

Yale Law Women Alumnae Achievement Award
Stephanie Krent
10.26.2014

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for coming. We are so excited and honored to be here today. My name is Stephanie Krent, and on behalf of the entire board of Yale Law Women, I'd like to welcome you to our reception honoring Justice Sotomayor, the recipient of the 2014 Alumnae Achievement Award. I'd like to thank Dean Mike, Dean Overly, Dean Davis, and the administration for helping us plan this event, and of course Professor Eskridge, Justice Sotomayor and her staff, without whom this day would not be possible.

The YLW Alumnae Achievement Award was first established in 2004 to honor graduates of the Yale Law School. The Award is presented to an alumna whose personal and professional career epitomizes the mission statement of Yale Law Women: to advance the status of women at Yale Law School and in the legal profession at large. Thus, the award honors women who not only succeed to the highest reaches of their professions and break the proverbial glass ceiling, but also look back—women who use their success to help other women succeed; women who trailblaze to encourage others to follow in their footsteps. The award specifically recognizes alumnae who demonstrate valor, wisdom, and compassion.

In the 2004–2005 school year, YLW presented the award to Chief Justice Margaret Marshall. We lauded Chief Justice Marshall's career, distinguished by her pursuit of equality in all forms—including her fearless anti-apartheid leadership, her uniqueness first as a woman partner, then as Vice President and General Counsel of Harvard University, and finally as the first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts.

Almost exactly 10 years later, I am thrilled to add another Justice to our list of distinguished Alumnae Award recipients. In a few moments, our Alumnae Relations Chair, Julia Shu, will talk about why women here at YLS so admire you, Justice Sotomayor, but I want to take a moment to talk about how your career has embodied the characteristics of valor, wisdom, and compassion.

During your time here, you were never afraid to “speak up,” whether in class, or in publishing a note on possible effects of Puerto Rican statehood, or when filing a formal complaint against discriminatory law firm hiring practices. You went on to become a “fearless and effective prosecutor” in the words of Robert Morgenthau, serving as an AUSA and later in private practice, all while working tirelessly to benefit your community. You volunteered on the board of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, on the State of New York Mortgage Agency, where you helped provide mortgage insurance coverage for low-income

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housing and HIV/AIDS hospices, on the New York City Campaign Finance Board, where you distributed public money for city campaigns, and on the Maternity Center Association, where you focused on improving the quality of maternity care in New York. Just talking about all your public service work makes me exhausted, so I'm not sure how you managed all that with a full-time career.

And in your many years as a federal judge, your opinions and actions have exemplified both your hefty intellect and your dedication to treating all people with dignity and respect. When you visited in February, you told Linda Greenhouse that you often focus on the factual record of the case as a way to ground your legal insights in "the complexity and nuance of the human condition." From your declaration in *Scheutte* in April that race still matters, to your decision to use the phrase "undocumented immigrant," instead of "illegal alien," you have been firmly committed to treating parties as people instead of paragraph-long fact patterns. And your eagerness to continue giving back still shines brightly, as it did when you shook hands with every single YLS student during that visit in February and when you stopped by *Sesame Street* to teach Abby Cadabby, and girls everywhere, what it means to aspire to and achieve a meaningful career.

So on behalf of those girls, the women who now study your opinions in law school, and the Yale Law Women 2014–2015 Executive Board: Thank you, and congratulations.