



## **Book Reviews**

### *The Dirty Girls Social Club*

by Ivette Rivera

*The Dirty Girls Social Club*, written by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, is a story about six Latina women and their lives. “*Las Sucias*” became friends while studying at Boston University. After they graduated, they promised to meet at least twice a year to have a *Dirty Girls* reunion, usually a night of dinner, drinks, and girl talk. The book’s characters are Lauren, Sara, Amber, Elizabeth, Rebecca, and Usnavys. The main character is Lauren, a Cubana who works as a columnist for a local newspaper. Lauren is struggling with her identity as a Latina because her father is Cuban and her mother is white. Lauren also complains about her co-workers’ stereotypes of Latina women. Lauren thinks she’s not a good Latina because she doesn’t speak Spanish, but at the same time criticizes people’s notions about what they believe Latinas are like.

Another “*Sucia*” is Usnavys, a dark-skinned voluptuous Puerto Rican woman who grew up poor in Boston public housing, which has made her obsessed with the finer things in life as an adult. Usnavys is looking for a man who can support her financially, even though she is more than capable of supporting herself. Her father left her mother when she was very young and her

brother was murdered at a young age. So, she has abandonment issues that she masks by staying aloof with the men she dates.



Rebecca runs her own magazine called “*Ella*.” This “*Sucia*” is a Mexican woman but refers to herself as Spanish. Even though Rebecca has olive skin and dark hair she views herself as Spaniard and totally denies her Indian side. Another “*Sucia*,” Amber is Rebecca’s polar opposite, she is a very proud Mexicana. In college she discovered the Mexica Movement and decided she no longer wanted to be called Hispanic, and wanted to be referred to as Native American. While Rebecca denies her Indian roots, Amber denies her Spanish roots. Amber is a starving artist who is trying to get a record deal singing angry Spanish rock songs about what the white man did to her Indian people.

Meanwhile, Sarah is a white Jewish Cubana with blond hair who models herself after her idol Martha Stewart. She is a stay-at-home mom and comes from old Cuban money. She married her high school sweetheart Roberto, who turns out to be very abusive. Last but not least is Elizabeth, a beautiful Black Colombian, a successful news anchor who is hiding the fact that she is a lesbian.

As you read each chapter, you get a glimpse

## Book Reviews & Resources

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into a day-in-the-life of each woman. I loved this book and from the very beginning I couldn't put it down. I thought the author did a wonderful job highlighting some of the issues Latina women face. And, she did a great job showing the reader how vast the differences can be in each Latino culture by explaining some cultural histories and incorporating some of the rich traditions each culture holds. The book makes references to some of the typical foods, music, and customs, and it uses just the right amount of Spanish words to give you a glimpse into the minds of Latina women and culture.

Even though this book is about Latina

women, this is a story about women in general. It is about their struggles and the bonds that keep them together. I think Alisa Valdes Rodriguez wrote this book to share her experience of friendships and to make the reader aware of some of the issues facing Latina women. You can tell the characters are dear to her by how human she makes them. She shows all their weaknesses and strengths in a way that makes you feel that both contribute to their empowerment. I would highly recommend this book to anyone.

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