

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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## First female US Surgeon Gen. speaks

By Carol Sung

The first female Surgeon General of the United States, Antonia Novello, spoke yesterday at Barnard College, amid controversy over her views on abortion.

Novello spoke on the problems that women face in health care, employment, and in life in general.

At the beginning of her lecture in the James Room, three students approached Novello and placed wire hangers on the podium in protest of what some considered her anti-abortion stance.

Some students in the back of the room also held signs with slogans stating "America Stands for Choice, Planned Parenthood" and "You put a warning on cigarette packs/ will there be warning on



hangers/ Barnard-Columbia Students For Choice.”

Novello is the 14th Surgeon General and the first Latino to hold the position. She is also a clinical professor of pediatrics at the Georgetown University School of Medicine and a former deputy director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Novello commented on the impact of her appointment on other Latinos.

“I think the country has to come to realize, too, that Hispanics are a little bit more than Juan Valdez and Chiquita Banana,” Novello said.

Novello said that even today, women are not attaining the career heights they should.

“Women in high positions continue to be totally underrepresented, and I can tell you, true, that it is not as bad as it was before, but it absolutely is not the way that it should be,” Novello said.

Novello said young women need to be able to look up to the women leaders of today.

“We need awareness, but I can tell you, too, that we need role models. Most of the women that you see in the top today have a man as a role model,” Novello said.

Women in science and medicine are underrepresented, she added.

“There are 586,000 physicians in this country. Out of those, we are only 93,000 women physicians in this country and that is with a push, so called, that they are able to get women into medical school,” Novello said.

Novello said women should avoid having



a smug attitude about their career accomplishments.

“In the arena of health, we must not just talk only of achievements, we have to continually talk about the challenges that are out there,” Novello said.

Novello also spoke about the exclusion of women from the clinical research of many life-threatening diseases and from management positions in general.

In studies conducted on lung cancer, beta-carotene, aspirin as protection from heart attacks, and aging, for example, there were no women included in the research, according to Novello.

“The time has come for this paternalistic type of medicine to quit,” she said.

In addition, women hold only 10 to 12 percent of managerial positions worldwide, she said.

Novello said violence against women has reached epidemic proportions and that women stand a great risk of contracting the HIV virus, which causes AIDS, through heterosexual intercourse.

“The heterosexual mode of transmission curve surpasses the curve of sex with men and IV drug use,” Novello said.

Novello also outlined her view of what women should do to achieve success and happiness.

“We women of today and women of the future will have to continue to think clearly, act decisively, but more importantly, we have to start caring very tenderly for each other,” Novello concluded.