

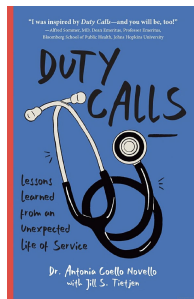


A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



April 2024 Her Story ENewsletter Puerto Rican Changemakers

On March 5, 2024, Jill Tietjen's latest book was released. It is the memoir of Dr. Antonia Novello titled *Duty Calls: Lessons Learned from an Unexpected Life of Service*. The first female and first Hispanic United States Surgeon General, Dr. Novello is one of a distinguished group of women from Puerto Rico who have changed America. In this newsletter, we profile Dr. Novello and Rita Moreno.



The first person of Hispanic descent and one of the few people to reach the pinnacle of entertainment excellence, actress, singer, and dancer **Rita Moreno** has won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar, and a Tony. Born in Puerto Rico, her family moved to New York City when she was young; she began dancing lessons soon after. At age 11, she was providing Spanish voiceovers for American films. At age 13, she appeared in her first Broadway production. Moreno appeared in numerous small roles in film throughout the 1950s, although she disliked many of those roles as she felt they were too stereotypical.

In 1961, Moreno was cast as Anita in the film version of *West Side Story*, for which she won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. She received a television Primetime Emmy (1977) for her role as Rita Kapcovic on *The Muppet Show*.

Still active after seven decades, Moreno continues to appear in films, on stage, and on television. In addition to her other honors, Moreno has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Medal of Arts, and the Kennedy Center Honors.



The first female U.S. Surgeon General and the first Hispanic to hold the office, **Antonia Novello** grew up in Puerto Rico with a congenital medical condition that was finally corrected when she was 22. This experience galvanized her to study medicine; her aunt's death from kidney disease, determined her focus on nephrology. Novello was named the first woman Intern of the Year during her years at the University of Michigan. She joined the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps in 1978 and later served as deputy director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Novello was appointed U.S. Surgeon General in 1990 by President George H.W. Bush. As Surgeon General, she focused on the health of youth, women, and minorities. Her efforts against tobacco usage included fighting the "Joe Camel" advertising campaign that she felt targeted children. In addition, she worked to stop the spread of AIDS. During the Gulf War, she worked to expedite vaccines for military personnel, for which she received the Legion of Merit. She later served as Commissioner of the Department of Health for the State of New York; she led the state's health response after 9/11. Among her many honors, Novello has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Rita Moreno and Antonia Novello are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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