

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

Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

Vol II

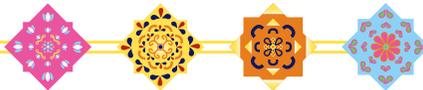


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Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

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# INTRODUCTION

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As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, judicial representatives, homemakers, nurses, ranch wives, or political representatives, Latinas and Hispanas have not been strangers in Arizona's history. It is important that their stories be recalled and remembered, and that we recognize their long-standing contributions to the development of our state as we approach Arizona's 100th anniversary of statehood in 2012. After all, these women are among the state's "trailblazers," women who established a strong social, cultural, and political presence prior to Arizona's statehood.

They are women from the families of Tomás de Belderrain, Mariano Urrera, Manuel de León, and Manuel Ygnacio de Arvizu—men who served as military officers in their Spanish presidio in Tubac in the 1750s. They are women whose families established large ranches as early as 1821 in southern Arizona—families like those of Francisco and Leopoldo Carrillo and Manuel Amado. We should know about Latinas like Pancha Acuña and her daughter Faustina, who were already in the Arizona Territory in 1863, accompanied by family members who came to the Prescott area to join in the gold rush. Or Juanita Bachichia, who established a boarding house for gold miners in 1864 on Lynx Creek in central Arizona's gold district. We know about Mexican women like Trinidad Mejía Escalante

Swilling, the "Mother of Phoenix," who came to the Salt River Valley in 1867 and made her first home in Wickenburg. And we know that Anson P. K. Safford, who served as Arizona's territorial governor from 1869 to 1877, met and married two Mexican women: Margarita Grijalva of Tucson, who died in 1880, and Soledad Bonillas, and made them representatives who oversaw the governor's official territorial home. And we must not overlook the women who, along with their families, settled in the rough and tumultuous copper-mining areas like Clifton-Morenci, Globe-Miami, and the Bisbee area by the early 1900s.

The trailblazers that we honor in 2010 have established their own unique presence in Arizona's modern history. Their collective voices give meaning to our lives because their own lives shed light on the power of women's work and value. The power of their actions resolved matters of injustice, racism, poverty, inequality, school segregation, and unionism. And so we honor them and all that they represent as women, as heroines, as leaders, and as sisters. We must not forget the names of Julia Cecilia Cuesta Soto Zozaya, Plácida Elvira García Smith, Dora Ocampo Quesada, Alicia Otilia Ocampo Quesada, Anna Marie Ochoa O'Leary, Carmela Ramírez, and Barbara Rodríguez Mundell—Latina Trailblazers.

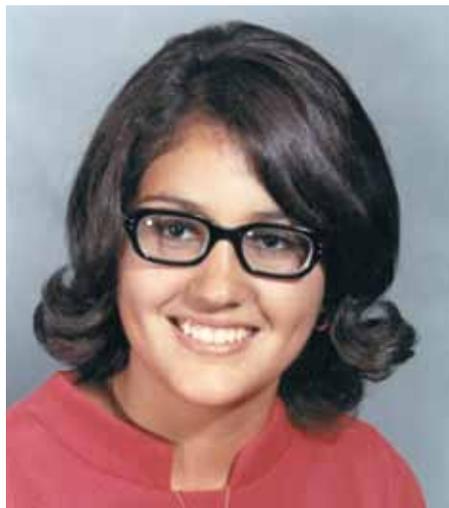
## *Dr. Anna Marie Ochoa O'Leary* **Labor Leader and Scholar**



“ You know how, when you’re cooking, you put in an egg and it holds the rice and everything together? That’s what we women are. We’re the egg of the family, just trying to hold together all these falling apart things. Each family is like a union and the first type of union is the family because women are organizers, leaders, thinkers, politicians, teachers, negotiators, planners, and doers.” – Dr. Anna Marie Ochoa O’Leary

Anna Marie Ochoa O’Leary was born to working-class parents on April 15, 1954, in Clifton, Arizona. Her father, Ernesto, earned his living as a shoemaker, and her mother, Luz, was a homemaker. In the ‘60s and ‘70s, Clifton was a relatively peaceful and close-knit community. Like generations before them, cohorts of children could expect to know each other throughout their entire lives, from kindergarten through adulthood. Compared to today’s urban environments, Clifton’s rural and isolated setting provided a place where children grew up amidst a rich social safety net. With neighbors and extended kin always on the lookout for each other, they could freely explore their environment: climb mountains, ride their bikes

across town, swim or fish in the San Francisco River, and ride horses, Anna’s personal favorite. During the school year, Clifton High School Trojan football and basketball games provided the opportunity for everyone to socialize while supporting the team. The long summer evenings were filled with picnics and baseball games, adult



Dr. Anna Ochoa O’Leary, 1970

Courtesy of Dr. Ochoa O’Leary

leagues and little leagues, and bands of neighborhood children playing “kick the can” under the streetlight. Back then, neighborhoods and families helped define one’s identity, and today still provide a place that many fondly remember. The downside of this nostalgic setting was that many young people never envisioned a future elsewhere. Copper mining dominated the community’s economy.

After graduating from Clifton High School in 1972 in the top 10 percent of her class, Anna was involved in community activities in Clifton and Morenci, such as helping organize fundraising activities for the local Catholic parish or for the League of United Latin American Citizens

(LULAC), where she served as secretary of the local chapter for a brief period of time. Restlessness accounted for her somewhat unfocused foray into post-secondary education; regardless, she earned her Associate of Arts degree from Eastern Arizona College in Thatcher in 1980 and made the President’s list with a 4.0 grade average. After this success, a Bachelor of Arts degree was her next academic goal. By that time, she had married Dr. Jorge F. O’Leary, a man from Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, son of a Mexican Yaqui Indian mother and an Irish father.

Anna and Jorge, who worked as a company physician for Phelps Dodge, set upon raising a blended family of five children in Morenci, Arizona. Continuing her education came about the hard way: by commuting from Morenci to the University of Arizona in Tucson, 170 miles away, often with children in tow. Anna had little time or interest in student life. Courses had to be accommodated between child-rearing responsibilities until 1982, when she received her B.A. in political science. Content for a while with this accomplishment, she then settled into the rhythm of life in the Morenci mining community, which was short-lived with the start of the 1983 copper strike.

In 1983, one of the nation’s most important labor conflicts disrupted the peace enjoyed by the Clifton-Morenci communities. That same three-year labor strike first defined Anna. A David-and-Goliath story unfolded in this bitter

Courtesy of Dr. Ochoa O'Leary



Dr. Anna Ochoa O'Leary; 1999, Ph.D. graduation ceremony





Photo by Ron Chaff, courtesy of the Chicano Research Collection, ASU Libraries

A mile-long picket line at the Morenci mine

management-labor confrontation. Thrusting the dispute into the nation's limelight was her husband's termination for vocally supporting the strikers' cause and defying the company's order to refuse to see striking miners who sought medical care at the company-owned hospital. However, his dismissal only served to strengthen the community's resolve as strikers and supporters rallied in support of Jorge and Anna O'Leary. This was when Anna first learned of the Morenci Miner's Women's Auxiliary (MMWA). She joined the group and became one with its long history of union support and community organizing. The organization was later featured in a

PBS documentary.

Early in the struggle, Phelps Dodge invoked the Taft-Harley Act that limited picketing by striking union members, but the injunction didn't stop the women—sisters, wives, grandmothers, daughters, girlfriends, friends, and relatives of the miners—from staging the strike. Their growing presence on the picket line and in the speaking circuit transformed the MMWA from a striker's support organization to a political action organization. Through their outreach and organizing, MMWA became a formidable adversary. As one of the presidents of the MMWA, Anna helped direct and organize

efforts to reach out to supporters, raise funds for strikers' families, and educate the community, state, and the nation about the company's tactics to break the strike. During one of their labor rallies, award-winning Hollywood actor and union supporter Ed Asner gave an inspiring speech and paid tribute to the women. He said, "Security is a precious gift we can give to our families, but a greater gift is showing them we can stand up for what we believe in."

At the high point of community organizing activity, Anna and other MMWA members went on public speaking and solidarity tours at the invitation of such organizations as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Coalition of Labor

Union Women (CLUW), where they presented the case for continued support for the strikers and their families. Anna also spoke at the international convention Forum 85, a United Nations Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, where, as a Ford Foundation scholarship recipient, she attended as an NGO delegate. Upon her return, she was elected to the Clifton City Council. However, her term came to an abrupt end within weeks. It was 1986 and three years since the strike began. With more families forced to move away, community unity and support drastically diminished. Anna and her husband were compelled to move to Tucson (where they presently live and work), but not before

Courtesy of Dr. Ochoa O'Leary



Dr. Anna Ochoa O'Leary; 1994, trip to Mexico

fulfilling their commitment to see the strike to the end. In the fall of 1986, the 13 unions on strike were officially decertified.

Anna's experiences with the MMWA motivated her to seek a Master of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Arizona. Her 1994 master's thesis explored the history of Mexican-origin populations in the copper industry and the concept of *la familia*. Central to the development of the thesis was the question of how a community—where principles of social cohesion and fellowship seemed to thrive—could end up so fragmented. Later, her post-graduate work analyzed the prevailing economic forces that weaken communities' abilities to resist disintegration, and in particular, the key role of women in negotiating the harmful consequences of familial and communal breakdown. The education of women was seen as an important factor in strengthening this capacity.

In 1996, Anna received a research award from the National Science Foundation for her dissertation, "Investment in Female Education as an Economic Strategy Among U.S.-Mexican Households in Nogales, Arizona," which aimed to determine factors important to Mexican-origin households as they considered investing in the education of family members, especially women. This research was in part a personal response to the obstacles and lack of direction that she herself experienced. Later, she focused her attention on migrating women, and, consistent with the

themes that flowed from her experience, she examined how elements such as cultural and social identity operate to reaffirm one's disposition to support and sympathize with those less fortunate. Anna received her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology in 1999 from the University of Arizona.

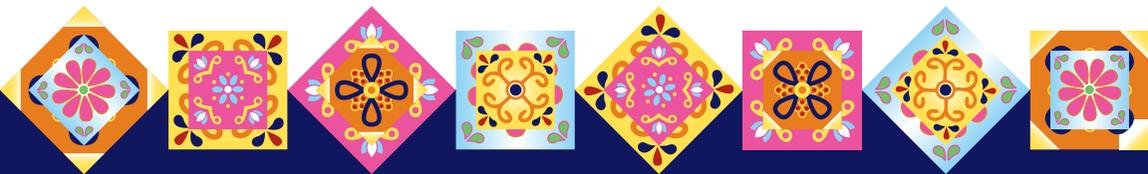
Today, Anna is an assistant professor of practice in the Department of Mexican-American and Raza Studies at the University of Arizona. Her commitment to teaching resulted in a Chicano Studies textbook published in 2007 by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. Her path-breaking research and scholarship on Mexican women and immigration enforcement and transnational migration on the U.S.-Mexico border places her on the forefront of new research about a pressing matter that impacts us all. For this work, she was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship for 2006-2007. She continues political advocacy work through several nonprofit, community-based groups, such as the Arizona Border Rights Foundation, *Fundación México*, and a national advisory board organized by Mexico's *Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (CC-IME)*, representing the Mexican-origin communities in the Tucson consular district. Within this advisory group, she heads the border issues commission that, among other things, provides a voice for those less able to resist the same destructive economic forces that undermined her own community's power and ability to survive.



As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, 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, especially as we approach Arizona's 100th anniversary of statehood.

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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