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TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

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My name is Austin Wilkins, and I am the Editor-in-Chief of the *N.Y.U. Annual Survey of American Law*. So, we are here tonight to celebrate the dedication of our seventy-third volume to the Honorable Justice Sonia Sotomayor, which we are very excited about. But before I get started, I want to take a few seconds to, first of all, thank my incredible staff for all of their hard work this year. It really takes everybody to run a journal like ours. Also, I want to thank our wonderful guest speakers for coming out here tonight. It couldn't happen without you. You are what make it special. And of course I want to thank Dean Morrison and everyone at this school, especially Tracee Nwafor, for all of their help in putting this event together and making it a success every year.

So, some of you are probably familiar with the *N.Y.U. Annual Survey of American Law*. Some of you may have been to these events in past years or even spoken at them before, as I know some of you have. But for many of you this is your first exposure to our journal. So, I just wanted to take a second to kind of explain the significance of these events that we do every year. The *Annual Survey of American Law* has for many years—since 1942, actually—published a volume every year, sometimes of multiple issues, chronicling and helping to analyze the recent developments in American law. That very first volume was dedicated to then Chancellor of the New York University, Harry Woodburn Chase. And since that first dedication, we have dedicated each subsequent volume to a person, an individual, who we believe has made a significant impact on American law in recent years.¹ And tonight we are welcoming Justice Sonia Sotomayor for this honor. You can see on the back of your programs tonight the list of all of our past dedicatees, and it is really an amazing club of very distinguished individuals.

This tradition that we have of every year holding this event and dedicating our volume, our work, to a person, I think signifies our journal's understanding of the law as more than just the written words on a page of a statute, or in a judicial opinion, or on the pages of a law review. But it is really also the people behind the law: the people who work to create it, to improve it, and to expound upon it every day. And so, in events like these, we celebrate those

1. 1942 N.Y.U. ANN. SURV. AM. L.

titans of American jurisprudence for all of their hard work. But it is also important to remember that the law is not just the law of these very distinguished individuals. It is also the law of the common American: the people who every day are affected and affect the law very subtly in their own way. And this is not a lesson lost on tonight's honored guest. She grew up just north of here but in a very different world. At a recent gathering of the Bronx Defenders, she told them that instead of being called by her full designation, the Honorable Justice to the Supreme Court, she would rather be known as "Sonia from the Bronx." And I think that is a big reason why we picked her. She really is a justice of the people who knows what it is like for everyday Americans out there. And she is working to make sure that they really have a law that works for them.

Not too long ago—only twelve, twelve years ago—at the sixtieth anniversary of this event, a Second Circuit judge sat in one of these chairs over here and gave a lovely tribute to that night's dedicatee, a certain John Sexton.² And tonight we are overjoyed to welcome that judge back into our community, only this time as a Justice of the United States Supreme Court—and this time as the one who is to be receiving those tributes.

So, next is going to be Dean Morrison to introduce our guests, but I just want to say "welcome" from the journal, our staff, and everyone here to the Honorable Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Sonia "from the Bronx" Sotomayor.

2. 60 N.Y.U. ANN. SURV. AM. L. (2004).

TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

JUDGE ROBERT KATZMANN

Thank you, Dean Morrison.

Thank you, Austin.

Good evening to everyone.

It is a great privilege to be part of this tribute to the extraordinary and special Sonia Sotomayor. Not only a brilliant jurist, but the people's justice. A wholly accessible and giving justice, who inspires us to do better, who has given hope to people of all hues, including those who must struggle every day—people she has encouraged to dream and live their dreams, who feel now that their dreams can be realized because of her.

Last week, Sonia and I were at a panel about statutory interpretation—the panel, comprised of four judges, one of the judges having once been a legislator, with a litigator as a moderator. We had a great discussion that morning that ranged from how legislation gets made and passed, the often misunderstood work of agencies in the work of legislation, the helpful critiques by some textualists on how legislative history gets used, the stances of the justices in some recent cases. I spoke first and talked a bit about my book on statutes. Sonia spoke next, managing in a few short minutes to present to the audience difficult concepts in wholly understandable form and to connect with the audience in ways unmatched by anyone else I know. As she said that morning, she and I use similar methods and tools when approaching the often thorny task of discerning the meaning of a statute.

In her remarks, the Justice said something that I found particularly striking. She said that she always looks at the structure of a statute while trying to unpack it—striking, because structure is an idea that has been an important principle in Justice Sotomayor's approach to judging and life. And, in my brief time, I want to talk about how structure has been important to Justice Sotomayor in law and in life.

Structure.

In her masterful book, which I, like many others, predict will be a classic in American literature—the coming-of-age story of a brilliant young Latina [who] faces and triumphs over a series of adversities—the Justice frequently uses and refers to structure. She writes that she was, and I quote, “[D]rawn to psychology and sociol-

ogy, having always been interested in the patterns of individual behavior, as well as the structure of communities.”³ She writes of her college professor who urged her to develop an argumentative structure in organizing her facts. Critiquing her mother’s writing for her nursing degree, Sonia said, “There’s no structure here, Mami. It wanders.”⁴

The way Bob Morgenthau, The Boss, structured the office was a model of efficiency and integrity. Writing about her love for the law, she observed, and I quote, “[That] the law gives structure to most of our relationships, allowing us to promote our interests at once, in the most harmonious way.”⁵ She continued, and I quote, “[T]hrough the law, you could change the very structure of society and the way[s] communities functioned.”⁶ She writes of the law as the structure for upholding society.

With her analytical mind, deep concern for society, for fairness, and, of course, fondness for Nancy Drew stories and Perry Mason, it is no surprise that the law appealed to her. What is structure and why does she like it so much as she writes about the law?

To be a pure textualist for a moment—and only for a moment—and use a dictionary: Structure pertains to the relationship or organization of the component parts of a work of art or literature; or a mode of building construction or organization; arrangement of parts, elements, or constituents; or a complex system considered from the point of view of the whole, rather than of any single part; or anything composed of parts arranged together in some way; an organization; something built or constructed, as a building, bridge, or dam.⁷

But what does structure mean to Sonia Sotomayor?

From a young woman’s orderly, disciplined mind, law—with its history, language, the use of precedents—appeared and made sense to her . . . , a person who liked the big picture, who liked seeing the order and, yes, the structure of the system, [the] intellectual discipline of, yes, statutes. Law, with its myriad and vibrant connection[s] to the practical lives of human beings, spoke to her the way a song or piece of music can speak to us when we immediately recognize something that makes sense to us. And we feel it and know it in our bones. By looking at the big picture—the Constitu-

3. SONIA SOTOMAYOR, *MY BELOVED WORLD* 129 (2013).

4. *Id.* at 139.

5. *Id.* at 255.

6. *Id.*

7. Random House, *Structure*, *DICTIONARY.COM*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/structure> (last visited Apr. 21, 2017).

tion, the legislation, the problems to be addressed—she could start to see the principles and priorities guiding it. For someone who could live, literally, thanks to the structure of her daily insulin shots—which she started to administer herself, to herself, at not yet eight years of age—the structure of a law, along with its dynamic qualities, speaking to her zest for life, had to make total sense.

She loves the law: how it works, how it lives, how the writing and analysis of it are some of those components. Sonia, are you sure you weren't a Talmudic scholar in some earlier part of your life?

As someone very proud to call Sonia a close friend, I can personally attest to her extraordinary prowess and excellence on the bench. Sure, I know that Judge Calabresi would certainly agree. Sonia is a judge's judge. A lawyer's lawyer. No one loves the law, its structure, its history, its language, more than she does. Taking apart an argument, pulling apart the pieces, analyzing the logic, tracing the precedent, connecting a case to the Constitution, relating the history and issues to today's world, would satisfy her intellectually and, I think, emotionally. She loves what she does. No one on the bench is more prepared than she is for oral arguments. And no one more eager than she to explore what is going on in a case: the history of it, the contingencies, the ramifications, and to make the right and fair decision. Unique among Supreme Court Justices is her trial court experience. She has a deep appreciation of not just legal principles, but also to facts, on how decisions affect the realities on the ground and the need to be sensitive to those realities.

Her career as a prosecutor, [as a] commercial lawyer in private practice, as a district court and appellate court judge give[s] her a well, deep, and experienced perspective and wisdom. I love how Justice Sotomayor loves the world from which she came, and how joining the Supreme Court made her want to write better and want to better understand her childhood. From her vivid descriptions of the public housing development in the Bronx where she grew up—the brick of the buildings, the window out of which she and her father gazed at the moon and imagined worlds far away, the neighbors and relatives whose apartments were as familiar to her as her own—Sonia describes the built and human world, this beloved world, with its characters, its part and pieces, its landscape in sounds and tastes, its woes and comedies. And to her, clarity and willingness to share her hopes and anxieties. Any reader can feel connected to her and to the world of the South Bronx. Yes, the structure of that world has been made available to us through her wonderful book.

Although from reading *My Beloved World*, you get the sense that other people and others' dreams, problems, and joys are deeply important to her, those of us who have the privilege of being part of her world palpably feel the kind of person Sonia Sotomayor is. The structure she has created for the way she lives her life is a gift to all of us. She manages to pack more in a day into life than anyone I know—a person of indefatigable energy. A typical week might involve intense and full devotion to court work; hosting student groups and classes; staying close to family, old friends, clerks. Indeed, attending to the problems of friends and family with complete focus. Perhaps convening a poker game, attending dance performances; traveling and immersing herself in the world in which she is in, [or] attending community events in her former neighborhood in the Bronx.

She is very much someone for whom others are important and who will inconvenience herself for the sake of someone else. The examples I could give are legion. I remember one, when a friend of hers was dying right around Christmas. It was out on Long Island. Sonia, in Washington and needing also to attend to her mother, found a way to visit and sit with that friend on Christmas Eve, if I remember correctly. This is not unusual for her. If you're a part of her circle and her friends and her family, there is no "I" and "you," but truly "we."

I feel pretty confident that I can speak with some authority about this extraordinary person who is a sister to me. After all, we were born within fourteen months of each other in the same city. We went to the same law school and overlapped. We worked together on the same court for a decade. In the ten years that we sat together, my clerks did a survey, we agreed one-hundred percent of the time. 238 cases. There is not one difference between us, which is really pretty amazing. Sonia presided in those cases, so I was just following the leader.

The sum and total of what I have I have talked about is but one window into Sonia Sotomayor's greatness. I use "greatness" in a very particular way. There are those who achieve great things in life, but they are not great people. They lack the concern for others; the kindness; the capacity to be generous with their time, energies, and commitment. Not so with Sonia Sotomayor, who is the total package, who in my book is in the pantheon of great human beings. What a joy it is, what a privilege it is to know her! Sonia, thank you. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for everything you are. You are fantastic, and I love you.

TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

JUDGE GUIDO CALABRESI

It's a great, great joy to be back here—to be back for this event, where I was the subject some years ago; to walk by the portraits of Ricky [Revesz] and John [Sexton], two remarkable deans; and most of all, to be here to honor Sonia, to honor Sonia. I've heard many quite correct descriptions of what makes Sonia the wonderful judge and human being that she is: great intelligence, empathy, grounding in facts and in her own remarkable life experience—and as those who were at the civil justice [know]—humor and humanity. They're all true.

But there is one quality that I have not heard mentioned which makes all of the others, all of the other attributes, work. It is courage. And it is on that quality that I would like to focus my remarks today. I don't know much about physical courage; I don't really understand it. I've never been called to exercise it. I'm not sure that I would if I had to. It's another form of courage that I'm concerned with. It's moral courage. It's moral courage that I have in mind, and it is moral courage that characterizes Sonia. That quality, both rare and wonderful to behold, is what for me makes all the rest of Sonia so powerful.

Let me give a few examples of Sonia's moral courage. I start long, long ago with a very young Hispanic girl from Puerto Rico and the New York projects. She arrives at the Yale Law School, a place that tries to be nice but that scares any number of kids who have all sorts of safety nets underneath them. They react by giving back to their teachers what their teachers told them, almost word for word. They make no mistakes, they take no chances, and they sell themselves short out of a very understandable form of what, dare I call it, is cowardice. Perhaps it even happens in as nice a place as NYU. But not Sonia. I taught her torts, and I know. Where she got the guts, I can't say. But right from the start she took chances, used her imagination, and disagreed when she did not agree. Courage.

Later, as a district judge—when everyone said be careful, be cautious, don't be controversial, and you will have a great future and a great career—"SS," as we call her on our court, paid no heed. Read those early opinions and you'll see what I mean. And of course, it resulted in opposition that almost derailed her appointment to the Second Circuit. Go back and see what some senators

were saying. But Sonia had refused to let cautious careerism keep her from doing what she believed justice and law required. And if it made appointment and confirmation impossible, too bad. Courage.

On our court, it was the same again. Many a very good circuit judge gets mentioned in the press as a possible appointment to the Supreme Court, and all of a sudden you see that very good judge start to waffle—a sad, but understandable, sight. Sonia was talked of for the Court from the moment she came to us. And I dare anyone to find anything she did that might in any way have seemed to bend to that wind.

But there is more. Sonia was and is devoted to her mentor and great role model for Hispanics and Puerto Ricans: the brilliant, powerful, and charismatic José Cabranes. José is, unlike me, a person of strong views. He probably expected that Sonia would out of deference and perhaps “juniority fear” go along with him. But there too Sonia was always herself. Agreeing with her mentor when she did—and standing up to him, fiercely even, when she didn’t. And this is what is more remarkable. She did this while constantly reaffirming her affection, gratitude, love, and deep debt to him. Courage.

And on the Supreme Court, how easy it is for a junior justice to be silent, to go along with revered seniors out of fear of stepping out of line! Even very great ones have done so. My own judge, Hugo Black, told me of how, to his sorrow, he went along with Cardozo and voted to allow a clear double-jeopardy execution in *Palko v. Connecticut*, to his everlasting dismay.⁸ “I was new, and I did not dare to stand up to the great Cardozo,” he said to me. I could mention many, many others among justices whom I greatly admire, but who have failed in this regard.

But not Sonia. Here too and from the very beginning, she knew what she believed law and justice required, and she said so whether with others or alone. Has that made her seem less cozy to some of her Supreme Court colleagues? Perhaps. I don’t know. Holding to one’s belief is always costly. But to me it bespeaks a quality that is most rare in public life and in private life as well. It is a quality that made me think somehow of a poem by the great abolitionist poet James Russell Lowell.

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,

8. *Palko v. Connecticut*, 502 U.S. 319 (1937).

For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, some great decision,
Offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever,
'Twixt that darkness and that light.
Then to side with truth is noble,
When we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,
And 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave one chooses,
While the coward stands aside.
Till the multitude makes virtue
Of the faith they had denied.⁹

Sonia has never stood aside. She has always spoken the faith that law and justice required. And it is that quality that makes all the others—brains, imagination, empathy, a background that qualifies one for a job, et cetera, et cetera—meaningfully effective, because without courage they don't do anything. It is a quality that shines on and commands respect when much else has passed away. It is a quality that makes Sonia as truly admirable as she surely is. Thank you.

9. James Russell Lowell, *The Present Crisis*, in *POEMS OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL* 96 (1912), as adapted in *Once to Every Man and Nation*, in WILLIAM J. PETERSON & ARDYTHE PETERSON, *THE COMPLETE BOOK OF HYMNS* 185 (2006).

TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

JUDGE DEBORAH A. BATTS

I have been given the honor and privilege of giving a tribute to my dear and constant friend, former colleague, and big boss, the Honorable Sonia Sotomayor. Or, to put it another way, our mission tonight—and my colleagues up here and I come from a very deep bench of Sotomayor fans—is to try to do justice to the Justice. I would call this truly a mission impossible. And when you heard me just say “deep bench of fans,” you may have wondered how did I mean it. Bench, of course, is often a term used to describe judges, as in “appointed to the bench.” Deep bench, however, is sports terminology, which means having a large number of very talented players. As not all players can play at the same time, other very talented players will be sitting on the bench waiting to go in. Bob, Guido, Dawn, and I are very lucky that we get to play on the starting Sotomayor team tonight, whose other loving members are legion. Being here, talking to you now in that capacity, is better than being elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Why all this sports talk? Because I want to talk briefly about a case that affected millions of baseball fans, that is historic and interesting, and was decided by then-District Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor, and which prompted President Obama in June of 2009 to introduce her to the world as not only his Supreme Court nominee, but as, quote, “the woman who saved baseball,” close quote.¹⁰ I want to talk about *Silverman v. MLB Players Relations Committee*.¹¹ The petitioner, or plaintiff, was the regional director for region two of the National Labor Relations Board. The respondent, or defendant, was the collective bargaining representative for the twenty-eight Major League Clubs, or the “Owners.”

The National Labor Relations Board (“NLRB”) issued a complaint on the basis of charges filed by the players that the Owners had violated the National Labor Relations Act by unilaterally eliminating, before an impasse had been reached, salary arbitration for certain reserve players, competitive bargaining for certain free agents, and the anti-collusion provision of their collective bargain-

10. President Barack Obama, Remarks at the Nomination Ceremony of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the United States Supreme Court (May 26, 2009).

11. *Silverman v. Major League Baseball Player Relations Comm.*, 880 F. Supp. 246 (S.D.N.Y. 1995).

ing agreement.¹² The NLRB sought an injunction against the Owners' unfair labor practices. In December of 1993, the basic agreement had expired, and negotiations began for a new agreement in March of 1994. Negotiations were ongoing, but on August 12, 1994, the players commenced a strike. The Owners wanted a salary cap, elimination of the salary arbitration system, and a more restricted free agency system. The players objected to the salary cap, but were open to a tax system on high paying clubs to deter extravagant wage offers.

On March 29, 1995, the players offered to return to work if the court issued an injunction restoring the full terms of the expired basic agreement. If the court did not issue the injunction, opening day with replacement players was scheduled for April 2, 1995. Now, notice the very short window between March 27, 1995, when the NLRB petition for an injunction was filed, and opening day on April 2, 1995. However, Judge Sotomayor's opinion was rendered on March 31, 1995.

In enjoining the unilateral action of the Owners and restoring the terms of the expired basic agreement, then-Judge Sotomayor said:

The Owners argue that the right to bid competitively or collectively must be a permissive type of bargaining, because if it were a mandatory topic, the Owners would be forced to give up their statutory right to bargain collectively. Courts in addressing the antitrust area of law have easily recognized, however, that the essence of collective bargaining in professional sports is the establishment and maintenance of reserve and free agency systems in which owners agree to bid competitively for some players and collectively for others. The Owners' argument has a superficial appeal in its attempt to harken back to the unionizing cry of employees when they banded together to create this nation's union [sic] laws. What the Owners have missed here, and the NLRB has not, is that the statutory right to join collective bargaining units belongs to employees, not employers. *The NLRA gives only employees the right to bargain collectively through an elected representative. . . .* In other words, the term "employer union" for collective bargaining purposes is not meaningful.¹³

Or in other words, play ball!

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.* at 256.

You know, earlier I said Justice Sotomayor's friends are legion and that those of us up here are so fortunate to represent them. Of the four of us, I am the new kid on the block, since I only met Justice Sotomayor in 1991, shortly after Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put both our names forward for district court judges. We went to dinner, talked all night, and have been fast friends ever since. As a friend, she is wonderful—intensely loyal, supportive, loving, considerate, funny, candid when it is not easy to be, and always there for you and with you.

Now many songs have been written about enduring friendship. Carole King's "You've Got a Friend"¹⁴ comes to mind. But because Justice Sotomayor's friends all know that she will always be there for them, another song comes to mind as well. Even though many of you are not old enough to have seen the first run of the TV show, [*The*] *Golden Girls*, there is a good chance you have seen the reruns on cable television. The show's theme song was written by Andrew Gold, and it is called "Thank You for Being a Friend." Oh, no no no, there is no need to lock the doors. I'm not going to sing it. I am going to quote the first stanza however.

"Thank you for being a friend.
Traveled down the road and back again.
Your heart is true, you're a pal and a confidant.
I'm not ashamed to say I hope it always will stay this way.
My hat is off, won't you stand up and take a bow."¹⁵

Sonia, on behalf of all of us, thank you for being our friend.

14. CAROLE KING, *You've Got a Friend*, on TAPESTRY (Ode Records, 1971).

15. ANDREW GOLD, THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND (Asylum Records 1978).

TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

DAWN CARDI

Before I talk about her, I just want to say that before you get out there and practice law, you never know who your colleague is going to become. You never know who your adversary is. It is terribly important to be respectful of each other, and to listen [to each other,] and not judge from where they stand. Because had we not done that, I would not be here today and I would not have had the best friend in the world. So that's just a little aside.

When I was invited to speak tonight, I was honored and touched to do so. So, I asked if there was a theme, and I was told that I should speak about Sonia's achievements. Well I thought, achievements, wow, how many hours do we have this evening? And then I was told I should only speak about eight to ten minutes and I was relieved, because clearly, I was not expected to speak about all of her achievements.

So, I began to think about what aspects of her achievements I should discuss. And I decided that most people know about her professional achievements, and some who have read her memoir know about her personal achievements. There is so much I could tell you about her. Don't worry Sonia, I promise not to tell everything.

I was struggling to organize my thoughts, when I heard President Obama interviewed on *60 Minutes*. And when he was asked what was he looking forward to when he left the White House, one of his first answers was "living outside the bubble." And my first thought was of Sonia. One of her biggest fears when she was nominated, and ultimately named to the Supreme Court, was that she would be trapped somehow by the bubble. The bubble, as you know, is that world that famous, powerful people live in whether they want to do so or not. It is the way that people start to treat you differently because you are famous and powerful; it's what happens to your head when people start to treat you this way and when you live in the bubble.

I suddenly realized that one of Sonia's greatest achievements has been that she has transcended the bubble. I will tell you how she's done it, and it will resonate, I am sure, with those in this room who know her and love her for it.

Sonia, despite her staggering work schedule, always makes time for family and friends, and her clerks are her family. How many

weddings has she done, how many showers, christenings, birthdays, anniversary parties has she arrived with a gift in tow, and her down-to-earth, warm, and friendly manner? People at your party or event who have never met her are often taken by surprise at how warm and affectionate she is to all. If someone is ill or has a problem or there's a death in the family, she will be there if she can. And if she cannot, she will call or text or send an e-mail. Or sometimes she writes a lovely hand-written note. I don't know how she does it. Is there a single person on the planet who has asked her to sign a book and she said no? Not only does she sign the book though, but she wants to know about the person who is receiving the book, so that she can write a personal note that applies to that person. Who lives in the bubble and does this?

One of the most important ways that she has transcended the bubble is through her intentional outreach to children of all ages, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds. She especially gives to those children who may have struggles, be it poverty, language, health issues, and the like. She will make an extra effort to hug them, to smile with them, bring them close to her, and share with them confidence to follow their dreams.

Many of you know, but some of you may not, that in almost every single trip that she makes to address distinguished groups, be it lawyers, judges, law schools, professors, the rich and famous who court her company, she schedules a visit to children in the poorest neighborhoods, to families and organizations who service those needs. Wherever it is, she insists that she visits places where no Supreme Court Justice has ever been. Every summer, she participates in the major event for the children of the Bronx, [The] Dream Big [Initiative]. And she gets other famous people who can inspire these children to come and join the event. Just a week or so ago, she visited a school in the poorest neighborhood of Newark because the principal called her chambers and so impressed her that she said okay. She has not forgotten her roots: what it was like to be that poor child with health issues—that child whose family struggled to make it in a very tough world.

Whenever we go to a restaurant, she will patiently take photos with every one of the staff who asks her—and I have taken hundreds of photos with their iPhones. She is especially kind to the kitchen staff, who are thrilled to be treated with such respect and spoken to with such warmth.

I was in Washington one weekend and we were walking to her apartment. And some law student came up to tell her how much they admired her and asked to take a photo with her. "Of course,"

she said, “Yes.” And I thought, would that law student feel as comfortable approaching some of her other colleagues on the Supreme Court bench?

Sonia often visits her mother, Celina, in Florida, and when Celina’s husband Omar was ill and dying, she sought out as many medical professionals to try to help him. She made extra visits to be there for him and her mother. She was and remains a beloved and devoted daughter who has never let the Supreme Court duties prevent her from being there for her mother when she needs her the most.

And her kindness extends to my husband’s parents: Mike, a retired bus driver, and Eve, a homemaker, who passed away last year at the ages of 103 and 96. She never missed a visit with them. When she came, their eyes would light up as she came to the door. She makes my in-laws feel so special, and they loved her for it. I promise you that she does this for so many, many people who cross her path. What she does is she gives the gift of herself. We would all do well to try to emulate her this way. The world would be a much nicer place.

I watch her closely when she is doing an event and I listen to her speak: “It can be very hard when you live in a bubble to keep your true voice.” She has kept her true voice. It is the same voice of the Sonia I met in 1980, when we were both just baby lawyers, just beginning in the profession we both loved then and still love now.

Sonia is very generous. She has opened her very exciting world of meeting famous and amazing people, or doing very exciting or prestigious events with the people she knew before she was famous. Others who live in the bubble might seek out new, more prestigious friends, but not Sonia. While she has, and will continue to enjoy the amazing people and experiences that have opened for her since she’s come to the Supreme Court, she never forgets to share those exciting experiences with the people she knows and loves. My son Zachary will never forget that he went with her to Vice President Joe Biden’s swearing in because he was staying with her because he wanted to be there for President Obama’s inauguration. He had no idea when she offered him a place to stay that she would invite him to such an event. She just said, “Hey Zach, do you have something to wear like a shirt and a tie?” Actually, he surprisingly did, and off they went. This is who Sonia is, and Zach will never forget that experience for the rest of his life.

Every summer when she visits at my underwhelming beach club, she greets people who she’s met before and seeks out some

senior members of the club, asking them about their health, their grandchildren, their life, and she really listens. She really cares.

Last summer, a teacher in a poor school in Brooklyn told her how much her class idolized her. And she made arrangements for them to meet her at the Supreme Court when they came to Washington.

A dear criminal defense attorney passed away suddenly last year, Ed Wilford, who had been one of my officemates at Legal Aid. Ed and Tony Ricco, his partner, went on to become premier criminal defense attorneys, fighting bigotry, racism, and injustice for all. Sonia wrote the most beautiful letter to his daughter and his son about Ed. Tony Ricco wept when he gave it to the family.

She dances salsa with Notorious RBG. She loves to play poker, and if she's not winning you are not allowed to leave. When the criminal justice system or the family law that I practice still sometimes makes me weep for my clients, she tells me when I stop weeping for my clients I will stop practicing law.

She who goes into her office and helps decide the legal issues of the century never, never makes me feel that my practice is one iota less important than hers. One of her finest examples of transcending the bubble may surprise some of you who don't know her. Despite the fact that her job is to be one of the top judges in the world, she rarely, if ever, is judgmental in her personal life. Sonia always looks deeper into the person and the behavior, seeking out the reasons or motivations, which compel behavior among the people she knows. Sonia may find the behavior problematic, but doesn't judge the person. I've often heard her say, "Good people can make bad decisions." I believe it's why she's so able to negotiate the world that she must and get along so well with people who may have starkly different views. Sonia has maintained her humility. Isn't that a wonderful accomplishment?

So, my dear friend Sonia, what you feared the most was this job would change you, that the bubble would somehow make you different, that you would lose the sense of who you are and the roots from which you sprung. Well my friend, you have transcended the bubble, you have made a difference, because of who you are. And we all in this room love you for it.