

VOICES THAT MUST BE HEARD

A call to Latino men

By Juan Ramos, *El Diario La Prensa*, 8 June 2009. Translated from Spanish by Chris Brandt.

"Let's hope that the key conferences aren't when she's menstruating or something, or just before she's going to menstruate. That would really be bad. Lord knows what we would get then," said Gordon Liddy of Judge Sonia Sotomayor. "I'm not taking back calling her a racist. She will bring a certain kind of racism to the Court," Rush Limbaugh said.

The recent attacks on Sotomayor by Liddy, Limbaugh and others should not be a surprise to any of us. From the struggle to abolish slavery, to the women's liberation and the civil rights movements, citizens have fought against the various forms of oppression throughout the history of this country.

Some people say we have come a long way in the struggle against racism and sexism, but, in reality, there is still a lot of work to be done. The reaction to Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court is a clear example of the stigma attached to women of color, and the desire of some to perpetuate racism and sexism. Her presence is the worst nightmare of any misogynist male racist. How is it that a woman, and moreover a **LATINA**, could be considered for a high position that has a direct impact on laws that enforce and maintain the status quo? This is why racist and sexist critics are coming after her with their arsenal of tactics.

I would like to call on Latino men to discard their mistaken machismo and dare to support and defend our sister Sonia. We have the opportunity to challenge and defy sexist attacks against women and girls: by demanding an immediate end to the attacks on Sonia Sotomayor; by making sure that the women in our communities receive fair and equitable treatment in establishments that traditionally favor men; by demanding that crimes against women be treated as crimes, including when such a crime is committed by a woman's intimate partner; and by educating and socializing our children to accept and respect women as equals. We can establish a standard in our community which will combat sexism.

As men of color in this country, we are acquainted with all the wrongs of racism and oppression. It is for that very reason that we men, in order to put an end to sexism in this country, must listen to women and accept their leadership. If we really want to get rid of sexism, a form of oppression, supporting Sotomayor is the correct route. This also means that our sisters of color, who feel the impact of racism and sexism directly, must have a voice at the table when we talk of putting an end to the violence against them. The time is now for us men to become a part of the solution.

Juan Ramos is a New York activist who fights against sexism and is a member of the group A Call to Men.

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