

## **BACA BARRAGÁN, POLLY (1941– )**

“My young single life was an incredible opportunity and I loved it. My second life was as a mother. We will see how my third life goes.” Polly Baca. *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*.

Born into a family that encouraged education for women, Baca received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley, as well as an honorary doctorate of law from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Elected to the Colorado House of Representatives in 1974 and to the Colorado Senate in 1978, Baca became the first minority woman to serve in any state senate in the United States. In 1977 Baca chaired the House Democratic Caucus and was vice-chairman in the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Executive director of the Colorado Hispanic Institute, she co-chaired the Clinton/Gore campaign in Colorado. In 1994 President Bill Clinton named Polly Baca special assistant in the Office of Consumer Affairs. As the chief consumer advisor for the president, Baca served as chair of the Consumer Affairs Council, and chaired the delegation to the Organization of Economic Development's Committee on Consumer Policy. Baca's recognitions, as well as awards, are numerous. She was inducted into the national Hispanic Hall of Fame, received the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award, and was named an outstanding humanitarian by the Denver branch of the NAACP. Polly Baca was inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame, and in 2002, was appointed executive director of the Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA).