

Latinidad™ Newsletter – September/October 2005: Agents

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Please note my web site, <http://www.marcelalandres.com/>, is temporarily down, as the servers that support it are located in New Orleans. It should be back up shortly—thank you in advance for your patience.

1. Saludos

The number one question I get from Latino writers is “How do I find an agent?” while the number one question I get from agents is “How do I find Latino writers?” I created my web site, <http://www.marcelalandres.com/>, and the Latinidad™ newsletter to help these agents and writers connect. As you can see from the interviews below, writer Marta Acosta found agent Julia Castiglia via the web site, and they recently landed a two-book deal at a major publishing house. If you’ve yet to contact the agents listed in past newsletters or the web site, I hope this success story inspires you to dust off and submit your proposal.

Helping Latino writers get published,

Marcela Landres

marcelalandres@yahoo.com

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

2. Agent Q&A

Julie Castiglia is president of the Castiglia Literary Agency in Del Mar, Calif., and has placed many significant fiction and nonfiction titles which have won awards and appeared on the New York Times Most Notable Books and national bestseller lists.

Among the agency's clients are Tamim Ansary (West of Kabul, East of New York, Farrar Straus & Giroux), Dean Hamer (The God Gene, Doubleday), and Susan Mitchell and Catherine Christie, (Fat Is Not Your Fate, Simon & Schuster).

Which Latino authors have you represented?

We have placed many ethnic novels and non-fiction including: Diane DaCosta (Textured Tresses), April Sinclair (Coffee Will Make You Black), Bil Wright (One Foot in Love), Todd Boyd (Young Black Rich & Famous), Persia Walker (Harlem Redux), Margarita Engle (Singing to Cuba), and most recently Marta Acosta.

What kinds of manuscripts do you seek?

Ethnic, commercial, literary and women's fiction, offbeat mysteries, narrative nonfiction, health, science, parenting, biography, architecture, interior design, current affairs and niche books.

How has <http://www.marcelalandres.com/> helped you find Latino writers?

Marta Acosta found my name on <http://www.marcelalandres.com/> and sent me her manuscript. I loved the book immediately and offered representation. It took some time but eventually an auction took place and Marta's first two books ended up at the Pocket division of Simon & Schuster for a very nice high five figure advance.

Send submissions to: Castiglia Literary Agency, 1155 Camino del mar, # 510 Del Mar, CA 92014

Web site: <http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/CastigliaAgency/>

More Editor Q&A <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id60.htm>

3. Author Spotlight

Marta Acosta received her B.A. in both creative writing and literature from Stanford University, where she also studied theatre. Her professional life has been primarily in community and public relations, including working for theatre companies. She is currently a freelance writer and lives with her husband and son in the East Bay. Her first novel will be published by the Pocket division of Simon & Schuster.

Which author or book inspires you, and why?

The saying goes, "Dying is easy, comedy is hard," and I have always been inspired by comic writers. The best comic writers have both great technical skill and deep empathy for the human condition, even as they make us laugh at it. I have a deep and abiding passion for Shakespeare, Austen, James, Twain and Waugh. I constantly buy John Kennedy Toole's *Confederacy of Dunces* and Mario Vargas Llosa's *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* to give to friends. I think there are wonderful comic writers today, including Christopher Moore and the Tart City writers: Katy Munger, Sparkle Hayter and Lauren Henderson. I admire Jennifer Weiner's gentle humor in her character-driven novels.

Why do you love to write?

My family loves to talk and tell stories, and I think my writing developed from that passion for words. The only time I really love writing is when I've come up with something utterly ridiculous. I feel a pure joy then, even if others aren't as amused. My husband likes to tell me, "You think you're so funny."

How did you meet your agent?

My agent is Julie Castiglia and I found her by searching through the internet and coming across your website. I'd already checked out the Association of Authors' Representatives list, but wanted to narrow down my search to agents who would be interested in a

contemporary comic novel by a Latina. I saw that Julie had a good track record with her authors, so I wrote to her. She asked to see my manuscript, liked it and signed me.

What is your writing ritual?

Thanks to Julie getting me a two-book deal, I'm now able to stay home and write. My typical day starts with walking the dog, then getting my son to school. Then I drink coffee and read the papers before I open my computer. I'm a freelance writer, so I spend some time emailing my editors, conducting interviews, and putting together articles. If I'm working on my fiction, I don't take any freelance assignments. I just sit at my computer from early morning until late at night until my eyes feel as dry as the Mojave.

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

My advice to other Latinos wanting to land a book deal is to get some professional credibility, know how to sell yourself, and don't let others define your own ethnicity. By professional credibility, I mean getting published somewhere. A lot more non-fiction than fiction gets published everyday and there are far more opportunities with newspapers and magazines than with fiction publications. Prove that you can work with an editor and deliver on time. If you need a little guidance, join a group. The National Association of Hispanic Journalists has great resources and workshops all over the country.

You need to know how to sell yourself to get your manuscript read. Your query letter has to catch an agent's attention and assure the agent that you are a serious writer and that your novel is accomplished. Good agents are swamped with unsolicited manuscripts; they don't have time for long-winded essays. Have a friend with experience in publicity help you write a concise, intriguing query letter and only send it to agents who are interested in novels of your genre.

Latinos also face the burden of others' preconception of what "Latino writing" is or should be. We are a remarkably diverse group and our novels should reflect that diversity. If an agent presumes to know what your experience as a Latino is or should be, you might be happier with someone who is willing to accept your individuality. Novelists Daniel Alarcon and Alberto Fuguet have written excellent essays on the topic in Salon Magazine.

Click here for more Author Spotlights: <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id58.htm>

4. Upcoming Workshops

How to Write a Knockout Book Proposal, 10/6

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

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, October 6, 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: 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>

5. Writing Opportunities

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

KENSINGTON SEEKS LATINO WRITERS

Kensington books is interested in Latin American and Hispanic fiction, primarily commercial, including, urban, romance, mystery/suspense, thrillers and erotica. Literary fiction will eventually be part of the mix, as will non-fiction. There are no plans currently for poetry, plays, screenplays or children's books. We are interested in both novellas (approximately 20,000 words) and full-length novels. The writing can be in English or Spanglish. We are also looking at novels in translation that meet the above criteria. We recommend manuscripts be complete, but partials are fine. Previously published, self-published, never been published, and un-agented writers are all encouraged to submit work. We prefer that submissions be snail mailed, with a letter of introduction, synopsis, and a SASE if you'd like the work returned. Send submissions to: Sulay Hernandez, Kensington Publishing, 850 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022. For more information about Kensington visit <http://www.kensingtonbooks.com/>

MARKETING FOR AUTHORS ONLINE CLASS

Class: September 12 – October 17

By the end of the class you will have a customized marketing plan for your book and your book only. Authors from McAdam Cage, Ballantine, Penguin and SMP have taken this class, as well as publicists and editors from Tor, Wylie and Simon & Schuster. M.J. Rose (<http://www.mjrose.com/>), an international bestselling author, has been on the Today Show, Fox News, and CNN. To register and for more information visit <http://writersweekly.com/wwu/courses/marketing.html>

BOOKS FOR A BETTER LIFE AWARDS

Deadline: September 30

The Books for a Better Life awards recognize and pay tribute to a category of books that has become a major force in American culture. Books labeled “self-help,” “motivational,” “self-improvement” or “advice” have ridden high on bestseller lists for years, working their way into the fabric of our everyday being and influencing countless lives. Books for a Better Life honors these works. This is an invitation to all publishers and authors to submit entries to the 2005 Books for a Better Life awards. Original titles that fall into any of the above-named categories, published in the U.S. between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2005, are eligible. For entry guidelines and forms visit http://nationalmssociety.org/nyn/event/event_detail.asp?e=7623

HEDGEBROOK RESIDENCIES FOR WOMEN

Deadline: October 1

Hedgebrook invests in women who write by providing them with space and time to create significant work, in solitude and community, and by developing an international network to connect writers and audiences. They serve as a safe haven for women authors of all ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, writing genres, and levels of writing experience. To apply and for more information visit <http://www.hedgebrook.org/>

WASHINGTON SQUARE REVIEW FICTION AND POETRY CONTEST

Deadline: October 31

Washington Square is a non-profit literary journal publishing fiction, poetry and essays by emerging and established writers. It is edited, produced, and nationally distributed biannually by the students of the Graduate Program in Creative Writing. Recent contributors to the journal include Agha Shahid Ali, Billy Collins, Mark Doty, Jessica Hagedorn, Donald Hall, Philip Levine, Sharon Olds, Marie Ponsot, Charles Simic, Chuck Wachtel and Rick Moody. Two winners (one each in fiction and poetry) will receive \$500, publication in Washington Square, and two contributor’s copies. Selected runners-up will also receive publication and two contributor’s copies. For guidelines visit <http://cwp.fas.nyu.edu/page/wsr>

ARABESQUES LITERARY AND CULTURAL REVIEW

Deadline: November 1

Arabesque is a new international annual sponsored by la Société Arabesque (Algeria), which seeks submissions from emerging and established writers from all over the world: poems (50-line max), stories (2000-word max), and reviews of first books of poetry and essays (1000-word max) for the second issue. Arabesques emphasizes the deep importance of place in contemporary writing and tries to promote a new cultural dialogue. Open to all writers in English; welcomes international submissions (indicate in cover). For submission guidelines visit <http://www.arabesquespress.org>

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS WANTED FOR BOOK ON EX-HUSBANDS

Deadline: March 1, 2006.

Editor seeks entries for a book of real stories from real ex-wives about events that have taken place with their ex-husbands. For those stories that are accepted, the editor will pay up to \$200 for stories of 1,000 - 2,000 words and \$50 for short anecdotes (250-500 words) along with a free copy of the published book. Stories should be real occurrences that reflect the real world and can be angry, funny, tragic, sad, sexual, weird, shocking, sweet and even romantic! They should not be boring essays or manifestos about the divorce rate in our country but rather real accounts of real people. I'm looking for submissions from "regular ex-wives" as well as professional writers. Some examples: One woman wrote about having great sex one night with a man she divorced 8 years ago and the interesting twist here is that their divorce happened because the marriage was no longer working sexually. Someone else sent a story about going on a blind date and the man turned out to be her ex-husband. A third person wrote about the blinding anger she feels every time she runs into her ex-husband and his new wife (the happy couple lives right across the street from her!). A fourth woman remarried but wrote about how she is having an affair with her ex-husband behind her new husband's back. And the fifth? It is so shocking that I'm just plain speechless. Submissions can be sent electronically to editor Anita Diggs via e-mail: anitadiggs@aol.com

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

The University for Writers (UFW) is an email only writers' school. It is an effective way for your e-instructor to tap you on your e-shoulder and say, "Wake up! You've got writing to do." It is easy to get lost in your daily routine and not log onto a website. But most people check their email daily. There is no escaping your duty to be true to your craft. They now include courses for writers who want to delve into bilingual Spanish/English fiction and non-fiction. Join them as they assist you in taking your writing career to the next level.

PALABRA--A MAGAZINE OF CHICANO/LATINO LITERARY ART

Chicano/Latino literary magazine invites submissions of fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction and short plays that explore new territory in Chicano/Latino literary art. Fiction & creative nonfiction up to 3500 words, poetry up to 3 poems with a max of 50 lines each, plays up to 10 pages. Sorry, no genre work. Unpublished work only. Include name, address, phone number and e-mail on each submission. Simultaneous submissions OK with prompt notification of acceptance elsewhere. No multiple submissions. Response time 2 - 3 months. Snail mail submissions only. Submissions accepted year-round. Include SASE for response only. Manuscripts not accepted for publication will be shredded and recycled. Palabra acquires first worldwide serial rights, nonexclusive electronic rights and nonexclusive anthology rights. Some pay. Copyright reverts to author upon publication. Submit via USPS only to Palabra, P. O. Box 86146, Los Angeles, CA 90086-0146. Inquiries only at palabralit@earthlink.net

LORRAINE AND JAMES SEEKS STORIES

Lorraine and James, the journal of global urban literature, is looking for original, unpublished stories for its winter 2006 issue. We are seeking contemporary literature (3,000-10,000 words) that is both well written and engaging. An honorarium of \$50 - \$200 will be paid for all published submissions. At this time we are accepting short fiction, creative non-fiction and poetry. No children's stories or novel excerpts unless self-contained. Multiple and simultaneous submissions okay. First rights are required. Further submissions details can be found at <http://www.lorraineandjames.com/>

FREE BOOK MARKETING ADVICE

Now authors with books to promote may ask questions of nearly 150 author experts whose specialties run the gamut from romance to foot surgery. Assembled from the thousands of subscribers to Book Promotion Newsletter, the experts include authors, editors, book reviewers, book coaches, ghostwriters, publicists and publishers. This free service is hosted by Maureen McMahon at <http://www.maureenmcmahon.com>, author of romantic suspense novels, Return of the Gulls, Shadows in the Mists and others, and Francine Silverman, author of Book Marketing from A-Z (Infinity Publishing 2005), a compilation of the best marketing strategies of 325 authors. For more information visit <http://www.maureenmcmahon.com>

CONSULTATIONS

I provide developmental editing for book manuscripts and critiques for book proposals. In addition, I offer strategic advice on how to launch and maintain a successful writing career. If you are interested in a consultation, please fill out the questionnaire here <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id48.htm> or send an e-mail to marcelalandres@yahoo.com.

POST AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN LATINIDAD™

E-mail announcements about contests, calls for submissions, conferences, jobs, book publications, literary events, etc., to marcelalandres@yahoo.com.

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If so, forward it to friends and colleagues. If not, take the Newsletter Survey on my web site <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id59.htm> and tell me what doesn't work and why.

“What is written without effort is read without pleasure.”

--Samuel Johnson

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