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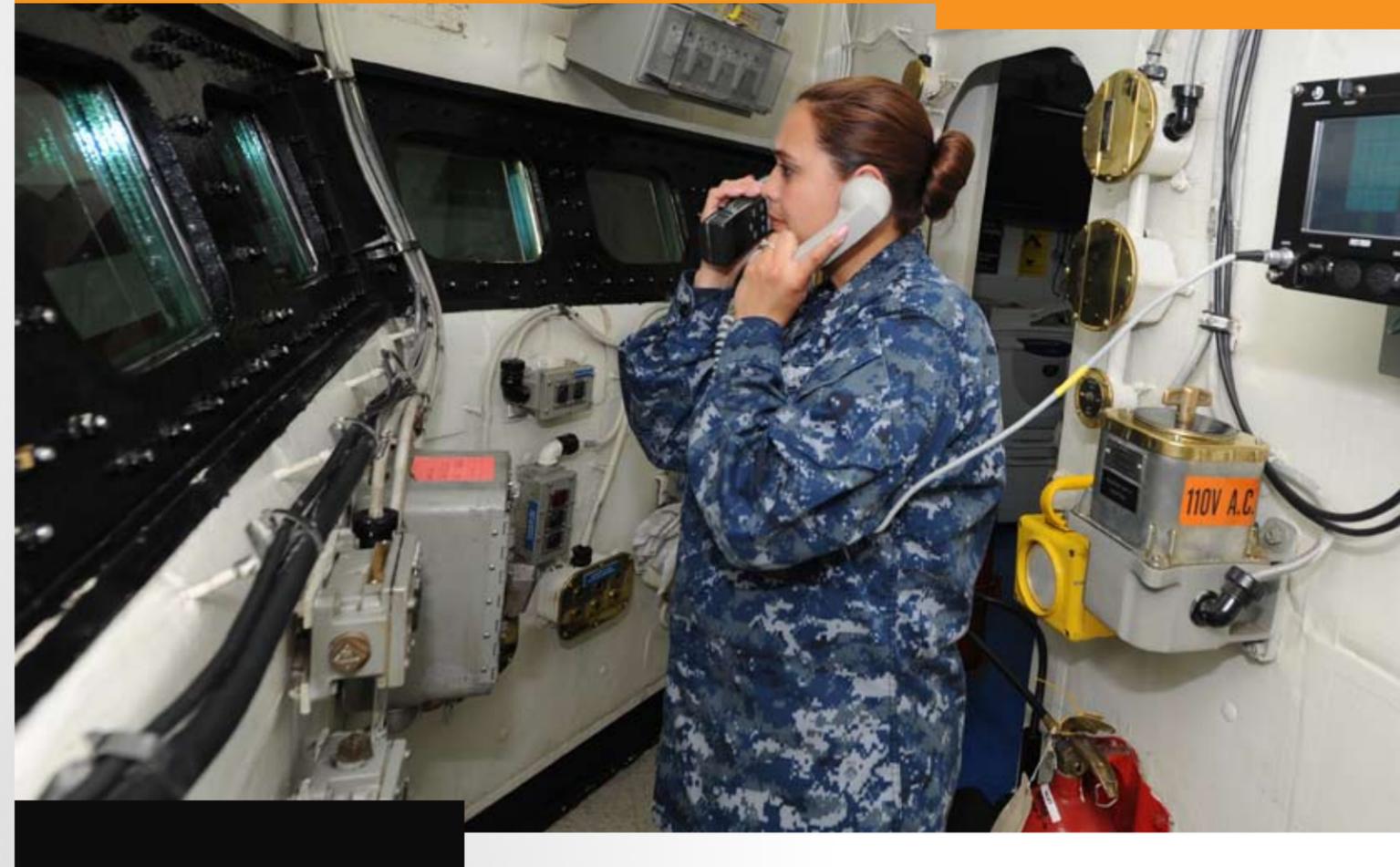
ABH1 Moreno



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More Than A Statistic

How One Reagan Sailor Breaks Stereotypes



Story and photos by
MC3 Terry Godette

The military is an organization filled with inaccurate and unfair stereotypes. “Sailors are nothing but vulgar drunks.” “Your rate doesn’t work.” “You’re just a woman.” These are just a few of the naïve ideas thrown around services, rates and genders. For Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 1st Class Gloria Moreno, USS Ronald Reagan’s V-3 Division Leading Petty Officer (LPO), breaking down and proving those stereotypes wrong has been a career-long goal.



“She told me to hold my ground and always stand up for myself and my Sailors”



She said knowing which Sailors are ready to handle the responsibility starts with clear communication of expectations.

“Communication is the best trait you can have as a leader,” said Moreno. “I feel it’s important to stay in tune with your Sailors. You need to know the environment your Sailors are dealing with inside and outside of work.”

And, like all good leaders, Moreno’s expectations of her Sailors are rooted in career experience and humility.

“I think it’s important as a leader that we show our Sailors that we started in the same position they are in,” she said. “We had to grow from being junior Sailors to being leaders.”

Experience, communication and responsibility are more than just tactics for Moreno, they’re selfless leadership traits that are easily visible to the Sailors under her charge.

“She is always working with us and she always makes sure we are taken care of first before she worries about herself,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 2nd Class David Slater. “I think that makes her the epitome of a leader.”

Stereotypes are a general way of categorizing what one does not understand. Breaking them is often more challenging than creating them in the first place. For Moreno, tearing them down starts with something as simple as planting the seed of success in the mind of the next generation.

“In our rate, you don’t see many female Chiefs or First Class Petty Officers,” added Laemmerhirt.

“I hope to be in (Moreno’s) position one day. I definitely wouldn’t mind following in her footsteps.”

In a male-dominated rate, Moreno encountered tough stereotypes early in her career, many of which centered on what the females in her job “couldn’t” do.

“The standard that the women were setting was not good,” said Moreno. “We were all looked upon as statistics because everyone thought we would either get pregnant or never work hard. Being an Aviation Boatswain’s Mate, you have a heavy workload so I had to grow thick skin and earn my respect. There was no way I was going to become a statistic.”

Moreno was born in Chihuahua, Mexico and quickly grew that thick skin. She was adopted by an American family into a house of five other siblings in order to get away from the violence that surrounded the area in Mexico she was born into. As the years went on, her adopted mother became her biggest champion.

“My mother always has been and still is my hero,” said Moreno. “She offered tough love and stood tall for all her actions. She inspired many people.”

Moreno said that her mother is very much an “Alpha” female with a dominate personality who always earned the utmost respect from both men and women—most of whom sought her out for advice—much like Moreno’s Sailors do with her as their LPO.

She joined the Navy to see the world and to make a life and name for herself. While she insists that she is not a feminist or overly biased towards female Sailors, she admits it was very important for her to always prove

herself and pull her weight to overcome the stereotypes surrounding her.

“I do believe that women have to work harder to get to where they want to be in the military,” she said. “As a woman, you have the capacity to be a great Sailor, but you will always be looked at by people asking, ‘Can she handle it.’”

Coming up through the ranks, Moreno had a lot of positive influences and mentors surrounding her, but her biggest influence was Lieutenant Regina Rogers, the Navy’s first female flight deck officer. While working for Rogers aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68), she said she was taught not to limit herself because of her gender.

“She obviously set the standard for women in our community, so her words always stuck with me,” said Moreno. “She told me to hold my ground and always stand up for myself and my Sailors.”

The influences, both good and bad, throughout Moreno’s career have helped shape her into an influential LPO of one of the largest divisions in one of the most demanding departments aboard an aircraft carrier.

“If I had to do it all over again, I would do it the same with no hesitation because it made me the person and Sailor that I am today.”

As a leader, Moreno finds the most success in being engaged with her Sailors and approaching each task as a cohesive unit.

“I’ve learned that things get done more effectively when you do them as a team,” she said. “I think as a leader, you set the tone on how your division’s day is going to be. My job as an LPO is to put everything personal to the side, walk into quarters with a positive attitude and let them know we are all here to do the same thing, so let’s do it with a smile.”

With that type of contagious attitude, it’s pretty easy for her division to fall in line and embrace that identity.

“She brings great morale to the division and she is a great person to look up to,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Lauren Laemmerhirt.

Over the years, Moreno said she has learned not to be afraid to give a junior Sailor a task above their pay grade and hold them to it.

“The hungry Sailors will take the task and run with it,” said Moreno. “By doing this, I feel like I’m helping them build character and making them feel like they matter.”



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