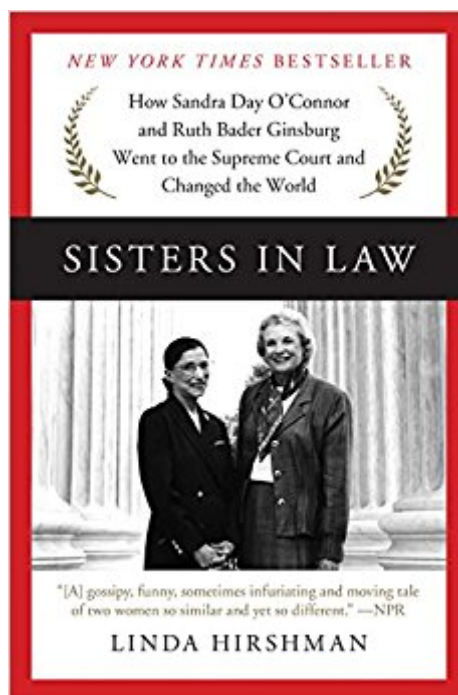




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# Sisters In Law: How Sandra Day O'Connor And Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went To The Supreme Court And Changed The World



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMESÂ BESTSELLERWASHINGTON POSTÂ BESTSELLERThe author of the celebratedÂ VictoryÂ tells the fascinating story of the intertwined lives of Sandra Day Oâ™Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the first and second women to serve as Supreme Court justices. The relationship between Sandra Day Oâ™Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburgâ™Republican and Democrat, Christian and Jew, western rancherâ™s daughter and Brooklyn girlâ™transcends party, religion, region, and culture. Strengthened by each otherâ™s presence, these groundbreaking judges, the first and second to serve on the highest court in the land, have transformed the Constitution and America itself, making it a more equal place for all women. Linda Hirshmanâ™s dual biography includes revealing stories of how these trailblazers fought for their own recognition in a male-dominated professionâ™ battles that would ultimately benefit every American woman. She also makes clear how these two justices have shaped the legal framework of modern feminism, including employment discrimination, abortion, affirmative action, sexual harassment, and many other issues crucial to womenâ™s lives. Sisters-in-LawÂ combines legal detail with warm personal anecdotes that bring these very different women into focus as never before. Meticulously researched and compellingly told, it is an authoritative account of our changing law and culture, and a moving story of a remarkable friendship.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âœLinda Hirshmanâ™s joint biography of the first and second woman to serve on the nationâ™s

highest court is a gossipy, funny, sometimes infuriating and moving tale of two women so similar and yet so different. • (NPR) • "Vital...Part of what makes Hirshman such a likable writer" is her addition to her wit and ability to explain the law succinctly without dumbing it down" is her optimism. • (Washington Post) • "Fast-paced and sure-footed...persuasive...Hirshman's ability to write clearly about the law without oversimplifying enables her to explain how O'Connor played defense and Ginsburg offense. • (Huffington Post) • "A lovely, thoughtful, and fascinating chronicle of [O'Connor and Ginsburg's] careers and lives that doubles as a concise history of the fight for equality for women. • (SCOTUS blog) • "Carefully researched and enjoyably written" • (Wall Street Journal) For anyone interested in the court, women's history or both, the story of Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, their separate routes to the Supreme Court and what they accomplished during the more than 12 years they spent together is irresistible. (Linda Greenhouse, New York Times Book Review) • "Linda Hirshman's joint biography of Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg is fascinating and informative but is also joyful -- a stirring reminder of how these two pioneers for women's rights have advanced the cause in their singular but complementary ways. • (Jeffrey Toobin, author of The Oath and The Nine) • "A tale of two unfaltering women with steel-trap minds, their unlikely rapport, and the legal landscape they battle to reshape. Smart, startling, and profoundly moving. • (Stacy Schiff, author of Cleopatra: A Life) • "Linda Hirshman has written a thorough, accurate, and most readable account of the careers of the two first women to serve as Justices of the Supreme Court. Laymen as well as lawyers will learn a great deal, not only about these two special people, but about today's Court as well. • (Justice John Paul Stevens) • "A riveting page-turner that will make you laugh, cry, and seethe with frustration at how long and hard the road to women's equality has been. Above all, it will inspire and delight. A prodigious achievement and an important contribution to the history of our times. • (Leslie Bennetts, author of The Feminine Mistake) • "This sharply-drawn double portrait of the first and second women on the U.S. Supreme Court and the way their lives and legal philosophies complement and contrast with each other is riveting. Linda Hirshman has the unique ability to think like a law professor and write like a journalist. • (Lynn Hecht Schafran, National Judicial Education Program, Legal Momentum)

The relationship between Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg "Republican and Democrat, Christian and Jew, western rancher's daughter and Brooklyn girl" transcends party, religion, region, and culture. Strengthened by each other's presence, these groundbreaking judges, the first and second women to serve on the highest court in the land, have transformed the

Constitution and America itself, making it a more equal place for all women. Linda Hirshman's dual biography includes revealing stories of how these trailblazers fought for recognition in a male-dominated profession's battles that would ultimately benefit every American woman. Hirshman also makes clear how these two justices have shaped the legal framework of modern feminism, setting precedent in cases dealing with employment discrimination, abortion, affirmative action, sexual harassment, and many other issues crucial to women's lives. *Sisters in Law* combines legal detail with warm personal anecdotes, bringing these very different women into focus as never before. Meticulously researched and compellingly told, it is an authoritative account of our changing law and culture, and a moving story of a remarkable friendship.

This book turned out to offer much greater rewards than I had anticipated. I had thought it was largely a dual biography of Justices O'Connor and Ginsburg. And to be sure, there is a good solid amount of biographical analysis present here. But there is so much more as well. Primarily, the book is also a comprehensive history of the legal fights to achieve women's equality. The author, a law school grad with a Ph.D. as well, is quite well versed in this material. So be advised to expect a good deal of detailed legal analysis that goes along with the biographical material. Much of the early portion of this nearly 400 page book is devoted to Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her pioneering and lonely fight to attack legal discrimination against women beginning around 1970. Ginsburg, who directed the ACLU's Women's Rights Project (initially while teaching at Rutgers Law School; later at Columbia) chose to follow a "careful incremental strategy." Cases were carefully selected in order to develop a doctrinal bridge to the final goal. This is just one of the ways in which Ginsburg resembled Thurgood Marshall's strategy in the civil rights cases. Her ultimate goal was to get the Supreme Court to equate sex discrimination with race discrimination and apply the corresponding strict legal tests when evaluating claims of sexual discrimination. The author discusses the early major cases, including *Reed v. Reed*, *Frontiero v. Richardson*, and *Kahn v. Shevlin*. Interestingly enough, Ginsburg was not happy with the *Roe v. Wade* decision's reasoning, since she much preferred that it be based on a strict equality argument rather than the new right to privacy. While perhaps an overstatement, to me Ginsburg seems to be the heroine of the book while O'Connor stands somewhat in her shadow. Her background is carefully developed and it contrasts mightily with that of Ginsburg: conservative in upbringing and orientation, happy to spend much time in cooking and supporting her husband's career, her key experience being in the Arizona legislature, and not a militant supporter of women's equality to the extent of Ginsburg. The author does a fine job in recounting how she became the first woman on the Supreme Court thanks to Ronald Reagan. While

O'Connor rises to the Supremes, Ginsburg eventually in 1980 is named to the D.C. Circuit, after many exertions by her famous tax lawyer husband, Martin Ginsburg. O'Connor's early years as the first and only woman on the Court are well recounted. She maneuvers around Burger, Blackmun and Rehnquist, and developed her technique of limiting major holdings to the specific facts of the cases, often imposing unclear standards such as "exceedingly persuasive justification" on confused lower court judges. Caution and compromise were her hallmarks. Meanwhile, Ginsburg continues fighting the battle for women's equality from the D.C. Circuit. Eventually, due to departures, O'Connor becomes the critical fifth vote and exploits her virtual control in many cases. When Bill Clinton puts Ginsburg on the Court in 1996, the narrative becomes especially interesting as the author traces the two female justices' early interactions, respective approaches to cases, agreements and disagreements. The discussions of the abortion cases during this period, and the VMI case, are particularly informative. When O'Connor leaves the Court in 2006--the situation clarified by the author--Ginsburg continues on alone until the arrival of Justices Sotomayor and Kagan, with a more conservative court due to substitution of Justice Alito for O'Connor. There are many strong points supporting the author's analysis. Her research is exhaustive, including interviews and correspondence, speeches and other published sources. She has made good use of Justice's papers, particularly Blackmun and Powell, to get an insider view of events. In that connection, she highlights the important role of female law clerks in persuading more conservative judges to adopt some of Ginsburg and O'Connor's arguments. This book represents part of a recent trend to focus attention on the life, work and contributions of Justice Ginsburg. See, e.g., Scott Dodson (ed.), "The Legacy of Ruth Bader Ginsburg." At age 82, we don't know how long this amazing career will continue because the Justice has rejected calls that she step down so a younger liberal judge can replace her. When I have seen her at the Court, she seemed quite frail--I guess I'm not the first to underestimate the drive and raw intellectual power she brings to bear. More books on her are coming so we can learn even more about this remarkable lawyer and judge. This fine book will be a helpful introduction to both Justices who were so influential and pioneering.

One of the most engaging non-fiction books of the year, *Sisters in Law*, nominally a comparison of the two first WOTSC, takes a sweeping and provocative look at the changing culture vis a vis women as reflected through the legal system. Over the last fifty years, our society has moved -- not always steadily -- from a position of "protecting" women to a legal system that increasingly endorses equal treatment of all. Hirshman briskly escorts the reader through dozens of cases, beginning with those that Ginsburg tackled during her early years as an advocate for women's rights and ACLU

volunteer, culminating with Hobby Lobby. Some of the most seminal and best-known cases, especially *Roe v Wade*, repeatedly surface; there is an undercurrent of concern that women's reproductive rights will be curtailed, which may surprise those readers who thought that women's right to choose had been assured for the last 40+ years. Looking back from our vantage point of 2015, most women can be grateful that we live and work in a world that doesn't try to protect us from serving on juries, managing the estates of deceased relatives, or competing in schools or jobs once considered too tough for women. Does women's progress reflect the Supreme Court's rulings, or has the nature of the rulings adapted to the changing mores of the general public? Hirshman does not address this question directly, but after reading the book, I see both as contributing factors. This is not truly a biography of either justice, though Hirshman describes the formative years of both. Though she tries to be evenhanded, it is pretty clear that she favors the Notorious RGB's passion, commitment, and laser-like legal focus over O'Connor's comparative wishy-washiness, imprecise language, and occasional abdication of jurisprudential sensibilities as with *Bush v Gore*. No reader will be surprised that Ginsburg got the t-shirts and the rap song. I had two issues with *SIL*, neither of them significant enough to subtract even 1/2 star. First, when the author refers back to a case mentioned earlier in the book, it would have been helpful to include a quick reference to the nature of the case to save the reader the trouble of shuffling pages, virtually or otherwise, to remember exactly which case that was. Second, and more troubling to me, was Hirshman's occasional references to living people, including the justices, as if they were long gone. For example, Mechelle Vinson's suit against a former employer was decided in 1986; Hirshman notes that after the case was settled, Vinson "had a long good life." Seems a little premature to make such a judgment about someone who is still alive and in her 50s. Amidst a current crop of books that direct women how to live their lives for maximum success, *Sisters in Law* is a pointed reminder of the role played by cultural expectations and legal constraints. Though it's hardly chick-lit, it's a must-read for upwardly mobile women of all ages.

Was excited about this book and ordered it in advance only to be mostly disappointed. The topic was well researched and I love the premise of telling the stories of both Justices but the historic importance of equality and the story itself is overshadowed by the author's apparent bias towards Justice Ginsburg. While Justice Ginsburg is a favorite of mine as well, the book's critiques of Justice O'Connor's jurisprudence as well as cheap shots at other justices and lawyers are unnecessary to telling the story. Would have rather the writing been a more objective account of the historic and important contributions of both women which necessarily should include the author's analysis of the

importance and impact of the people and events that have shaped the law of women's equality in this country. That is not what this book does. For me, the book was unfairly heavy-handed in its treatment of Justice O'Connor.

Not written for the non-lawyer. I really tried to like and finish this book, but it is not written for the non-lawyer. For my interest level, it went into way too much depth and detail. I was bored and couldn't finish the book.

Though I love RBG and wanted to learn more about Sandra Day O'Connor, this book is so clumsily written that I had to put it down. For example: The story of RBG being asked by the Dean of Harvard Law School to justify her place in class at Harvard Law School (rather than that spot being given to a man) is mentioned at least 4x in the first 50 pages.

Nice start but after a bit became droning and repetitive. Yes, this is important but could become a slog. I listened to this while driving across country. But, for what ever reason I do not know, my wife and I decided independently and then together to change to a different Audible selection. The book needn't have been this long and tedious.

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