

# About This Exhibit

The women featured in this exhibit should have been on the United States Supreme Court as early as the 1930s. Instead, they were shortlisted but not selected. *Shortlisted: Women in the Shadows of the Supreme Court* (New York University Press 2020) tells the overlooked stories of extraordinary women who appeared on presidential lists before and contemporaneous with Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female justice confirmed in 1981. Award-winning scholars Renee Knake Jefferson and Hannah Brenner Johnson cleverly weave together long-forgotten materials from presidential libraries and private archives to reveal the professional and personal lives of these accomplished women. In addition to filling a notable historical gap, the book exposes the harms of shortlisting—it reveals how adding qualified female candidates to a list but passing over them creates the appearance of diversity while preserving the status quo. This phenomenon often occurs with any pursuit of professional advancement, whether the judge in the courtroom, the CEO in the corner office, or the coach on the playing field. Women, especially female minorities, while as qualified as others on the shortlist (if not more so), find themselves far less likely to be chosen. With the stories of these exemplary women as a framework, *Shortlisted* offers all women a valuable set of strategies for upending the injustices that still endure. It is a must-read for those seeking positions of power as well as for the powerful who select them in the legal profession and beyond.

This exhibit, reproducing text and images from the *Shortlisted* book, profiles the nine women who appeared on Supreme Court shortlists before O'Connor's historic nomination by President Reagan and three more who appeared on his later lists for vacancies, along with five additional women who made it off the shortlist, four of whom were confirmed.

To date, only five of the 115 United States Supreme Court justices have been women—a mere four percent.

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## About the Authors



Renee Knake Jefferson and Hannah Brenner Johnson have been co-authors and friends for more than a decade. Renee is the Joanne & Larry Doherty Chair in Legal Ethics and a Professor of Law at the University of Houston, and a member of the Michigan State University Board of Trustees. Hannah is the Vice Dean for Academic and Student Affairs and a Professor of Law at California Western School of Law. Their work on *Shortlisted* has been heralded as “an excellent contribution...and essential for anyone who values diversity” by the *Library Journal* and “a perfect

read not only for scholars of the United States Supreme Court or judicial decision making, but for anyone hoping to learn from our history about how to brighten our future through systemic change” by the *Law & Politics Book Review*.

Learn more at [www.ShortlistedBook.com](http://www.ShortlistedBook.com)