



PI[♀]NEERING FEMALE JURISTS

Remembrance and Memory

In Memory of my Mother

Pioneering Female Jurists: Introduction

The presence of women in the legal field is a reality today: women are in the majority in Faculty of Law classrooms in Spain, they account for half of lawyers and the judiciary and their presence is increasing in all the legal professions. However, they are still far from executive positions and the epicentre of legal power. There is still a long road ahead. But somebody paved the way: the pioneers. The struggle for equality in the world of law began with them.

Concepción Arenal, *the* key pioneer, attended class disguised as a man in the nineteenth century and never finished her Law degree. Women were not welcome in Law faculties in Spain without restrictions until 1910. And after the classroom, then what? Law was a career with few women, unlike medicine, for example.

A woman could study law, but she could not work in the legal profession. Socially, it was frowned upon. Legally, a prohibition in a text from the thirteenth century, *Las Partidas*, prevented women from being lawyers. Some people debate whether that prohibition actually had legal backing, but the fact is that the first women were only able to join professional Bar Associations after 1920.

The reform of the Statutes of these Bar Associations, with Madrid in the lead (1920) and Barcelona later (1921), decisively opened up women's access to lawyerdom. Later, another door was opened: access to the public service in the judiciary. During the Second Republic, women were allowed to be judges, notaries or property registrars, but the dictatorship once again restricted these jobs to men. The ban on women accessing these professions was not lifted until the 1960s.

This website aims to bring visibility to 20 pioneering women jurists, the first generation: from Concepción Arenal to those who worked in the legal profession or started or finished studying Law in the Second Republic. Between these two periods, 90 years spanning two centuries, was a 'seed period' in which we mostly find women's access to lawyerdom, as well as the first magistrate, judge and prosecutor, and access to doctorates and scholarly life as law professors.

Drawing up the list, selecting them, has been a concerted group effort. The story of one of them led us to discover the names of others. Apart from the most famous (Concepción Arenal, Victoria Kent and Clara Campoamor), the majority are unknown, even among jurists and even those from Catalonia. Therefore, we have included some of the first lawyers in Catalonia (Maria Soteras, Leonor Serrano and Teresa Argemí) and the first woman to be appointed a judge here, was posted in Granollers (Maria Lluïsa Algarra).

In this website –published in three languages (Catalan, Spanish and English)– biographical notes led by the women's names and photographs, along with period documents that bring them visibility and tell us about them, recall the lives and careers of these pioneering women jurists with both an informational and an educational purpose. Written by 15 authors from different universities and disciplines, which ensures the transversality of the contents (civil, criminal, procedural, business, labour, constitutional law and the history of law), each note includes basic references to scholarly, literary or general-readership works. Links to videos and podcasts are also cited, if they exist.

There are still very few studies on these women, when they do exist they are recent, and many of them are doctoral theses, a format that does not reach the public at large. But one thing is clear: there can be no dissemination without prior research, and this latter means diving into primary sources to stitch together the remnants of their lives in academic records, applications for Bar Associations stored in university archives, associations and the press from their period, and in some cases also following their tracks in exile. This is a slow, methodical process in a world addicted to speed.

This website compiles a list of pioneering female jurists who appear in chronological order (by date of birth), although the digital format enables each of them to be viewed individually. Each life is a microcosm, but this project also aims to offer a vision of these women as a whole in that they represent even more women and shed light on gender-based discrimination in lawyerdom and the legal profession.

History tends to silence and stereotype women. Not only is reviving the memory and visibility of these women jurists legal tantamount to archaeology on women's access to the legal field; their memory also provides female referents in a sector that for centuries was reserved solely for men. They are inspiring profiles about overcoming obstacles which should empower women and future women jurists. Not only did they deal with difficulties, but they also changed the rules and made law more egalitarian. Bringing visibility to their names and recalling their lives is a pedagogy of equality, which may be a fundamental right even though real equality still does not exist.

Who were these women? Why are they worth knowing? **THESE WOMEN** are:

1. **Concepción Arenal Ponte** (1820-1893). *Prison activist and pioneering feminist. Defender of disadvantaged people* (Carmen Navarro Villanueva, Associate Professor [Profesora Titular] of Procedural Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
2. **Isabel Oyarzábal Smith** (1878-1974). *First woman labour inspector and first woman Ambassador of Spain* (Olga Paz Torres, Associate Professor [Profesora Agregada] of History of Law and Institutions, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
3. **Clara Campoamor Rodríguez** (1888-1972). *Much more than the female vote* (María Jesús García Morales, Associate Professor [Profesora Titular] of Constitutional Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
4. **Matilde Huici Navaz** (1890-1965). *The importance of education* (Miriam Cugat Mauri, Associate Professor [Profesora Titular] of Criminal Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
5. **Carmen Cuesta del Muro** (1890-1968). *The first woman PhD in Law in Spain* (Fernando Rey Martínez, Full Professor of Constitutional Law, Universidad de Valladolid).
6. **Leonor Serrano Pablo** (1890-1941). *First female lawyer to appear before the Court of Appeal of Barcelona* (José Santiago Yanes Pérez, PhD in Law, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria).
7. **Victoria Kent Siano** (1892-1987). *First lawyer in Madrid, deputy and director general of Prisons* (Gonzalo Quintero Olivares, Full Professor of Criminal Law, Universitat Rovira i Virgili).
8. **María de la Ascensión Chirivella Marín** (1893-1980). *First woman lawyer in Spain* (Manuel Cachón Cadenas, Full Professor of Procedural Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
9. **María del Carmen López Bonilla** (1898-1958). *The one who could have been Spain's first woman lawyer but wasn't* (José Santiago Yanes Pérez, PhD in Law, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria).
10. **María Lacunza Ezcurra** (1900-1984). *Professional integrity as a hallmark* (Arantza Libano Beristain, Associate Professor [Profesora Agregada] of Procedural Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
11. **Julia Álvarez Resano** (1903-1948). *First woman appointed to serve as a magistrate* (Elisa Simó Soler, PhD in Law, Department of Procedural Law, Universitat de València).
12. **María Soterias Mauri** (1905-1976). *First practising woman lawyer in Catalonia and example of repression on the basis of sex* (Daniel Vallès Muñio, Associate Professor

- [Profesor Agregado] of History of Law and Institutions, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
13. **Concepción Peña Pastor** (1906-1960). *One of the first practising women lawyers in Spain, Law professor in exile* (María Jesús García Morales, Associate Professor [Profesora Titular] of Constitutional Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
 14. **Sara Maynar Escanilla** (1906-1986). *First law professor at a Spanish university and early woman lawyer* (Belén Causapé Gracia, PhD in Gender Relations, Universidad de Zaragoza).
 15. **Elvira Fernández-Almoguera Casas** (1907-1938). *First woman prosecutor in Spain* (María Mercedes Serrano Pérez, Associate Professor [Profesora Contratada Doctora] of Constitutional Law, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha).
 16. **Teresa Argemí Melián** (1907-1994). *Jurist and lawyer from Barcelona. The first to celebrate 50 years in the Barcelona Bar Association* (María Jesús Espuny Tomás, Professor Emeritus of History of Law and Institutions, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
 17. **María Palancar Moreno** (1910-1970). *Labour law and social security vocation* (María Jesús Espuny Tomás, Professor Emeritus of History of Law and Institutions, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
 18. **Mercedes Formica-Corsi Hezode** (1913-2002). *Pioneering lawyer and defender of women's rights* (Juan Manuel López Ulla, Associate Professor [Profesor Titular] of Constitutional Law, Universidad de Cádiz).
 19. **María Telo Núñez** (1915-2014). *The lawyer of equality who was determined to change the Civil Code, and did* (María Jesús García Morales, Associate Professor [Profesora Titular] of Constitutional Law, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
 20. **Maria Lluïsa Algarra Coma** (1916-1957). *First woman judge. Playwright and screenwriter* (María Jesús Espuny Tomás, Professor Emeritus of History of Law and Institutions, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).

María Jesús García Morales
Associate Professor (Profesora Titular) of Constitutional Law
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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