



My name is Christina Llerena and was born in Cleveland, Ohio and was raised in Birmingham, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. My mom is first generation Rumanian American and was raised in Canton, Ohio and my dad grew up in Evanston, Illinois, the oldest of six in a German/Irish American family. Both my parents grew up working class and were first generation students.

I attended University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and participated in campus activism. I completed an intensive language program to attend Universidad de Sevilla as an international student during my junior year. I fell in love with Spain and the culture (hint: foreshadowing.) Three days after graduating college, I moved to NYC to work in foster care in Spanish Harlem and the South Bronx. Living in NYC during my twenties was amazing.

I attended Columbia University for my MSW. I got a full scholarship and paid it back by serving the NYC Board of Education as a school social worker for two years. Once my debt was paid, I reinvented my life and I moved to Oakland, CA briefly and then San Francisco. (My sister was living in SF so it worked out well.) For twenty years, I worked all over the Bay Area including for three cities: Redwood City, Palo Alto and Daly City. My entry into community college work teaching part-time for College of San Mateo in their Human Services department holding certificate classes for social work paraprofessionals all over the County. It was transformative.

Fast forward, I eventually became a tenured transfer and FYE counselor at West Valley College serving as a TRIO Director. My family and I relocated during the pandemic to the Central Coast and I worked as

the EOPS/CARE/CalWorks Director at Santa Barbara City College. Last December, I was promoted to Dean of Student Affairs.

My husband and best friend, Javier, is a tech veteran and entrepreneur and is originally from Madrid. We lived in the Bay Area for twenty years and recently moved to Orcutt, California (think one street) just south of Santa Maria and built a brand new home. We have two daughters, Isabel (Izzy to friends) 16, a sophomore and Early College student at Orcutt Academy HS and Allan Hancock College, and Lucia (Lu Lu to family), 13 who is a pre-Olympic soccer player who competes all over the country.

We have two wire-haired dachshunds, Maggie (3) and Titus (2) who we adore (spoil) and they keep us grounded. My husband and I also wrote a book, [*Boundless Love: Healing Your Marriage Before It Begins*](#) and do marriage preparation retreats with the San Jose Diocese and the Sacramento Diocese. We love the work and it's our passion. I'm a big believer in serving others and creating change in every aspect of my life.

