

Latinidad - Summer 2025: Roberto Carlos Garcia

Contents:

1. Saludos
2. Q&A: Roberto Carlos Garcia
3. Workshops: LKBF Latinx Storytellers Conference
4. Resources: Aesthetica Creative Writing Award

BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“Marcela Landres is a savvy literary consultant. She helped me make my query letter more compelling. She also gave me a lot of useful advice on what parts of my novel could be more interesting to highlight, on which of my loglines was the ‘sexiest’ from a publishing point of view, and on the most appropriate comparison titles. Marcela is also very honest and doesn’t try to sell you services that you don’t need or that she doesn’t think will be of much help. She was kind and conscientious throughout and did her best to try to fit all my questions in the consulting time I had booked. Friendly, enthusiastic and professional—highly recommended!”

—Matias Garrido

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1. Saludos

I’ve admired Roberto Carlos Garcia from afar for some time. In addition to building his own notable body of work, he champions other writers via Get Fresh Books Publishing, a literary non-profit he founded. In his latest book, the thought-provoking collection of essays *Traveling Freely*, he conveys with heart and humor the hard truths of moving through the world as a Black Dominican American man. Keep Roberto Carlos Garcia on your list of authors to watch. To learn more, read the Q&A below.

Helping Latinos get published,

Marcela Landres

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2. Q&A

Roberto Carlos Garcia is the author of several books, including *What Can I Tell You?* *Selected Poems* as well as the founder of Get Fresh Books

Publishing, <https://gfbpublishing.org/>, a literary non-profit. The recipient of a 2023 fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, he writes about the Afro-Latinx and Afro-diasporic experience. His work has been published in Poetry Magazine, NACLA, The Root, Poets & Writers, and the anthology Break-Beat Poets Vol. 4: LatiNext, among others. For more information, visit <https://robertocarlosgarcia.com/>.

Q: In addition to being the author of five books, you are the founder of Get Fresh Books Publishing. What have you learned from being on the other side of the desk that has most surprised you? Does being a publisher influence how you work with the publishers of your own books?

A: It's interesting because the knowledge I acquired as a published author is what led to me start a publishing company. I realized how important it was to have as much control as possible of my work and its publication as I can. Every time I work with a publisher, I feel confident because I understand what goes on behind the curtain.

One thing I've learned is that access to a broad audience is priceless. In my mind, equity in publishing also looks like the New Yorker, The New York Times Book Review and the other big outlets, reviewing small press books. Giving us that exposure.

Q: Other than glorious writing, how can writers make a good impression when submitting their manuscripts to Get Fresh Books Publishing?

A: Everyone wants to be published and reviewed. Few poets write book reviews or craft essays for the poetry being published today. GFB is interested in publishing good literary citizens that want to work within a literary ecosystem, as opposed to a capitalistic model of consumption.

Q: You are also an associate professor of English at Union College. What have your students taught you that informs your own writing?

A: That the human spirit is indomitable and that our lives are precious. That we undervalue and underserve our children, and in general, our fellow human beings. My students teach me to have hope for the future.

Q: Running a press can be a full-time job. Teaching is an all-consuming profession. Yet you manage to do both while authoring multiple books—plus you're a dad! Clearly, you have formidable time management skills. What tips can you share with writers—especially those who are parents of young children—on how to incorporate writing into a busy life?

A: To be honest, I don't know how I do it. LOL. I just take it as it comes, I suppose. It definitely doesn't hurt to have a great team. My interns receive great training but they're also aspiring writers, so they're invested in learning. Our intern team just turned over, and I'm really going to miss them. Quick shoutout to Angie, Maritza, and Victoria. They did some wonderful heavy lifting. Also, mad love to Josh and Anny.

My advice to writers is that there is no perfect time. You just have to sit down and get it done. If you're a morning person, then wake up early and knock it out. Night owl? Get a nice cup of your favorite beverage and get started. That's the secret. Put in the work. Your kids will appreciate and learn about discipline from watching you exercise it.

Q: How did *Traveling Freely* come to be published by Curbstone Books/Northwestern University Press? Approximately how long did the process take, from conception to publication?

A: As a university press, there were a lot of steps in the process. However, I want to say it was a one year, to one-and-a-half-year process. I probably could've done it sooner, but I'm pretty busy. LOL.

Q: Music feels like an important part of your sensibility. If *Traveling Freely* had a soundtrack, what songs and/or albums would be on it? Which music artists are you listening to now?

A: Absolutely! Definitely Marvin Gaye's *What's Goin' On*? The Brooklyn Caribbean Literature Festival did the first book launch for *Traveling Freely* in Brooklyn (video is up on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCKzqf0e6i0&t=3599s>), and they also curated a dope playlist. Shout out to the three M's. See link below:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/5ps9lX7qMQNffFHbC5>

Q: What are you reading these days that most excites you?

A: I'm reading a lot of books on Palestine. Poetry, fiction, plays, but also books written about this current genocide. I'm very proud of the people refusing to stay silent. I'm also reading books about Dominican/Haitian history and relations written by folx on the island and by Haitian writers. The island is in an urgent situation right now. We have to come together with our Haitian brothers and sisters. I'm doing my work.

Q: Do you have upcoming projects that my readers should have on their radar?

A: Get Fresh Books will be at the NYC Poetry Festival the weekend of July 12th and at the Brooklyn Book Festival in September. Due to the latest administration's discrimination against grants to diverse and inclusive non-profits we're currently accepting donations to keep publishing underrepresented voices. Please donate whatever you can. We're a non-profit so your donation is tax deductible. See link below:

<https://gfbpublishing.org/donate>

Here are the readings I have coming up:

Read & Greet Caribbean Authors: Miller Branch of the Jersey City Public Library on June 7th, 3-7 p.m.

Poetry Reading & Fundraiser: People's Forum in NYC on Thursday, June 12, 6-8 p.m., <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/books-for-gaza-poetry-reading-fundraiser-tickets-1391914857809>

I'm also working on various writing projects: short stories, novels, plays. Grants for artists have also dried up, so if you'd like to contribute to my projects, my Venmo is: @roberto-garcia-76.

3. Workshops

LKBF Latinx Storytellers Conference

WHAT: The LKBF's Latinx Storytellers Conference is an annual, in-person gathering of Latinx children and adult book writers and illustrators. During this two-day event, hundreds of Latinx storytellers will enjoy craft masterclasses, professional development sessions and have access to hard-to-reach industry professionals such as publishers, editors and literary agents. Marcela Landres will be participating in three ways:

1. Moderating a one-hour panel session with literary agents, titled Query Letters Read Aloud
2. Moderating a one-hour panel session with editors, titled First Pages, First Promise
3. Conducting one-on-one manuscript consultations

WHEN: Friday, September 12 and Saturday, September 13, 2025

WHERE: Scholastic's Headquarters, 130 Mercer Street, NY, NY

WHO: Marcela Landres helps writers get published by editing their manuscripts and educating them about the book business. Writers who have worked with her—such as Daniel Jose Older, author of the New York Times bestseller *Shadowshaper* and Elba Iris Perez, author of the USA Today bestseller *The Things We Didn't Know*—have gone on to be published by the likes of Pocket, St. Martin's Press, and Scholastic. Marcela publishes *Latinidad®*, an award-winning e-zine which was chosen as one of the 101 Best Web Sites for Writers by *Writer's Digest*, and has served as an NEA Literature Grant Panelist and as a judge for the PEN Beyond Margins Award. A graduate of Barnard College, she was formerly an editor with Simon & Schuster. Raised in the projects of Long Island City, Queens by Ecuadorian immigrant parents, Marcela now lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and very verbal daughter.

TESTIMONIAL: “Your suggestions (to trim away anything that ‘stops’ the reader and slows the narrative) were excellent. I appreciate your sincerity in pushing authors to achieve our best. Your enthusiasm, passion for excellence, and amiable nature make the time spent with you most valuable and memorable!”—Rudy J. Miera, author of *The Fall and Rise of Champagne Sánchez*, <http://www.rudymiera.com/>

TO REGISTER: <https://www.latinxstorytellersconference.com/>

4. Resources

UCROSS RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Deadline: July 15

Poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers are provided with a private bedroom and studio space, chef-prepared meals, and a \$1500 stipend. Both established and emerging artists are encouraged to apply. For more information, visit <https://www.ucrossfoundation.org/>

FINELY CRAFTED FICTION AWARD

Deadline: July 15

The Petrichor Prize offers \$1000 and publication by Regal House Publishing for a finely crafted work of fiction. For more information, visit <https://www.regalhousepublishing.com/>

SUNDRESS OPEN CALL FOR POETRY MANUSCRIPTS

Deadline: August 31

Sundress Publications seeks poetry collections particularly from writers of color, trans and nonbinary writers, disabled writers, and others whose voices are underrepresented in literary publishing. Submission fee is waived for all BIPOC writers. For more information visit <http://www.sundresspublications.com/>

AESTHETICA CREATIVE WRITING AWARD

Deadline: August 31

Two prizes of approximately \$2500 each and publication in the Aesthetica Creative Writing Anthology are given for a poem and a short story. The winner in poetry receives a membership to the Poetry Society in London, while the winner in short fiction receives a consultation with the literary agency Redhammer Management. For more information, visit <https://www.aestheticamagazine.com>

JOURNAL SEEKS WRITERS OVER 50

Submission Period: July 15 - September 15

Passager Journal's mission is to publish poetry, memoir, and short fiction by older writers. All submissions receive consideration for publication without regard to race, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, physical ability, education, or veteran status. For more information, visit <https://www.passagerbooks.com/>

ESSAY CONTEST

Deadline: September 30

The Nonfiction Contest for Emerging Writers offers \$1000 and publication in Boulevard for an essay by a writer who has not published a full-length book in any genre with a nationally distributed press. For more information, visit <https://boulevardmagazine.org/>

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“Only three things are going to help you produce art for a living. Producing art, letting people see it, and doing both of those things with fearless tenacity.”
—Brian Panowich, <https://www.facebook.com/brianpanowich/>

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