

WILLIAM MORROW
An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers
10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dee Dee De Bartlo
Phone: 212-207-7498
Email: diana.debartlo@harpercollins.com

- **Plastic Surgeons with More to Hide than Cosmetic Flaws** •
- **Ladies Who Lunch (and Tryst with their Personal Trainers)** •
- **Married White-Shoe Lawyers who Cruise Central Park for Rough Trade** •
- **A Brutal Murder that May Connect them All** •

COVER-UP
By Michele Martinez
On Sale March 13, 2007



“Fast, tense, authentic, sexy...the Melanie Vargas series is already guilty on all counts, but Cover-Up takes it to a whole new level. Highly recommended.” — Lee Child

“Anybody who’s been a prosecutor or a cop in a big city for any period of time has unbelievable war stories. Stuff the average person doesn’t know, would never see, and might not even believe if they heard about it. Some of it sickening, some of it totally hilarious, but all falling into the category of ‘you can’t make this stuff up.’”

—Former Federal Prosecutor Michele Martinez

Michele Martinez, whose books have been called a cross between *Law & Order* and *Sex & the City*, delivers a smart, suspenseful and sizzling new thriller that exposes the dirty secrets of New York high society. In **COVER-UP (William Morrow; On Sale March 13, 2007)**, the third book in her critically acclaimed series featuring Melanie Vargas, she sets the action on Manhattan’s Upper East Side—where a glittering surface hides a multitude of sins lying just out of sight.

In the darkest recesses of Central Park on a rain-swept night, a tabloid TV reporter lies stabbed and violated, her blood soaking into the wet earth. The murder has all the hallmarks of a random sex crime. But Suzanne Shepard was a beautiful and ruthless celebrity scandalmonger who had so many enemies that a chance attack seems unlikely.

Across town, federal prosecutor Melanie Vargas's romantic evening with hunky FBI agent Dan O'Reilly comes to an abrupt end as they rush out to view the crime scene. Melanie knows she must stop this killer immediately. Anybody capable of such savagery is likely to strike again.

Melanie races to solve an unfolding crime that appears to involve a high-society scandal, a personal trainer who's selling recreational drugs to his clients, and a sinister Park Avenue plastic surgeon. Meanwhile, she's fallen hard for the gorgeous Dan. But there's more at risk than Melanie's heart. She's been receiving chilling emails from an anonymous "admirer" who knows way too much about the brutal crime she's investigating and he also knows details of Melanie's own movements. As Melanie draws closer to the truth, the terrifying stranger lurks even closer to her and she finds herself fighting for her life against a truly psychotic killer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Michele Martinez is a young and accomplished writer who was born and raised in inner-city New Haven, Connecticut and went on to graduate with honors from Harvard University and Stanford Law School. She worked at the prestigious Manhattan law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton before spending 8 years fighting crime as a federal prosecutor in New York City, including a 2-year stint as Deputy Chief of Narcotics. Many of her cases involved murders, kidnappings, home invasions, and other acts of violence, and she has extensive courtroom experience. Michele lives with her husband and two sons.



Michele Martinez Photo © Sigrid Estrada

COVER-UP

A Novel of Suspense

By Michele Martinez

On Sale March 13, 2007

\$23.95 U.S./\$29.95 Canada

Hardcover

ISBN: 9780060899004

PRAISE FOR THE NOVELS OF MICHELE MARTINEZ

MOST WANTED (2005)

"[An] effervescent debut thriller . . . Martinez has crafted an enormously appealing heroine and a breezy, entertaining tale." -- **Publishers Weekly**

"*Most Wanted* succeeds as an intense legal thriller, a police procedural and a look at the treachery of the workplace, with a bit of romantic suspense added for good measure . . . *Most Wanted* should guarantee Martinez a long career in crime fiction."-- **Florida Sun-Sentinel**

"Martinez's debut novel is a breakout." -- **USA Today**

"In her debut, Martinez joins Linda Fairstein in the ranks of prosecutors turned authors, bringing real-life detail and emotion to this thriller." -- **Library Journal**

"Martinez entralls with her first-rate first novel, which has sizzling romance and gripping suspense. . . [*Most Wanted*] excels with its gritty realism, exploring everything from New York's drug wars to the dark side of its most esteemed law firms."
-- **Romantic Times Magazine**

"An absolute must-read." -- **Janet Evanovich**

"An utter page-turner." -- **Tess Gerritsen**

THE FINISHING SCHOOL (2006)

"[The] second Melanie Vargas thriller hits the spot...[A] suspense-filled ride."
-- **New York Daily News**

"Even better than [*Most Wanted*], and will likely bring this rising literary star's work to a wider audience."-- **Chicago Sun-Times**

"*Most Wanted* was a refreshing entry into the crowded mystery genre. [Martinez's] new novel, *The Finishing School*, is equally smart and gritty."-- **USA Today**

"Sexy, savvy Melanie Vargas is back in *The Finishing School*, bringing her prosecutorial panache to a deadly crime scene, loaded with suspense and fast-paced action that will have you turning pages late into the night. It's an exciting thriller from an author who knows the mean streets and delivers a worthy sequel to her strong debut in *Most Wanted*."-- **Linda Fairstein**

"Michele Martinez brings a fast-paced, fresh, Latin-spiced voice to the suspense line-up. Melanie Vargas is everything I love in a suspense heroine -- smart and ambitious, openly caring and secretly vulnerable, and determined for justice to win out in the end."-- **Tami Hoag**

"The romance is hot and the suspense high in this absorbing, fast-paced thriller. Highly recommended." -- **Library Journal (starred review)**

"Excellent ...Take a top-drawer episode of *Law & Order*, mix in a little *Sex and the City* and garnish with some Carl Hiaasen, and you'll see why Martinez is considered an up-and-comer in the mystery biz." -- **Justice Magazine**

"Martinez generates plenty of suspense while painting a vivid picture of Manhattan life and exposing the underbelly of an elite prep school... [An] intoxicating brew."-- **Booklist**

"Move over John Grisham . . . [Martinez] returns with a page-turning follow-up to her breakout novel, *Most Wanted*." -- **Latina Magazine**

Q & A

WITH

Michele Martinez

author of **COVER-UP**

Q. How did you come up with the plot for Cover-Up?

A. Living on the upper east side of Manhattan, I've gotten an inside peek at the lifestyles of the rich and famous. It was impossible not to notice the unduly close relationships some wealthy, stay-at-home wives maintained with certain service-providers, including personal trainers and plastic surgeons. The influence these people wielded in these women's lives intrigued me, and struck me as fertile territory for a crime novel. Once I had that basic concept, the idea of a muckraking celebrity journalist digging around and unearthing that type of scandal -- and paying the ultimate price for her curiosity -- seemed like a natural.

Q. Where do you get the ideas for your books?

A. I get them everywhere, because crime is everywhere. I realized this most vividly during my years as a federal prosecutor in New York. During that time, I led a divided life, safe and serene at home but crime-steeped at work. That's when I learned that crime is all around us. I would hear of seemingly innocent locations that were hotbeds of drug activity, for example. Or smart, savvy killers and drug dealers who carefully maintained "civilian" jobs so they could portray themselves as upstanding citizens when the time came to apply for bail. Once I had a defendant who'd been involved in several murders yet worked as a doorman in a building on the Upper West Side much like the building I lived in. At his bail hearing, he produced letters from several tenants who said they'd known him for years and believed him to be innocent. Of course, they hadn't seen the evidence! Little did they know that the guy in the elevator with them was a hardened killer. With the years of experience I have in the criminal justice system, it comes naturally to me to take an event or an idea from everyday life and spin it out into a realistic, gripping tale of crime and corruption.

Q. How does your background as a New York City Federal Prosecutor inform your books?

A. Simply put, my insider background makes my books possible. I would not be able to write what I write if I did not have the inside scoop on how the criminal justice system works. It would just take too much research to get it right, and research that wouldn't be possible or available to me without significant contacts in the system. How an investigation unfolds, what the politics are in a prosecutor's office, how the prosecutors interact with the FBI -- all that stuff is key to creating the type of authentic atmosphere that puts a reader inside a story. If I had not spent my previous career doing the job in real life, I'd be writing based on what I'd seen on TV and read in other people's books, and my work would not ring true.

Q. What is your writing schedule like?

A. It's feast or famine. When I'm touring, I don't write much at all. The rest of the time, I treat writing like any other job, and try to be at my desk by 9 and put in a full day. The writing can sometimes be interrupted by other responsibilities related to marketing and promoting the books, whether doing a phone chat with a book club, answering reporters' questions, blogging with several other mystery writers at The Lipstick Chronicles, or other tasks of that nature. But when I'm not on tour, I can usually get in a good solid writing day five days a week.

Q. How are you like or different from your main character, Melanie Vargas?

A. We share many characteristics. Melanie, like me, is half-Puerto Rican, comes from modest roots but has an Ivy League education, loves being a prosecutor but experiences great stress juggling her demanding job with being a mommy. But Melanie is also NOT me. She has her own separate life – a different office, boss, baby, parents, sibling, apartment, etc., etc., than I have. She also faces much more extreme circumstances than I do. I've gone up against dangerous criminals in the courtroom, but never --thank God! -- in a burned-out basement with a nine millimeter in my hand. I'm happily married, whereas Melanie is a divorced mom, facing all the challenges of juggling work, parenting and a hot and heavy romantic life. Despite the differences, I still like to think that if I were placed in Melanie's difficult (although stylish) shoes, I'd kick butt the way she does. But I can honestly say that all the characters in my books are really and truly themselves, rather than thinly veiled alter egos of people I know.

Q. What does the New York City setting mean to your books?

A. New York gives my writing its guts. There's a lot of crime here, and there are also a lot of dedicated, honorable, hardworking people in law enforcement whose job it is to stamp it out. That battle between these real-life forces of good and evil, played out against the always fascinating and vibrant landscape of this city, with all its unforgettable settings and characters, will never loosen its grip on my imagination.

Q. How much research do you do?

A. Probably less than a lot of writers who write crime, because I have so much first-hand experience. If a book begins with a particular crime, I already know how the police and prosecutors would go about investigating it, without having to look anything up. But having said that, many details still require research and legwork to get them right. For example, locations. I often set scenes in places I have been, yet still find that I need to visit the place again and take notes to get it perfect.

Q. What lawyer-authors do you admire? Do you think lawyers and cops make better crime writers?

A. Certainly some of the greatest crime writers have no professional law enforcement experience. They rely on sheer talent, and presumably some pretty thorough research. That said, I do think insider knowledge can enhance a story. I love reading Linda Fairstein, for example. Here's a woman who had one of THE great prosecutorial careers in recent memory, and it shows in the truly unusual level of authentic detail she brings to her books. She covers things that matter a lot in real life but that writers lacking her background might not think to include -- like office politics, or turf battles, or how to handle a difficult witness. Other lawyer-authors I enjoy are Lisa Scottoline, who makes the law fun and accessible and leaves out all the boring parts without ever sacrificing authenticity; Scott Turow, who is an astonishingly talented writer, and with whom I feel a great kinship since he -- like me -- is a former big-city Assistant U.S. Attorney. And, of course, John Grisham who basically invented the legal thriller single-handedly. I've learned a huge amount about suspense and pacing by reading his books.