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**Republicans Display Their Racial Hatred at Sotomayor Hearings
Color of Law**

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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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I learned very little about nothing much in particular from the Sonia Sotomayor hearings.

I already knew that Sotomayor has impeccable credentials, and is far more intelligent than many of the senators, and all of the GOP senators, who were in judgment of her. I heard a great deal about the Republican agenda - as demonstrated at the hearings for the first Latina Supreme Court justice, that is, White male privilege, gun worship, the evisceration of the reproductive rights of women, and corporate pimping - but I already knew about these things.

I learned little about a liberal-progressive agenda for the courts and the justice system. Democrats played it safe on the whole, with the exception of senators such as the newly minted Al Franken (D, Minnesota), who decried the loss of civil rights in America, and Benjamin Cardin (D, Maryland), who invoked his memories of growing up in a segregated Baltimore, when schools and movie theaters were segregated, and community swimming pools had signs which read "No Jews, No Blacks Allowed".

One thing that I did learn from the hearings, however, was the extent to which the Republican Party will demonstrate the extent of their hatred for civil rights, diversity, foreign cultures and foreign law, Latino folks in particular and people of color in general. And in that regard, they did not disappoint. The Senate Republicans, which one political observer notes, ran the risk of appearing more like a "Republican Cracker Caucus" than anything else, showed nothing but utter contempt for Judge Sotomayor and those who look like her. Pandering to a dwindling, increasingly racist and jingoistic electoral base, these retrogressive senators showed their ignorance. They betrayed their poorly guarded secret - which is, that nothing less than an unexpected scandal or election defeat separates these neo-Dixiecrats from the backwoods outhouses from whence they came.

Having no concern for the judge's record, they focused on [a speech](#) she gave at UC Berkeley Law School in 2001, in which Sotomayor, and rightly so, praised the virtues of a diverse court in which judges are informed by their life experiences and backgrounds. "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life," said Sotomayor in that speech.

Throughout the line of questioning, the Republican senators treated the judge like a child at best, and like the cleaning lady at worst, with their concerns that she is unable show fairness and impartiality because of her ethnic background. One was given the impression that they would not be happy until Judge Sotomayor repudiated her ethnicity and made herself more suitable for White conservative consumption, like conservative Linda Chavez of the Center for Equal Opportunity. One after another, the good ol' boys greeted the judge with a barrage of racist invective. Seemingly engaged in a game of good Latino, bad Latina, their line of questioning seemed to focus less on her and more on Miguel Estrada, a failed Bush appellate court nominee who has nothing in common with Sotomayor except that both are Latinos. Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma even tried to joke his way through his racism by channeling his inner Ricky Ricardo and telling Sotomayor that "you'll have lots of 'splainin' to do."

But the ringleader, or perhaps more aptly, grand wizard, of the good ol' boy caucus was [Senator Jefferson Beauregard "Jeff" Sessions](#) of Alabama, who was nominated by Reagan for a federal district court spot, but was dinged by a Republican-controlled Senate judiciary committee because of his problems. His problems? He was a critic of the Voting Rights Act, and called the NAACP and the ACLU "un-American" and "Communist-inspired" groups that "forced civil rights down the throats of people." As a U.S. attorney in Alabama, he reportedly called a Black assistant U.S. attorney "boy", and told him to "be careful what you say to white folks." And as a federal prosecutor, Sessions engaged in a voter-fraud witch-hunt against three Black civil rights workers, including a former aide to Dr. King. Moreover, during a 1981 KKK murder investigation, Sessions was heard by several colleagues commenting that he "used to think they [the Klan] were OK" until he found out some of them were "pot smokers."

And to pour even more salt into the wound, Sessions is affiliated with White nationalist and anti-immigration groups. So it is only fitting that Sessions would become ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, in judgment over nominees to the federal bench, and an arbiter of who is fair and impartial. Sessions had the temerity to scold Judge Sotomayor for not voting with another Puerto Rican judge in an affirmative action case. "Had you voted with Judge Cabranas, himself of Puerto Rican ancestry, had you voted with him, you could have changed that case," Sessions admonished Sotomayor. "Why, because all Puerto Ricans are supposed to vote alike?"

Pat Buchanan - another paragon of on fairness, justice and integrity - says that Judge Sotomayor is an unqualified "affirmative-action appointment" by Obama, someone who was admitted to Princeton University to the exclusion of other White candidates with higher scores. He believes that the Republicans were not hard enough on Judge Sotomayor, that they should have racially attacked her in the hearings in order to gain the support of aggrieved White workers "who pay the price of affirmative action when [their sons and daughters are pushed aside](#) to make room for the Sonia Sotomayors." When MSNBC's Rachel Maddow asked Buchanan why 108 out of 110 Supreme Court justices have been white, he said "this has been a country built basically by white folks." Buchanan added:

White men were 100% of the people that wrote the Constitution, 100% of

the people that signed the Declaration of Independence, 100% of the people who died at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, probably close to 100% of the people who died at Normandy. This has been a country built basically by white folks, who were 90% of the nation in 1960 when I was growing up and the other 10% were African-Americans who had been discriminated against. That's why.

If anything good comes from the Sotomayor hearings, it is that the Latino community, and everyone else for that matter, got to see the GOP in true form: angry and raw in their bigotry, and turning to the divisive racial strategies of the past in a futile attempt to fight changing demographics and an new understanding of what America should be.

Steven Colbert hit it on the head when he spoke of the "Neutral Man's Burden," this notion that "[in America, White is neutral.](#)" Whites do not let their experiences bias their decisions because they are White. After all, imagine how a Black justice would have upset the neutrality of the all-White court in the Dred Scott decision, or how an Asian-American judge would have threatened the neutrality of the court when it upheld the internment of Japanese Americans in World War Two!

People of good will can use this opportunity - not unlike the 1991 Clarence Thomas hearings, which were replete with sexism and misogyny - to seek to diversify the Senate with more women, more senators of color, and specifically Latino senators. Latinos are America's largest so-called "minority group", in a nation in which minorities are edging their way into a majority. The nation's leadership must and will reflect this reality. The people must break up the good ol' boys' club that is the U.S. Senate, and ensure that no judicial nominee is disrespected ever again.

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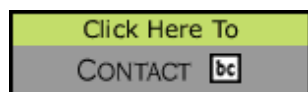
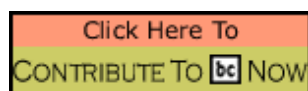
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