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O'Connor: Looking Back On A Career
April 16, 2006

(CBS)

O’Connor was a trailblazer, but she found the spotlight uncomfortable. Her judgments were scrutinized, her politics debated. Considered a conservative when she was appointed by Regan, she appeared to move to the center, becoming the swing vote in many important cases. "I don't care for labels," O'Connor says. "There isn't room for a lot of personal discretion in decision making. When you approach a case, you don't decide it on the basis of how you like it to come out. You have to reckon with all of the precedents out there on that proposition of law. You have to deal with the language of the statue you're interpreting, or the provision of the constitution. There isn't as much flexible in making decisions as most people, perhaps, think there is." This misunderstanding, O'Connor believes, is perpetuated by the media. She says the media could do a better job by giving the court credit for not making political decisions and for trying to solve issues fairly.

“A Latina Judge’s Voice”

“Whether born from experience or inherent physiological or cultural differences, a possibility I abhor less or discount less than my colleague Judge Cedarbaum, our gender and national origins may and will make a different in our judging. Justice O’Connor has often been cited as saying that a wise old man and wise old woman will reach the same conclusion in deciding cases….I am…not so sure that I agree with the statement. First, as Professor Martha Minnow has noted, there can never be a universal definition of wise. Second, I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more of the than not reach a better conclusion than a while male who hasn’t lived that life.”