

## Latinidad 4/13: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Writing Critique Groups

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### 1. Saludos

In continuation of my celebration of Latinidad's tenth anniversary, I am culling the best advice and advisors from back issues to help you get published. Previously, I've discussed managing money and time, plus writing classes. This month's focus is the supreme importance of getting your work critiqued.

Writing classes are an excellent means by which to receive constructive criticism. Once the semester is over, though, you're on your own again. In contrast, a good writing critique group can last for years, providing what every writer needs: regular feedback. To learn more, read this month's Q&A with Becky Levine, author of *The Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide*.

Helping Latinos get published,  
Marcela Landres  
[marcelalandres@yahoo.com](mailto:marcelalandres@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.marcelalandres.com/>

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### 2. Q&A

Becky Levine is the author of *The Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide: How to Give and Receive Feedback, Self-Edit, and Make Revisions*. She has been a freelance editor for over ten years and has belonged to her own critique groups for over fifteen. Becky speaks at workshops and conferences and has written articles for *Writer's Digest* magazine. She lives in California's Santa Cruz mountains with her husband and son. For more information, visit <http://www.beckylevine.com>

Q: At what point will a writer know s/he is ready to join or form a critique group?

A: I think any writer can join or start a critique group—they may just be ready for a different type of group than another writer. The best thing a writer can do before jumping into a critique group is look at their goals—whether they want to critique in-person or online, how big a group they're looking for, if they want to critique with writers working in a specific genre. And the most important question they should ask themselves is where they are on their writing path—how much time do they want to put into their writing today, whether they've been writing productively for a while or are just getting started, and how close do they (honestly) think they are toward querying an agent or editor or having a book ready to self-publish. Writers of different skills can critique together, but a writer should be aware of what will make them comfortable and productive and look for a group that is the right fit.

Q: What are the top three attributes writers should look for in a critique group?

A: A writer should be looking for a group that:

- Meets at a time and place (including online) that will make it easy for the writer to commit to showing up, with writing and critiques.
- Lets each writer work at their productivity level—with time to have their work critiqued and to critique writing from others.
- Where the writer feels comfortable and safe, where they can share their writing and receive respectful, constructive feedback.

Q: If someone is creating a critique group, what are the top 3 qualities writers should look for in prospective members?

A: A writer creating a critique group should look for members who:

- Have an equal level of commitment to the group.
- The writer feels comfortable and relaxed with, open to sharing writing and feedback.
- Are flexible and willing to grow—in both their writing craft and their critique skills.

Q: Should a writer be part of a group for his or her entire writing career, or just the duration of time required to critique a single manuscript?

A: I think critiquing is for life. :-) Obviously, if a writer has decided that they have one book to write, and that's it, they don't need to stick with a group after it's done. On the other hand, writers who plan to keep writing can brainstorm ideas with their group, get motivated by watching other members write, and continue to grow their writing by critiquing, even if they aren't putting new words on a page that month.

Q: Now that you've had a book published, how has your relationship to your critique group changed?

A: I don't think it's changed that much. Everybody in the group was excited for me and happy to help me with their critiques as I wrote *The Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide*. And we celebrated big time when it was published! They still watch me writing and struggling with my current projects, and they'll still argue (nicely!) with me when I give a critique they don't agree with. We've been critiquing together for a long time now, and every one of us keeps getting better and better at this writing thing—in good part, I think, because of those years of critiques.

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 Writer's Digest Books?

A: My agent for adult nonfiction is Jessica Faust ([http://www.bookends-inc.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.bookends-inc.com/about_us.html)) at BookEnds, LLC (<http://www.bookends-inc.com>). I was lucky enough to be speaking at a conference, as a freelance editor, and to sit on a panel with Jane Friedman (<http://janefriedman.com>), who was still with Writer's Digest then. There was a lot of talk about critiquing during the panel, and afterward I took a breath and pitched her the idea for the book. Some discussion and an outline later, and I was on the way.

Q: What are you working on now? What should my readers look to read from you next?

A: I'm working on my fiction projects at this time—I write fiction for children and teens. I have a completed middle-grade mystery that I'd love to find representation for, and I'm writing a young-adult historical novel and a picture book as well. I'm also starting to work on some nonfiction for kids—hoping to find homes for those pieces with magazines and educational publishers.

### 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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#### SEEKING EXPERIMENTAL ESSAYS

Deadline: May 13

Creative Nonfiction Journal seeks experimental nonfiction for their "Exploring the Boundaries" section. They want essays that not only push the boundaries of the genre, but also tear down the borders. For more information, visit <https://www.creativenonfiction.org/submissions/exploring-boundaries>

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#### RAGDALE ARTIST'S RETREAT

Deadline: May 15

Ragdale offers residencies from two weeks to two months to emerging and established writers from all over the world. Financial aid is available on a limited basis. Past residents include Francisco Aragon, Loida Maritza Perez, and Achy Obejas. For more information, visit <http://www.ragdale.org/>

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#### POETRY CHAPBOOK CONTEST

Deadline: May 15

The Hudson Valley Writers' Center offers \$1000 and publication by Slapering Hol Press for a first poetry chapbook. For more information, visit <http://www.writerscenter.org/shpcompetition.html>

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#### POETRY COLLECTION PRIZE

Deadline: May 15

The Blue Lynx Prize offers \$2000 and publication by Lynx House Press for a poetry collection by a U.S. citizen living anywhere in the world and by international writers living in the U.S. For more information, visit <http://lynxhousepress.org/blue-lynx-prize>

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#### WHIDBEY WRITERS WORKSHOP CONTEST

Deadline: May 24

The Whidbey Writers Workshop Alumni Association Emerging Writers Getaway is a seven-day retreat given annually to a fiction writer who has completed but not published a novel. For more information, visit [http://www.whidbeymfalumni.org/?page\\_id=1323](http://www.whidbeymfalumni.org/?page_id=1323)

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#### \$10,000 ESSAY AWARD

Deadline: May 31

Creative Nonfiction Journal in partnership with Arizona State University's Global Institute of Sustainability offers the \$10,000 Walton Sustainability Solutions Best Creative Nonfiction Essay Award. Whether you're deciding it's not worth the trouble to recycle or are living off the grid, they want to hear about it. For more information, visit <https://www.creativenonfiction.org/submissions/human-face-sustainability>

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#### WEAVE MAGAZINE

Deadline: May 31

Weave celebrates diversity in both the creator and their works and strives to showcase both novice and established writers and artists. For more information, visit <http://www.weavemagazine.net/>

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#### INTERNATIONAL WRITERS CONFERENCE

Date: June 1

The Writing Across Borders conference will engage the writing community in a discussion of our role and responsibilities at this moment of economic upheaval and unprecedented movement across borders. For more information, visit <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/362297>

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#### SHORT STORY PRIZE

Deadline: June 1

The Marguerite McGlinn Prize for Fiction offers \$2000 and publication in Philadelphia Stories for a short story. For more information, visit <http://www.philadelphiastories.org/>

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#### JUST RE-LAUNCHED: FOREVER MY LADY

Forever My Lady, a Latino-themed novel, has been relaunched as an indie book and became the #4 book on all of Amazon. Get your copy today! <http://tinyurl.com/d8u4j58>

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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>

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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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“This is an absolutely essential skill for a writer: the ability to involve others in your revision process. You have to be not only the author, but also your own editor in chief.”

--Thomas Legendre

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Marcela Landres

Author of the e-book "How Editors Think: The Real Reason They Rejected You"

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