



## How Lisa Guerrero Learned to Be Brave

The Inside Edition correspondent shares her path from cheerleader to actress and sportscaster, the “dream job” as a Monday Night Football sideline reporter that quickly turned to a “nightmare,” and how the surprising choice to appear on the cover of Playboy allowed her to reclaim her narrative and rebuild her career. It’s all part of her riveting memoir, [Warrior: My Path to Being Brave](#).

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- Alicia Menendez: Whether you know Lisa Guerrero from her work as a correspondent on Inside Edition or her time as a sideline reporter on Monday Night Football, a job she calls both a dream and a nightmare, you know that she'll go toe to toe with anyone. Now she's exploring where that empathy and courage comes from in her new memoir, *Warrior: My Path to Being Brave*. Lisa and I talk about everything from the experience of suffering a miscarriage on live television to her decision to pose on the cover of Playboy. Lisa is sharing it all in the hopes of helping us reimagine what it means to be brave. Lisa, I was such a fan of yours before the book. I am a bigger fan after. Thank you so much for being here.
- Lisa Guerrero: Thank you so much for having me, Alicia, because I watch you, I'm such a fan of yours, so thank you for having me.
- Menendez: Mutual admiration society. I would imagine that for a lot of our listeners, beyond your work at Inside Edition, you are best known for your work at Monday Night Football. You write, "It was both a dream job and a complete nightmare." Tell me why.
- Guerrero: After 10 years of working as a sportscaster, I had been a beat reporter for the Dodgers, the Lakers, USC, UCLA, the Kings, the Chargers. I was the first female anchor at Southern California Sports Report, and suddenly I'm on Best Damn Sports Show Period, a big national show on Fox SportsNet.
- Menendez: Which is to say, you have your credentials. I want to just put a pin in this to say that you know your stuff inside and out. You have a resume that proves that. And yet ...
- Guerrero: And yet I get hired by Monday Night Football on ABC, the biggest job a woman could get in sports broadcasting, 40 million viewers every Monday night, an incredible amount of attention, an incredible amount of exposure, and I was really excited to get this job. But before I ever pick up a microphone for ABC, I start seeing these articles about me that were calling me a bimbo, and that were pointing out the size of my breasts or the length of my hair, or my last name before I ever report from the actual sidelines. And I realized that a lot of the criticism had nothing to do with my ability, but more to do with, I wasn't the type of woman that the sports media, I guess, elite felt should be covering the sidelines, meaning I didn't come from ESPN, I hadn't been a sports columnist. I had been an NFL cheerleader and a swimwear model and an actress, so therefore I must not be a very good sports reporter. I must have only been hired because I was cute. And they ignored the 10 years of sports casting that I had just done. I started to get a lot of anxiety. I started to become nervous, and my boss, who this was now only his second year

as the executive producer of Monday Night Football, realized that I was coming under this intense scrutiny. And he started to get nervous, I think, and he began to be pretty cruel to me and verbally abused me. He would constantly be yelling at me, screaming at me. He took all of my reports and rewrote them in his voice because he was so nervous that if I went live, who knows what I would say? He started to control what I looked like, put me in dark blue suits and, "Make sure you can't see any cleavage. Make sure she's covered up to here."

So I realized that I was going to get fired. I knew I was going to get fired before the very first game, and then at the end of the first regular season game, I misspoke on the air and I immediately corrected it. But Alicia it was too late because it gave my critics the opportunity to say, "See, she doesn't know what she's talking about and she doesn't deserve this job." So I got very depressed. I really sank into this extreme, I don't know what else to call ... It was very traumatic experience for me because I had always been known as the sports chick. I knew my sports and to have this narrative now be that I didn't know sports and that I was just a model or just a cheerleader, I didn't know how to combat that. And the powers that be at ABC wouldn't let me do any interviews. They wouldn't let me speak for myself. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I was throwing up before and after every game or after every interaction with my boss who was screaming at me in my IFB during live interviews in front of 40 million people. And I just thought, I'm not going to make it. I don't know how I can get through this season.

And finally, I found out I was pregnant. I had just gotten engaged, and I was excited about it, even though I thought I would never have children, because I was in love with my fiance and I thought maybe I do want to have a child with him. But I was so overwhelmed with anxiety and depression over this job that I couldn't eat or sleep. So about three quarters of the way through the season, I was at a game, and about close to the end of the first quarter, I started to get very severe cramps. By the second half, I had a headache, I was dizzy, the cramps were getting more painful, and I could feel the dampness between my legs. And at halftime, I went into the official's bathroom and I realized that I was having a miscarriage.

And I was so worried about losing my job that I didn't tell my boss. I was scared to tell him that I was having a miscarriage, please call 911. I couldn't. I was more worried about being fired, and I was more worried about what the critics would write about me if I didn't show up in the second half of the game. If they found out I had a miscarriage, then they would think I was weak. And so I went out in the second half of the game and I plastered a smile on my face, and I continued to do my job. I got to the plane after the game, and I threw away my pants that had been soaked through with blood, and thank God I was wearing a big heavy coat. And I just covered up, I buttoned up the coat so you couldn't see the blood on my pants during the game.

And I remember flying home thinking the worst possible thing, the worst thing isn't getting fired. The worst thing is what just happened to me, and the fact that I'm too scared to tell my boss what happened to me. And so the next day I went to my gynecologist and I had to have the DNC to complete the miscarriage. One in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage, and it's nothing to be ashamed of, and it's nothing to feel humiliated about. One of the reasons I wrote about it in Warrior is I wanted to have these painful conversations as gut-wrenching as it is to talk about and to think about. It's so important to talk about these things, Alicia, because I felt so alone and I know that I'm not alone.

Menendez: The story on its own is heartbreaking, that you felt so under siege, so unprotected, that you couldn't be honest about a health crisis. It further breaks my heart when you then pull out some of the VHS tapes, watch the playback of your younger self because you want to see, was I bad? Was I actually not good at this? And will I understand this in retrospect in a way that I couldn't understand it when I was in it? And you pull the tapes out, you're good. You're good at the job. You like the person who's reflected back at you, you're proud of her. On some level that is really edifying. On some level, it makes it all the sadder that you were being treated that way.

Guerrero: Back then, all of my hits on every game were condensed into a VHS tape that they would overnight me so that my boss and I can go through them so he could yell at me about all the things that I did wrong. "You're not looking into the light. Why didn't you direct that comment in here?" You said ah instead of the." all the things that he was criticizing me for. So I had all these VHS tapes, and after I was fired, I considered throwing them away. But instead, I put them in a box and put them in my storage unit. And honestly, I was humiliated and embarrassed and ashamed to look at them for years. And finally, when I decided to write this book, I said, "I'm going to write this book honestly. I'm going to talk about how I felt and my humiliation, my mistakes, my successes, but I'm going to talk about it honestly. And the only way to do that is to get into that storage bin and to pull out the box of tapes." So I had to take them to a company to have them transferred, and I was embarrassed. I'm like, they're going to look at this horrible work that I did on Monday Night Football, and they're going to make fun of me, or they're going to say, "how did she ever get that job?" I was even embarrassed for the technicians to see the work. So finally, I go and I pick it up and I've got it on a little thumb drive. So I go home and I stick that in my computer and I start to watch. And I saw from the beginning, I saw that I was good, and I saw that I was worthy of having that job. And then I just cried. I cried for my younger self because that experience was ruined for me. That work that I did was diminished to the point where I thought I was terrible, but I really grieve for the younger me and the person that thought I sucked when I didn't.

Menendez: There are two stories you tell in Warrior that I actually think are interesting side by side. And that is that because you were doing sports broadcasting, because you were anchoring, you had already lined up this feature in FHM sort of Men's Lifestyle magazine where you are portrayed as pretty sexy. And the timing lines up in a really terrible way where then all of a sudden you get the job at Monday Night Football, and in your own mind, the images from this FHM shoot just play into the narrative that they're already trying to over-sexualize you.

So to me, that is an interesting example of not having control of the narrative, of the message, of the branding around who you are. In sharp contrast with what happens after you leave Monday Night Football, where you get your millionth offer to be on the cover of Playboy, you dismiss it because you've dismissed it a million times before. And your husband of all people says to you, "I really think you should consider it." And his argument to you is, you can make money, you can do this on your own terms, you can turn this into what you want it to be. And to me, as someone who thinks a lot about image management, it to me showed a moment of growth where all of a sudden you were back in control of your narrative.

Guerrero: I call that chapter the Big F You, and I write about that because I had just been eviscerated for being sexy, for being attractive. That was the lead in almost every article about me was

what I looked like. And after I was fired and after my depression, suicidal ideations, I mean, I really battled a lot during that two year window. I finally was able to look in the mirror again. I wasn't able to look in the mirror for a long time because I thought the image that I saw was my mother. I looked like my mother, and I thought I had brought great shame to her and her name by being fired and humiliated in sports. And so finally, through healing and through therapy, I was able to look in mirrors again. And I looked at myself and I saw my mother, and I thought, well, wait a minute. Why am I letting these people that I don't know tell me how I should look, what my image should be, whether or not I am qualified to be sexy?

I'm allowed to look like this. I'm allowed to have long hair. I'm allowed to wear makeup. I'm also articulate, sports knowledgeable, funny, I'm a good writer, I'm a good storyteller, I ask tough questions. Why can't somebody be all of those things? And I was 40 at the time, which was kind of unheard of to be asked to be on the cover of Playboy as a Latina at 40. And I thought, you know what? Darn it, I'm going to do it. Why not? I feel sexy. I am sexy. I'm done worrying about what other people think about me. Maybe I can use the platform that Playboy will give me on that cover. Because when you're on the cover, you do a satellite tour and you do interviews about the cover. And of course, me being on the cover after having done Monday Night Football was shocking. So everybody wanted to talk to me.

And so I did a media tour and I told everybody that would listen. A, I'm proud of myself, I'm proud of my culture, I'm proud of my heritage, proud of my last name, proud of my age. And by the way, I want to still cover news, but now I want to do entertainment reporting or breaking news or maybe work for a news magazine like Inside Edition or Entertainment Tonight. And those shows heard me. Two days later, I got a phone call from Inside Edition and they said, "We want to do a story about you being on the cover of Playboy post Monday Night Football." And I said, "Okay, let's do it." So they brought a crew out. They did a feature about me. It aired. The women who watched Inside Edition back then, especially primarily female viewers liked me. And so the executive producer called my agent, offered me a two-year deal as a West Coast correspondent. I was promoted to chief investigative correspondent in 2010. And since then, I've done 600 investigations and all because I had the audacity to be on the cover of Playboy.

Menendez: It also is not just that you were on the cover of Playboy. You went into being on the cover of Playboy with a plan. You were incredibly strategic, and you were also brave enough that when people then said, "What do you want to do?" You didn't demure. You said exactly what you wanted to do, which I constantly need to remind myself, I constantly remind our listeners that that is the only way to connect yourself with the right opportunities is to be very clear with people about what you want and what it is you're looking for.

Guerrero: Exactly. Because you need to articulate it so that people can hear it. Some people call it manifestation. I very strongly believe that there's somebody listening to this conversation right now that is going to have a call to action in their life, that something we say may trigger something in them. There's somebody that could be listening that is maybe thinking about, we should put together a show with Latina broadcasters. You just don't know. So you have to articulate these things. You have to put them out in the universe because somebody's listening to that, and that will be the acorn of an idea that somebody has, and they can provide an opportunity for somebody else like you.

Menendez: Lisa, my last question for you is you are known in your own words as being someone who gets in people's faces. That is, you have done that with everyone from Dennis Rodman. I will allow that story to live in Warrior so that everyone feels they have to go out and get their copy. It was hilarious and amazing. You do it with people who have been accused of crimes. You do it with scammers. Some of it comes naturally, and some of it is learned. So what is your best counsel to a Latina who is listening, who is not yet comfortable getting in people's faces?

Guerrero: So the ability to do that, to confront, first of all, confrontation is not a dirty word. And even in journalism, we say we don't call them confrontations. We call them unscheduled interviews. Well, sometimes you have to confront people. People are going to tell women, young women, especially breaking into this business or any other business, "Smile more, argue less. Don't burn a bridge. Don't be confrontational." That is absolute [inaudible]. You have to be able to burn a bridge. You have to be able to confront people. You have to set boundaries. You have to learn the word no. No, that doesn't make me feel comfortable. No, I don't want to do that. No, that's not right. Instead of, yes, course I will. I spent years trying to be what they wanted me to be. And then I realized that I will never be whatever it is they think they want me to be, but I can be exactly who I want to be.

And when I was able to do that, I was able to live for my mother and me at the same time. My mother's gone. She lives inside of me, but I live for both of us. I'm able to now be the person that she wanted me to be when at eight years old, she told me, "I'm a Guerrero. You're a warrior. Fight for yourself. Fight for others." Now I do that. Now I have lived up to my heritage because I'm not trying to be anybody else than who I am. So that's what I would tell young Latinas. I would say, "Be who you are. Listen to your gut instinct. Have boundaries. Burn bridges. Burn it down because you will build it back up because you are the best you. You know how to be the best you. You can speak in your own voice." So I think it's really important for us to stop trying to be who they want us to be, and to be who you want you to be.

Menendez: Lisa, thank you so much for taking the time to do this.

Guerrero: Thank you so much for having me, Alicia. This was an amazing conversation. I appreciate it.

Menendez: Thanks for listening. Latina to Latina is executive produced and owned by Juleyka Lantigua and me, Alicia Menendez. Paulina Velasco is our producer, Kojin Tashiro is our lead producer, Tren Lightburn mixed this episode. We love hearing from you, email us at [hola@latinatolatina.com](mailto:hola@latinatolatina.com). Slide into our DMs on Instagram or tweet us at Latina to Latina. Check out our merchandise at [latinatolatina.com/shop](https://latinatolatina.com/shop). And remember to subscribe or follow us on Radio Public, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Goodpods wherever you're listening right now. Every time you share the podcast, every time you leave a review, you help us to grow as a community.

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