friend;

my father who passed away many years ago but whom I'm sure is present here today in spirit. I know he is very proud today; my wonderful family who's also come from very far, you've heard from Illinois, from Michigan, New York. They traveled this distance to be here with me today, but not only today. They have always been supportive throughout all my endeavors, and I thank them for that. Of course to my colleagues and friends here in Delaware, both in the corporate world and outside in many of my public duties on the board of Headstart and with other agencies that I volunteered with. All of my friends who are far too numerous to mention, I wouldn't even try for I know I would get myself in trouble. It's truly an honor to have been appointed as a Superior Court Judge.

I know along with such honor comes the knowledge that it's also an awesome responsibility. I pray and I hope and I trust that all of you will pray that God grants me the strength and the wisdom to carry out this responsibility in a manner that is fair, just and compassionate.

I come before you today as the first African American woman granted the honor to serve on this distinguished Court, fully realizing that no individual

reaches any height without the love and support of many people. I am no exception.

This appointment represents a milestone, not just for me personally but for the African-American community that has, over the last couple of weeks, collectively beamed with pride that another of their community, one of its members, was chosen to serve the State of Delaware in the capacity of this Court.

It gives me great pressure to know that I am contributing to a greater perception of inclusion in the American dream of liberty and justice for all. I am proud to serve as a role model for young people who may look at me and say yes to their dreams rather than doubt and despair.

(Applause)

I pray through the grace of God and the support of all of you that I live up to the expectations placed in me. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: Thank you, Haile. Congratulations and best wishes upon your taking the oath today. All of us on the Court look forward to working with you.

Pastor Freeman will now give the benediction.  
Please stand.

(Benediction)

PRESIDENT JUDGE RIDGELY: This concludes  
the Special Session of the Superior Court of Delaware.  
There will be a reception afterwards at the first floor  
lobby where you are welcome to stay and greet our new  
Judge.

Court is now adjourned.

(Special session adjourned at 11:45 a.m.)

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