

## Latinidad - Spring 2025: Susan Velazquez Colmant

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—Maria Ramos-Chertok, author of *The Butterfly Series: 52 Weeks of Inquiries for Transformation*, <http://mariaramoschertok.com>

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### 1. Saludos

Did you know that only 26% of YA readers are 17 years old and under? I learned this and much more from the impressive Susan Velazquez Colmant who possesses a unique perspective as a literary agent and subsidiary rights director. Avail yourself of her experience by reading the Q&A below.

Helping Latinos get published,  
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### 2. Q&A

Susan Velazquez Colmant is the subsidiary rights director at JABberwocky, where she manages audio and translation rights in addition to her own growing client list. She was born and raised outside of Dallas, Texas and received a BA in Creative Writing with a minor in Gender Studies from SUNY Oswego in 2016. Her hobbies include visiting art museums, trying new restaurants, and practicing her French with her husband, who was raised in

Corsica. For more information, visit <https://awfulagent.com/agents/susan-velazquez/> and <https://susanvcolmant.com/>.

Q: You are a literary agent and a subsidiary rights director. How does your agenting inform your subrights work? And vice versa?

A: I love working in subrights because it gives me a bird's eye view of the market. Through conversations with foreign and audio publishers, I get a lot of valuable insights on market trends and how customers consume books which then helps me see a clear vision for how to pitch my clients or prospective clients.

On the other side, I think what I bring as an agent to the subrights side is a lot of passion. I have to familiarize myself with all our authors and their titles, which means I get just as emotionally invested in wanting to bring their work to a wider audience. I want to make the sale not just because it's my job in subrights to make the sale, but because I love getting to write an email to the author and their agent with the subject line "Offer." A win for any of our authors is a win for me.

Q: Audiobooks seem to be a consistent area of growth. In your experience, are there particular categories of books best suited for audio? Do books by BIPOC authors fare well in audio?

A: In my conversations with audio publishers, the top genres for audiobook consumption seem to be (in no particular order) science fiction, fantasy, and romance. I don't think there's been any statistics about BIPOC authors and stories specifically that can give any insight to their performance levels.

From what I've heard from audiobook publishers, they're still trying to understand new purchasing and consumption habits. When Spotify entered the audiobook market, that caused a big shift in the marketplace. Just personally speaking, I never listened to audiobooks regularly until my Premium subscription came with the 15 hours of free listening every month. (I know, ironic for someone who works in audio rights.) So I think there's now a huge chunk of audiobook listeners who are like me, who are just starting to get into audio and we ourselves are still trying to understand what makes us select an audiobook over another.

Is it the narrator? The author of the book? Is it because this title is a hot new title that everyone is talking about and I don't want to wait for a hold at the library? Is it the genre or subject matter that drew me in?

I think it's up in the air now but in a good way. When users have more options to consume audiobooks—whether it's buying an individual download, using an Audible credit, streaming on Spotify, etc.—I think it allows for more pathways for stories to find their audience.

Q: My understanding is you represent young adult, new adult, and adult fiction. YA in general—and Latinx YA in particular—seem to be popular. Do you find there is a greater demand for YA than new adult or adult fiction?

A: This is another area that's really up in the air! So we know that a lot of YA readers are actually adults. Farshore and HarperCollins issued a report in 2024 (<https://www.farshore.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2024/04/The-Farshore-and-HCCB-Annual-Review-of-Childrens-Reading-for-Pleasure-1.pdf>) that showed only 26% of YA readers are 17 years old and under. There's lots of theories and reasons as to why that is—teenagers aren't reading for pleasure as often as previous generations did, adult readers have more disposable income so that's why they drive more sales, etc.

Whatever the reasons, the result is that the YA market has shifted towards targeting an older audience and tweens and young teenagers have been left behind and now everyone's unsure about what makes a successful YA book if the buyers are primarily adults.

However, the silver lining is that the New Adult category seems to be making a comeback and now both booksellers and publishers know how to market this age range and where to shelve it. I've seen editors on both the YA and adult side ask for New Adult stories so there seems to be a growing appetite coming from both age categories!

I am hoping that in the next five years, the YA market will become more balanced and publish more stories aimed at the 13-15 year old audience again and the New Adult category will continue to be shared between YA and adult imprints. I think that's a good way to keep from one age range dominating entirely and for stories to have multiple chances of being placed with an editor.

Q: Other than with glorious prose, how can writers impress you?

A: Developing strong characters and their sense of voice. If you get me hooked onto your protagonist, chances are I will have a hard time letting go. If a writer is able to craft a character who actually feels like someone I could run into in real life, that's an extremely powerful writer in my opinion.

Q: Are you open to Spanish-language and/or bilingual projects, or do you prefer English-language only?

A: I primarily work with English-language only projects and I'd be open to bilingual projects but I can't guarantee I'll be the best fit. I describe myself as being fluent in "Spanglish" so if you're looking for someone to double check your spelling and grammar in Spanish, I don't think that will be me.

Q: Will you work with writers based abroad, or do you prefer U.S.-based authors?

A: I work with authors from everywhere! I have clients based in the UK, Canada, Brazil, and New Zealand. The nice thing about living in the modern era is that time zones aren't a huge obstacle to work with.

Q: If you could go back in time and chat with your younger self, what advice would you share about launching a career in publishing?

A: I didn't know I wanted to enter publishing until my second semester of senior year in college so my main regret is that I didn't know that I wanted to do this sooner and take advantage of internship programs for college students. I wish I could have gotten the chance to explore different sides of the industry although the nice thing about being an agent is that I do interact with almost every facet of publishing in some way.

For general advice for young professionals, I'm going to be honest: when they say it's tough to get into publishing, they're not lying. Publishing has always been tough because the industry is so concentrated in NYC and it's very customary for people to work a series of unpaid, part-time internships until they finally get that entry level position. During the peak COVID period, it looked like publishing (specifically editorial positions) were going to open up to more remote work but I've been hearing that a lot of major publishers are returning to mandatory in-office work, either on a hybrid schedule or full-time basis. And with the costs of NYC living just getting higher and higher, it's so difficult to stick it out and wait for a foothold.

Now, this isn't to say that there aren't other options. Small presses, university presses, audio publishers, and literary agencies are based all over the country and some of those companies are more remote-friendly so NYC doesn't have to be the final destination.

But I would encourage people who want to go into this industry to think about when you want to break out a Plan B. Especially when you're coming from a

low-income family, it may not be sustainable to do unpaid internships for extended periods of time. And I want to say there should be no shame or sense of failure for not being able to “make it.” This industry is so constricted right now that it’s not about the quality of the job candidates, it’s just the fact that there are so few open positions available. (And don’t get me started on the pay for those positions that make it difficult to stay . . . .)

If you leave publishing, that doesn’t mean you can’t come back. If you look at any typical publishing position, there’s a lot of skills—marketing, project management, research, administrative support, etc.—that can be gained at another job or industry and you can then transfer those skills back into publishing.

And there’s lots of ways to stay involved with books in the meantime. You can volunteer at events held by local writer’s conferences, book conventions, libraries, and bookstores. You can start your own personal book blog or Instagram to show that you’re keeping up to date on new releases. The Young Publishers Association (<https://www.youngpublishers.org/>) hosts virtual events that you can participate in.

When you can’t enter from the ground floor, I would encourage you to see if there’s a side door you can enter from instead.

Q: Which of your authors have upcoming books that my readers should have on their radar?

A: This was really hard to narrow down because there’s so many clients that both my agency and I represent that I want to shout out but I’ll control myself to just recommend five, three new and two backlist (because there’s so many good books that people may have missed upon initial release).

1. *The Other Side of the Ocean* by J.D. Netto - Forthcoming June 17, 2025. Loosely based on J.D.’s life, this is a powerful coming-of-age story about a closeted Brazilian teen who, with help from his first love, finds the courage to come out as a gay and as an undocumented immigrant. This is the project that I offered representation to J.D. on and it’s a subject matter close to my heart, as my sister was a DACA recipient.

2. *Neverthorn (#1)* by Shannon Mayer - Forthcoming July 25, 2025. Harry Potter meets *A Deadly Education* in the first in a new trilogy by bestselling indie author Shannon Mayer. Shannon brings her signature sass to Harlow, a 29-year-old wizarding school dropout who is forced to return to the magical academy *Neverthorn* to aid in the fight against a rising evil wizard. But could

a dark secret from her past reveal that she's not the hero the world needs—but the next villain?

3. *All the Wicked* by Catelyn Wilson - Forthcoming June 11, 2025. In this sequel to Catelyn's dark academia *ALL THE DEVILS*, Andromeda "Andy" Emerson must infiltrate a secret society at a prestigious Scottish university that is practicing dark magic that threatens the Underworld itself.

4. *Right Back Where We Started From* by Joy Lanzendorfer - This one has a special place in my heart because this was the first book I ever offered representation for! I actually found this in the query box when I was interning at another agency and once I became an agent, I reached out to Joy to see if it was still available. Joy has crafted a gripping family saga spanning from the California Gold Rush to World War II about three generations of tenacious women who are trying to chase a version of the American Dream, no matter the cost. They are not always likable, but it's mesmerizing to watch them go after what they want.

5. *Not Dead Enough* by Tyffany D. Neiheiser - Also another one that has a special place in my heart, as I met Tyffany when she pitched me her book at a Writers League of Texas event. Drawing from her experience as a mental health therapist, Tyffany explores the aftermath of a domestic abusive relationship with a supernatural twist. In *NOT DEAD ENOUGH*, a teenage girl is grappling with the death of her abusive boyfriend and just when she is starting to move on, she starts receiving threatening messages from someone claiming to be him. Is it truly his ghost haunting her from the grave? Or is someone trying to use her worst pain against her?

### 3. Resources

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#### TEEN AUTHOR SUMMER BOOT CAMP

Registration Period: March

Calling writers in grades 7-12! Learn to up your story game this summer with award-winning author Heather Clark and bestselling virtual author guest instructors to teach you techniques and tricks it took published authors years to master. For more information, visit <https://www.teenauthorbootcamp.com/summercamp>

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#### \$3000 RESIDENCY FOR CARTOONISTS/GRAPHIC NOVELISTS

Deadline: April 1

The Center for Cartoon Studies Cornish CCS Residency Fellowship is designed to create a focused and inspiring environment for cartoonists in order

to create exceptional work. An honorarium of \$3,000 will be provided. For more information, visit <http://www.cartoonstudies.org/cornishfellowship/>

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#### SHENANDOAH SEEKS POETRY

Submission Period: Opens April 15 until they reach 500 submissions

Shenandoah aims to showcase a wide variety of voices and perspectives in terms of gender identity, race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, nationality, regionality, sexuality, and educational background (MFAs are not necessary).

They love publishing new writers; publishing history is not a prerequisite. For

more information, visit <https://shenandoahliterary.org/>

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#### WILLIAM-FAULKNER - WILLIAM WISDOM CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

Deadline: May 15

The Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society offers: \$7500 for a novel or short story collection; \$2000 for an original work of creative non-fiction, including non-fiction novel, history, memoir, biography, and linked essay collection; \$1500 for a novella; \$1500 for a short story; \$1500 for a work-in-progress fiction or non-fiction novel including literary, mainstream, or genre; \$1000 for an essay; and \$1000 for a poem. For more information, visit <https://faulknersociety.org/>

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#### CRUX: THE GEORGIA SERIES IN LITERARY NONFICTION

Submission Period: May 15 - February 15

Crux, based with the University of Georgia Press, publishes literary nonfiction by diverse writers working in a variety of modes, including personal and lyric essay, memoir, cultural meditation, and literary journalism. For more

information, visit <https://ugapress.org/series/crux-the-georgia-series-in-literary-nonfiction/>

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#### SKYWAVE FICTION CONTEST

Submission Period: Opens in June

A prize of \$1500 and publication by High Frequency Press is given for a novel or short story collection. The winner will also receive film and television agent referrals to agencies such as Creative Artist Agency and Curtis Brown.

For more information, visit <https://www.highfrequencypress.com/book-contests>

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“Choose enthusiasm. If you are lucky enough to have more than one agent or editor interested in your work, don’t automatically choose the bigger name or even the most money. Go with the person who loves your book and is dying to work with you.”

—Eliza Kennedy, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/221236/eliza-kennedy/>

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