



Aye Que Loca!

Growing up in a section of “Da Bronx” that used to hold the title “Baby Beirut”, little Alba Sanchez, lived with her singing papi; (which according to Alba was a cross between Ricky Ricardo and Bill Cosby), her mother was a light-skinned Latina nurse, (Alba is a dark-skinned Latina, so now everyone thinks she’s adopted), and sister (Whom, everyone keeps mistaking her for Alba’s mother). Sound crazy yet?

During the week, Alba grew up in exclusive boarding schools ran by Irish and Scottish Catholic nuns in the richest sector of the USA. On weekends, she would convert back to “Baby Beirut” one of the poorest neighborhoods. “I am not talking about the suburb of the Bronx that Jenny from the Block is from!” said Alba. All the various people doing so many different things in her life, made her feel as if she did not fit anywhere. “I know that not fitting in would be considered a strength in my life path. I would have suffered a lot less mental anguish, but I guess that is what gives my comedy “an edge. I think my life has been a set up to be funny. With all the extremes, it was either laugh or die.” Alba stated.

She grew up watching her father tell stories and from him, gained the crafts of pacing, punchline and story telling...of course. “He really should have been a comedian because I spent so many hours laughing with that man.” said Alba. On top of him being a great singer in New York in the 1940’s-1960, he was a lone shark as well. In Alba’s words, “I think that is a great premise for the start of a comedian’s life. God is smart.” No Alba, the man upstairs is hilarious! Convincing her parents that comedy was a great career move wasn’t so easy. Let’s just say it was her first professional performance...in front of a negative audience. Persuading old school Boricua parents that being a comedian was a sensible career choice for a dark-skinned Latina was pretty difficult for Alba. “Hey the pay is better than being a nurse and it’s steady. Yeah right, I should’ve won an Oscar!” stated Alba. Even after appearing on HBO Latino, her mother still brings home applications to apply for numerous jobs such as the Post Office and Con Edison!

It is with deep regret that Alba has not had any Latina comedians to look up to for inspiration. Why is that? Because there were none. Alba explains, “I don’t think Latina women were given permission to be “ballsy” and funny until recently. I find that a lot of Latina women shy away from being funny professionally cause they’re afraid of looking ugly.” She was however inspired by Latino men such as Paul Rodriguez and Cantinflas. One of her true inspirations is Sandra Bernhard, even though she is not Latina.

The way Alba concocts her material may sound cliché, pero basically she gets her ideas from everywhere! “I have a hundred napkins all over the place with funny lines that I hear during the day. I eventually incorporate them into a story. I use to make up a lot of things, now I find that just living is enough for material. Life is really funny!” said Alba. Most comics work from inspiration. If nothing is tickling Alba at the time she will just sit until something comes to her. “I admit most people don’t have the patience, but most people’s livelihood doesn’t depend on it either.” said Alba.

Alba has been more popular in the all out Americano scene, but the Latinos that know about her support her as well, especially locally. She is pushing toward a lot of Latina/os in colleges this spring and next fall. “I really want to get to MI GENTE! There is nothing like saying, “Wakala!” or “Aye fo!” and having the audience know what it means literally. I love to hear big laughs when people identify with what I am saying. I love to look out and see people doubled over and in pain from laughing so hard. I love to hear delayed response. I could go on and on,

but I already went over my quota of one example! I love that. So I look forward to meeting lots more Latinas nationally in the next year.” said Alba.

Latina/os need to laugh in these times of government warnings and wacky colored terror levels and financial calamities, “I think Latinos are too serious. We are not too serious as a people. Actually, we are downright hilarious, but I feel that a lot of Latinos still have a lot of insecurities. We are still trying to prove ourselves in a lot of ways, so we are really not open to laughing at ourselves. I feel that being a comic is a blessing because we are great healers. If we can laugh at ourselves, we become less "serious" and happier!” said Alba.

Alba is doing “big thangs” this coming year. First she is reinventing herself and is getting more and more excited as she morphs into her new being. She is working on a new show in New York City, opening this March called, “Latinas Don’t PMS”. The show is about a couple of Latinas talking about how it is. The whole show is in her words no one is writing for her. Alba is also working on a new play entitled, “Spic & Spam”. Spic & Spam is a two person comedy about Alba’s white Gay male friend from Appalachia and herself. She also will be touring and do some radio work as well and possibly more television! You can check out the latest news on Alba by visiting her website, www.albasanchez.tv. (Oh and sign the guestbook please!).

And now for the two golden questions:

Let us learn from your mistakes. Tell all the Mijas one “uh oh” you made that you wish for no one else to make.

“JUST BE WHO YOU ARE AND LET THAT BE OK. There is a place for every body. If you have one eye, two left feet and can’t seem to get a good walking eye dog than I feel sorry for you there’s not hope. But other wise try to meet your authentic self and never leave its side. It’s all we have. I spent to much of my youth not feeling OK like I just was not good enough. Thank God I am over that! It’s a lot more fun now! JUST BE WHO YOU ARE AND LET THAT BE OK.”

Tell us some words of wisdom for anyone that would like to get into your field.

”If comedy is your purpose in life follow it and allow no one to talk you out of it. Just jump in and do it. That is the only way. It is a baptism by fire. Listen no one put you here. And realize it is its own prize. Comedians are truly blessed. Comedy as a life path can be challenging, but remember it is its own prize and at its core there is nirvana.”

To sum it all up, Alba Sanchez is **THE** Mija to look out for. Despite her lack of Latina inspirations while adapting into the entertainment biz, Alba shows no sign of struggle or lack of momentum. Determination and sacrifice are all what makes her “La loca” that she is today. I am overjoyed knowing that she will be the mold, the prototype for future Mijas that would want to get into her profession. “Hopefully when I am long gone female, comedians can say,” Wow, when I first saw Alba Sanchez; I knew I wanted to do comedy. She really inspired me!” Mija, you won’t have any problem with that. Many will utter those words from their mouths, but just don’t make that happen quite yet. You still gotta whole lot of living to do!

Written by: Roberta M. Rosa