

CLIFF NOTAS

U.S. \$4.95

SERROS' HOW TO BE A  
CHICANA ROLE MODEL



YOUR LLAVE TO LOS CLASICA/OS

NOTAS

Mc.

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Cliff Notas provide you, the Latina/o Literature enthusiast with the extended effort of one - me. Opinions expressed in Cliff Notas aren't strict dogma meant to discourage your intellectual exploration, but rather to save time.

Cliff Notas assists in redefining and applying Chicana/o wisdom to the contemporary classica/os and should be used as a tool to acquire knowledge and insight about the author and her/his work and still maintain adequate mental and emotional stamina to watch television later that evening. Cliff Notas is highly recommended by students who take an alternative approach to education.

A thorough appreciation of literature allows no short cuts, but I do.

Enjoy!



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## HOW TO BE A CHICANA ROLE MODEL

### NOTES

including

- *Biographical Note*
- *Note from the Author*
- *General Plot Summary*
- *List of Characters*
- *Summaries and Commentaries*



## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Michele Marie Serros was born in Oxnard, California in 1966. Her father, George R. Serros, was a janitor who studied at night to later become a court interpreter. He loves Vincente Fernandez, reciting Spanish poetry, and the all you can eat salad bar at The Sizzler. Her mother (deceased 1991) was Beatrice Ruiz whose favorite past times were painting, gardening, and buying bolts of expensive fabric to later never make anything out of it. Serros has no brothers and only one sister, Yvonne, six years her senior.

Serros attended public school in El Rio, a rural community within the Oxnard city limits, and her grades were excellent until she entered junior high where they were immediately relegated to below average status. Arithmetic, English, Physical Education, Science, History and Political Science were her worst subjects. She had various nicknames while growing up. The endearment "Mickey" (after her love for anything Mickey Mouse, also the English equivalent to Micaela); "Chewbacca" (due to her extended height and excessive black arm hair, the latter which has eliminated with the discovery of Joleen hair lightener); "Chicana Falsa" (given to her by childhood bestfriend, La Letty) and finally, "Chicana Role Model" (by Professional Hispanics desperately seeking positive role models in the Latina/o community).

Serros is reported to have been an emotional, mean spirited, and highly sensitive child. She spent her summers at home watching TV game shows, digging holes in the backyard and prank calling her neighbors.

At age sixteen she got her first job as a counter girl at the Sizzler Steak House. This caused a mixed reaction for her working class father who strongly disagreed with her decision to enter the workforce at such a young age, but immediately inquired about the family discount.

Unlike the assertion of other literary figures, Serros was not a "withdrawn nerdy teen" who "ate lunch alone in the school yard." She had many friends in high school and many times ditched 5th period Spanish to spend the second lunch period with more friends. She is reported to have been an emotional, mean spirited, highly sensitive and very friendly (some say promiscuous) teenager.

At nineteen years of age she moved to Venice, California and attended Santa Monica College for six years, before transferring to UCLA where where she studied for an additional three years.

In 1988 she met musician/percussionist Eugene Peter Trautmann (currently with Queens of the Stone Age, check out their new CD, "R-Rated" on Interscope Records) at a Belgium music festival and whom she married eight years later. Two years after a June wedding they had a November separation. She is currently living in NYC

## SETTING

The sites of principal action is divided by the strawberry fields of Oxnard, California and the silver mines of Taxco, Mexico, as well as the cosmopolitan metropolis of Los Angeles.

Central and minor characters are aspects of all three settings and as Dickens created urban characters of the Industrial Revolution, Serros has created characters of the Top Forty '70s and the Post New Wave '80s.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*La Chicana Role Model*  
(R. Model)

The protagonist; plagiarist, liar and prank phone caller.  
Always late.

*Angela*

Roommate, sweater borrower.

*Anthony Rivera*

Former "General Hospital" star, Michael Jackson music video dancer, looks like Michael De Lorenzo in the movie version.

*The White Socks*

Una clicka of catty co-eds studying Spanish with R. Model in Mexico.

*Coworker Jennifer*

Former "In Living Color" Fly girl, actress. Looks like Jennifer Lopez in the movie version.

*Ernesto Chavez*

Professional Hispanic

*father*

Alive, well and always on time.

*mother*

Deceased, application for sainthood was approved. Standard adoration mindset when a daughter loses a mother at a young age (see the book, "Motherless Daughters")

*Aunt Tura*

Doña Yakkity Yak. Always calls back . . . again and again and again.

*Frank Black*

Singer, songwriter, guitar god. Total dick in person

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (Continued)

*Gabby Mi'jo*

Skateboarder's body, grease monkey's fingernails, lover of literature, Yummy.

*Martha Reyes*

Former chola with a keen ojo for creases.

*The Chicana Writer*

Uppity, favors shoulder scarfs and hyphens.

*The Red Headed Mexican*

Can't get enough of them.

*Cokie Roberts*

NPR correspondent, looks like Kevin Bacon in the movie version.

Other characters are included throughout the text , however they are so minor they need no separate mention.

## SPECIAL ASSEMBLY

### Summary

A school cafeteria is the introduction setting and a panel of role models ("a cop, a news lady from the local Spanish station, a poet . . .") are part of a special assembly. They are speaking to an audience of students who are anxiously awaiting the role model of them all - Anthony Rivera. Not mentioned is the smell of fish sticks and snickerdoodles coming from the kitchen.

### Commentary

Adulation for author Judy Blume is noted by the insertion of a character named Margaret Simon, the same name as the protagonist in Blume's young adult novel, "Are You There God? It's Me Margaret."

Unclear is where protagonist, R. Model, is during this chapter. Is she a student in the audience or the poet/speaker on-stage? This "Free Write" could have very well been written by Martha Reyes, for we later learn (Role Model Rule Number 9) that she is also in attendance at the special assembly.

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 1

### Summary

Our protagonist, R. Model, is invited to "participate" in a Chicana Writer's conference and discovers she is asked to serve food, rather than read her poetry. She is embarrassed when learning this but decides to partake in the poetry open mic session that is held the last day of the conference. While serving food, R. Model spits in the Spanish rice (jes messin', jes wanna see if you are paying attention) and is asked a question (in Spanish) by The Chicana writer. When R. Model responds in Spanglish, she is berated by The Chicana Writer. Thus, the odyssey of R. Model begins. The search for a worthy position in the Chicana/o community as a role model.

### Commentary

The poem quoted (page 10) is "Mi Problema" from Serros' first book, *Chicana Falsa*, (Riverhead Books, \$10.00, available at your local bookstore)

## SENIOR PICTURE DAY

### Summary

It is the morning of "Senior Picture Day" and R. Model is getting ready to have her picture taken at school. She squeezes her nose to make it narrower and "less Indian" looking. While doing so she recalls why and how the squeezing started.

### Commentary

This is based on the actual account during Serros' preteen years. In real life, "Terri" broke her nose years later in a skateboarding accident and her nose got all fucked up. Then later when "Terri" got married, her husband divorced her and Serros saw the husband and his new wife at Bob's Big Boy in Oxnard (the one on Oxnard Boulevard and Vineyard) and the new wife had this fantastic honker. There you go.

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 2

### Summary

R. Model takes a position as a page at a Hollywood TV show and seeks support from a Latina coworker in hopes she will help her climb up The Industry ladder.

### Commentary

Eating for free is a common theme in Serros' work. One of the perks for R. Model's new job as a page is that she'd be allowed, "to eat for free in the studio commissary." In an excerpt of Serros' earlier work, *Chicana Falsa*, (Riverhead Books, \$10.00, available in a bookstore near you.) we find in the poem, "Dead Pig's Revenge" that the long trip to Chino was worthwhile because the family believed, "We'd eat good, we'd eat free..."

Scholars have long debated the amount (or lack of) comestibles in the Serros household.

## FIRST CALL

### Summary

R. Model calls a Professional Hispanic for whom she's worked for and inquires about some money he owes her.

### Commentary

What . . .

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 3

### Summary

R. Model has her first book of poetry and short stories published, but the publisher closes down the press and R. Model is forced to sell them on her own.

### Commentary

This story is based on the circumstances surrounding the publication of Serros' first book of poetry and short stories, *Chicana Falsa* (Riverhead Books, \$10.00. Available at a bookstore near you).



## PASSPORT TO CROSS OVERLAND

### Summary

R. Model reflects how she derived from a long line of name changers and paper product wasters.

### Commentary

Okay, the premise is good, but somewhere the story got lost closer to the ending. Serros hates this story, but you don't have to agree with her. If you want to be her friend (or just look like one) say, "No, it's a really good story. *Really.*"

## SECOND CALL

### Summary

R. Model calls the Professional Hispanic to inquire about some money he owes her.

### Commentary

What a . . .

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 4

### Summary

Following information from an outdated encyclopedia, R. Model learns the meaning of social maturity.

### Commentary

The introductory paragraph to Role Model Rule Number 4 is based on a similar introduction in Judy Blume's young adult novel, *Tiger Eyes*. The protagonist, Tiger Eyes, is spending a hot summer day outside with a crowd of people. "So hot," Tiger Eyes says, that a "pool of sweat" starts to "form inside" her bra. It is later learned that Tiger Eyes is at her father's funeral.

Literary critics have argued for generations whether Serros is inspired by the work of author Judy Blume or is just being a mere copycat.

## THE BIG DEAL

### Summary

Guess who's coming to Cena? Not Greg Allman, not Che Guevara, but rather another long haired tattooed vegetarian. R. Model has to prove her boyfriend's worth not only to her "primary maternal figure," Aunt Alma, but to her whole meat eating Mexican American family.

### Commentary

The situation in "The Big Deal" is based on a family gathering involving Serros' cousin Andrew and his non Latina, non Catholic, tattooed, vegetarian girlfriend, Sierra.

The definite ethnicity of Doze, the new boyfriend, is unclear. We know he is not Mexican, ("I could accept he isn't Mexican," laments Aunt Alma) and that he is light skinned, ("he's definitely guero, huh?"). But Doze could very well be a light skinned Latino, say, an Argentinean or he could just look like one of Serros' favorite South Texas artists, Beto.

Sustaining a vague background for Doze is similar to another central character in a short story by Toni Morrison that Serros read (and loved) in a Women's Studies class at UCLA. She forgot the name of it.

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 5

### Summary

It is Christmas night and R. Model is outraged that her family wants to go see the new Madonna film, "Evita." They have forgotten their promise to Uncle Charlie, an actor who asked the whole family not see films that feature Latino characters portrayed by non Latino actors.

### Commentary

Based on the NPR piece, "Evita Christmas", written by Serros in 1996. Latinos in the movies? This is fiction

## THIRD CALL

### Summary

R. Model calls The Professional Hispanic to inquire about some money he owes her.

### Commentary

What a complete . .

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 6

### Summary

While working at an art store, R. Model is asked by a local artist to pose as an Indian for an upcoming art show. Remembering Uncle Charlie and his activism to protect actors of color, R. Model thinks fast. Her own method of activism is weak, however it allows her to get the "strappy slingbacks" that show off her sexy toe cleavage.

### Commentary

All that squeezing didn't work. R. Model still looks like an "Pow Wow" Indian even though the air brushed photo of her on book cover doesn't show it.

## TENTH CALL

### Summary

R. Model receives a phone call and thinks it's The Professional Hispanic to pay her the money he owes her. It isn't him, but rather Zack De la Rocha from Rage Against the Machine asking if she'll help him with his song writing skills (not really, jes wanna see if you're still paying attention).

### Commentary

Based on an actual conversation Serros had one evening with muy talented singer/songwriter Quetzal Flores (check out his band, Quetzal) who has had similar dealings with "Professional Hispanics" who are always "down for brown", yet are negligent about paying "the green" they owe to working Latino artists.

## BREAKING THE MAJOR RULE

### Summary

Roommate Angela borrows R. Model's stolen sweater. While R. Model retrieves it, she discovers a passage written about her in Angela's diary.

### Commentary

People who keep diaries really, in a way, want them read, don't they? I mean, don't you ever write something in your journal and think, "Ooh, this would be cool in a movie."

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 7

### Summary

Tia Tura, the chattest of all R. Model's aunts, calls and interrupts R. Model's "creative flow." While she tries to get Tia Tura off the phone, R. Model makes a discovery about the family tree.

### Commentary

See "Passport to Cross Overland"

## LET'S GO MEXICO!

### Summary

R. Model needs a passing grade in a foreign language course to complete her undergraduate degree in Chicana/o Studies. She decides to study Spanish in Mexico where she endures The White Socks and pigeon eating landladies and takes advantage of used text books and lazy Sunday mornings at IHOP.

### Commentary

"Slutty Sock" read this part of the book and is pissed! If a tall white girl with sandy brown hair named Francie asks you for Serros' home address, DO NOT give it to her. Have Grandma Soco deal with her.

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 8

### Summary

R. Model confronts all the white people who ask her all the time where she is from. She decides to turn the tables around and asks them the same question.

### Commentary

Sorta still painful when you think about it.

## I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

### Summary

Nirvana couldn't make it, but good news! R. Model is asked, along with 11 other poets, to travel on Lollapalooza for a whole summer.

### Commentary

Based on the young adult novel, "Go Ask Alice." From the introduction to lines such as "Each time a drop of rain hits me, I can swear it's a tear making up for the ones I want to cry..." are inspired by that '70s cult classic written "Anonymous."

When R. Model is eating an orange yeast roll bought from the snack machine on the train, this rare moment of happiness is derived from the fact that she knows she is finally leaving the horrible tour and going home. This scene is similar to when "Anonymous" returns home (after having been on the road as a drug addicted runaway) and she bakes orange yeast rolls with her grandmother. It is then, that both protagonists, R. Model and Anonymous, know that everything is going to be okay.

In addition, the sensation R. Model experiences while eating the roll, "I can feel its warmth and am actually experiencing the orange zest. It's a thousand times better, a million, trillion times

better than all that catered crap they served us on tour." is comparable to when "Anonymous" is home and embracing a kitten. The warmth and purring of the small animal expresses an euphoric moment for "Anonymous" that is far better than any drug she has ever taken in her whole teenage life.

## **ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 9**

### *Summary*

Martha Reyes stresses to R. Model the true definition of Latino Unity - a girl and her iron.

### *Commentary*

Based on pretty bad photos of Serros, perspiration stains and wrinkled gut lines that she is too horrified to claim. "Twin Pix" from Rite-Aid only doubled the amount of shame.

## **COUNTER ACT**

### *Summary*

While working the counter at a local art store, R. Model realizes what's really missing from her life.

### *Commentary*

Based on actual dialogue taken from the counter at Michael's Arts 'n Crafts in Santa Monica, California, where Serros worked from 1989 to 1994.

An ovarian cyst was actually discovered in Serros in 1990 and she promptly fainted in the doctor's office when hearing the news. Later that evening, a compassionate boyfriend decided to treat her to an evening of dinner, movie and sex. The sex made the cyst rupture and she no longer has it. When she is late for an appointment or work, Serros still uses the non existent cyst as an excuse.

## **TWELFTH CALL**

### *Summary*

R. Model calls The Professional Hispanic to inquire about some money she owes him.

### *Commentary*

What a complete and . . .



## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 10

### *Summary*

As a "woman who gives back to her community," R. Model is invited to Washington D.C. to partake in a focus group sponsored by "America's Number One Women's Television Network."

### *Commentary*

No snow dome, but 5,830 frequent flyer miles ain't bad.

## TWENTIETH SOMETHING CALL

### *Summary*

R. Model call the Professional Hispanic to inquire about some money he owes her.

### *Commentary*

What a complete and total . . .

## FOURTH THURSDAY IN APRIL

### *Summary*

Father cannot afford a sitter and takes R. Model (as a young girl) to work with him at the Oxnard city airport.

### *Commentary*

A fictionalized account on what Serros' own father related to her about his experiences in the work place.

## ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 11

### *Summary*

Abuelita (Grandma Soco) aids R. Model in obtaining a serving of some good ol' traditional *nalgas mexicanos*.

### *Commentary*

Chalé con chains, anyway. Support your local bookdealer.

## GOOD PARKING

### *Summary*

R. Model receives a university award and asks her father to attend the ceremony with her. When he arrives, four and a half hours

early (he never wants to be late) he questions how she is living her life.

*Commentary*

Dialogue taken verbatim. Serros could have just held a tape recorder and transcribed this story for publication.

**ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 12**

*Summary*

R. Model has a book signing and smiles.

*Commentary*

This is the second to reference to Pollo Loco, a Mexican American food franchise on the west coast, however, it's reported that Serros actually prefers the fabricated hard shell and slimy orange cheese of Tito's Tacos in Culver City.

**THE PLAINTIFF, THE POET**

*Summary*

A court judges calls The Professional Hispanic to the bench and inquires about the money he owes R. Model.

*Commentary*

What a complete and total dick, huh?

**ROLE MODEL RULE NUMBER 13**

*Summary*

Stacks and stacks of mail arrives to R. Model's door and they ain't no "Final Demand" notices either!

*Commentary*

Handwritten letters are so much better than pussy email.

**SPECIAL ASSEMBLY, PART 2**

*Summary*

R. Model is late, again, and has to speak to a group of elementary school students in Bell Gardens.

*Commentary*

Bell Gardens, "The City that Works!," has population of 43771. 87.5 % are Hispanic, 0.2% are Other.

Chicken pot pies contain no marijuana. Role models should not smoke marijuana, but can indulge in anything Swanson once in a while.

This is the last story of the book. You should be typing, "In conclusion..." right about now.

14

15

...shall be deemed to have been assigned to the assignee...

ARTICLE IV, SECTION 1, PART 1

...shall be deemed to have been assigned to the assignee...

ARTICLE IV, SECTION 1, PART 2

...shall be deemed to have been assigned to the assignee...

ARTICLE IV, SECTION 1, PART 3

...shall be deemed to have been assigned to the assignee...

ARTICLE IV, SECTION 1, PART 4

...shall be deemed to have been assigned to the assignee...

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