



Erika Lopez

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You've got nothing to lose. Absolutely nothing. This life can suck, but it can also suck working for a big company, getting laid off when you've got a mortgage, and then you get cancer and die and you notice you were hardly ever at home. Stick up for yourself and find a way of laughing at yourself and others. Never get caught up in a fashionable victim of the month club. That can make you cry and feel better for a minute, but victims get eaten up. People who write victim of the month books are making a killing . . . Make Sense? Live close to the ground and pay in cash. That's my advice for the closest thing to 21st century freedom without having to kill and skin your own rabbits.

— Interview with Erika Lopez

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Quick Facts

- * Puerto-Rican-American cartoonist, novelist, and activist
- * Wrote a semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Flaming Iguanas*

Biography

Erika Lopez, who is half Puerto Rican, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her early childhood was anything but typical. Her parents practiced Quakerism, “doing the whole hippie sign-in-the-street thing . . . they did a lot of peace work and activism.” Maybe this is where Lopez got her wild tongue?

This page was researched and submitted by Stephanie Mardell on February 28, 2003.



Erika Lopez

Biography continued

Her mother and father divorced when Lopez was a young child. During the divorce, Lopez's father tried to kidnap Erika and her sister. Due to this threat, Lopez, her mother, and her sister went on the run throughout the United States; they lived in many places, such as West Virginia, Chicago, New York, and Massachusetts. Trying to hide from their father, the family lived in the slums of inner cities and were supported by food stamps and welfare. This unconventional life led Lopez to become different than her peers. She was raised to speak her mind. Quakerism, which is non-hierarchical, taught her about equality, and thus she was not raised to be subservient.

During Lopez's early twenties, she knew that she needed to live in a place with a vibrant culture, so she packed her bags, gave her apartment to her sister, and left Philadelphia for San Francisco. Once in San Francisco, she put her artistic genius to work. First, she drew cartoons, but it took a long time for these cartoons to gain the attention Lopez was hoping for. Finally, the *San Francisco Bay Times* decided to display Lopez's cartoons regularly.

Once Lopez felt as though she had "made it," she was able to write about her personal life. She put her life's adventures into the first of her semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Flaming Iguanas: An All-Girl Road Novel Thing*, which was published by Simon and Schuster in 1997. Later in 1997, she published many of her cartoons, which were assembled into a book called, *Lap Dancing for Mommy: Tender Stories of Disgust, Blame, and Inspiration*. In 1998, Erika published *They Call Me Mad Dog*, and in 2001 released, *Hoochie Mamma: The Other White Meat*.

Through her newfound success she was on the road again, traveling around the country and sharing her ideas and views to all of America; she gave book readings, was an invited speaker at several locations, and attended conferences.

Lopez is a bisexual woman who is known for her advocacy of GLBT issues. In 2002, she was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, an organization that promotes and recognizes the writings and works of the GLBT community.



Erika Lopez

Biography continued

Through her work, Lopez has opened the door to a new way of writing. She writes in a “crude” yet dignified way, using language many people consider “vulgar” and “low class.” She also deals openly with issues of female sexuality. Through her words and pictures, she inspires many to “say whatever you want” in whatever way you want.

In 2001, a legal battle ensued between Lopez and her publishing agency, Simon and Schuster. This legal battle was mostly caused by Lopez’s objections to the price of new books; she believes that no person should be charged thirty dollars for her books. Lopez was dropped from her publishing agency, but her agency still reaps the profits from her books. She says, “No big company’s gonna hose me down and feed me back to my audience with a big mark-up . . . so share books with each other, get them at the library. I don’t want Simon and Schuster making a dime of my work.”

Currently, Erika Lopez is worrying about food stamps, and is being funded by the American Government.

Selected Bibliography

Works by the author

Flaming Iguanas: An All-Girl Road Novel Thing (1997).

Lap Dancing for Mommy: Tender Stories of Disgust, Blame, and Inspiration (1997).

Hoochie Mamma: The Other White Meat (1998).

They Call Me Mad Dog: A Story for Bitter Lonely People (2001).