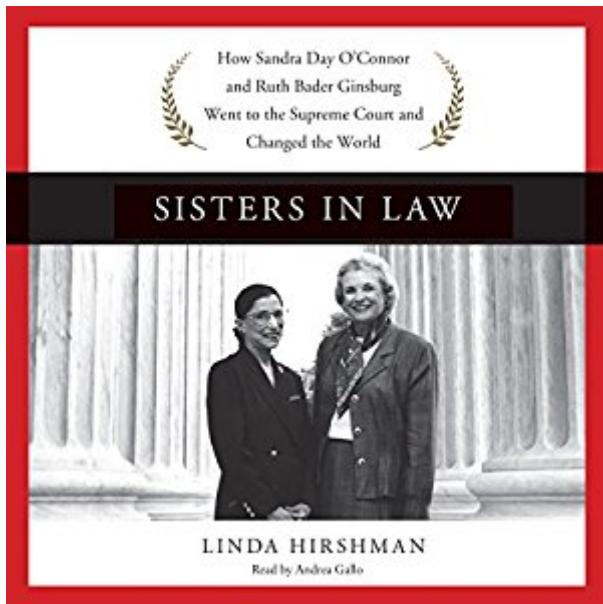


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# Sisters In Law: How Sandra Day O'Connor And Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went To The Supreme Court And Changed The World



## Synopsis

The author of the celebrated *Victory* tells the fascinating story of the intertwined lives of Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the first and second women to serve as Supreme Court justices. 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 their own recognition in a male-dominated profession - 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 women's lives. *Sisters in Law* 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

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 a 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.

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.

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