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## Strom Thurmond's family confirms paternity claim

From David Mattingly  
CNN Washington Bureau

**(CNN) --An attorney for the family of former U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina confirmed Monday that in 1925, when he was 22, Thurmond fathered a child with a black teenage housekeeper.**

Thurmond, the longest-serving senator in U.S. history, died in June at age 100. His daughter's story was published Sunday by The Washington Post.

Essie Mae Washington-Williams, a 78-year-old retired school teacher in Los Angeles, California, revealed her relationship to the former segregationist after decades of silence.

Thurmond ran for president in 1948 on the ticket of the States Rights Party, the "Dixiecrats," a breakaway faction of Southern Democrats who believed strongly in racial segregation and were opposed to the Democratic Party's civil rights program.

He received 1 million votes and carried four Deep South states; Democrat Harry Truman won the election.

Thurmond joined the Republican Party in the 1960s and ultimately turned away from his segregationist past. ([Thurmond's life and times](#))

Frank Wheaton, Washington-Williams' attorney, said she came forward at the urging of her children and had no plans to ask the Thurmond estate for any money, according to the Post.

Monday's statement from the Thurmond family reads: "As J. Strom Thurmond has passed away and cannot speak for himself, the Thurmond family acknowledges Ms. Essie Mae Washington-Williams' claim to her heritage. We hope this acknowledgment will bring closure for Ms. Williams."

The Thurmond family attorney, J. Mark Taylor, declined further comment.

Glenn Walters, a South Carolina attorney also representing Williams, told CNN he was happy that the matter had been resolved in this manner.

Walters was reportedly prepared to provide documentation and undergo a DNA test to prove her claim. Her attorney told CNN no DNA test was done.

According to the Post report, Washington-Williams' mother, Carrie Butler, worked as a maid at the Thurmond family home in Edgefield, South Carolina.

At the time the girl was born in 1925, Butler was 16 and Thurmond was 22, unmarried and living in his parents' home.


Butler's sister took the girl to live in Pennsylvania when she was 6 months old. She did not meet Thurmond until returning to South Carolina in 1941, when she was 16, the Post reported.

Her mother, who was ill and died a short time later, had insisted on introducing her to Thurmond, who acknowledged her as his daughter, the newspaper reported.

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