

June 8, 2009

## Detractors playing game of ignorance

The other morning, when I heard of Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court, I found myself grinning ear to ear. My heart lifted and a sense of pride swept over me. Pride in Sotomayor and her achievements; pride in our country - yet the land of opportunity and dreams; pride in our new president's courageous nomination.

Then, of course, the negative press began its drumming, and in just a few hours, anthems of "reverse racism" and "activist judge" reverberated. Many commentators are repeating a quote from the nominee, of course taken out of context, which some assert reveals Sotomayor's explicit racism and sexism - against white men.

Sotomayor's detractors do have a point: race, gender and class matter. And the way in which we interpret the influence of race, gender and class will affect the way we interpret everything - including the law. Those charging Sotomayor of racism and sexism are playing shameful games of ignorance. At best, they are only unconscious of their complicit involvement in the sweeping systemic racism, sexism and classism that is still rampant in our society:

> Women make up more than 50 percent of the population in the United States and yet they hold only 16.8 percent of the seats in Congress.

> Women of color make up more than 17 percent of the population in the United States and yet they hold only 3.9 percent of seats in Congress, with no women of color holding a Senate seat.

> 1.8 percent of all Supreme Court justices have been women (Sotomayor's confirmation would raise that to a whopping 2.7 percent as she would be the third woman to ever serve).

(Statistics from the Center for American Women and Politics).

> Zero percent of all United States' presidents have been women.

In the face of these statistics, instead of being concerned about Sotomayor's potential "racism" and "sexism," we ought to be celebrating her success. I am disheartened by those who wish to discredit Sotomayor by accusing her of the very opinions they hold implicitly. Moreover, those who critique Sotomayor for her attitude ought to place their frustrations on the real culprits behind her success - those people who influenced the decision to admit women to Princeton University in 1969, and the forward-thinking radicals who enrolled women at the Yale School of Law beginning in 1919 - Sotomayor's alma maters.

To Sotomayor's nomination, I say hurrah; we are one step closer to taxation with fair representation. And from one strong, intelligent woman to another, I say to Sotomayor - "you go, girl."

---