

## Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez Biography

Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez is a woman who wears many hats. Most recently, "bestselling, groundbreaking novelist" has been the dominant hat. *Entertainment Weekly* named her a breakout literary star. *Latina* magazine named her a Woman of the Year. *Hispanic Business* magazine has twice named her among the 100 most influential Hispanics in the nation. And now, *Time* magazine has named her one of the 25 most influential Hispanics in America, alongside George Lopez, Bill Richardson, Jennifer Lopez and others.

*Time* included Alisa because, they said, she is the "Godmother" of chica lit, a new and lucrative genre in U.S. publishing that tells mainstream, modern stories of professional, educated American women -- many (but not all) of whom just happen to be of Latin descent. The genre marks a break with publishing's traditional (wrongheaded) expectation that U.S. authors of Latin descent must somehow write in the magical realism style of many well-known authors from Latin America.

Alisa has always written, and decided she was going to be a novelist when she was nine years old. She holds a master's in journalism from Columbia University, where her Reporting and Writing professor David Krajicek described her as having a "mind that gives off sparks like flint on steel." She began her professional writing career at 24, as one of the youngest staff writers ever hired at the *Boston Globe*. Her lyrical, witty prose soon landed her a Pulitzer nomination, and recognition as the best newspaper essayist in the nation by the SUNMAG organization.

After five years at the *Globe*, Alisa took a job as a staff writer at the *LA Times*, covering the pop music industry, melding her two lifelong passions -- writing and music. Also a professional jazz saxophonist, Alisa holds a bachelor's in music from the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, and her deep understanding of music and journalism quickly put her at the top of the music writing field. While at the *Times*, she won an award for feature-writing from the American Society of Sunday Newspaper Editors.

In 2001, Alisa's first novel, the landmark "The Dirty Girls Social Club," was sold to St. Martin's Press after a fierce bidding war. The book became a national bestseller, optioned for film by Columbia Pictures with Jennifer Lopez as a producer . . . and star. The rights eventually came back to Alisa when production on the movie failed to materialize; Alisa is in the process of turning the book into an independent film.

Alisa is a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her father is a sociology professor who came to the U.S. from Cuba as a 15-year-old orphan, as part of Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. Her mother is a seventh-generation New Mexican of Irish, Native American, French Jew, English and Spanish extraction. Alisa is married to Patrick Rodriguez, a third-generation Mexican-American; they have a son, Alexander, five. They live in a lovely adobe house in New Mexico. Asked to describe her ethnicity, Alisa likes to say she's a "citizen of the world, and a student of our global humanity."

"Make Him Look Good" is Alisa's third novel. "After years of covering celebrities -- and dealing with them now as a novelist and screenwriter -- it was amazingly

rewarding and cathartic to poke fun at the psychology and backstage machinations of fame," she says. "I loved writing this book. It was way too much fun to qualify as work."

In the fall, Alisa's first young adult novel, "Haters," will be released by Little Brown & Co.

Alisa is a popular public speaker on American campuses. Her personal and occasionally controversial blog, "Queen Sucia," has been highlighted in *Vanity Fair* as among the top writer's blogs on the 'net. She is the founder of the Chica Lit Club Fiesta, an annual literary conference.