

Women in Politics and Government

American Resource Center Newsletter

September 2009

Sandra Day O'Connor

First woman justice of the Supreme Court



Sandra Day O'Connor was born in El Paso, Texas in 1930. She grew up on the Lazy B Ranch in southeastern Arizona. She married John Jay O'Connor III soon after graduation from law school and has three sons.

Despite her law degree – with honors – from Stanford University, O'Connor was turned down by law firms because of her gender, a common practice in the 1950s. O'Connor became deputy county attorney of San Mateo, California. Years later, she recalled that her first job "influenced the balance of my life because it demonstrated how much I did enjoy public service." The family moved to Germany and then to Arizona, where O'Connor held a succession of jobs, raised her children, and became involved in Republican Party politics.

In 1969, she was appointed to the state senate, won re-election twice to that post, and became senate majority leader in 1972. In 1975, voters elected her to a state

judgeship on the Maricopa County Superior Court. Four years later, Arizona's governor appointed her to the state's Court of Appeals, and Reagan formally nominated her to the Supreme Court on August 19, 1981. O'Connor brought to the Supreme Court experience in government, as well as being the only sitting justice previously elected to public service.

Many saw her as the most powerful woman in the United States. O'Connor's opinions have provided judicial guidelines on federalism and on controversial topics such as affirmative action, the death penalty, and abortion. Through it all, she remained mindful that – as the first woman in the Court – some people might focus only on her sex and not her talent while, paradoxically, her appointment represented an achievement for American women.

"The power I exert on the Court depends on the power of my arguments, not on my gender," she once said. But she also insisted that "half the population in my country are women, and it makes a difference for women to see women in positions of authority in high office."

Justice O'Connor retired from the Supreme Court on January 31, 2006. She is currently co-chair of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a group dedicated to preparing the next generation of Americans for citizenship.

President Obama awarded Justice Sandra Day O'Connor the Medal of Freedom on August 12, 2009 in recognition of her meritorious contribution to the U.S.

Key women in Obama Administration



Department of State Secretary
Hillary Rodham Clinton



Department of Labor
Secretary
Hilda L. Solis



Department of Homeland
Security Secretary
Janet A. Napolitano



Department of Health and Human
Services Secretary
Kathleen Sebelius

Ambassador at-large for
Global Women's Issues
Melanne Vermeer



Council of Economic
Advisers Chair
Christina Romer



Environmental Protection
Agency Administrator
Lisa P. Jackson



United States Ambassador to
the United Nations
Ambassador Susan Rice

U.S. Award Honors, Supports Women Who Fight for Social Justice:

Clinton, First Lady salute Women of Courage awardees, cite U.S. Initiatives

Washington — First Lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton joined forces March 11 to congratulate the 2009 winners of the secretary of state's International Women of Courage awards, celebrate International Women's Day and announce the Obama administration's efforts to empower women everywhere.

The International Women of Courage awards, established in 2007 by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, pay tribute to emerging women leaders and recognize the courage and leadership shown by each in her struggle for social justice and women's rights.

This year's awardees are Hadizatou Mani of Niger, Ambiga Sreenevasan of Malaysia, Veronika Marchenko of Russia, Reem Al Numery of Yemen, Suaad Allami of Iraq, Mutabar Tadjibayeva of Uzbekistan, Wazhma Frogh of Afghanistan and Norma Cruz of Guatemala.

"Our honorees and the hundreds of millions of women they represent not only deserve our respect, they deserve our full support," Clinton said at the awards ceremony at the U.S. Department of State.

"What I am committed to is doing everything in my power as secretary of state to further the work on the ground in countries like those represented here to make changes in people's lives." Women's rights and human rights, Clinton said, "will always be central to our foreign policy."



First Lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton with the 2009 Women of Courage awardees.

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION INITIATIVES TO HELP WOMEN

In her remarks at the awards ceremony, First Lady Michelle Obama noted the president's signing of an executive order earlier the same day that called for a White House Council on Women and Girls.

The council's mission will be to coordinate federal response to the challenges confronted by women and girls and to ensure that all Cabinet and Cabinet-level agencies consider how their policies and programs affect women and families.

The council will be chaired by Valerie Jarrett, assistant to the president and senior White House adviser, and will include as members the heads of Cabinet-level federal agencies.

The executive director of the council will be Tina Tchen, deputy assistant to the president and director of the Office of Public Liaison at the White House.

"The goal of this council is to ensure that young girls have no limits on their dreams and no obstacles to their achievements," the First Lady said.

The importance the Obama administration places on social justice for women, Clinton said, is further demonstrated by the president's March 6 announcement of a new foreign policy position focused on global women's issues and his nomination of Melanne Verveer as ambassador-at-large for international women's issues.

Verveer is the co-founder and chair of Vital Voices Global Partnership, a nonprofit organization that identifies, trains and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe. If approved by the U.S. Senate, Verveer will report directly to the secretary of state.

WOMEN'S ADVOCACY GETS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

In remarks at the awards ceremony, Ambiga Sreenevasan, Malaysian Bar Council president, spoke on behalf of all the awardees.

"This award will help to bring to the international stage our voices and our advocacy," she said. "This occasion gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of the rule of law in promoting the rights of women around the world. When the rule of law is upheld, equality is upheld, the cause of justice is upheld and human rights are upheld."

The award, Ambiga said, "has given us the opportunity which we would not otherwise have had to share our stories, our successes, our failures, to reach out across our borders and to establish a base upon which we can build a meaningful network of support."

During their weeklong stay in the United States, the awardees (with the exception of Reem Al Numery, who was not able to leave Yemen) met with officials at the State Department, the White House and the U.S. Agency for International Development and

with members of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

The awardees met also with representatives of a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including those from Vital Voices Global Partnership.

For the second year in a row, the American Women for International Understanding (AWIU), a nonprofit nongovernmental organization, held a banquet for the Women of Courage awardees at the National Press Club in Washington and presented each with a \$1,000 grant.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton congratulates Veronika Marchenko of Russia, while First Lady Michelle Obama looks on.

Read more: <http://www.america.gov>

The Council on Women and Girls' new site

Christina M. Tchen

Welcome to our new website! As the Executive Director of the Council, I'm very excited to launch this site as we commemorate Women's Equality Day on August 26.

On this day when we remember the bravery and struggles that won women the right to vote, we are very pleased to add this website to share with everyone the work of this Administration to address the issues of concern to women and girls.

The mission of the White House Council on Women and Girls is to ensure that every part of the federal government takes into account the needs of women and girls in the policies we draft, the programs we create, the legislation we support. Through this site you will be able to meet the member of the Council and the key staff in each agency who are charged with meeting this charge from the President.

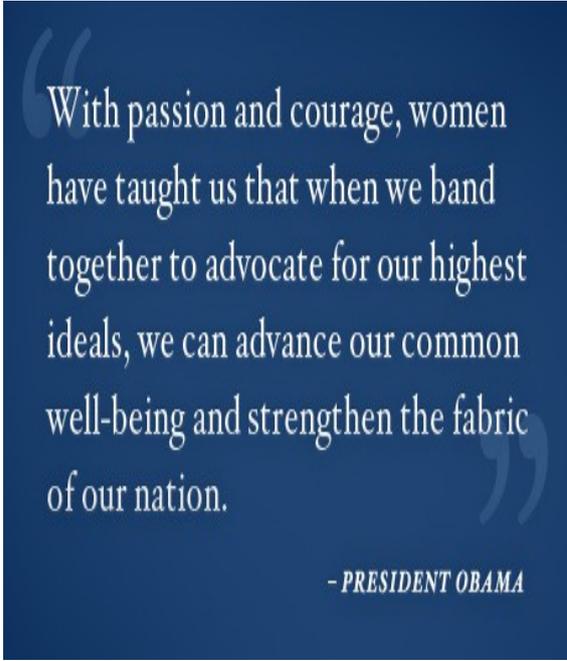
This site also gives you information on the work we have been doing through the Council highlighting the Anniversary of Title IX, working on health reform, and joining the Vice President in the appointment of a White House Advisor to the President on Violence Against Women.

We hope that you will come back often for updates as we and each of the members of the Council moves forward with our work. One of our first steps has been for each agency to assess their current resources addressing women and girls, and to begin planning for the future. Those reports have all been submitted to us, we are reviewing them, and we thank everyone in the agencies who worked on them. We will be posting the reports on line in the near future.

I hope that you will use this site and share it with others. We want you to come back and visit us often to learn what is happening throughout the Administration on issues concerning women and girls.

Thank you for your support.

Christina M. Tchen is Executive Director of the Council on Women and Girls and the Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement



With passion and courage, women have taught us that when we band together to advocate for our highest ideals, we can advance our common well-being and strengthen the fabric of our nation.

- PRESIDENT OBAMA

Read more:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg/>

Sotomayor Confirmed as Newest U.S. Supreme Court Justice

In a vote of 68–31, the United States Senate confirmed Judge Sonia Sotomayor as the 111th U.S. Supreme Court justice, and Sotomayor is expected to be sworn in to replace retired Justice David Souter on August 8.

Speaking at the White House August 6, President Obama said he was “pleased and deeply gratified” that U.S. lawmakers had approved his nominee for the highest level of the judicial branch of the U.S. government. Sotomayor will be “charged with the vital and difficult task of applying principles set forth at our founding to the questions and controversies of our time,” Obama said. The position is a lifetime appointment.

The Supreme Court’s nine justices make up the court of final appeal from the lower federal and state courts. Political experts believe it is likely Obama will make more than one appointment to the Supreme Court during his presidency.

Sotomayor’s presence on the court is of special historic significance because she is the first Hispanic-American member. She is also only the third female justice. At the August 6 vote, Senator Robert Menendez (Democrat from New Jersey) said that with Sotomayor’s confirmation, “the new portrait of the justices of the Supreme Court will clearly reflect who we are as a nation, [and] what we stand for as a fair, just and hopeful people.”

As outlined in Article II of the U.S. Constitution, a Supreme Court justice, like Cabinet officials and other political appointees, is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee then holds hearings and questions the nominee before voting on whether to pass the nomination along to the full Senate for a confirmation vote. (See “Nominees for Highest U.S. Court Undergo Careful Scrutiny.”)

The president said that in the 10 weeks since Sotomayor was nominated, the

members of the Judiciary Committee and the full Senate have carefully scrutinized her legal career, including her 17 years as a federal judge.

“They’ve gauged her respect for the proper role of each branch of our government, her commitment to faithfully apply the law to the facts at hand, and her determination to protect our core constitutional rights and freedoms,” he said.



The president said the Senate’s constitutionally mandated role in confirming Supreme Court justices has been “helping to ensure that ‘equal justice under the law’ is not merely a phrase inscribed above our courthouse door, but a description of what happens every single day inside the courtroom.”

“It’s a promise that, whether you’re a mighty corporation or an ordinary American, you will receive a full and fair hearing. And in the end, the outcome of your case will be determined by nothing more or less than the strength of your argument and the dictates of the law,” he said.

The president also thanked the senators for the timing of the vote, saying Sotomayor will be “fully prepared to take her seat” when the court begins its new term in October.

Selected bibliography of recent books available at the American Resource Center

After the revolution : women who transformed contemporary art / Eleanor Heartney [et al.].
Munich ; London : Prestel, 2007.
ARC 709.04 After

Barr, Juliana
Peace came in the form of a woman : Indians and Spaniards in the Texas borderlands
Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, cop. 2007.
ARC 976.4004 Barr

Bernstein, Carl
A woman in charge : the life of Hillary Rodham Clinton
New York : Knopf, 2007.
ARC 328.7309 Bernstein

Crocker, Ruth
Mrs. Russell Sage : women's activism and philanthropy in gilded age and progressive era America / Ruth Crocker.
Bloomington : Indiana University Press, cop. 2006.
ARC 361.7409 Crocker

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, feminist as thinker : a reader in documents and essays / edited by Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Cndida Smith.
New York [u.a.] : New York Univ. Press, cop. 2007.
ARC 305.4209 Stanton

Gender and elections : shaping the future of American politics / edited by Susan J. Carroll, Richard L. Fox.
Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2006.
ARC 324.973 Gender

Gillespie, Marcia
Maya Angelou : a glorious celebration
New York : Doubleday, cop. 2008.
ARC 818.5409 Lupton

Hill, Jeff
Women's suffrage
Detroit, MI : Omnigraphics, Inc, cop. 2006.
ARC 324.623 Hill

Janda, Sarah Eppler
Beloved women : the political lives of Ladonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller
Julkaistu: DeKalb, Ill : Northern Illinois University Press, cop. 2007.
ARC 305.4889 Janda

Schiff, Karenna Gore
Lighting the way : nine women who changed modern America
New York : Miramax Books/Hyperion, 2006.
ARC 920.7209 Schiff

The sex of class : women transforming American labor / edited by Dorothy Sue Cobble.
Ithaca : ILR Press, 2007.
ARC 331.4097 Sex

Song, Sarah
Justice, gender, and the politics of multiculturalism
Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2007.
ARC 305.488 Justice

Tallichet, Suzanne E.
Daughters of the mountain : women coal miners in central Appalachia
University Park, Pa : Pennsylvania State University Press, cop. 2006.
ARC 331.4822 Tallichet

This is not chick lit : original stories by America's best women writers / edited by Elizabeth Merrick.
New York : Random House Trade Paperbacks, cop. 2006.
ARC FIC This

The unraveling archive : essays on Sylvia Plath / edited by Anita Helle.
Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, cop. 2007.
ARC 814.54 Unraveling

Weller, Sheila

Girls like us : Carole King, Joni Mitchell, and Carly Simon - and the journey of a generation
New York : Atria Books, cop. 2008.
ARC 782.4216 Weller

Women and leadership : the state of play and strategies for change / Barbara Kellerman, Deborah L. Rhode, editors ; foreword by Sandra Day O'Connor.
San Francisco, Calif : Jossey-Bass, cop. 2007.
ARC 305.42 Women

Women, democracy, and globalization in North America : a comparative study / Jane Bayes ... [et al.].
New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
ARC 320.082 Women

Zipf, Catherine W.

Professional pursuits : women and the American arts and crafts movement
Knoxville : University of Tennessee Press, cop. 2007.
ARC 305.4097 Zipf



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