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YOU CAN QUOTE ME

Cristina Pérez

Age: "97" (not under oath) **Profession:** Judge on TV's syndicated *Cristina's Court* and author, *Living by Los Dichos: Advice from a Mother to a Daughter*
Born: Long Island, New York **Raised:** Guadalajara, Mexico **Lives:** Glendale
Law Degree: Whittier Law School **Personal:** Married; one daughter, age 4

My parents are from Colombia, but I grew up in Guadalajara.

I loved everything about Mexico, but when we came to the United States my father and mother taught me to use every part of what I am. I am Latina and a woman, and that is what has made me successful and proud.

I come from a family

that you can say is a typical immigrant U.S. success story. My father came to this country mopping floors, worked from the ground up, experienced obstacles and discrimination, but he didn't give up.

I didn't learn English until I

was 10. Children are sponges. If you can teach your child a second language, then more power to you.

The term *crossing over* is really funny

because, as first- and second-generation Latinos, we cross over every day. I cross over every time I talk to my mom.

True justice is not

just making people aware of what they did wrong or right, but also letting them know that the law is there to protect them and bring them together.



We sometimes forget

what this country stands for. I understand we have to protect our borders as a question of national security, but at the same time how do we deal with those who enter the United States and work hard, pay taxes, and have children who are citizens?

My father is conservative, and I

have a lot of that in me. But I am also a mother in the 21st century and think it's important for America to be accepting, inclusive, and free, to honor our Constitution and enforce its rights—and I'm seeing those rights dwindling.

Our generation is losing this great tradition of *dichos*.

Our mothers used these colorful, hilarious sayings, but, sadly, we don't use them among ourselves so much. I sometimes see a struggle among younger Latinos who don't want to be associated with their parents, or their culture, and that's a shame.

Everything I do on *Cristina's Court*

or in public is because of the love and passion I have for my community. I hope God blesses me with more energy and time to keep doing this.

—AS TOLD TO ERIC GUTIERREZ