

OLIVAREZ, GRACIELA (1928–1987)

Born and raised in Sonora, Arizona, Olivarez entered the work force before finishing her education. She worked for an advertising firm in Phoenix but soon had the opportunity to become a radio disc jockey for a Spanish-speaking radio audience. Once established as a radio personality, Olivarez hosted Action Line, a program which focused on civil rights. She worked for a newly formed branch of the Office of Economic Opportunity but in 1965 as an older woman with career experience, she made a major decision – to enroll at the University of Notre Dame Law School making her the first woman to graduate from the law school. Olivarez was a consultant to the Urban Coalition, directed a food stamp program, and was a charter member of the National Organization for Women (NOW). In 1978 she directed the Institute for Social Research and Development at the University of New Mexico. While there, the governor of the state, Jerry Apodaca, appointed her to head the New Mexico State Planning Office. A well known figure in state and national political circles, Olivarez devoted her later years to work in broadcasting and philanthropy.