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Dramatic Publishing

Confessions of Women From East L.A.

A Comedy
by
JOSEFINA LOPEZ



Dramatic Publishing
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(CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.)

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CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

is dedicated to the Mexican woman who sells corn on the cob on the corner of First Street and St. Louis in Boyle Heights, Dr. Maria Viramontes De Marin, my mother the **telenovela** addict, Jon Mercedes III, William Alejandro Virchis, Catalina Maynard, and Keisuke Fukuda.

CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A. was first presented as a work-in-progress by Teatro Mascara Magica and The Fritz Theater, in association with Mercedes/López Productions, in San Diego, from April 25 to May 12, 1996. The production was directed by William Alejandro Virchis with set design by Gary Larson, light design by Ginger Harris, and costume design by Suzan Bennett. The cast was as follows:

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, Ph.D.	Catalina Maynard
DOÑA CONSEPCION	Linda Castro
LOLITA CORAZON	Pola Allen
CALLETANA	Rosa Apodaca
YOKO MARTINEZ	Catalina Maynard
ROXIE	Pola Allen
TIFFANY	Catalina Maynard
DOÑA FLORINDA	Rosa Apodaca
VALENTINA	Linda Castro

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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Latina women have always been categorized and portrayed as “virgins, mothers, and whores” in plays, movies, and television. I don't like that because I am none of them. I am a combination of all of them. I have a little of the mother, the virgin, and the whore. However, Latinas are much more than that. Latinas are complex, diverse and powerful. All these women that I have written about are me and my mother. They all represent a certain confession at a different stage in my life and her life. When you put them all together you will get to understand the Latina that I am.

Josefina López
Los Angeles
April 5, 1996

SETTINGS FOR THE MONOLOGUES

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D. - A fancy hotel suite

DOÑA CONCEPCION - A church

LOLITA CORAZON - The pharmaceutical section in K-mart

CALLETANA - A street

YOKO MARTINEZ - A sushi restaurant in Little Tokyo

ROXIE - The Hollenbeck Police Station

TIFFANY - A Chicano Studies Class at East L.A. College

DOÑA FLORINDA - An apartment in a housing project

VALENTINA - Basement taco shop/hair salon by day and a
revolutionary's secret gathering place by night

CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

A Play
For 4 women playing multiple roles

CHARACTERS

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D. 35, teaches a seminar
DOÑA CONSEPCION. 55, a widowed grandmother
LOLITA CORAZON. 25, a “Hot Señorita” type
CALLETANA. 40, a street vendor
YOKO MARTINEZ. . . . 28, a Latina trying to pass for Japanese
ROXIE. 30, a self-defense instructor
TIFFANY 20, a Valley Girl and Chicana activist
DOÑA FLORINDA. . . . 45, a soap opera addict in recovery
VALENTINA 26, a Chicana activist

SETTING:

Various places in East Los Angeles and Little Tokyo.

TIME:

The summer of 1996.

NOTE: Words in Spanish are in **bold** print. You will find a glossary and Spanish terms in the back of the play.

PRODUCTION NOTES

ADDITIONAL CHARACTER NOTES

- > MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D.: An energetic Latina feminist who encourages Latinas to marry Jewish men in her “How To Be A Super Latina” seminar.
- > DOÑA CONSEPCION: After her husband’s death, she is forced to come to terms with her homosexuality when she discovers her husband has given her AIDS.
- > DOLORES “LOLITA” CORAZON: Teases and punishes men with her powerful sexuality.
- > CALLETANA: Sells corn on the cob on the street and challenges City Hall for her right to earn a living.
- > ROXIE: Accidentally attacks a man who was merely going to ask her for the time.
- > TIFFANY: Finds courage and strength in Frida Kahlo’s paintings.
- > VALENTINA: She is trying to organize her people to fight against Proposition 187.

PROPERTY LIST

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D.

1 podium

1 easel with a poster that reads: “How To Be A Super Latina”

1 suitcase

3 books with the following titles:

Ten Pendejadas Latinas Do To Mess Up Their Lives

La Llorona Complex

Women Who Don’t Complain Enough

1 cape with “SL” on it
1 paper with poem

DOÑA CONSEPCION

1 altar
5 candles
1 cross
1 chair

LOLITA CORAZON

1 empty pill bottle
2 chairs
1 box female condoms

CALLETANA

1 shopping cart with:
 1 large pot full of corn
 1 large mayo jar
 1 squeezable plastic bottle
 1 bag napkins
 1 box aluminum foil
 1 glass jar with wooden sticks
 1 small jar with holes and chili powder
 1 salt shaker
 1 bottle of lemon juice
 1 metal fork

YOKO MARTINEZ

1 menu

1 Japanese fan
3 “No” theater masks

ROXIE

1 chair
1 pair handcuffs

TIFFANY

1 letter
1 piece of paper
1 podium

DOÑA FLORINDA

1 handkerchief
4 remote controls

VALENTINA

1 cardboard sign that reads: “KILLER TACOS of East L.A.,
Over I million served.”
1 U.S. citizen application form

COSTUME LIST

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D.

1 pair slacks
1 silk blouse
1 “dress for success” blazer
1 pair black pumps

1 pair gold earrings
1 designer bag

DOÑA CONSEPCION

1 pair pants
1 black lace veil
1 blouse
1 bag
1 handkerchief
1 rosary

LOLITA CORAZON

1 low-cut floral Spandex dress
1 pair red heels
1 black bag
1 large pair gold hoop earrings

CALLETANA

1 baseball cap
1 apron
1 pair pants
1 dress

YOKO MARTINEZ

1 kimono
1 black wig
1 pair Japanese sandals
1 Japanese fan

ROXIE

1 pair black jeans
1 black sleeveless t-shirt
1 black leather jacket
1 pair black biker boots

TIFFANY

1 brown beret
1 blouse
1 pair of jeans
1 Native American vest

DOÑA FLORINDA

1 handkerchief for her head
1 large floral dress
1 pair knee-high stockings
lots of curlers

VALENTINA

1 pair black pants
1 red T-shirt
1 pair black combat boots

Glossary/Spanish

(F) French - (I) Italian - (J) Japanese translations

A, bueno... - Oh, well...

¡A un dolar! - For one dollar!

(J) **abura** - lard

Ah, miren - Oh, look

¡Ah, que la chingada! - Oh, shit!

Andele, compre me uno... - Come on, buy one...

Andele, señor - Come on, Ms.

Aver, aver - Let's see, let's see.

¡Ay, dios! - Oh, God!

¡Ayy - Oh

Ayy, Papi, como me gustas - Oh, Daddy, how I like you

Ayy, que grandototote estás, chulo - Oh, how big you are, cutie

Ayy, que papasito - Oh, what a babe!

¡Bienvenidas! - Welcome!

borracho - drunk, alcoholic

Chicana - Chicana term of endearment

chichis - slang: tits, breasts

chillona - cry baby

Chingón - (playwright's word:) kick-ass, fighter, femme-fatal

chisme - gossip

cochina - dirty girl

Cochina y mal hablada - Dirty and bad spoken

corazón - heart, soul

de adrede - on purpose

Doctora - Doctor

Dolores - Pains

(J) **Domo arrigato gozaimasu** - Thank you very much

Doña - Mrs., a sign of respect for an older woman

el pobrecito - my poor husband
¡Elotes! - Corn!
¡Elotes, elotes, con mucho chile! - Corn, corn, with lots of
chili pepper!
en mi corazón - in my heart
Eres mi rey - You are my king
ese buen hombre - that good man
eso si que no - that, no way
galan - hero, beau
galan de cine - movie star
gente, raza - (both mean:) my people
Gracias - Thank you
gringa - white woman
gringos - whities, Anglo-Saxon
hermana - sister
Hijole - Oh man
Hola - Hello
¡Hola muchachas! - Hello gals!
Juan Del Diablo - Juan of the Devil
la - the
La Elotera - The corn lady
La Llorona - The crying woman; a famous Mexican legend
about a woman who killed her children, threw them into a
river, and then committed suicide. However, God would
not let her into heaven until she found her children, so her
spirit roams the rivers of Mexico looking for her children.
la santa - the saint
la vecina - the neighbor
las chispas - sparks
Las razones que... - The reasons are...
**Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir éste racismo es
que, es que, es que...** - The reasons our people must resist
this racism is that, is that, is that...

Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir este racismo es que la Proposicion 187 es un ataque contra todos. Primero comienzan con los Latinos, despues con los Asiaticos, y todos, los demas que no son Anglo-Saxones. ¿Qual es la diferencia entre Wilson y Hitler? ¡Si como Hitler que se encargo de tratar de desacerse con toda una raza, asi Wilson quiere desacerse de nuestra raza! ¡Por eso todos los Latinos debemos luchar contra la Proposicion 187!! - The reasons our people must resist this racism is that Proposition 187 is an attack against all of us. First they begin with Latinos, then with the Asians, and then everyone else who is not an Anglo-Saxon. What is the difference between Wilson and Hitler? Like Hitler, who took charge of getting rid of a group of people, Wilson would like to get rid of our people! That is why all Latinois must fight against Proposition 187!!

(F) Les femme qui n'ont pas de poitrine sont le meilluers. Les homme puet etre plu porche a leur cuore - Women who don't have breasts are the best. Men can get closer to their hearts.

Lolita - nickname derrivative of Dolores

los campesinos - the farmworkers

Machos - traditional Mexican men who behave as though they are superior to women

mejor que la gosen los humanos a que se la coman los gusanos - better that humans enjoy it than the worms eat it

mensa - dummy

mi chatita - my flat-nosed one, (term of endearment)

Mi'jita - my darling

mi'jitas - my little daughters, darlings

mi negrito - my little black one, (term of endearment)

mulatos - black/dark people

Ni me crea - Don't believe me

Nixtamal - cornmeal
No le hallo el chiste - I don't get it.
No me gustan - I don't like them.
No mucho - Not much.
No, no, no mas 'stoy bromiando - No, no, I'm only joking.
N'ombre - No way man.
¡O mi dios! Oh my God
(J) Onegaishimasu! - Please, I beg of you!
¡Orale! - Cool! Yeah!
Padre - Father, priest
Papi - Daddy
pendejada - stupidity
pendejadas - stupidities
Pero eso si - However/But
pero gueno - but, oh well
pero mi hija - but my daughter
Pero no se puede - But we can't do it...
pinchi - expletive, stupid
pito - slang: dick
Por un Hombre Guapo - For a Handsome Man
¡Pos que chingados, éstos pinches gringos! Oh, those
damned whites!
prieta - dark one, (mestiza)
prietos - darkies
Prietos y sencillos tal vez, pero - Dark and simple-looking,
maybe, but
prostitutas - prostitutes
pues - then
puta - slut, whore
¡Qué drama! - What drama!
¿Qué no? - Don't you think?
Que rico, suave - How delicious, smooth...
¡Que se vallan a la chingada! - then they can go to hell!

raza - our people
Sabroso - tasty
Se enchilo tanto - The salsa got to him, his tongue got irritated by the salsa
¡Se me olvido! - I forgot!
Señorita - Miss, lady
¡Si se puede! - Yes we can do it!
Si te dije... - If I told you...
Si te dije que te amaba con toda mi alma... - If I told you that I loved you with all my soul...
Si te quise fue porque... - If I liked you it was because...
Squincla mal pintada - an over-painted slutty girl
Te amo mi'jita - I love you my darling
(J) Teburu e otsurue shimasu. Kore wa anata no menu de gozaimasu - This way to your table. Here is your menu.
telenovelas - soap operas
(I) Ti amo carrina - I love you darling
Tres Veces Casada - Three Times Married
Un viejo chancludo, peludo - A hairy, dirty old man
¡Vamonos! Let's go!
vendida - sell-out
viejo rabo verde - dirty old man
(J) Wakarimashita ka - Do you understand?
welferosos - slang: welfare recipients
Y si no - And if not
ya ni la friegas - you messed it up
Ya parale - Stop it already
Ya va a empezar la telenovela de las ocho. ¡Ya me tango que ir! - The eight o'clock soap opera is about to start. I have to go now!

CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

(The stage is bare except for an altar C with four candles and several items. The altar is mobile with several compartments and will become an intricate part of the show. There are also four coat racks on four opposite corners of the stage with several costumes. On top of the coat racks are the names of famous streets in East Los Angeles such as: Cesar Chavez Boulevard, Whittier Boulevard, First Street, Soto Street, Indiana Street, Fourth Street and St. Louise Street. Next to the racks are four chairs.

Lights fade out. After a few seconds lights fade in slightly. Four WOMEN enter from different directions. They are all wearing black. They gather at the altar and light up some sage which they pass around circling in the air, one by one. After they have finished, they push the altar U and transform it into a podium. Then three of the WOMEN sit on the chairs. One WOMAN exits.

*The lights fade in completely and the three WOMEN become young, shy, Latina students waiting for a seminar to begin. A woman wearing a dressy blazer carrying a large designer bag rushes in as though she were late. She is **VICTORIA MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D.**)*

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D. ¡**Hola muchachas! Bienvenidas!** Welcome to my seminar. How have you liked the “The High School Latina Leadership Conference” so far? Pretty informative? Eye-opening? Shocking? Well, just get ready to change your lives! Oh, it’s nice to see that all of you were able to join me this evening. First of all let me introduce myself. My name is **Doctora** Victoria Marquez-Bernstein, Ph.D.

STUDENT #1. A doctor?

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D. No, I am not a medical doctor, my Ph.D. is in Social Psychology. That’s why I decided to teach this seminar, because I am a “Super Latina.” Check it out! (*MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN pulls out a brown and lavender satin cape just like Superman’s. It bears the emblem “S L” on it. She puts it on and models it for them.*) You like it? You like it? My mother gave this to me after I got my Ph.D. That’s when I became a Super Latina...But for those of you who don’t know me, I’m a best-selling author of several self-help books written especially for the Latina of today, like you. I brought a few copies to show you and at the end of the seminar you may purchase them at a discount...All right **pues**. (*She picks up the books and shows them to her students.*) Now, my first book came out two years ago. “Ten **Pendejadas** Latinas Do To Mess Up Their Lives,” I’ve done practically all ten, but I’m still here. My next book “**La Llorona** Complex” deals with the victim persona Latinas adopt. And my mother’s favorite, “Latinas Who Don’t Complain Enough.” I’m also presently working on my second Ph.D. dissertation entitled: “Lorena Bobbitt, The Latina Revolution Begins: Volume One.” (*She puts the books aside and stands at the very front of the conference room.*) All right **pues**. I’d like to see by a show of hands, how many of you

Latinas believe you can be a “Super Latina.” **Aver, aver**, everybody raise your hand or get out of my seminar because I don’t want you here just occupying space. I want you to participate. Don’t be shy. Oh, come on now, you’ve been taught all your life to be quiet, but today I want you to speak up. What you think matters. Shyness is a sin! (*STUDENT #2 does the sign of the cross.*)

All right, let me put it to you this way! How many of you would like to make \$30,000 dollars a year?...(*The three STUDENTS raise their hands.*)

Oh, put your hands down! That’s not good enough! (*The three STUDENTS lower their hands.*)

...How many of you would like to make \$70,000?...Oh, that’s not even close. How many of you would like to make \$120,000 a year? Okay, **muchachas**, all of you raise your hands! Because that’s how much money I make. And you see that Mercedes out there, that’s mine. So you see, instead of living for weekends waiting for your boyfriend to pick you in his Chevy, **mi’jitas**, go to college and you can pick him up in your Mercedes! (*She snaps her fingers.*) All right **pues**. Oh, before we get started, I’m going to share a little secret with you that’s gonna save you a lifetime of grief. (*Whispering with a New York Jewish accent.*) Marry Jewish men. They’re so giving, they work so hard that they’ll do anything to please. And if you’re into women, marry a Jew, that works too. But if anybody asks you where you heard it, you didn’t hear it from me...All right **pues**. (*She lifts up her arm and points to the upper interior part of it.*) What do I have underneath here? Do all of you know what I have here? Well you should know. It’s a Norplant contraceptive. Now, I’m not here promoting the Norplant, I just want you to take responsibility for your fertility. One of the 10 **Pendejadas** Latinas do to mess up

their lives is get pregnant. So don't get pregnant, get a Norplant and you can give yourself five years to complete your education, child-free. You know what, boys/men are nothing but trouble, so if you can avoid them, do so. Learn how to masturbate. Empower yourself with the knowledge...*(All the STUDENTS become embarrassed.)*

Oh, I forgot, I'm not supposed to talk about masturbation. The people who hired me don't want me to mention or say the word masturbation. But if I'm going to talk about preparation, and determination, we should be able to talk about masturbation. But I understand so I won't talk about masturbation. *(Aside.)* Anybody interested in learning, meet me after the seminar. *(She opens her attache case and takes out a piece of paper.)* All right **pues**, I'm going to read you a poem from a graduate of my seminar. When I met her she had very little self-esteem, she didn't like herself. She was involved with a man who would abuse her. So after she took my seminar, she wrote this poem and sent it to me. It's called, very appropriately, "My Low Self-Esteem Days"...

"Si te quise fue porque I had low self-esteem.

If I swore I'd always be by your side,
Was because I had nothing better to do.

Si te dije you were a great lover,
Was because I had nothing to compare it to.

If I said you and me were meant to be,
Was because I thought I couldn't find any better.

Si te dije que te amaba con toda mi alma,
Was because I hadn't found myself.

If you think that now that time has passed,
And my low self-esteem days are gone,
That I'm a bitch, a whore, a liar.

Well then go ahead!

'Cause you ain't my master, my father, my hero, my lover...

Shit! I ain't even gonna bother...

To address your remarks.

Time has proved me stronger,

I don't need your approval any longer.

So today, I ain't even gonna bother...

To let you know how good it's been...

Without you"

(She takes a dramatic breath of fresh air and lets it go, however her enthusiasm is still there.)

If anybody would like a copy, I'll have them out at the end of the seminar... You know, I could have written this myself. My husband, Murray, as sweet as he was, he took off with the maid. She was a simple girl from Guatemala. Oh, that's the second **pendejada** Latinas and all women do is to take off with somebody else's husband and then they wonder how he could have left them. So why am I telling you this?... Well, before you can become a "Super Latina" there are a few things you need to know and accept... You see, my father died when I was twelve and although he worked very hard, he never saved any money. He left my mother with nothing but debts and six children and I swore that I would never be that helpless. And I swore that I would do everything in my power not to be like her. Even though I got what I wanted, it didn't guarantee me happiness... It's lonely at the top. But it's better to be lonely and successful than to be lonely and unsuccessful. Your career can't hug you back, but your career will never leave you, will never cheat on you, will never insult you, will never abuse you. Whatever you've invested in your career you will get back, but it will be lonely, because when you've chosen to follow your dreams, people will not be able to

identify with you. People won't like you. Men won't like you because as soon as you start asserting yourself in life, pretty soon you're going to be telling him, "A little to the left, a little more to the right, I need some more cunnilingus before I can reach my plateau of excitement..." Oh, I forgot, I'm not supposed to talk about cunnilingus either. All right, fine, we won't talk about cunnilingus anymore. (*Aside.*) Look it up in the dictionary when you get home and you'll forever thank me...Know that the odds are against you, but your spirit has to be strong. Because people will always question your right to get an education. People will assume that because your last name ends with "ez" as in (*She reads name tags.*) Martinez, Chavez, Sanchez, Lopez, and Ramirez, that you got into college or you got your position because of your last name. So you must know what you want and you must know without a doubt that you deserve it. That you deserve to be happy, that you deserve everything in the world. To have money, to have shelter, to have food. You deserve to have hope. I have hope that maybe one of you will not be the same after today. But if you haven't learned anything, remember this. Choose to be the heroine of your life, because, **Mijita**, ain't no man gonna rescue you. Because as Latinas we don't get to play the role of "Cinderella" and "Snow White." No. As Latinas all we get to play are the roles of virgin, mother, whore, and the **pinchi** maid. (*She changes gears and becomes energetic and animated once again.*) So stand up if you want to be a "Super Latina" and put on your cape. (*The THREE YOUNG STUDENTS get up and open their arms as though they were wings and follow MERCEDES-BERNSTEIN as she circles the stage.*)

(*Aside.*) Have your mother make you one or you can get one at K-mart for \$5.99 in the toy section...and follow me,

my caped crusaders. Follow me as we take the first step of the beginning of the rest of your lives! *(She stops suddenly and faces them. The three STUDENTS smash into her. She adjusts herself and stands erect. Immediately the three STUDENTS imitate her heroic pose.)*

Now let's go check out my Mercedes so you can decide what features you want when you get yours. **¡Vamonos!** *(She charges out like "Superman" with her three STUDENTS, their arms stretched out like capes. Lights fade out.)*