

## Latinidad Newsletter – February 2006: Crafts

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For more writing opportunities, including calls for submissions, contests and conferences, visit <http://www.marcelalandres.com/> and click on Writing Opportunities.

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### 1. Saludos

According to a study done by the Hobby Industry Association with the Cultural Access Group, 51% of Latino households participate in crafts, and spend an estimated \$1.9 million annually on crafts. And yet there are only two crafts books on the market for Latinos—and they're both written by the same author, Kathy Cano Murillo, who is the subject of this month's Q&A. If you aspire to publish a crafts book, there's a gaping hole on the bookshelf waiting for your contribution.

Helping Latino writers get published,

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

### 2. Q&A

One of my fondest childhood memories is of crocheting booties with my sisters when our mother was expecting our baby brother. As an adult I'd occasionally buy a crafts book and some supplies, hoping to recreate that warm feeling, but invariably the book would remain unread. Truth be told, I find most crafts books to be poorly written and drably illustrated. In contrast, Kathy Cano Murillo's *Crafty Chica's Art de la Soul: Glittery Ideas to Liven Up Your Life*, is a breath of fresh air. This is likely the only crafts book you will ever read from cover to cover solely for the writing. More than a mere how-to, it's a guide to releasing your inner artist. A nationally syndicated columnist for The Arizona Republic and Gannett News Service, the wise and warm Cano Murillo proclaims, "In order to make art from the soul, you have to be in touch with your soul." My favorite project? The Hardback Book Purse—made out of a real hardcover book!

Which author or book inspires you, and why?

I read oodles of books, from non-fiction to fiction. Right now I'm really digging the creativity/motivational books such as *52 Projects* by Jeffrey Yamaguchi or Keri Smith's *Living Out Loud*. These books aren't just about reading, they're about doing. I was bummed there wasn't a Latino-themed book like that—light and whimsical with a "craft your life" kind of message, so I wrote one! As far as fiction, I'm a sucker for chica lit. I

can hardly wait for Patrick Sanchez's new book, "Tight," to come out. He has such a wicked sense of humor, yet I \*always\* cry at the end of his books because they are so sweet. And make that double everything for Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez's upcoming "Make Him Look Good." The reasons I'm excited for her book goes beyond the story. I follow her blog and find it fascinating to read about her daily life and how she juggles single motherhood, writing, politics - and the way she put her dreams into action. Truly inspirational!

Why do you love to write?

For non-fiction, I love to inspire others to make the most of their time on Earth. I try to come up with book ideas that will add value to their lives that aren't mushy, but are playful and productive. I'm also writing fiction. I'm currently polishing up my first novel. I love writing fiction because it takes me to a world I wish existed. And I can go there anytime as long as I sit at my computer and click-clack away. I'm an artist, and writing is art too, except I can't see any tangible supplies. They are stocked in my imagination and they aren't even in order, like art supplies would be! I have to search for them in the dark and that makes the journey all the more challenging, breathtaking, exciting and unpredictable! I love writing so much that I also keep a blog to journal the events in my life. Even though I write for my day job as an entertainment reporter, and then my craft books, my blog almost every night and then my novel for a couple hours a night—you'd think I'd get burned out. But I don't!

How did you meet your agent?

I actually have two agents, Scott Wachs and Jonathan Pecarsky, both from the William Morris Agency. It was good karma. It was about three years ago when my third book was just coming out. I was doing my TV segment at the local station. The weather anchor loved my artwork and books and told me she had a friend who was an agent and that she would get me his card. While I knew she was genuine, I assumed she would forget and I didn't want to embarrass myself and ask for the card. After my segment, I was walking out of the building and she ran after me and said: "Kathy! Here is my friend's card! Call him! Tell him I sent you and good luck!" I took the card and thanked her, but didn't look at it until I got in my car. It was too good to be true. It was from Scott Wachs from The William Morris Agency! When I got home from work that day, I was reluctant to call. They rep people like Salma Hayek. I do crafts with glue guns and glitter. Hello? But then I thought: "I'm the Crafty Chica! This would be a crafty move to call him and pitch myself, my work and my following! The crafts industry is a \$31 billion a year business and there are few Latina personalities! Call him!" So—I called. It changed my life. We chatted for about 30 minutes and the next month I was in New York and we met in person and have worked together ever since. Scott's associate, literary agent Jonathan Pecarsky, came on board to handle all my book contracts. Scott handles my TV work. I learned such a valuable lesson. Never, EVER undervalue yourself. Now I work it like Eva Longoria on the red carpet! OK, maybe not that flashy. Bottom line? I knew I had something special with my "Crafty Chica" business and I worked very hard to establish

all kinds of positive connections from every angle possible, so I should have had faith that something good would come back to me.

What is your writing ritual?

I'm very disciplined. Because I'm a reporter, I'm great with deadlines, even when there is not a deadline, like with my fiction. I assign myself a deadline, because no one else will. When I'm writing my entertainment and craft columns for work, it's during the day and I'm surrounded by chatter in the newsroom. When I'm working on a craft book, it is usually during the day or on weekends and I'm surrounded by chatter from my family. But my novel? I write late at night when everyone is in bed, and I'm surrounded by the chatter of the characters. That, I can handle! Sometimes I stay up until 3 a.m. and then go to work at 9 the next morning. I take vitamins and drink plenty of water so I stay refreshed during the day. I do a lot of TV, I can't have bags under my eyes! It is always a balancing act.

Other than honing their craft, what advice would you give to Latino writers looking to land a book deal?

Get a web site. Don't think you have anything interesting to post about yourself? You are in the wrong business! Even if it is a simple blog, it's great practice and gets yourself out there and shows publishers you are serious. It's a great way to build buzz for your work. My web site (and blog) is how I made contact with different editors for my books. Without those sites, I would not have the crafty career I do now.

Never jump on a current trend. Instead, work on establishing a new trend or seek to spot emerging trends. Force yourself to write a little bit each day, even if it sucks. At least you have something to work with. Don't let other writers psych you out. I wasted a year before starting my novel because I kept reading all these fabulous books and I would say: "I can never do that!" Now I say, "I'm going to give it my best shot!" It's just a blank computer screen and you have a delete button. It's not like Paris Hilton's palm pilot where it will get leaked to all the media! You are the only one who has to look at it. You have the power to change, rearrange and exchange it. So have fun and go for it! Stay motivated. Keep a small blank journal on you at all times to record ideas. Listen to writing podcasts. I love <http://www.ishouldbewriting.com> and other online shows that I can put on my iPod and listen to while I work out or paint.

Love your space. Make your writing area comfy and stylized. Hang up reminders of bad habits, or writing tips, or character traits. My novel has a magical love shrine in it. So I made a glittery cigar box love shrine and I have it at my desk when I write. Learn all you can. Read when you have the time. Visit writing web sites or join online or local writing groups. Read online writing message boards. Go to author readings and ask questions. Visit your favorite authors' web sites and read their bio page to see how they got started. It will light your fire! Visit agent sites and read their guidelines for submissions and the "do not do this" list. Stay focused. Keep your writing at the top of your to-do list. Make it

an important part of your life so you will finish. See where you can trim time from your schedule (i.e. Dancing with the Stars!). Work on one idea/project at a time.

Obtain the book: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0060789425/marcelalandre-20/103-8232088-8558235?%5Fencoding=UTF8&camp=1789&link%5Fcode=xm2>

Visit author's web site: <http://www.craftychica.com/>

### 3. Upcoming Workshops

How to Write a Knockout Book Proposal, 3/2

Sponsored by the Learning Annex, Course 427DNY, Section Q

WHAT: Most proposals are rejected not because the writing is weak, but because the writer failed to provide agents and editors with all the information they need. This is especially true for fiction proposals. Topics discussed include: the true purpose of a proposal; why 90% of proposals are rejected based on the cover letter alone; and the three most common mistakes writers make when preparing proposals.

WHEN: Thursday, 3/2, 6:45 pm - 9:30 pm

WHERE: School for the Physical City, 55 East 25th Street b/w Madison and Park Ave, New York City, NY

REGISTER: Call 212-371-0280 or visit <http://www.learningannex.com/> and search for "427DNY"

Invite me to speak for your organization: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id49.htm>

List of upcoming workshops: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id22.htm>

### 4. Writing Opportunities

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When you contact these organizations, please mention that you were referred by the Latinidad™ Newsletter. Thank you, and let me know what happens.

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#### WORKSHOP FOR WRITERS OF COLOR

Deadline: April 7

VONA (The Voices of Our Nation Arts Foundation) is a non-profit organization associated with the University of San Francisco's School of Education that is dedicated to nurturing writers through the traditions, perspectives, and aesthetics of writers of color. VONA was founded by Junot Diaz (author of Drown), Elmaz Abinader (author of Children of the Roojme and In the Country of My Dreams) and Executive Director Diem Jones. The impressive faculty has included such acclaimed writers as Terry McMillan,

Martin Espada, and Willie Perdomo. To register and for more information visit <http://www.vona-voices.org/>

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#### ZINE SEEKS EXPATRIATE STORIES

Deadline: March 1

Thereby Hangs a Tale is a new biannual print zine based in Portland, OR. It explores stories that form around an idea, an object, an image, a place or an experience. The inaugural theme for the first issue is "expatriate." Its interpretation is up to the writer. To check out submission categories (which include fiction, essay, how-to, and lists), read an interview with poet Jon Woodward, submit a story for our web-only "Show and Tale" feature, or cruise the Resources for Writers page, please visit <http://www.therebyhangsatale.com/>.

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#### RANDOM HOUSE INTERNSHIPS

Deadline: March 1

Random House's internship program is geared to students between their junior and senior years in college, and is geared towards students who have a serious interest in the business of book publishing. This ten-week session, which runs from mid-June to mid-August, has been called "a first rate publishing internship" by The Princeton Review. For more information, visit [http://www.randomhouse.com/careers/cg\\_intern.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/careers/cg_intern.html).

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#### WHIDBEY ISLAND WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Date: March 3-5

Offers workshops, individual consultations with editors and agents, sample critique sessions, fireside chats with more than 30 published authors, and a writing contest. Presenters include Chris Bohjalian, Hallie Ephron, and Cherry Adair. To register visit <http://www.writeonwhidbey.com/>.

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#### NAHJ STUDENT PROJECTS

Application Deadline: March 10

NAHJ offers several opportunities for selected students to become involved in their annual convention. These students can work with professional journalists in putting together a convention newspaper, a television newscast, a radio newscast, or an online news Web site. This program is open to college students who are pursuing careers in English and Spanish-language print, photo, broadcast and online media. Students do not have to be journalism majors to be eligible. To learn more visit <http://www.nahj.org/home/home.shtml>.

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#### LATINO BOOK AWARDS

Deadline: March 17

Sponsored by the Latino Book & Family Festival. Authors can nominate themselves. Self-published books are eligible. For guidelines visit <http://www.latinofestivals.com/home/>.

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#### CHICA LIT CLUB FIESTA CONTEST

Deadline: March 31

Would you like to attend the Chica Lit Club Fiesta for free? Submit a 500-word essay on the topic "When I First Realized I Was a Sucia," using the meaning of the word found in the Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez novel, "The Dirty Girls Social Club," as well as a paragraph outlining why you think you are a writer. Send all materials as an attachment to:

[alisa@dirtygirlsproductions.com](mailto:alisa@dirtygirlsproductions.com). In the subject line, write Chica Lit Club Fiesta Essay.

Be sure to include a short biography and contact information with your submission. The winner will have all expenses paid to the Chica Lit Club Fiesta 2006, including airfare.

The winner will also be asked to read her work out loud at one of the brunch gatherings.

Buena suerte, chicas! For more information, visit <http://www.chicalitclub.com/>.

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#### ALTA NATIONAL TRANSLATION AWARD

Deadline: March 31

A prize of \$2,500 is given annually to honor a translator whose work has made a valuable contribution to literary translation in the previous year. Publishers may submit book-length translations of poetry, fiction, drama and creative nonfiction. For more

information, visit <http://www.literarytranslators.org/>.

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#### SEAL PRESS SEEKS SUBMISSIONS

Deadline: April 1

Seal Press seeks stories for an anthology to be published in winter 2007 entitled "Homelands: Women's Journeys Toward Meanings of Home." For more information, visit <http://www.sealpress.com/>.

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#### PLANMYQUINCE.COM SEEKS WRITER

Project Type: ClearPortal is a web portal development company located in San Francisco, CA. ClearPortal is currently in beta launch of a Quinceanera website, <https://planmyquince.com/>, that allows young Latina girls the opportunity to plan their Quinceanera online. ClearPortal develops websites that target Hispanic audiences and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Position Type: Contract to Perm.

Position Title: Website Content Developer

Compensation: Project based - \$2500– \$4000 for online content development of 35-40 pages and print collateral (brochure content)

Requirements: Writing experience targeting youth audiences (Latina girls aged 13-15).

Experience with event planning and/or familiarity with traditions relating to

Quinceaneras/Sweet 15. Experience writing Sales and Marketing collateral is preferred, but not required. Ability to read and write Spanish is also preferred, but not required.

Job Description: Write content for website and print collateral (brochures) as well as ongoing monthly articles on Latina teen fashion, beauty, and Quinceanera planning tips. (ongoing articles compensated at agreed upon market rate)  
Location: San Francisco Bay Area. Looking for San Francisco Bay Area writers, but open to all qualified candidates.  
Starting Date: ASAP.  
Target Audience: Hispanic girls aged 13-15.

Respond to: [content@clearportal.com](mailto:content@clearportal.com)

ATTN: Quince Project.

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#### CONSULTATIONS

I edit manuscripts, critique proposals and advise on how to launch and maintain a successful writing career. If you are interested in a consultation, please visit <http://www.marcelalandres.com/>, click on Consultations, and follow the instructions.

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#### POST AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN LATINIDAD™

E-mail announcements about contests, calls for submissions, conferences, jobs, book publications, literary events, etc., to [marcelalandres@yahoo.com](mailto:marcelalandres@yahoo.com).

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“The luck of having talent is not enough, one must also have a talent for luck.”

—Hector Berlioz

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