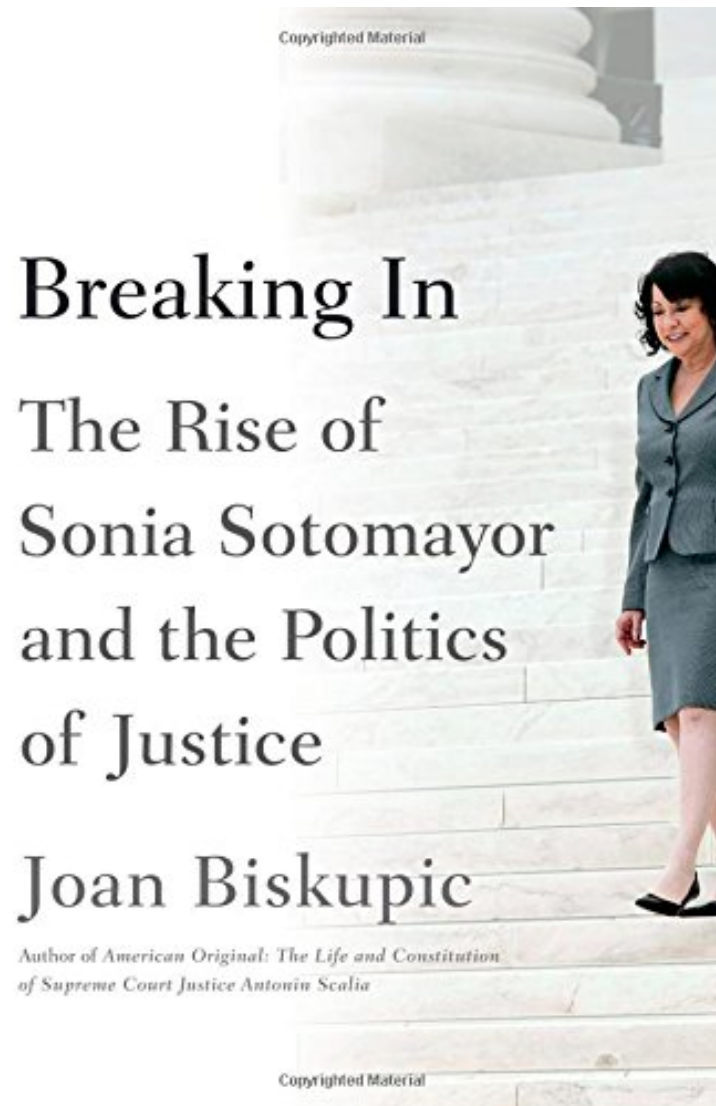


# Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice

Joan Biskupic

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**Joan Biskupic : Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. My Beloved CareerBy Reader 47Excellent book. It gives a good idea of how anyone with sheer ambition, despite a very humble background, can succeed and become part of the American Dream. It shows how networking and political savvy are absolutely crucial in federal judicial appointments. Justice Sotomayor is and continues to be a great role model for women, minorities, and people dealing with a chronic

medical conditions. The only issue I have with this book is that you didn't go into her crucial role in affirming healthcare in the 2012 oral arguments where she pushed the issue of upholding this law under the taxing power which Chief Justice Roberts ultimately did. A fine read and a great addition to Sotomayor's "My Beloved World." 14 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Nicely complements the Justice's autobiography. By Ronald H. Clark This turned out to be a somewhat different book than I had anticipated. I had read with great benefit the author's two judicial biographies on Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia, so I assumed that this book would be another judicial biography. In fact, it is something quite different, and I am glad it is. In her own words (at p. 7), the author declares, "Rather than biography, it examines the cultural and political shifts that merged with Sotomayor's life and led to her appointment." This is not to say there is not a good deal of biographical material here--but its focus is far broader. The Justice's well-received autobiography, "My Beloved World," opened to me the story of Puerto Ricans in America, both the good and the challenging. It was an important education for me. This book is concerned with the political, social, and economic factors, coupled with Sotomayor's own incredible drive and talents, that she maneuvered through to secure her Supreme Court appointment. That is, why was she right for the times when the Court vacancy arose? For those really interested in the Justice, I recommend that the two books be read in conjunction. Particularly interesting is the discussion of Puerto Rican interest groups dedicated to promoting the appointment and advancement of Hispanic candidates for the judiciary. The author recounts how years of effort had preceded Sotomayor's arrival on the scene. Judge Jose Cabranes in the opinion of many had the best chances for the Court--yet he aged out of contention because of the lack of Hispanic political muscle. Political factors were clearly at work in the denial of a D.C. Circuit seat to Miguel Estrada, which the author discusses in a highly insightful chapter. Yet Sotomayor made it and why this is so constitutes the central recurring theme of the book. Once again, the book reminds us of how bizarre sometimes the process of selecting nominees for the Court can be, especially in these days of intense partisan warfare. One need only read John Dean's book on Nixon's selection of Rehnquist (whose name he could not even remember at times) to see a further example. Here the author effectively traces the final competition between Sotomayor, Judge Diane Wood, and Elena Kagan to secure President Obama's nod for the nomination. Confidential letter writing to the White House; activating long-term contacts with White House and DOJ staffers; the use of published articles and books (I had forgotten about Jeffrey Rosen's harsh "New Republic" appraisal of Sotomayor) all played a role here. Sotomayor's offhand "wise Latina" statement and its impact is thoroughly reviewed by the author. The famous "Ricci" firefighter qualification case, where Sotomayor's Second Circuit panel was accused of devoting insufficient attention or analysis before denying the appeal, also played a role in the nomination battle. And of course, facing some confrontational GOP members of the Senate Judiciary Committee injected yet further unusual elements into the process. In short, the Justice's autobiography is her view of her challenging pathway to the Court, focusing as it should upon her own battles, talents, and successes. This book is concerned with the environment in which Sotomayor developed from a poor Bronx childhood, into degrees from Princeton and Yale Law, a stint in Robert Morgenthau's district attorney's office, years in private practice, and her appointments to the Southern District of New York and the Second Circuit (some 17 years worth of judicial experience). But why her time had come had much to do with the context of what was going on external to her own efforts--the increasing political influence of Hispanics; the particular outlook of Obama; her contacts, colleagues, and other influential supporters. This book melds the personal Sotomayor together with the context of American politics to fully explain how she made the leap to the Court. The book covers a lot of ground in 260 pages. There are helpful end notes; a brief selective bibliography; some pictures and illustrations; and a helpful index. I only wish that the author had chosen to discuss a few more Court cases, but the ones she discusses are certainly important, though it is hard to say how representative they are of the Justice's oral argument techniques and ability to influence her colleagues. The book also raises the issue implicitly as to whether the Justice is too publicly active outside the Court, or just a much-needed breath of fresh air in a stodgy old institution. Quite a masterful study that adds much to our understanding of this most unique Justice who has a long career ahead of her. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great! By JeanJoan Biskupic received a J.D. from Georgetown University Law School and is the legal reporter for Reuters. She has written biographies of Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia. Biskupic says this book is not exactly a biography of Sonia Sotomayor but a parallel narrative to trace the growing influences of the Hispanic population in the United States. Reading this book I learned about the 1954 Supreme Court case of Hernandez V Texas, which gave protection against discrimination for people of Mexican and Latin American descent. I was surprised I knew nothing about this important ruling prior to reading about it in this book. The author weaves information about Sotomayor and the rise of the Hispanic population in an interesting and balanced method. Biskupic shows her journalistic training as she describes the federal judicial-nomination process. I found this process most interesting and also most discouraging. Biskupic presents a fact in Sotomayor's confirmation hearing and in the way it contrasts between several other confirmation hearings that were conducted. References to Scalia's Italian heritage for example were repeated so often it became a running joke. And O'Connor's gender was a selling point. By comparison Sotomayor's membership in Puerto Rican organization set off a backlash against her. Biskupic reflects on the way notions about ethnicity can blur into notions about race. Thus Scalia's and Alito's Italian ethnicity were celebrated as an enhancing dimension of their belonging, while Sotomayor's ethnicity

is still viewed with skepticism. Biskupic reveals but does not address how judicial politics has become ground zero in the struggles to demonize integrationist vision of diversity. The author covers in-depth the role Sotomayor has on the court about race discrimination and affirmative action laws. Overall I found this an informative and thought provoking book. I enjoyed the photographs provided in the book. I read this as an e-book via my Kindle app on my iPad.

"I knew she'd be trouble." So quipped Antonin Scalia about Sonia Sotomayor at the Supreme Court's annual end-of-term party in 2010. It's usually the sort of event one would expect from such a grand institution, with gentle parodies of the justices performed by their law clerks, but this year Sotomayor decided to shake it up--flooding the room with salsa music and coaxing her fellow justices to dance. It was little surprise in 2009 that President Barack Obama nominated a Hispanic judge to replace the retiring justice David Souter. The fact that there had never been a nominee to the nation's highest court from the nation's fastest growing minority had long been apparent. So the time was ripe--but how did it come to be Sonia Sotomayor? In "Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice," the veteran journalist Joan Biskupic answers that question. This is the story of how two forces providentially merged--the large ambitions of a talented Puerto Rican girl raised in the projects in the Bronx and the increasing political presence of Hispanics, from California to Texas, from Florida to the Northeast--resulting in a historical appointment. And this is not just a tale about breaking barriers as a Puerto Rican. It's about breaking barriers as a justice. Biskupic, the author of highly praised judicial biographies of Justice Antonin Scalia and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, now pulls back the curtain on the Supreme Court nomination process, revealing the networks Sotomayor built and the skills she cultivated to go where no Hispanic has gone before. We see other potential candidates edged out along the way. And we see how, in challenging tradition and expanding our idea of a justice (as well as expanding her public persona), Sotomayor has created tension within and without the court's marble halls. As a Supreme Court justice, Sotomayor has shared her personal story to an unprecedented degree. And that story--of a Latina who emerged from tough times in the projects not only to prevail but also to rise to the top--has even become fabric for some of her most passionate comments on matters before the Court. But there is yet more to know about the rise of Sonia Sotomayor. "Breaking In" offers the larger, untold story of the woman who has been called "the people's justice."

A veteran Supreme Court reporter charts Sotomayor's evolution from a poor Puerto Rican girl living in the Bronx to the first Latina Justice on the Supreme Court. Sotomayor's sense of ethnic identity, Biskupic argues, may be as important a legacy as the Justice's legal contributions. TimeMs. Biskupic sets out to chronicle Justice Sotomayor's career and, in a parallel narrative, to trace the growing influence of the Hispanic population in the United States. ... Ms. Biskupic succeeds at both her tasks. ... Ms. Biskupic is at her journalistic best when she describes this federal judicial-nomination process, one that former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh once described as possessing the 'intricacies of chess and audacity of old-fashioned hardball.' Wall Street Journal[Biskupic] begins with ... Sotomayor's salsa dance at an end-of-term party for the court's justices and staff. ... [T]he vignette introduces the book's theme: that Sotomayor 'spent a lifetime challenging boundaries and disrupting the norm' and that, because she 'was not one to wait her turn,' she was able to exploit 'the cultural and political shifts that merged with [her] life and led to her appointment. ... In the end, Sotomayor does stand out, both as a courageous justice, as able as any of those who joined the court before her, and as an inspiring public figure. ... As Biskupic recognizes, [her public] message is likely to prove as powerful a measure of Sotomayor's impact on our national future as will her contributions to the work of the Supreme Court. Washington Post[Breaking In is] an examination of what it means to become a celebrity; a deeply reported study of how to concoct a strategy maximizing the chance of a presidential appointment to the Supreme Court; and a journalistic analysis of Sotomayor's court performance so far. ... Biskupic clearly and compellingly recounts how Sotomayor plotted her rise to the pinnacle of the judicial branch of government. ... Most important for the future of the USA, Biskupic explains why Sotomayor is sui generis on a court of nine justices, how she cares more about interpreting the Constitution and court precedent according to what's best for society rather than becoming a coalition builder. Seattle TimesThe book's strong suit is a wealth of detail about the race between Republicans and Democrats for the prize of appointing the first Hispanic justice. It is a primer for anyone with large ambitions, as well as a cautionary tale, since the message conveyed is that skillful manipulation of identity politics may carry the day over more substantial achievement. This is, of course, an old story for both parties, which have at times filled regional, religious, racial, and gender slots with candidates who eclipsed other, arguably better qualified, aspirant. Biskupic's book is well balanced, setting forth an array of views on Justice Sotomayor. ... The book opens with an arresting account of Sotomayor in a bold charm offensive at the 2010 Supreme Court end-of-term party. The story has to be read in full to be believed.... National One U.S. Supreme Court justice's passionate behind-the-scenes fight to allow race to be considered in college admissions rescued the University of Texas from a historic legal defeat in 2013, according to a book released Tuesday. Offering a rare look into the secret deliberations of the nation's highest court, author Joan Biskupic's biography of Justice Sonia Sotomayor details for the first time how the court's first Hispanic member helped turn an initial 5-3 defeat for UT into a 7-1 decision. Austin American StatesmenA fascinating account of the political machinations involved in achieving a Supreme Court judgeship and of Sotomayor's juridical decisions

and actions since her appointment [Biskupic's] skill as a journalist enlivens [her] sources with vivid anecdotal detail Publishers Weekly Biskupic offers a compelling look at a justice who continues to face challenges to her right to sit on the bench. Booklist Biskupic combines scholarly rigor with a bit of human admiration in this clear-eyed account of how someone advances a judicial career in 21st-century America A balanced but also admiring portrait of a Latina, a jurist and a trailblazer. Kirkus This is a remarkable book about an extraordinary woman in very challenging times. Sonia Sotomayor's memoir is not complete without Breaking In. Joan Biskupic has done a wonderful and insightful job writing about the most influential Latina ever. She puts together three incredibly complex elements: Sotomayor's life of struggle, the rise of the Latino community, and the intricacies of the Supreme Court. The result is superb. Sotomayor's mission--that a single person can make a difference in the cause of justice--is transforming our country. You have to read it to know us. Jorge Ramos, anchor, Univision/Fusion If you think books about Supreme Court justices are only for lawyers, think again. Joan Biskupic has written a fascinating story, at once shrewd and sympathetic, about overcoming the fear of failure. Biskupic takes you into the head and the heart of the most interesting Supreme Court justice since . . . well there's never been a justice like Sotomayor. Evan Thomas, author of *Ike's Bluff: President Eisenhower's Secret Battle to Save the World* It's hard to write a fair-minded biography of such a polarizing figure, but that's what Joan Biskupic has done with *American Original* . . . Impressively balanced and well reported. Jeffrey Rosen, *The New York Times Book on American Original* *American Original* is full of strong reporting. It is scrupulously even-handed, which may irritate partisans on both sides of the Scalia divide--there are few fence-straddlers when it comes to him . . . Biskupic's larger accomplishment is to present the recent evolution of the Supreme Court through the prism of its most colorful member. Jim Newton, *Los Angeles Times on American Original* A timely and important book . . . Illuminating. Anthony Lewis, *The New York of Books on Sandra Day O'Connor* Superbly thorough and perceptive. David J. Garrow, *The New Republic on Sandra Day O'Connor* About the Author Joan Biskupic has covered the U.S. Supreme Court for more than twenty years and is the author of several books, including *American Original: The Life and Constitution of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia* and *Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice*. Biskupic is an editor in charge for legal affairs at Reuters News. Before joining Reuters in 2012, she was the Supreme Court correspondent for *The Washington Post* and for *USA Today*. A graduate of Georgetown Law, she is a regular panelist on PBS's *Washington Week* with Gwen Ifill. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and daughter.