

Latinidad – November 2008: Why Voting is a Creative Act

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BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

"Anyone thinking of taking a novel into the public market must consult
Marcela

first. I know it's an expense, and money's tight--it's always tight--but Marcela did more for me than correct grammar and straighten ideas. She pointed out the lack of progression and character development in my novel. She suggested CD's and books I'm only beginning to use. She gave me real directions on how to start a writing career. I used one CD she recommended and realized my book was only a third finished. My friends couldn't do that. If it's a matter of time, make time to work with Marcela. If it's a matter of money, she's worth every dime. I feel as if I received honest mentoring from someone in the publishing business and made a friend at the same time. If you choose not to work with her, that's OK too; the publishing market is hard enough already and I really don't need the competition."

--Luis Alvarenga, author of "Confessions of an Internet Pornographer"

If you are ready to work with a professional editor, visit

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

1. Saludos

Unless you are a political writer, you probably don't consciously think about politics when you write. Yet, the government wields enormous influence over your writing life. Politicians decide how much (or how little) money to allocate towards the arts, libraries, and schools. If art funding is cut, how many non-profit presses and literary journals will disappear? If library budgets decrease, how many of the remaining dollars will be spent on Latino books? If educational resources dwindle, how much time and attention will be devoted to creative writing classes?

Voting is not only a political act; it is a creative one. With your pen or keyboard, you shape future generations of readers and writers, but voting is how you shape your future. You create your art by writing, and you create your country by voting.

On November 4th, put down your pens, walk away from your keyboards,

and vote. Don't vote alone. Grab your abuelita, best friend, significant other, boss, staff, preacher, congregation, teacher, class, mentors, and protégées and make sure they vote too. On this election, it is not sufficient for individuals to vote—we must vote as a community.

Helping Latino writers get published,

Marcela Landres

marcelalandres@yahoo.com

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

2. Q&A

I posed the follow question to various writers: Given that the President makes decisions that affect the arts, why is it important that Latino writers—as members of the largest minority in the U.S. and as members of the artistic community—vote on November 4th? Below are their answers.

"This election demonstrates that our government officials and wannabes want us and the world to believe that a typical American is 'Joe Six Pack', 'Joe the Plumber', and 'Soccer Mom.' These stereotypes are meant to counter the terror-induced image of Americans as intellectual, high minded, eloquent. These luddites don't openly say that Joe Six Pack, Joe the Plumber and Soccer Moms don't read, don't go to museums, don't think too much or too deeply about anything beyond the basic necessities. That might be offensive. But they loudly proclaim that the 'average American' prefers to drink reality into oblivion through liquor, are obsessed with sewage, and prefer

to stand on the sidelines while someone else runs after the ball. It is up to intellectuals and artists to proudly and loudly elevate the discourse and to ennoble and dignify what it means to be an average or typical American. These

are not issues of ethnicity or race. They are issues of citizenship."

—Esmeralda Santiago, author of "When I Was Puerto Rican," "Almost a Woman," "America's Dream," and "The Turkish Lover"

"As I'm thinking about the upcoming election, the needs of our nation are far more important than my personal needs as a writer. Our nation is facing enormous challenges--a financial crisis, two wars, a health care crisis, a broken education system--that hit the lowest on the socio-economic ladder, including many Latinos, hardest. We can't thrive as individuals or as artists if all our time and energy is spent on the struggle to survive.

Latino writers, many of us immigrants or the children of immigrants, are

especially sensitive to the importance of financial and social stability. We value the rights we are granted here, including freedom of speech. When we vote for a candidate who will work to improve living conditions for all Americans, and not just those on the upper tiers of society, then we all benefit, including the writers and artists."

—Marta Acosta, author of "Happy Hour at Casa Dracula," "Midnight Brunch," and "The Bride of Casa Dracula"

"No one said it better than Audre Lorde. She wrote, "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action." As a cultural activist, I've witnessed the veracity of this statement time and again. But the myth that art and entertainment are apolitical not only remains pervasive, it hurts most those communities who have a history of marginalization in the United States. Even a cursory glance at the history of social movements in this country will reveal a strong artistic component.

Latin@s may be the fastest growing minority in the U.S., but I think the current presidential campaign proves that the Black-White racial paradigm continues to exist. Art and entertainment is the way we assert our visibility, imprinting the collective consciousness with our views of the way the world is but also our vision of how it could be. This is true whether we write literary magical realism or commercial "chica lit." Therefore, Latin@ artists of all stripes must get to the polls on November 4th to support the candidate we believe will invest in the arts and unequivocally stand against censorship regardless of his personal views and aesthetic."
--Sofia Quintero, President of Sister Outsider Entertainment, and author of "Divas Don't Yield" and the Black Artemis hip hop novels.

"Funding the arts is like funding health insurance in this country. It's the first to be cut when times are hard. The arts are important in so many ways, especially to children. Writing, playing a musical instrument, singing, painting, drawing--the whole spectrum of the creative arts--is a way that kids, especially at risk kids, can express themselves in a constructive way. I know that throughout my life I've written in my journal to express my thoughts and feelings especially at difficult times. At some point, journal writing became fiction writing and I love it! So, vote for the presidential ticket that will support the arts."

--L.M. Gonzalez, author of "Too Late for Romance?"

"As a travel writer, I live on the road, so have seen firsthand how the Bush

Administration has devastated our standing in the international community. On November 4th, we have a precious opportunity to reverse the terrifying direction our nation has taken. And that is by casting our ballots for Barack Obama. He is beloved throughout the globe: Kenya, Indonesia, Cuba, Venezuela, Jordan, Germany--even France. He alone has the potential to restore people's faith in us. We must vote for him not just as writers or Latinos but as citizens of the world."

--Stephanie Elizondo Griest, author most recently of "Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlines"

"I cut my satirist fangs on Ronald Reagan when I was a college newspaper cartoonist, so my gut, (and this election year) tells me John McCain is easy prey. McCain would guarantee gaffes and unintended hilarious viejito moves for at least 4 years. But his--or President Palin's--arts strategy would likely be to promote arts suitable only for the discount racks of Wal-Mart.

But I'll take one for the team: Vote Obama, and put political satirists out of work!"

--Lalo Alcaraz is a nationally syndicated cartoonist, and author of "Migra Mouse: Political Cartoons on Immigration," "La Cucaracha: The First Collection

from the Daily Comic Strip," and illustrator of "Latino USA, A History of Latinos in the US" by Ilan Stavans.

3. Upcoming Workshops Winter Words Conference

WHAT: Panel subjects include Agent Panel, Children's Literature, Hot Publishing Trends and Books for 2009, How to Develop a Fiction Series, Literary Fiction, Living the Adventure, Memoir, Niche Writing (business, feature, science, travel), Sports Writing and Young Adult Literature. There will be book sales and signings all day long.

In addition, a limited number of manuscripts will be accepted on a first come first served basis for review by editors Marcela Landres (adult) and Eileen Robinson (children's). Manuscripts and full payment must be received by November 20th.

WHEN: Saturday, December 6th, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

WHERE: Fairfield Public Library, 1080 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT 06824

FOR MORE INFO: Visit <http://www.fairfieldpubliclibrary.org/>

Invite me to speak for your organization:

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

List of upcoming workshops:

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

4. Resources

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>

\$3000 FALL FICTION CONTEST

Deadline: November 30

Narrative magazine is seeking short shorts, short stories, and excerpts from longer works of fiction. For more information, visit

<http://narrativemagazine.com/>

WRITING YOUR NOVEL

Date: Sat. Nov. 15th, 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Location: Upper Marlboro, MD

Cost: \$90.00

Workshop co-sponsored by Strebor Publishing (Zane's Publishing House)
Led by Essence bestselling author, Karen E. Quinones Miller, this 3 ½ hour workshop is designed to aid with plot assessment and structure development. Topics covered in this writing intensive workshop include: point of view, character development, story structure, self-editing, finding the time to write, overcoming writer's block, writing believable dialogue, setting a scene, to outline or not to outline--that is the question. To register, contact Karen E. Quinones Miller at authorkeqm@aol.com

PHONE-IN PUBLICITY SEMINARS

Date: November 21

Publicity expert Bella Stander offers seminars that include: the lowdown on promoting your book like a pro; Q&A session; individual 15-minute follow-up consultation; and \$25 discount on first hour of

additional consulting. For more information, visit

<http://www.bookpromotion101.com/>

CALL FOR NONFICTION SUBMISSIONS

Deadline: December 31

The Truth About the Fact: An International Journal of Literary Nonfiction is seeking nonfiction essays, memoirs, and nonfiction poetry. For more information, visit <http://www.thetruthaboutthefact.com/>

BUZZ YOUR BOOK ONLINE CLASS

Dates: January 5 - February 2

By the end of the "Buzz Your Book" class, you will have a customized marketing plan for your book and your book only. Authors from MacAdam/Case, Ballantine, Penguin and SMP have taken this class, as well as publicists and editors from Tor, Wylie and Simon & Schuster. The instructor, M.J. Rose (<http://www.mjrose.com/>), is an international bestselling author and has been on the Today Show, Fox News, and CNN. For more information, please visit <http://www.bksp.org/content/view/141/2/>

ANNUAL SPRING WRITERS FESTIVAL

Dates: March 6 - 8

The festival at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee features workshops, talks, panels, manuscript reviews, and pitch sessions. For more information, visit <http://www4.uwm.edu/SCE/course.cfm?id=13682>

LAKE TAHOE WRITERS CONFERENCE

Date: June 12 - 14

Open to both beginners and advanced writers of nonfiction, fiction, travel writing, articles, TV/movie script writing, poetry, and more. The conference also teaches how to create a book from your business with a panel of professionals who have done this. For more information, visit

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

PENGUIN SEEKS SENIOR PRODUCTION EDITOR

Penguin seeks a Senior Production Editor for its Grosset & Dunlap division.

For details, visit <http://www.marcelalandres.com/jobs.html>

PENGUIN SEEKS ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/MANAGING EDITOR

Penguin is looking for an Associate Managing Editor or Managing Editor (depending on experience) for Razorbill, their innovative young adult imprint.

For details, visit <http://www.marcelalandres.com/jobs.html>

LATINAS, LOVE, AND MEN SURVEY

Cindy Rodriguez, journalist extraordinaire, is doing research for a book about Latinas and what they think about love and men. She's put together a quick 10-question survey and welcomes you to share your thoughts. To take the survey, visit

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=nxT5K4bPgFs6vhTxMocj0g_3d_3d

Please forward the link to fellow Latinas. For more information about Cindy, visit

<http://cindyrodriguez.wordpress.com/>

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If you like my web site, please nominate it for next year's Writer's Digest Magazine's "The 101 Best Web Sites for Writers" list. Send nominations to writersdig@fwpubs.com with "101 Best Web Sites" as the subject line and a brief note explaining how <http://www.marcelalandres.com/> has helped you. Thank you in advance for your support!

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"Bad politicians are sent to Washington by good people who don't vote."

--William E. Simon

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Marcela Landres

Editorial Consultant

718-208-5810

marcelalandres@yahoo.com

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

E-zine: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marcelalandres/>

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