

## Lunch with a Living Legend

To be in close proximity of the third female and first Latina Supreme Court judge of the United States for a minute, never mind a *day*, would be an honor, if not a blessing. Sonia Sotomayor has faced the whole gamut of unfortunate circumstance. However, rather than acquiescing to the power of these dead weights to drag her down, she instead used them to propel her forward in her childhood, education, and career.

Not unlike the rapid-fire questions used by a litigator in a court trial, Sonia, daughter of immigrants seeking to ‘make it in America,’ experienced successive difficulties during her childhood. She was hit with a double whammy: growing up in a single-parent household in the largely Puerto Rican housing projects of East Bronx. The National Housing Institute reports that these inner-city projects are toxic environments virulent with drugs, disease, and destitution. Nonetheless, Sonia survived and thrived with the help of her unflagging mother who had food on the table, a roof over their heads, and her daughter manifest the very American dream that she immigrated in search of.

What’s more, Sonia was hit with another double whammy: identifying herself as a female minority. Growing up, she was surrounded by so many pervasive gender and racial norms that were magnified by her time- the latter half of the twentieth century that only *glimpsed* the beginnings of gender equality. In spite of these adversities, Sonia displayed dogged determination and just plain, old hard work by advancing on to graduate at the top of her high school class, gaining acceptance into Princeton University and subsequently Yale Law School, and ultimately climbing the legal hierarchy to its pinnacle.

Now, this is where Sonia's story dovetails with mine. Living in this millennium's highly patriarchal, ethnocentric, and classist society, I would ask Sonia how she managed to break the so-called glass ceiling. The inherent feminist in me is both incensed and empowered by the sad truth that women are consistently barred from leadership positions, as revealed by a department chair from the University of Wisconsin. This entrenched misogyny arises from a tumultuous combination of a "lack of role models, unconscious biases, discrimination, and unwelcoming climates" in the workforce. Not only that, but I aspire to converse with such an authoritative yet humble female. Her former acquaintances have referred to her as "a dynamo" and someone who "wasn't aloof."

Sonia Sotomayor is not only a supreme figure in the highest court of the land, but also the supreme definition of an underdog that has beaten seemingly unbeatable odds. While I've been blessed with exponentially more fortunate circumstances, I can only dream to achieve a *fraction* of the caliber that Sonia has amassed. Despite some 'minor' setbacks, Sonia has outpaced many in the rat race that characterizes our intensely socially-stratified America. Furthermore, what most resonates with me is that she is in-the-flesh proof that anything's possible, and if one wants the American dream, one can most definitely go and get it.

#### References

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