



## CELEBRATING WOMEN IN MATHEMATICS

### ARGELIA VELEZ-RODRIGUEZ

1936- , Cuba- Velez-Rodriguez studied mathematics at the Marianao Institute where she gained her bachelor's degree in 1955. She continued on to graduate studies at the University of Havana. At that time, only 10% of the Cuban population was black and no black woman had ever received a doctorate in mathematics.



Her doctoral work was on differential equations which arise in the study of astronomical orbits. She submitted her doctoral dissertation *Determination of Orbits Using Talcott's Method* and was awarded the doctorate by the University of Havana in 1960, thus becoming the first black woman to receive a doctorate in mathematics at the University of Havana.

In 1962 Velez-Rodriguez began teaching mathematics and physics at Texas College. It was in 1970 that she first became involved with the science education programs of the National Science Foundation, and this marks the beginning of what eventually became her life's work.

A professor at Bishop College, she was appointed chair of the Department of Mathematical Science from 1975 to 1978. She continued to experiment with ways of teaching mathematics which would be particularly helpful to minority and disadvantaged students.

In 1979 she took a leave of absence from Bishop College to become a program manager with the Minority Institutions Science Improvement Program in Washington, D.C. and in 1980 became director of the Minority Science Improvement Program at the U.S. Department of Education.

*Biography courtesy of The MacTutor History of Mathematics archive*