

## Latinidad Spring 2014: Writer's Block

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### BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“While scrambling my way through the daunting process of publishing a book, I was somehow wise enough to seek out the help of a professional. I found that in Marcela Landres who gave me invaluable guidance to help hone my book proposal and, as an added benefit, empower me as a writer to have the confidence I needed to actually submit the proposal. It hasn't been an easy road, but I still remember the caring voice on the end of the line that was Marcela, assuring me that if I didn't give up, all the work would pay off, and it did!”

— Sheana Ochoa, author of Stella! Mother Of Modern Acting, <http://sheanaochoa.com/>

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<http://www.marcelalandres.com/services.html>

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### 1. Saludos

Are you doing laundry, cleaning your house, or daydreaming every time you intend to sit down and write? Like many writers, you may suffer writer's block or self-sabotaging behavior like procrastination. To break through and finally finish your manuscript, read *Around the Writer's Block: Using Brain Science to Solve Writer's Resistance* by Rosanne Bane. Part coach, part cheerleader, part neurobiologist, Bane provides the tools and inspiration you need to get ideas—and words—flowing. To learn more, read this month's Q&A with Rosanne Bane.

Helping Latinos get published,

Marcela Landres

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<http://www.marcelalandres.com/>

### 2. Q&A

Rosanne Bane is a Creativity Coach and author of *Around the Writer's Block: Using Brain Science to Solve Writer's Resistance* as well as *Dancing in the*

Dragon's Den. In more than 20 years teaching at the Loft Literary Center, University of St. Thomas, University of Minnesota and other adult education programs, she has given thousands of writers the tools to bust through blocks, build effective writing habits, and achieve their writing dreams and goals. For more information, visit:

Blog - <http://baneofyourresistance.com/>

Website - <http://www.rosannebane.com/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/AroundtheWritersBlock>

Q: Would you define what writer's block is—and what it isn't?

A: Writer's block is the most extreme form of writer's resistance. I titled my book *Around the Writer's Block* because 'writer's block' is the phrase everyone knows, but true writer's block is actually rare. In AWB, I define writer's block as "full-fledged aphasia and paralysis; actually sitting down with the intention and desire to write and being unable to do so no matter how long you sit there and what you try."

Most writers are unwilling or unable to endure the agony of full-fledged block. To avoid the painful awareness that we do not or cannot write the way we want, we frequently procrastinate or distract ourselves (with e-mail, Facebook, cleaning our office, buying office supplies, family or social obligations, etc.). Resistance also includes perfectionism, postponing, self-sabotage, excessive criticism, overscheduling, and endlessly delaying your writing. Another form of resistance is getting stuck in one stage of the process (like research) and not being able to move to the next step.

Resistance is a normal, natural reaction caused by the brain's fight-or-flight response to anxiety. Most writers experience some form of resistance; if you're not writing when you say you will, you're resistant. The goal is not to eliminate resistance (which is impossible) but to learn how to respond effectively so you move through it to write the way you want to write.

Writer's block or any other form of writing resistance is NOT about lack of will power, discipline, ambition, or talent. It's about what's happening in your brain.

Q: What are top 3 dos to managing writer's block?

A: First, learn to recognize how your resistance shows up. You need to understand what's going on in your brain when you feel resistant and what you can do to shift your brain back to a relaxed, creative state.

Second, build habits to support your writing. I recommend writers do something for Product Time (what some people call writing time), Process (creative play for the sake of play with no expectations about the outcome), and Self-Care. (For more about the three habits, go to <http://baneofyourresistance.com/just-for-students/> and enter the password “habits”).

Third, make small commitments to your habits—no more than 15 Magic Minutes—and keep showing up to honor those commitments no matter what!

Q: On the other hand, what are top 3 don'ts to dealing with writer's block?

A: Don't assume resistance means you're a bad or lazy writer.

Don't forget that completing a writing project takes a lot more than drafting and revising. There are six stages in the creative process—including identifying ideas, asking questions, research, incubating ideas, etc. In only one of those six stages do you actually have your fingers on the keyboard or pen on the page. Give yourself credit for everything you do.

Don't let resistance stop you.

Q: Aside from your first-rate book, what resources would you recommend to writers who want to learn more about overcoming writer's block?

A: Other great books are:

\* The Courage to Write: How Writers Transcend Fear by Ralph Keyes

\* The Writer's Book of Hope: Getting from Frustration to Publication by Ralph Keyes

\* The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles by Steven Pressfield

\* Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking by David Bayles and Ted Orland

I also recommend writers read books like The Brain that Changes Itself by Norman Doidge and My Stroke of Insight by Jill Bolte Taylor.

Other resources include my blog, classes, and being part of a writer's group that understands resistance. (I suggest you read my book or another to have

common vocabulary.) The Loft Literary Center offers outstanding classes, some of which are online and available no matter where you live.

Q: Who is your agent and how did you meet him/her? If you don't have an agent, how did you come to be published by Tarcher?

A: Michelle Brower at Folio is my agent. I asked the instructor of a Loft class on writing book proposals for recommendations and he gave me the names of three agents. I looked at their websites, interviewed two of them, and selected Michelle on intuition. Both agents I interviewed wanted to represent me in part because I already had an offer on the table from Tarcher (how that happened is another story that illustrates why writers need a variety of interests). And yes, even though I had an offer from a publisher, it was worth hiring an agent. Michelle negotiated for better terms than the first offer Tarcher made and that more than covered her 15%.

Q: Do you have upcoming projects that my readers should have on their radar?

A: I'll be at the Bloomington Writer's Festival on March 22 if any of your readers are in the Minneapolis metro area. For those who aren't, I'm doing a telechat with Ruth Folit, founder of the International Association of Journal Writers, on March 13 at 3:00 p.m. Central. My online Entering the Flow class with the Loft starts March 3<sup>rd</sup>. This summer I'll teach an online version of Discover Your Way Around the Writer's Block that will cover most of the material in my book, also with the Loft. And your readers can always check the Events page on my blog, <http://baneofyourresistance.com/3304-2/>

### 3. Resources

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#### HOW EDITORS THINK

"I read How Editors Think in one sitting and was engaged from beginning to end. It is well written, highly informative, and humorous—I found myself laughing out-loud in a few spots! Thanks for sharing the secrets of the trade."  
—Mayra Lazara Dole, author of Down to the Bone

Inspired by my experience as a former Simon & Schuster editor, How Editors Think: The Real Reason They Rejected You reveals what it really takes to get published. For more information, visit:

<http://www.marcelalandres.com/E-book.html>

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#### POETRY TRANSLATION PRIZE

Deadline: March 31

The Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation offers \$1000 and publication by White Pine Press for a book of poetry translated into English. For more information, visit <http://www.whitepine.org/>

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#### RETREAT FOR EMERGING LGBT VOICES

Deadline: April 1

The Writers Retreat for Emerging LGBT Voices is a one-week intensive workshop immersion in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. Past fellows include Justin Torres, author of *We the Animals*. For more information, visit <http://www.lambdaliterary.org/>

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#### WRITERS HOUSE SUMMER RESIDENCY

Application Deadline: April 1

Residency: June 9 - August 16

The Hub City Writers Project offers the Writers House Summer Residency with a monthly stipend of \$400. The program is targeted at early-career writers, preferably without a published book. For more information, visit <http://hubcity.org/>

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#### ONLINE MFA PROGRAM

Deadline: April 15

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) offers a fully online MFA in Creative Writing. Writers can complete the entire degree from anywhere in the world, as there is no residency requirement. For more information, visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=42392&submenuheader=2>

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#### DEBUT-LITZER PRIZES

Deadline: April 30

Late Night Library offers \$1000 for a book of poetry and a book of fiction published in the previous year. For more information, visit <http://latenightlibrary.org/>

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#### SELF-PUBLISHED/INDIE PRESS AWARD

Deadline: April 30

The International Rubery Book Award offers approximately \$1635 for a book of poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction that is self-published or published by and independent press. For more information, visit <http://www.ruberybookaward.com/>

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#### MILITARY WRITER AWARD

Deadline: May 15

The Jeff Sharlet Award offers \$1000 and publication in Iowa Review for a work of poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction by a U.S. military veteran or an active duty service member. Anthony Swofford, author of Jarhead, will judge. For more information, visit <http://iowareview.uiowa.edu/>

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#### EMERGING WRITER'S CONTEST

Deadline: May 15

\$1000 each and publication in Ploughshares are given for a poem or group of poems, a short story, and an essay. Writers who have not published a book or chapbook are eligible. For more information, visit <https://www.pshares.org/>

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#### JUST PUBLISHED: STELLA! MOTHER OF MODERN ACTING BY SHEANA OCHOA

Turn of the 20th century. Lower East Side Manhattan. The king and queen of the Yiddish theater put their youngest daughter on stage as soon as she can walk. The girl, Stella Adler, would go from the Yiddish stage to starring on Broadway and later in Hollywood to finally becoming one of the most indomitable, yet under-recognized luminaries of her time. Ironically, it was not onstage but off that Stella would make her greatest contribution, teaching legions of actors from Marlon Brando and Shelley Winters to Benicio del Toro and Mark Ruffalo. Her teachings helped pioneer acting craft lifting it from its histrionic Greco-Roman days to the realism we prize today in film, television, and theater. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/pejxf8b> and <http://sheanaochoa.com/>

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#### JUST PUBLISHED: THE DEPORTATION OF WOPPER BARRAZA BY MACEO MONTOYA

After Wopper Barraza's fourth drunk driving violation, the judge orders his immediate deportation. "But I haven't been there since I was a little kid," says Wopper, whose parents brought him to California when he was three years old. Now he has to move back to Michoacan, where his life unfolds in new and unexpected directions. California Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera writes, "Montoya's dialogue is fierce, his multi-voices tender and rough cut crystal; his characters are carved with the dark-real scalpel of Juan Rulfo and Victor Martinez." For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/m9xo69m> and <http://www.maceomontoya.com/>

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#### KNOWLEDGE IS POWER ONLY WHEN SHARED

Please forward Latinidad® widely.

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For more resources, visit <http://www.marcelalandres.com/resources.html> and follow me on:

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### SUCCESS STORIES

Has Latinidad® been of help to you? E-mail your success stories to

[marcelalandres@yahoo.com](mailto:marcelalandres@yahoo.com)

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“Not every word you write matters, but the fact that you write every day  
does.”

— Rosanne Bane

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