

SONIA SOTOMAYOR, DOCTOR OF LAWS



Sonia Sotomayor is the 111th justice of the United States Supreme Court. She is the first Hispanic and the third of four women to serve the nation's highest court in its 223-year history.

Justice Sotomayor was born to Puerto Rican parents who moved to New York during World War II. Together with her younger brother, she grew up in housing projects in the Bronx and often visited family in Puerto Rico, with whom she maintains close ties. Her father spoke only Spanish, and she did not reach fluency in English until after his death when she was nine.

Justice Sotomayor was profoundly influenced by her mother, who instilled in her the value of education and inspired her to declare, at age ten, her interest in attending college and becoming an attorney.

She was an avid reader with a love of learning. Diagnosed with Type I diabetes at the age of eight, Justice Sotomayor excelled in school despite the challenges of managing her health. She was valedictorian of her Cardinal Spellman High School class and earned a full scholarship to Princeton University, where she graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1976. At Princeton, she pushed the administration to diversify by introducing classes about Latin America and by hiring Latino faculty.

At Yale Law School, Justice Sotomayor was an editor of the Yale Law Journal and managing editor of Yale Studies in World Public Order. After graduating in 1979, she worked in the trial division for Robert Morgenthau, the New York County District Attorney, serving as Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan. She then spent several years in private practice with Pavia & Harcourt, also based in New York, becoming a partner in 1988.

President George H. W. Bush nominated her to the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in 1991; unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate the following year, she became the youngest member of the court and the first Puerto Rican woman to serve as a judge in a U.S. federal court. She was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in 1998, and in 2009 President Barack Obama nominated her to the United States Supreme Court. Her appointment was confirmed by majority vote in the Senate, and she was sworn in on August 8 of that year. The only justice with experience as a trial judge, Justice Sotomayor has joined the majority on decisions related to immigration law and the Affordable Care Act; her first major written dissent was a response to a Miranda rights ruling.

Justice Sotomayor served as an adjunct professor at New York University School of Law and has also lectured at Columbia Law School. A passionate advocate for education, she has spoken about her experiences at law schools and elementary schools alike and has just published a memoir, *My Beloved World* (2013). She was a member of the Second Circuit Task Force on Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts and served on the boards of the State of New York Mortgage Agency, the New York City Campaign Finance Board, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. She was awarded the John Carro Award for Judicial Excellence by the Association of Judges of Hispanic Heritage in 2011.