

Supporting Sotomayor

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
Thursday, 02 July 2009 15:09

Judge Sonia Sotomayor is qualified to be a justice on the Supreme Court. If the Senate chooses to confirm her she will be only the third woman, and also the first Latina justice to be confirmed.

But will they confirm her? Already we are hearing rumblings that a woman spunky enough to assert that a wise Latina might differ from a white man in her interpretation of the law is “race conscious”. And those who are sitting in a race neutral fog are loaded for bear.

But this woman, this phenomenal woman, has paid her dues in the judicial vineyards. She has been an Assistant District Attorney in New York, a board member for any important organizations, including the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, and a judge who was nominated by President George Herbert Walker Bush (not shrub) to the Southern District Court of New York.

She has cleared hurdles, climbed mountains, and made legal history, including an injunction she issued that stopped the baseball strike in 1994.

President Bill Clinton gave the sister an upgrade, and the U. S. Court of Appeals confirmed her in 1998. Her nomination was delayed by a year because some were afraid that she was moving to the Supreme Court. Now she is moving on up, again, as President Obama has nominated her to the Supreme Court.

This is exciting, but our excitement has to be muted and focused by the already mean-spirited comments that are coming from the right, comments that suggest that there are those who will not give this woman a fair hearing.

There are folks who truly believe that Judge Sotomayor is off base for embracing her ethnicity, or for making it clear that there are too many women whose voices are silenced, and for asserting that women like her will lift their voices in support of those who are silenced and sidelined.

We are excited, and yet also challenged at the nascent resistance that comes from white men who cannot wrap their brains around the reality of a phenomenal woman of color who is also quite qualified to be a supreme court justice.

This sentiment is echoed by several, including the President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, the Hon. Cynthia Butler-McIntyre. She has written, “Judge Sotomayor has lived the American dream of growing up with very little, yet managing to excel and become successful.”

Sotomayor’s mother served in the women’s Auxiliary Corps of the Army during World War II. Her father, who had a third-grade education, died when Sonia Sotomayor was nine. She turned to books for solace and her love of reading lead her to study law. What a story! What a woman! What an inspiration if she is confirmed as Supreme Court Justice.

And yet there are hurdles that must be cleared. Questions that need to be answered. Inappropriate litmus tests that must be addressed. Should this judge have to tell folks whether she supports the death penalty? Abortion? Affirmative action? Did those last two judges, whose confirmations were bum rushed through the Senate, have to do much more than a cakewalk?

Supporting Sotomayor

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
Thursday, 02 July 2009 15:09

Judge Sotomayor should not have to do more than the two white men who preceded her did. She has the confidence of a President whose right is to appoint a Supreme Court justice. The senate's job is to advise and consent. Not to intrude and dissent. For the record.

This is a time for progressive people to come together to support a wonderful woman whose outstanding record qualified her for this Supreme Court.

Importantly, while she is a grounded, experienced and focused jurist, she is also a woman who embraces her diversity and brings it to the table of her decisions. She has participated in over 3,000 panel decisions and authored more than 400 opinions. She is an open book, and as we turn the page we see nothing but a great future for Judge Sonia Sotomayor.

There are some senate republicans who would delay this process. The confirmation of Judge Sonia Sotomayor needs to be expedited.

In her letter to members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, President Cynthia Butler McIntyre offers her servant's heart to the women she asks to reach out to the Senate about Judge Sotomayor's confirmation.

All our hearts should join Sister McIntyre's to lift up a woman who can only be a positive addition to the Supreme Court.

Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College for Women. She can be reached at presbennett@bennett.edu