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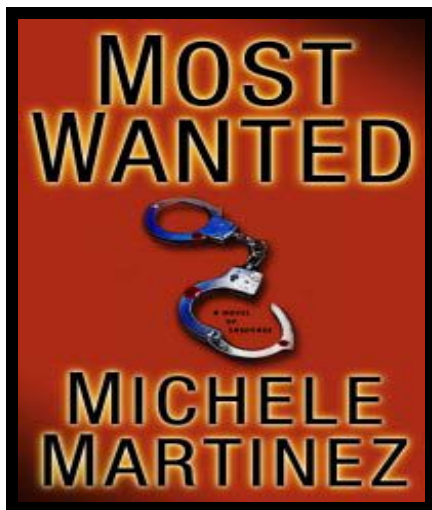
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*Michele Martinez's Debut Novel*

# **MOST WANTED**

"An absolute must read."- Janet Evanovich



**On Sale:** 2/15/05  
**ISBN #:**006072398X  
**Genre:** Fiction

**Publisher:** William Morrow  
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## **DESCRIPTION:**

**Federal Prosecutor Turned Author Offers Readers a Smart, Sexy and Riveting New Heroine**

A former New York City federal prosecutor, Michele Martinez has seen it all. From prosecuting some of the

largest narcotics organizations in the world to putting vicious murderers behind bars, Martinez has seen things the average person never has and might not even believe if they did.

In her suspenseful, fast-paced debut novel, Martinez uses her legal expertise and life experience to bring readers a bold, young, multi-faceted protagonist who shares Martinez's heritage and insider knowledge. She's tough, she's smart, she's sexy, she's real. **MEET MELANIE VARGAS - THE MOST INTERESTING AND EXCITING NEW HEROINE TO COME OUT OF CRIME FICTION IN YEARS.**

A fearless, hardworking New York City federal prosecutor, Vargas is trying to make a name for herself in the cutthroat world of New York City law and order while trying to juggle her demanding career, motherhood and a crumbling marriage. On an innocent evening stroll with her baby daughter, Melanie stumbles across a horrifying crime scene: a wealthy former prosecutor has been brutally murdered. It's the high-profile, headline-grabbing crime of the year and just what Melanie needs to boost her career. What Melanie doesn't know, however, is that this case will pit her against a dark, sadistic killer who will shadow her every move and bring her closer to a handsome, hard-to-resist FBI agent who may have secrets of his own.

This thrilling new novel has already garnered rave reviews from such masters of suspense as Janet Evanovich, John Lescroart, Iris Johansen and Tess Gerritsen.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Born to a first generation Puerto Rican father and a Russian Jewish mother, Michele graduated from Harvard University and Stanford Law School and spent years as a federal prosecutor in New York City. She lives in Manhattan with her husband and two sons. Learn more about Michele at [www.michelemartinez.com](http://www.michelemartinez.com).

### **MOST WANTED**

**By Michele Martinez**

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**Audio CD and Large Print Format Available**

**MOST WANTED** is a Book Club Alternate for Doubleday, Literary Guild and Mystery Guild.

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**\*ALL CALLS WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL\***

# Q & A

WITH

# Michele Martinez

author of **MOST WANTED**

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**Q. What made you decide to start writing MOST WANTED?**

A. Honestly, it was more like the book decided to write itself. At a time in my life when I was totally confused about whether to continue being a prosecutor, which I loved, or stay home with my kids, who obviously needed me, I literally had a dream that contained the opening scene of MOST WANTED. That dream answered a question I'd been asking myself for years: how could I put the vast storehouse of insider knowledge about violent crime, narcotics and law enforcement that was kicking around inside my head to decent use if I left my job? Once I had the first scene, the rest of the book just flowed – although with many drafts, rewrites, and revisions.

**Q. You were a lawyer for your entire career. What made you think you *could* write fiction?**

A. Being a prosecutor is different from being any other type of lawyer. A lot of what I did on the job was investigating crimes side by side with the police, before any arrests were even made. When I



appeared in court, I had to stand up in front of a jury and explain complicated, scary events in a way people could understand and relate to. I learned to think on my feet, to speak clearly and to tell a good story -- all skills I use every day in my writing. Also, like many writers, I simply *love* to read. And I learn a huge amount from reading other writers. While writing MOST WANTED, I embarked on a major thriller-reading campaign that helped me figure out

some important issues of pacing and plotting. Besides, I had so many great stories and characters in my head -- they were just itching to jump onto the page!

**Q. Where do you get your plot ideas?**

A. MOST WANTED was unusual in that I literally *dreamt* its opening chapter. But there is no shortage of fascinating characters and crime stories in the waking world. During my years as a prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office, I had contact with hundreds, even thousands, of cases, each one different. Every day that I open the newspaper or turn on the TV, there are still more. Even a small element of a crime can be worked over in my head to generate an entire imagined plot, complete with characters, scenes, dialogue. And that's just the crime stuff! Beyond my experience as a prosecutor, I've been fortunate to lead a pretty interesting and varied life. I grew up in modest circumstances, went to Harvard, worked in a fancy law firm, and met lots of fascinating and influential people. I've lived in tons of different places, including for many years now on Manhattan's Upper East Side, where I get to observe all sorts of noteworthy (and sometimes bizarre) behavior up close and personal. It's endlessly engrossing and a blast to write about.

**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, husband, 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's marriage is in deep trouble and may not last, meaning she'll face all the challenges of being a divorced mom. 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. Like the Auto Show scene in *MOST WANTED*, for example. Or sometimes, I want to write something that experience has not prepared me for. Like when Melanie faces down the bad guy (I won't say which one, so I won't spoil the surprise) at the end of *MOST WANTED*, and her gun runs out of bullets. I personally did not know what that would feel like (other than "Oh s###!!") So I called a friend of mine in law enforcement who told me how it feels to pull a trigger when the chamber's empty. For my next book, which involves murder, drug dealing and intrigue set in a tiny New York City girls' school, I had to research things like the pampered lives of NYC's doggies (manicures, pedicures, Chanel outfits!) But the broad strokes of criminal investigation . . . those I know by heart. The second book in the Melanie Vargas series is due out in March 2006.

**Q. What are your most and least favorite things about being a writer?**

A. I have tons of favorite things about being a writer! First of all, I get to live a double life -- who wouldn't love that? As I wrote *MOST WANTED*, I got to ride along on all Melanie's adventures, whether she was facing down a vicious killer, flirting with Dan O'Reilly or just changing Maya's diapers. I also love how creative writing is. I not only love reading, but I love music, movies and television. I can let my favorite books, movies and songs influence me, and creep into my work in subtle ways that pay homage to them. In *MOST WANTED*, for example, I allude to Elvis Costello, Toby Keith, Patty Loveless, *The Sopranos*, *The Last Seduction*. Can you find the references?

On the down side, being a writer is very solitary. I'm an outgoing person, and logging all those hours alone at a desk makes me a little crazy sometimes. I do find myself walking down the street talking to myself, reciting dialogue out loud. But then I'll have a great day choreographing a gunfight (or a sex scene!), and I'm hooked all over again.

**Q. Do you ever miss being a prosecutor?**

A. Constantly.

**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.

**Q. What is your writing schedule like?**

A. I could pretend to be one of those writers who gets up at four in the morning and produces 20 pages before the sun comes up. But that would be a lie. The fact is, I hate mornings. I live in New York, and this is a late-night town, not a "rise and shine" one. The best I can do is keep to something resembling a New York lawyer's schedule, which means I get to my "office" around nine -- if I'm lucky. Okay, sometimes it's later. And if my kids need me, I take a break. But when I'm really in the middle of a novel, I write eight or ten hours a day, so I'm often working late into the night. And I often work weekends -- in fact, I'm writing these words at 11:40 on a Saturday night. Luckily my supportive husband, who works a long week himself, is willing to pitch in and watch the boys (like, for example, he took them all day today so I could work!)

# MOST WANTED

by Michele Martinez

## Behind the Book

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."

Like Melanie Vargas, the main character in MOST WANTED, Michele Martinez had the privilege of serving as a federal prosecutor in New York City. For eight years she was an Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern



District of New York, which covers some of the most drug- and gang-infested areas of Brooklyn and Queens. She specialized in narcotics, and we're not talking high school kids selling pot, either. The Eastern District includes the airports and the seaports serving New York City, so Michele had jurisdiction over the biggest narcotics organizations in the world. We're talking Mexican cocaine cartels loading forty or fifty million dollars of cash at a time into tractor trailers to send back across the border. Burmese warlords controlling hundreds of kilos of heroin secreted in seemingly innocent shipments of goods from Southeast Asia. And local kingpins operating massive crack and heroin supermarkets 24/7 on the streets of our cities, pitching drugs to young children as they walked to school. Michele prosecuted all these cases, and more, many of them involving serious violence, weapons charges, even murder. Doing the cases in New York, where



everything seems to move faster and happen bigger, she got a whole lifetime's experience of serious crime in eight years.

It wasn't easy for Michele to get there, nor was it at all a sure bet. Like Melanie, Michele came from very modest roots. Her father was born in Puerto Rico during the Depression, the son of a cigar roller on a tobacco plantation and a teenaged mother. Michele's mother was the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants in Connecticut, lived modestly and worked hard all her life, and never had the opportunity to go to college. While Michele was growing up, her father worked in the Connecticut prison system running inmate education programs, and her mother was a secretary. Her family didn't have much money. They lived in a small apartment in a tough section of New Haven, and Michele went to inner-city public schools during the height of urban racial tensions and rioting in the late 60s and 70s.

But her parents were great believers in the American Dream, and they taught Michele that she could achieve anything if she worked and studied hard. Michele feels like living proof of that. She made it to Harvard University and to Stanford Law School, clerked for a federal judge, and landed a position at a fancy, high-paying Manhattan law firm. But she'd been raised to believe that there was more to life than being a hired gun in disputes between big corporations. All along, she had her sights set on being a prosecutor, which she felt was the best way to use her skills to make a difference. In 1993, Michele became an Assistant U.S. Attorney, and the next eight years were some of the most thrilling and challenging of Michele's life.



During that time, some other thrilling "little challenges" arrived. Michele and her husband had two little boys, and for five years Michele juggled her very intense job with being a mommy to two major whirlwinds. Any working parent

knows that's a tough situation. When you're trying to give a hundred percent to your children and a hundred percent to your job, the math doesn't quite work out. Michele felt a lot of guilt in both directions, and began to wonder if she should stop working. Yet she couldn't bring herself to give it up. Being a prosecutor felt too important to her. She needed to find a meaningful alternative that would allow her more flexibility.

Then one night she had a dream -- literally. About a fire in a townhouse that killed a handsome silver-haired lawyer who may have been leading a double life. The next morning, she woke up and wrote it down. That dream became the opening scene in MOST WANTED, and pointed the way for Michele to share her insider's knowledge of the real world of crime and law enforcement with her readers.

Now Michele writes every day in a little office next to her kitchen on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Even though she still works really hard, her husband and kids are thrilled that she's around more, and totally excited about her new career. She brings to life the same types of vivid characters and intense situations she lived through as a prosecutor. And she pours her other life experiences into her writing as well. The Melanie Vargas thrillers, starting with MOST WANTED, reflect Michele's unique background -- from humble beginnings to the halls of the Ivy League, from the mean streets of Brooklyn to the glamorous environs of Manhattan's wealthiest neighborhoods, from working late to changing diapers, with plenty of sex and violence thrown in for good measure.