

# ARIZONA *Our history* LATINA *Our story* TRAILBLAZERS

Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

Trailblazer Series Vol VII





## *Nancy A. Gonzales*

### Ensuring A Path to Success



A nationally-recognized, award-winning researcher and ASU Foundation Professor of Psychology, Dr. Nancy Gonzales's academic work has directly impacted Arizona's Latino community for over 20 years. Her research and intervention programs have created a platform for success for young Latino students and their families. She has also influenced national conversations in the area of adolescent-family development and youth prevention programs. Her determination and high standards, along with a genuinely humble and collaborative approach, inspire others to blaze their own trails of success.

Nancy traces her roots to Miami, Arizona. Nancy's parents, Jesus and Martha Trueba Gonzales, married in 1958 and raised four children. Nancy was born in 1962, and recalls growing up in a tight-knit community where families had pride in their mining and Mexican heritage. She became especially

interested in psychology as teenager, and graduated Valedictorian from Miami High School in 1980.

Nancy joined Arizona State University and majored in Clinical Psychology. She benefited from the mentorship of professors like Dr. Irwin Sandler, who engaged Nancy in her first project involving children. In 1985, Nancy entered graduate studies at the University of Washington. Here she developed her academic focus under the direction of Dr. AnaMari Cauce, with a particular interest in using her research to directly benefit the public, especially low-income communities and high-risk populations. In 1992, Nancy received her Doctorate and started a new job back at ASU in the Psychology Department.

During her early years at ASU, she met her first husband, Dan Strouse. They married in 1995 and raised two daughters, Isabel and Emma. He tragically passed away

from cancer. Nancy later married Peter Reilly and expanded her family.

At ASU, Nancy set her sights on working with the Latino community. She recognized the importance of developing studies to produce high quality research that would lead to a positive, tangible impact on Latinos. Through the Prevention Research Center and in collaboration with other faculty members, she began researching, publishing, and mentoring students, and soon received tenure.

In 2003, Nancy and her team at ASU developed a study called *La Familia*. This 10-year project examined the factors of educational success for Latino families in Maricopa County, and became one of the top national studies on Mexican-American families. During this period Nancy also initiated a well-known intervention program, called Bridges to High School, or *Puentes a la Secundaria*. This program, now in its 15th year, brings middle school students and their parents together to encourage high school success, reduce substance abuse and address mental health issues.

Nancy's program also involved undergraduate, graduate students, and community people in the research process and in making a difference in the lives of

young people. She has played a significant role as a mentor to many students who have moved into leadership roles across the country in public health, education, psychology, law, politics, and more.

She has joined local and national boards in order to make a difference as well. She served on the Arizona Mental Health Research Institute and Valle del Sol. Nationally she has served on National Institute of Health boards, the Society for Prevention Research, and most recently, the William T. Grant Foundation. Nancy has received numerous awards for her work, including the first Eugene Garcia Award for Outstanding Latina Faculty Research in Higher Education from the Victoria Foundation for her impact locally as a university professor in 2010.

Nancy's work reveals that strengthening families' connection to education, while encouraging preservation of culture and values, builds lifelong benefits. In the future, Nancy plans to develop a broader version of the Bridges program that will be accessible to all middle school students. Her work will continue to influence national policy impacting opportunities for Latinos and their future educational success.

The Raul H. Castro Institute (RCI) is proud to have a role in preserving the significant contributions made by the 2015 Arizona Latina Trailblazers. This vision of the the Raul H. Castro Institute is to improve the quality of life for the Latino community in Arizona by bringing focus to priority issues of education, health and human services, leadership, and civic engagement – all areas in which these Latina Trailblazers have created a tremendous and lasting impact. Through the use of this book in educational settings and through its availability as part of the Arizona Memory Project, their legacy will be perpetuated as generations of leaders continue to be inspired by the spirit and actions of these pioneering women. It has been a privilege to tell their stories.

To learn more about the lives and achievements of the 2015 Arizona Latina Trailblazers, please visit

**[www.azlatinatrailblazers.com](http://www.azlatinatrailblazers.com)**

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**Thank you to the premier sponsor for making this project possible:**



## *Latinas' Stories Remain Important in Arizona's History*

As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, judicial representatives, homemakers, nurses, ranch wives, or political representatives, Latinas and Hispanas have long been at the forefront of Arizona's history. It is important that we recognize the impact of their individual contributions, and imperative that their collective stories be recalled and shared.

The life journeys of these women are filled with compelling stories that reflect the strength of their vision, their courageous actions, and their thoughtful advocacy. Their outstanding leadership formed strong cultural cornerstones, laying the foundation for women in leadership roles today.

And so we honor them and all that they represent, pioneers who forged our rich cultural heritage and strong role models.



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