



Behind the Housekeeper's Diary

Lisa Alvarado is a poet, performer, and installation artist, focusing on identity, spirit, and the body. She is the founder of La Onda Negra Press, and is author of RECLAMO and THE HOUSEKEEPER'S DIARY, originally a book of poetry and now a one-woman performance, and is the recipient of grants from the Department of Cultural Affairs, The NEA, and the Ragdale Foundation. The Housekeeper's Diary, which dealt with her experiences as a domestic for one of

Chicago's wealthiest families, premiered nationally in Washington, D.C. in 2001, as a co-production with Sol y Soul and Gala Hispanic Theater. In March of 2002, The Housekeeper's Diary had its Chicago premiere to critical acclaim; under the auspices of Insight Arts...what else is there to say besides this woman is a patient one. She was scheduled to be on our June of 2004 release but you all know how this summer melted us away. The great thing about this is that she is here now in our 3rd issue of Mija Magazine let's go!

Lisa has been writing and performing since 1995, but it wasn't until 2000, that she mounted her first one-woman show, "The Housekeeper's Diary." What has inspired her into performing arts and writing is her passion to in honoring her ancestors and not being able to ignore the feeling inside that just makes her keep speaking.

When I heard just the title, "The Housekeeper's Diary" I think of a pissed off, all-knowing, quiet woman. Since Lisa was a housekeeper before, I asked her if the stereotypes and images portrayed by Hollywood to the world about Latinas being either cleaning ladies/domestic, correct? "Well, in a nutshell, dominant culture doesn't understand the strength, the courage and the determination it has taken and still continues to take for our mothers, aunts and grandmothers to come here, to seek work, to work hard day in and day out doing those things that someone else doesn't want to do." Lisa stated.

Her shows capture a major Latina following and what she writes and speaks about are universally felt in different cultures "I believe that audiences of color have the deepest connection with what I do." Her poems and shows that impact the audience more are somewhat difficult to determine. If it is a LGBT audience, she thinks erotica is received most enthusiastically. "In communities of color, both straight and gay, I think Housekeeper's Diary resonates because so many of us have mothers, aunts, grandmothers who cleaned houses for other people. Student groups, youth groups, all have different reactions to the work and that's exciting!"

Lisa just signed a book contract with New American Library/Penguin Books. **SisterChicas** is a coming-of-age novel written by Lisa Alvarado, Ann Hagman-Cardinal and Jane Alberdeston Coralin. **SisterChicas** is set in Chicago, and follows three Latina friends and their passage from adolescence into adulthood. The novel also explores the evolution of traditional roles in Latino families and the emergence of these three young women as they stake their claim in more than one world. Each author writes her own character, with the points of view alternating from chapter to chapter throughout the novel. This is one book I will read.

And now for Mija Magazine's golden question: Can you share some "words of wisdom" to our Mija audience that may want to follow in your footsteps someday?

"Mujeres, hermanas - we come from generation upon generation of ancestors who built temples, who healed, who danced, who sang, who plotted the path of the stars. We have greatness in us, waiting to be born, greatness that is being born in every moment."

You can contact Lisa Alvarado by visiting her online at www.lisaalvarado.net

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