



PARTY OF FIVE (FROM LEFT): GINA REYES, DIANA MENDEZ, JAINA LEE ORTIZ, LISA MORALES, AND MORRIS CHESTNUT, BEHIND THE SCENES OF *ROSEWOOD*.

FLIP THE SCRIPT

A TRIO OF DETERMINED CREATIVES AT FOX IS ENHANCING THE LATINO PERSPECTIVE ON TELEVISION.
BY BIANCA MERCADO

■ ANOTHER BATCH OF TV SHOWS HAS LAUNCHED THIS FALL, AND LATINOS ARE STILL SEARCHING IN VAIN to find characters with depth who reflect our experience. Our presence on the small screen and, more important, behind it, has yet to match our cultural influence, which includes a spending power that has grown to more than \$1.4 trillion. No wonder networks are taking notice. Fox—which introduced Latina talent like Jessica Alba, Jennifer Lopez, Melissa Fumero, and Stephanie Beatriz to the mainstream—is particularly committed to diversifying the media landscape. Case in point: *Rosewood*, the network's new show that features a Latina lead (Jaina Lee Ortiz) and an African American star (Morris Chestnut). *Latina* spoke to three *mujeres* behind the crime drama—Gina Reyes, Lisa Morales, and Diana Mendez—who have dedicated their careers to bringing our point of view into the editing room and beyond.



Will sparks fly between Ortiz's and Chestnut's characters?



GINA REYES

Creative Manager,
Fox Audience Strategy

YOU'VE WORKED ALONGSIDE INCREDIBLE A-LIST TALENT SUCH AS SALMA HAYEK AND JENNIFER LOPEZ. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM WORKING SO CLOSELY WITH THEM?

I learned how to be a strong businesswoman in Hollywood from both of them. Jennifer is a very hardworking and resilient woman. And she is a very creative person. I worked with Salma the most. She is more of a mentor to me. Salma is incredible!

LIKE SALMA, YOU'VE ACHIEVED AN ADMIRABLE LEVEL OF SUCCESS. YOU'VE GONE FROM BEING A CREATIVE EXECUTIVE TO MANAGING THE FOX WRITERS INTENSIVE PROGRAM.

DESCRIBE YOUR JOB TRANSITION.
I had to learn how to play the game. Once you understand how things work in Hollywood, it doesn't get easier, but it helps you know how to maneuver. Entertainment is one of the hardest industries to work in. You have to be driven and need thick skin. You will get rejected from different jobs, depending on the kind of position you're looking for. Sometimes people give up and go back home. For me, I learned I have to keep getting up and trying again.

DIANA MENDEZ

Rosewood Staff Writer

HOW DID YOU BREAK INTO THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS?

I was born and raised in Los Angeles. Both my parents are from Mexico. When my mom first got here, she cleaned houses for lots of Hollywood industry types. My first exposure to the TV and film industry was cleaning houses with my mom. One of her clients was Joss Whedon, the writer-creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It was one of the first times I'd met a screenwriter. That really inspired me. If you ask my mom about it now, she is embarrassed. She said to me, "I'm sorry I couldn't do better for you. I'm sorry I had to take you with me to clean." I told her, "No, *al contrario*. That motivated me so much. It gave me a goal to shoot for."

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO ROSEWOOD?

I like shows that craft clues as they go along so the audience can figure it out. The chemistry between the two leads is "Will they or won't they?" The fact that there is a Latina lead is a dream come true. It's the whole reason I became a writer. As a kid, I watched TV and thought, "Wow! We are always gangsters or maids." I'd tell my family, "There are different stories to tell. Yes, Mom cleans houses, but what about the others?"

LISA MORALES

Rosewood Executive Story Editor

YOU SPENT MANY YEARS AS A WRITER BEFORE BECOMING ROSEWOOD'S EXECUTIVE STORY EDITOR. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE YOU FACED PRIOR TO SOLIDIFYING YOUR NEW ROLE?

It's a matter of building confidence and finding your voice. As a writer, learning to trust your vision and voice is an ongoing obstacle. You have to trust yourself and know that you're here for a reason. I think that's common to writers as a whole. We flip out and question ourselves a lot, which is what guides us to keep working, stretching our talents, and taking on new challenges.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF TELEVISION? AND WHERE DO LATINOS FIT?

Television, as a whole, is in another golden age. Because of cable, there are so many different realms we can explore nowadays—and that's exciting! TV shows are giving movies a run for their money, as far as the quality of character-driven stories. As Latinos move up the ladder and start creating their own shows, the opportunities will get bigger. We will be more diverse. Hollywood is taking note that there are 55 million Latinos that buy movie tickets and watch TV, and studios are starting to respond to that.

PHOTOGRAPHS, OPPOSITE PAGE: TYLER GOLDEN/FOX; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JEFF DALY/FOX; TYLER GOLDEN/FOX; EDDY CHEN/FOX.