

## **Jonylah Lopez - Tolland Middle School**

### **Maria C. Colon Sanchez**

Maria C. Colon Sanchez (1926 - November 15, 1989) was a Puerto Rican American educator and a civil rights advocate for Latinos in Connecticut. She was also an activist and politician. She was also known as the "La madrina" (the godmother). In 1988, Maria became the first Hispanic woman elected to the Connecticut General Assembly. The Connecticut General Assembly is a place in Hartford, Connecticut in the House of Representatives who work with public welfare, civil, the environment, criminal law, education, and more.

How did she contribute to the state and nation? Maria contributed to Connecticut in many ways. On August 10th, 1969 the French Canadians and Puerto Ricans in Hartford turned into a riot known as the "Comanchero Riot," where about 150 men gathered at the intersection of Park and Main Street. Maria tried to calm down the police, firefighters and the general public. She then organized a meeting between the men and the city of Hartford. Also, in 1954 Maria and her husband convinced Puerto Ricans to vote in the election. One of her biggest accomplishments was fighting for rights for Latinos to go to English schools. These schools hired Spanish teachers, so the Spanish speaking Latinos could learn English. She was focused on bilingual education and served on the Hartford board of education. In 1972, she contributed to opening La Escuelita, which was the first bilingual school in Connecticut.

Based on the facts and information that is given about Maria Sanchez; would you look at Maria as one of your everyday idols? Maria was the liberator of a civil rights movement for the Puerto Rican community and focused on bilingual education. Thanks to Maria now all Latinos can attend any English school and bilingual schools. Maria also made the Puerto Rican parades possible. Fun fact, there is a Maria C. Colon Sanchez Elementary School in Hartford, CT.

How did she affect me? As a bilingual Latino American, Maria Sanchez affects me with my everyday life. Being a part of the Hispanic/Latino community is already challenging just by how I look. So the fact that myself and other Hispanics can get a good education is very

important to me. In my school, I'm able to fit in with staff and students. I'm also able to learn Spanish from teachers and students as well. Not only that, but Maria gave Hispanics a voice when it comes to voting. She has influenced me to vote when I'm of age. Because of Maria, I am able to attend American schools and get the same education as everyone else. I'm thankful for everything that Maria C. Colon Sanchez did for me and Connecticut.