



Michele Serros

AUTHOR,
SOCIAL COMMENTATOR,
TANKER SURFER

SMC Distinguished Alumni
Recognition Award for Outstanding
Professional Achievement, 2014

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Alumni Association

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

A FLOURISHING AUTHOR WITH RELEVANCE AND PASSION

By Jamie Solis

As a thriving poet, social commentator and author, we are proud that Michele Serros is an alumna of Santa Monica College. She is a former writer for the TV series *George Lopez*, and her published works have landed on recommended reading lists in many Southern California schools. Her books have also received attention from bands like Red Hot Chili Peppers and Rage Against the Machine. While studying at SMC, Serros began to make big moves in her writing career. She recalls the faculty who were influential during this exciting time in her life.

Michele Serros first entered academia by attending public school in her hometown of Oxnard. After public school, she went to Ventura College for a few years. She then moved 60 miles to the south where she started at Santa Monica College in 1985. While she lived in Los Angeles, Serros was too embarrassed to admit that she was from Oxnard. Instead, she would give the name of her city a fancy spin, "I would often tell people, as casually as I could, 'Oh, I live between Malibu and Santa Barbara.' It sounded so much more glamorous."

Several members of the faculty made a lasting impression on Serros. One instructor inspired Serros was Daniel Cano. She explains how one class stood out to her, even though any class she took with Cano prepared her for a successful future, "And without doubt, Mr. Daniel Cano's Mexican American Literature class. His instruction was a turning point in my life." She is also very grateful for her Speech class, because she still uses the skills today as a professional speaker. She also received support on a more personal level from the Women's Center and her math instructor Ann Carroll. With help from these women, Serros was able to grieve the death of her mother.

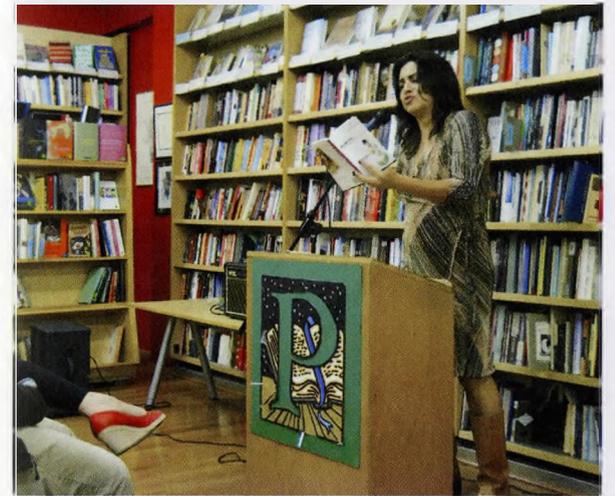
Serros started gaining fame for her writing during her years at Santa Monica College by publishing *Chicana Falsa and other stories of Death, Identity and Oxnard*. Serros went on tour with Lollapalooza with 11 other poets as a result of the attention she received from her earliest book. While on tour, Billy Corgan of the Smashing Pumpkins played guitar as she recited her poem, "Mr. Boom Boom Man." Her first collection of poetry and stories really propelled her career forward.

After studying at Santa Monica College, Serros went on to receive a degree in Chicana/o Studies from UCLA, where she graduated cum laude. She has since published young adult novels entitled *Honey Blonde Chica* and *Scandalosa!* She is also an experienced writer for numerous publications including *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and more, and she is well-known for contributing social commentaries on various outlets on National Public Radio. From her influence on curriculum, to

her poetry that drives by on the Los Angeles County buses, her immeasurable successes can be seen all over.

When asked what the biggest challenge she faced was on her road to success, Serros explained that she didn't get to spend enough time with her family, "There are so many pages in the family's photo albums (large books with heavy paper pages where one can attach photos—ha!) that celebrate family events that [do] not include me." Despite the challenges, Serros is happy that she continued on, because she can now make a living by doing what she loves.

Serros' fondest memory of Santa Monica College was working alongside a future star, "It was fun having Rivers Cuomo (from Weezer) as my assistant at the (then) Latino Literary Center. We talked a lot about music and books.



I remember thinking, "This poor guy from Wisconsin. His band is never gonna make it." With the sense of humor you'd expect from an entertainment writer, Michele Serros represents the remarkable capability that lies within every student at SMC.

As an experienced speaker, Serros often gives speeches at commencement ceremonies across the nation. This year, Santa Monica College is beyond privileged to have someone with so much relevance sharing her expertise at our graduation ceremony. Michele Serros would like to send our graduates off into their promising futures with this simple piece of advice, "Meet all your deadlines a DAY before they are due and always, always, arrive 10 minutes early for interviews."

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