

DOLORES S. ATENCIO, FOUNDER

*Luminarias
de la Ley*

LUMINARIES OF THE LAW™

A native Coloradan, Dolores graduated from Colorado College and the University of Denver College of Law. Licensed for 44 years, Dolores started her legal career at Colorado Rural Legal Services as a *Reggie Fellow*. She was an Assistant Attorney General, state Administrative Law Judge and a partner at Garcia, Hernandez Sawhney, LLP. Her management experience includes Development Director for public jazz radio KUVU 89.3FM. She joined two other Latinas to launch its broadcast in August 1986—celebrating 40 years in August 2026. While there, she received a *W.K. Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship*. Dolores left KUVU to join the Colorado Bar Association (CBA) staff as Director of Legal and Public Services. Recruited from the CBA, she became the first Latina lawyer for a Formula 1 company as Vice President & General Counsel of the Denver Grand Prix Auto Race, Inc. Thereafter, she returned to private practice. Throughout, Dolores has been active within the bar and in the community. She was president of the Colorado Hispanic Bar and Hispanic National Bar Associations (CHBA 1991, HNBA 1991-1992) and inaugural Chair of the HNBA Latina Commission (2008-2010). Dolores served on the ABA Commission on Women and chaired the Denver Women’s Commission. In August 2025, Dolores was appointed to the ABA’s Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession.

After retiring from law, Dolores created the national legal history project, *Luminarias de la Ley | Luminaries of the Law™ (Luminarias Project)* in 2015 to identify the first Latina lawyers in the country. The *Luminarias Project* is multi-faceted. It includes the *Luminarias Exhibit*, Digital Exhibit, research and writings. Key findings from the seven-year *Luminarias Study* (2016-2022) were published in *Luminarias: An Empirical Portrait of the First Generation of Latina Lawyers 1880-1980*, 39 UCLA CHICANX LATINX LAW REV. 1 (Sept. 2023). In October 2025, her first law school textbook was published, “*The Illustrious Impact of Luminarias on the Law: The Legal Handicraft of the First Latina Article III Judges and State Supreme Court Justices*” (Carolina Acad. Press). Dolores’s second history book, “*A Century of the First Latina Lawyers in the United States*” is slated for publication in 2026. The coffee table pictorially captures the *Luminarias’* entrée and historical journey in the legal profession by incorporating content and beautiful images from the *Luminarias Exhibit*.

Dolores has taught, written, produced and spearheaded numerous works on Latina lawyers, including *Las Primeras*, a 50-minute slide show on 21 Latina trailblazers (1993) converted to a video documentary (1994) and two pieces in collaboration with the Latina Commission: “*100 Years of Achievement: Un Historia Abogada*” (2013) and “*Saluting Hispanic Women Lawyers in the 50 States*” (2014). As Latina Commission Chair, she orchestrated the first two national studies on Latina lawyers, “*Few and Far Between: The Reality of Latinas in the Legal Profession*” (2009), and *Challenges and Rewards in Serving the Public Interest* (2010). Dolores authors articles for publication by select state bar magazines to expand the literature on Latina lawyers while simultaneously fulfilling the Latina Commission’s study goal to increase the visibility of Latina attorneys. Articles to date include: *The First Latina Law Graduates and Lawyers in Colorado*, *The Colorado Lawyer* (June 2024). *The Lone Star Luminarias*, *St. Mary’s Law Review on Race & Social Justice*, vol. 28 (March 2026) and *The Floridian Luminarias* (Summer 2026). In development is the *Luminarias Middle School Series* for Latino/youth.

Recognized as the national expert on the history of Latina lawyers, Dolores has received numerous awards, including the ABA Margaret Brent Outstanding Lawyers of Achievement Award (2024), DU *Law Star - William L. Keating Outstanding Alumni Award* (2023), HNBA President’s Award (2021) and HNBA Latina Commission *Primera Abogada Award* (2018). In 2014, she received the prestigious *Ohtli Award*, Mexico’s highest honor bestowed to non-citizens. In March 2016, Dolores was one of the four female national bar presidents honored for co-founding the Coalition of Bar Associations of Color (CBAC) in 1992. The CHBA has bestowed three awards upon her for *Lifetime Achievement* (2016), *Outstanding Law Firm* (2001) and *Outstanding Attorney* (1992). She is the proud mother of daughter Simone and son-in-law, Jorge. As *Abi*, she lovingly pampers her grandchildren, ten-year-old Jorge Julian and Lilia, five.



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