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TALKING HEADS

GRAB A CAFECITO AND CHAT
WITH THE LATINA DAYTIME
TALK SHOW HOSTS OF PAST,
PRESENT, AND FUTURE!

BY CELIA SHATZMAN



CRISTINA SARALEGUI TAUGHT US ABOUT SEX. REALLY.

When our moms were too shy or old-school to talk about doing the deed, Saralegui was there with her talk show, interviewing sex addicts and S&M lovers—it was 50 shades of daytime TV. That’s why when you hear “Latina talk show host,” the first image that comes to mind is most likely Saralegui giving her signature thumbs-up salute.

The cubana host paved a path for other Latinas to take the mic on daytime TV, from Rosie Perez on *The View* to Adrienne Bailon on *The Real*, now in its third season. “We were a part of that change in daytime talk shows, and we’ve made a difference,” says Bailon. “They’ll probably continue to have more shows with multicultural hosts, and we’ll continue to celebrate the differences among women and people in general. It’s kind of crazy that it only takes one show to make the heads of networks say, ‘This is doing really well’ and recognize it is the diversity. There is an entire demographic that for a long time was neglected and wants to be represented on TV as well.”

El Show de Cristina broke barriers. “They told me Latinos would not open up and talk—and boy, did they talk,” says Saralegui, who retired from Univision in 2010. “It was like uncorking a huge champagne bottle of infinite bubbles. It was a very exciting time for me. We wanted to try everything, and we did. I loved it.”

“Cristina has been a huge trailblazer,” says Bailon. “She is the end-all, be-all of talk show hosts in the Latin world, but it’s awesome to see us represented in the English language as well.”

From winning Emmys to being



(From top) Saralegui on set; next to her star, which she was honored with in 1999.

handed city keys to snagging the first star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for a talk show host with a Spanish-language show, Saralegui and *El Show de Cristina* earned plenty of accolades. But for her, “nothing tops helping people out by giving many a voice they did not have, to share their opinions and concerns and happiness and sorrows as they tried to assimilate to this melting pot we know as America.”

Shows like *The Real*, known for its groundbreaking multicultural cast, are making diversity the norm. “I wanted to be part of something that was going to change daytime television,” says Bailon, also an actress and singer. “I loved the name; I loved the concept. The slogan is, ‘You think it, we say it.’ My peers and friends



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“TALK SHOWS ARE A GREAT WAY TO DISCUSS AND BRING TO LIGHT MANY ISSUES THAT OTHERWISE WOULD NOT BE TOUCHED UPON.”



The Real and *The View* showcase a variety of Latina perspectives—not just a single voice.

it on her admittedly short run on *The View*? And Univision is launching two daytime talk shows: variety-style *Roxanna*, with actress and comedian Roxanna Castellanos, and *La Revista de Zuleyka*, with actress and beauty queen Zuleyka Rivera. Having different faces on-screen means that topics are likelier to be diverse too. “Talk shows are a great way to discuss and bring to light many issues that otherwise would not be touched upon,” Saralegui says. “Latinas deserve to be represented in front of and behind the camera.”

Bailon concurs: “It’s important for us to have a presence on daytime talk shows because we are the viewers. We will no longer be the minority soon, and it’s important that entertainment reflects that. When you’re growing up, it’s important to see something that represents your culture well; you can watch it and say those are the conversations or values you grew up with. The best feedback I’ve gotten is Latina viewers saying, ‘You are like a sister,’ or, ‘You are a *prima*.’”

Saralegui believes the landscape for Latina daytime talk show hosts looks promising. “There are many talented and charismatic ladies on air, so the future looks good,” she says. “I hope that they can grow into their full potential. Being unique is what makes a talk show host great. It’s not good when everybody looks the same.”

have something to watch that really sounds like how we talk at dinner. What people love about the show is that it isn’t polished, and that’s what makes it so tangible and relatable.”

With actress Tamera Mowry-Housley, singer Tamar Braxton, comic Loni Love, and fashion expert Jeannie Mai rounding out the panel, practically no subject (marriage, the single life, current events, and everything else under the sun) is off-limits at *The Real*. The hosts’ honest, personal takes are refreshing—as is getting perspectives from a range of women. Bailon hopes that her team’s backgrounds are a way to celebrate their differences for an audience while

showing the commonalities among all women. “It helps for other races to recognize that we’re very similar in many ways,” she says. “We sort of become mainstream, and I think that’s the ultimate goal.” It’s crucial to Bailon that the program shows diversity, including diversity within the Hispanic community. Bailon tells stories about growing up speaking Spanish with her family, but recognizes the importance of acknowledging that not all Latinas speak Spanish, since she wants to connect with the next generation of acculturated Latinas.

The Real isn’t the only panel known for no-holds-barred opinions. Who didn’t love watching Rosie Perez go for