

October 20, 2007

Dear Ms. Michele Serros,

I would like to take a moment of your time to express to you how much I really appreciate and love your work. I remember reading Chicana Falsa in tenth grade in high school, my boyfriend let me borrow it and I've kept it since. Your book changed my perspective not only on life, but also on my identity and helped me reevaluate my state of mind. As you know, high school is a very influential and determining period in one's life, a period in which one is still defining their identity, a period where learning and experiences are crucial. Pretty much, high school can "make you or break you." I have to say high school was not too difficult for me because I have always had a sense of who I truly was, but from the moment that I read your book, I knew that I needed to remember that who I was depended on where I came from.

Growing up, I never felt like I really belonged to one particular social group. Not to say that it was very important, but my sense of identity could not be categorized. I was born in the mid eighties, and I grew up during the nineties in the San Fernando Valley, more exclusively in the city of Van Nuys. During this time, the population was still predominantly white, and not as diverse as it is today, so connecting with peers similar to my cultural background was hard to come by.

My parents are from Guatemala City, Guatemala and I was born and raised here in California, so I feel that my identity consists of two cultures, where I can't seem to relate completely to one or the other. I always felt this way growing up, but during high school, I realized, through your writing, that I was not the only person dealing with a sense of mixed identity. Even though I am not Mexican-American, I am of Hispanic culture, which I believe stretches out through most Latin American countries, so that the cultural traditions, beliefs, and expectations are quite similar. I related to the expectations held by the families and characters in your stories. I could relate to having an aunt who expects my boyfriend to fit a certain mold appropriate for the family. Or having my father expects so much from me because he wants me to do better than him and not have it to work as hard. Being a girl is difficult already, but being a girl in a Hispanic household/family is twice as hard. Having such pressure became easier to deal with after reading Chicana Falsa. I found comfort through your writing and story telling. I also found myself questioning the expectations held by mainstream society and decided to liberate myself of the standards that the media and others had for me. I guess I developed a social conscience and decided to look within myself and to my family to determine for what I thought was important.

With this, I just want to thank you for your wonderful work and really encourage you to keep doing what you do. I read all of your books and am glad to say that I will look forward to reading more in the future. My dream has been to be a writer and reading your work has encouraged me to follow that dream. I recently move here to Camarillo from Van Nuys because I am currently attending California State University Channel Islands and I remember telling my mother, "It would be so cool if Michele Serros came to our school, seeing how she's from Oxnard, she must be involved in the community." At that time, that was just wishful thinking, but today I am giving you this letter in gratitude for the awesome work that you do and to let you know that I am a big fan.

Best Wishes,

Tiffany J. Ramirez