

**STATEMENT OF THE DOÑA LILA MAYORAL DE HERNÁNDEZ,  
FIRST LADY OF PUERTO RICO -ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
REGION II DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS NETWORK, ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE GALA LUNCHEON- OCTOBER 18, 1990 -  
TAJ MAHAL, ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY.**

GOOD AFTERNOON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, HONOREES, GUESTS AND FRIENDS.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I WISH TO THANK THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS AND THE SPONSORING AGENCIES --FOR INVITING ME TO BE PART OF THIS EXPERIENCE TO SHARE AND TO STRENGTHEN THE TIES AMONG WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS. I AM DELIGHTED TO BE IN AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE WE CAN REAFFIRM THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE AND WHERE WE CAN PREPARE THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE CHALLENGES WOMEN WILL BE FACING IN THE COMING CENTURY.

SECOND, AS THE FIRST LADY OF PUERTO RICO, I AM PROUD TO BE HERE ON BEHALF OF THE WOMEN OF PUERTO RICO, WHO REPRESENT MORE THAN HALF OF THE TOTAL POPULATION ON THE ISLAND AND WHO ARE THE MOST AFFECTED BY PUBLIC POLICIES IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE OBSTACLES FACED BY WOMEN IN ALL SOCIETIES, THE PUERTO RICAN WOMAN IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ENDURING STRENGTH AND COURAGE FOUND IN ALL WOMEN.

AS SURVIVORS OF DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, THE SOCIAL ILLS OF POVERTY, POOR EDUCATION AND LACK OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND ACCESS TO ECONOMIC PROGRESS, WOMEN CONTINUOSLY DEMONSTRATE AN INCREDIBLE ABILITY TO EXCEL AND CONTRIBUTE CONSIDERABLY TO THE FACBRIC OF OUR SOCIETY.

FOR THE MOST PART, WOMEN ARE CONSIDERED THE UNSUNG HEROES, THE ANONYMOUS INVENTORS, AND THE DEDICATED FOLLOWERS. IN OUR SOCIETY, PEOPLE ARE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT WOMEN AS LEADERS. THERE IS A RESISTANCE TO CHANGING ILL-INFORMED EXPECTATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF NEW EVIDENCE THAT CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT WOMEN ARE DESIROUS AND EXTREMELY CAPABLE OF MANAGING THEIR LIVES.

YET WE MUST ADVOCATE, THROUGH PUBLIC POLICIY AND LEGISLATION, FOR THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN AS OFFICERS, ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS, AUTHORS, AND ENGINEERS AND FULL PARTICIPANTS IN ALL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

THE CREATION OF GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES SUCH AS THE NEW YORK STATE AND NEW JERSEY STATE DIVISIONS FOR WOMEN, THE WOMEN'S AFFAIRS COMMISSION OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO, EXEMPLIFY THE INITIATIVES THAT CAN BE UNDERTAKEN TO BEGIN THE LABORIOUS PROCESS OF REEDUCATING OUR SOCIETY TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT WOMEN TO FULFILL THEIR OBJECTIVES.

AS A STARTING POINT IN THIS BRIEF PORTRAYAL OF PUERTO RICAN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROWTH OF THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAND, I MUST LOOK BACK TO THE 1940'S WHEN, AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO, JURIDICAL EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES WAS ESTABLISHED. OUR CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN SINCE 1952. THE IMPROVEMENT OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR MAIN GOVERNMENTAL PRIORITIES.

EVEN THOUGH SUSTANTIAL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN AREAS OF LEGISLATION, AND EDUCATION, NEVERTHELESS DEEP ROOTED DISCRIMINATION HAS BEEN A MAJOR OBSTACLE IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN.

\* ON THE ISLAND WOMEN REPRESENT 52% OF THE POPULATION, BUT THIS IS NOT REFLECTED IN TERMS OF ACCESS TO REAL AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY.

\* PUERTO RICAN WOMEN HAVE GONE AND ARE STILL GOING THROUGH DEEP CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES. MANY WOMEN FACE DISCRIMINATION IN THEIR HOMES AND AT THEIR WORKPLACE.

\* THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO, AS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD, CONSTITUTES A MAJOR CONCERN FOR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO HAS PROPOSED FOR THE NEXT TEN (10) YEARS TO CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS AND RESOURCES INTO FINDING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS IN AREAS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON THE ISLAND. THE MAIN OBJECTIVE BEING:

"TO ELIMINATE ALL JURIDICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS WHICH HINDER WOMEN'S FULL INTEGRATION INTO THE GOVERNMENTS DEVELOPMENT PLAN".

THIS MEANS THAT:

- \* MORE OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE GIVEN TO WOMEN TO OCCUPY GOVERNMENT, JUDICIARY, LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE POSITIONS.
- \* TO ENFORCE ALL CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL DECREES AGAINST SEX DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE.
- \* TO ESTABLISH SELECTION CRITERIA THAT INCORPORATE SEXUAL, RACIAL, AND SOCIAL EQUITY IN THE PRODUCTION AND PURCHASE OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

- \* A SELECTION OF BASIC NEW READINGS FOR ELEMENTARY LEVEL WHICH PRESENTS AN UP TO DATE VIEW ON WOMEN, FAMILY AND PUERTO RICAN SOCIETY WILL BE PUBLISHED.

THE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ACHIEVING THESE GOALS IS THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO CREATED IN 1973.

BEFORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS AGENCY IN 1973 IMPORTANT EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS COMMISSION OCCURED.

THESE WERE:

1. THE STRUGGLE FOR FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS BY PUERTO RICAN FEMINISTS FROM ALL SOCIOECONOMIC LEVELS AND THE BEGINNING AND DURING THIS CENTURY.
2. THE 1952 CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO WHICH ESTABLISHES EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND MEN.
3. THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN OF 1967.

4. THE 1972 PUERTO RICAN COMMISSION OF CIVIL RIGHTS REPORT WHICH AMONGST ITS CONCLUSIONS ESTABLISHED THE PRESENCE OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS IS TO IDENTIFY OBSTACLES WHICH IMPAIR WOMEN'S RIGHT AND CONSEQUENTLY THEIR FULL DEVELOPMENT AND TO ASSIST IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES.

IN A BROAD SENSE THE THREE MAIN AREAS OF WORK MAY BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

- A. WOMEN AND FAMILY
- B. WOMEN AND EDUCATION
- C. WOMEN AND WORK

IN EACH OF THESE AREAS WE WILL FIND EXAMPLES OF CONSTRAINTS WHICH IMPAIR WOMEN'S FULL DEVELOPMENT. SOME EXAMPLES ARE: SEX DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, LESS PAY FOR COMPARABLE WORK, SEX STEREOTYPING IN SCHOOL EDUCATION AMONGST OTHERS.

AS PART OF THE PROGRAM PRIORITIES OF THE COMMISSION AND OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE AREA OF WOMEN AND FAMILY, A HISTORICAL BREAKTHROUGH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THIS AGENCY PREPARED, TOGETHER WITH FEMINIST GROUPS AND SENATOR VELDA GONZÁLEZ, A BILL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THAT WAS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATURE IN AUGUST 1989, KNOWN AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION ACT, PUBLIC LAW NO. 54.

THIS INNOVATIVE LAW RECOGNIZES FIVE TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSAULT; AGGRAVATED ASSAULT, ASSAULT BY CONSTRAINT, ASSAULT BY THREAT AND MARITAL RAPE. FIRST TYPE OFFENDERS, MAY BE GIVEN THE OPTION OF RE-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. ALSO AN EDUCATIONAL ASPECT FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY WAS INCORPORATED IN THE BILL AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE.

THE AGENCY ITSELF OFFERS SPECIALIZED SERVICES TO BATTERED WOMEN INCLUDING CRISIS INTERVENTION, LEGAL ADVICE, COUNSELLING AND REFERRALS TO SHELTERS.

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY ON THIS MATTER THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A FIRM STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SINCE IT IS CONTRARY TO THE BASIC UNIVERSAL VALUES OF DIGNITY, PEACE AND RESPECT ESTABLISHED IN OUR CONSTITUTION, WHERE THE PROTECTION OF LIFE, SECURITY AND DIGNITY IS A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT FOR ALL CITIZENS.

ALSO, THE COMMISSION HAS ESTABLISHED AS ONE OF ITS TOP PRIORITIES EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ON THIS TERRIBLE PROBLEM. THIS RANGES FROM TRAINING FOR POLICE, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, TO TALKS AND WORKSHOPS TO COMMUNITIES. GUIDELINES HAVE ALSO BEEN WRITTEN FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RE-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF BATTERERS.

MYTHS AND DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN WHO SUFFER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE OFTEN FOUND AMONGST THOSE KEY FIGURES WHO INTERVENE IN THESE CASES. TO ACHIEVE THIS CHANGE OF ATTITUDE AMONGSTS ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY A BIG EFFORT HAS BEEN CONCENTRATED ON PUBLIC SERVICE EDUCATION.

POSITIVE AND ASSERTIVE IMAGES OF WOMEN WILL BE USED IN VARIOUS PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISEMENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, EDUCATIONAL SEX EQUITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. A ONE HOUR DOCUDRAMA MADE FOR TELEVISION, SHOWS US THE LIFE OF VARIOUS WOMEN WHO ARE WORKING IN THE AREA OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE DAILY ISSUES WITH WHICH THEY ARE FACED. THE MAIN PURPOSE FOR USING AN ENTERTAINMENT FORMAT IS TO ATTRACT THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S ATTENTION AND THEREBY EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ON SUCH ISSUES AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, AND OTHERS. WE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE AIRED ON ALL LOCAL CHANNELS ON PRIME TIME AT THE END OF THIS MONTH OF OCTOBER.



ANOTHER BIG AREA WHERE THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IMORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS IS THAT OF WOMEN AT WORK. IN 1985 A BILL PROHIBITING SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT WAS PASSED. IN 1988, PUBLIC LAW NO. 17 OF APRIL 22, OF PUERTO RICO WAS APPROVED PROHIBITING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE. THE RATIFICATION OF THIS LAW ACKNOWLEDGES AND ESTABLISHES THAT:

"THE PRACTICE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EMPLOYMENT, IN ANY OF ITS MODALITIES, VIOLATES THE INVIOABILITY OF THE HUMAN BEING AND CONSTITUTES CLEAR DISCRIMINATION AGAINST A MAN OR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE."

GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WERE PREPARED BY THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS ON PUBLIC POLICY IMPLANTATION AND INTERNAL PROCEEDINGS TO ATTEND THE COMPLAINTS ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE. A LARGE NUMBER OF REQUESTS FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED ASKING FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLANTATION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES AT THE WORKPLACE. EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN ON SUCH POLICIES INCLUDING AMENDMENTS. OTHER AGENCIES HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED TO FORMULATE THEIR OWN POLICIES.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO MENTION THAT THERE IS A BIG MOVE FROM ACADEMIC CENTRES IN ESTABLISHING A NEW BILL WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. PROJECT 850, WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IS BEING DISCUSSED AT THE SENATE'S COMMISSION ON CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

ANOTHER ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE AREA OF WOMEN AND WORK IS THE EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 5066 AIMED TOWARD AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN WOMEN ON THE ISLAND BY ESTABLISHING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY, THE EXECUTIVE ORDER 5066 WAS SIGNED ON THE 8TH MARCH OF 1988 WHICH COINCIDES WITH INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S DAY.

AT PRESENT, THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS IS COORDINATING AND MONITORING AN EFFORT AMONG GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO ESTABLISH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMAN.

IN MARCH 1991, TO COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S DAY, THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS WILL HOLD A CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, WORK AND THE FAMILY TO IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE THE EFFECT

ON WOMEN OF THE PRESSURES OF FAMILY LIFE, WORK AND EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED PROBLEMS. THIS WILL SERVE AS A BASIS ON WHICH TO DEVELOP SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS. THE CONFERENCE WILL BE ADDRESSED TO WOMEN FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR OF THE ISLAND.

THE LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, MAIN AREA OF WORK IS WOMEN AND EDUCATION. IF WE LOOK INTO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN PUERTO RICO, SEX STEREOTYPING IS STILL PRACTICED. AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO DEVELOP ITS OBJECTIVE IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO HAS BEEN WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR WOMEN.

EDUCATIONAL STAFF, FUTURE TEACHERS, AND PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE RECEIVED A SERIES OF TRAININGS ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. A MODEL PROJECT ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AT A PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA. THIS PIONEER PROJECT, CALLED SEX EQUITY STRATEGIES IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IS AIMED TOWARDS INTERGRATING SEX EQUITY INTO THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WILL BE ADDRESSED ALSO, IN ORDER TO PREVENT IT.

FROM THIS BRIEF OUTLINE OF SOME OF THE MORE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS GAINED FOR PUERTO RICAN WOMEN, WE CAN GAIN A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION, TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS THAT MOVILIZE DAILY GOVERNMENT WORK.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO IS COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING THE WOMEN OF OUR SOCIETY SO THAT THE TOTALITY OF OUR COLLECTIVE TALENTS AND RESOURCES ARE REALIZED TO MAXIMIZE OUR ABILITY TO FACE THE CHALLENGE OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

AS WOMEN, WE FACE A SPECIAL CHALLENGE. RATHER THAN JOIN THE RANKS OF THE UNEMPLOYED AND UNDEREDUCATED, WE MUST ENSURE THAT WOMEN BECOME A POLITICAL FORCE TO ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF GOODS AND SERVICES --WHETHER IT'S ENHANCED BILINGUAL EDUCATION, NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES OR IMPROVEMENTS IN A HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM.

AS WELL AS REGISTERING TO VOTE AND PARTICIPATING AT THE BALLOT BOX, WE ARE ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO ACTIVELY WORK IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AND DEVELOP THE TECHNICAL EXPERTISE NECESSARY TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES TO LEARN THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. WE MUST MOVE FROM BEING MERELY PETITION CARRIERS TO POLITICAL STRATEGISTS AND ELECTION LAWYERS.

JUST AS IMPORTANT IS ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO ENTER THE POLITICAL ARENA AS VIABLE REPRESENTATIVES IN LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTED POSITIONS.

THE FUTURE OF MY PEOPLE IS AS MUCH IN THE HANDS OF OUR WOMEN AS IN THE HANDS OF OUR MEN. THE GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO IS COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING THE WOMEN OF OUR SOCIETY SO THAT THE TOTALITY OF OUR COLLECTIVE TALENTS AND RESOURCES ARE UTILIZED TO MAXIMIZE OUR ABILITY TO FACE THE CHALLENGE OF THE 21ST CENTURY.