



Marylou Olivarez Mason

Inducted: **2014**

Era: **Contemporary**

Locale: **Lansing**

Group: **Hispanic**

Area(s) of Achievement: **Civil Rights, Education**

Through the years, Dr. Marylou Olivarez Mason struggled through poverty and discrimination as a child migrant worker, woman, Latina, and single parent. She is the founder of Michigan Hispanic Heritage Month and has served with both Democratic and Republican governors. In 1986, she was the first woman to be named executive director of the Michigan Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs by Gov. James J. Blanchard. Her empathy and legislative testimony helped pass a \$350,000 increase in appropriations for migrant housing in Michigan.

Dr. Mason became the first Hispanic woman appointed to the Lansing Community College Board of Trustees in 2003. Her work in establishing the Michigan Education Opportunity Fund helped more than 400 Michigan students receive scholarships from the fund from 1988 through 1997. As founder of Advocates for Latino Student Advancement in Michigan Education, Dr. Mason coordinated financial advisor and admission officer efforts to recruit Hispanics to the state's colleges and universities.

During Dr. Mason's tenure as the first woman Hispanic appointee to the Michigan Department of Civil Service Executive Board, 45 Hispanic troopers joined the State Police—one of which became the first Hispanic post commander and later director of the State Police. She has served on advisory councils for three presidents of Mexico—Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderon, and Enrique Pina Nieto. Dr. Mason was honored as Hispanic Woman of the Year in 2000 by the National Hispana Leadership Institute in Washington, DC. In 2005, Dr. Mason received the highest award the Mexican government bestows on an individual outside Mexico.