

Latinidad Newsletter – March 2004

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CONTENTS:

1. Saludos: March is Small Press Month
2. Q&A: Co-Director Alex Taylor, Curbstone Press
3. FAQ: Pen names
4. Success Stories: Contest leads to book deal
5. Recommendations: Small Press Center
6. News to Use: bookjobs.com
7. Author Spotlight: Daniel A. Olivas
8. Upcoming Workshops: For Love & Money Conference
9. Writing Opportunities: St. Martins seeks Latina fiction

1. Saludos

March is Small Press Month. While writers and the media often focus on major publishing houses, most of the books in the U.S. are published by small presses. In fact, Barnes and Noble reports that purchases from the top 10 publishers declined to 46% from 74%. The shift has been to independents, small publishers and university presses. Large publishers generally do not accept unsolicited and unagented submissions, and prefer established and commercially safe authors. Small presses,

however, have traditionally welcomed unsolicited and unagented submissions, as well as riskier projects, such as poetry and short story collections. More importantly, large publishers often watch small presses with an eye towards wooing authors, particularly short story writers who are on the verge of making the leap to novels. As such, a small press may be a good way to launch a writing career if you're still at the short story stage, but plan to write a novel in the near future.

2. Q&A:

Alexander Taylor is Co-Director of Curbstone Press, one of the few publishing houses with a long-abiding respect and enthusiasm for Latino literature. Like many small houses, Curbstone Press welcomes new writers and accepts unsolicited manuscripts.

Why is Curbstone a great home for Latino writers?

Well, I'm delighted to hear you think it is! As you know, our focus is on publishing quality literature that promotes human and civil rights, intercultural understanding, and constructive social change, and much of Latino writing falls into this category, so we have naturally placed a special emphasis on Latino literature. We have also published Anglo, African-American, Jewish, Latin American and European writers whose creative work has meaningful social content-writers who want their art to make a difference in the sense that it will impel people to take action.

Curbstone is a good home for the Latino writer who wants the integrity of his story respected, e.g., we don't have any pre-conceived notions of what Latino writing is, so we don't ask the writer to “become more Latino” or to eliminate passages that might upset some redneck in Dogpatch, or wherever. I don't think any editor should, but one hears from writers that it happens. One of the advantages of our being a nonprofit organization is that it is our mission that drives the Press, not the need to put making money above all else. Curbstone could be a good home because we keep our books in print, pay a great deal of attention to marketing, not only to the general trade but also to academia. It is a good home for those fine works of literature that may never reach “best-seller” status, but can sell steadily over time. But we also like to think of Curbstone as a step-ladder for those writers who can eventually find a home in main-stream publishing, and a number of our writers have gone on to commercial houses.

Which Latino authors has Curbstone published?

We have published such now well-known writers as Jack Agüeros, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Martín Espada, Luis J. Rodriguez, and Tino Villanueva. We also have published many debut books, Naomi Ayala's *Wild Animals on the Moon*, for instance, and the winners of our new Miguel Mármol Prize for the best first book of fiction by a Latino or Latina author has included a number of exciting new writers—Lorraine López,

Carla Trujillo, and Mary Helen Lagasse, all of whom have received wonderful critical attention.

What kinds of manuscripts do you seek?

We are seeking manuscripts that fit the mission I just described, manuscripts that have social content and are artistically compelling; well-written, well-shaped fiction with solid characters and convincing plots. We are looking for skillful, original poetry with fresh figurative language. But you know all that. Perhaps we could say that it's the first duty of the writer to be interesting in some way (or many ways); otherwise why should we read the stuff?

Because of our extensive work in public schools, we are also on the lookout for good work suitable for young adults. We just published a wonderful anthology of Latino short stories for middle and high school students called *Once upon a Cuento*, edited by Lyn Miller-Lachmann, Chief Editor of *Multicultural Review*. Nicholasa Mohr, by the way, was incredibly helpful with this project, and we owe her a deep debt of gratitude.

How can writers avoid your “Reject” pile and get into your “Pursue” pile?

Write compelling work. Every editor dreams of discovering an important new writer.

Other than honing their craft, what is the smartest step writers can take to become happily published?

I think it's really important for authors to publish widely in journals and magazines and build a reputation before submitting book manuscripts to publishers, not only to gain credibility, but also because this process helps the writers develop self-criticism and encourages revision. When you get a rejected story or group of poems in the mail, you have to ask yourself, "Is it the editor or me? Or maybe a little bit of both of us?" But in any case, as a writer you often take another good hard look at your work and find yourself immersed in revision.

Contact info: Alex Taylor, Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson St, Willimantic, CT 06226

Web site: <http://www.curbstone.org/>

Are there specific editors or agents you'd like to see interviewed? If so, let me know marcelalandres@yahoo.com

3. FAQ

Q: My real name is Miguel Angel Reynaga. My pen name is Max M.

Power. I am dedicated to publishing my book and it is going on three years since I completed the manuscript. I want my work to be judged based on the work and not my name. However, in the world we live in, my pen name gets my work read more than my real one. I would like your thoughts on the subject. Thank you for your time.

Miguel Reynaga, maxmpower1@hotmail.com

A: The most important factors agents and editors consider when reviewing a submission is a writer's talent and platform, not his name. If you're not receiving positive responses, chances are you need to either hone your craft or build your platform. Having said that, there are compelling reasons to use a pen name, i.e. a male writer may use a feminine name if he writes romance. Or, a writer may use a pen name when writing in a different category for which he's known. For instance, a writer may use a pen name for thrillers and her real name for literary fiction. While you have experienced more rejection using your real name, don't despair. Agents are becoming increasingly interested in Latino writers. Use the tips in the FAQ section of the October 2003 issue of *Latinidad* <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marcelalandres/> to find these agents.

Email Miguel Reynaga maxmpower1@hotmail.com
Ask a question via marcelalandres@yahoo.com.
Find more FAQ <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id54.htm>

4. Success Stories

Daniel A. Olivas, who is also featured in this issue's Author Spotlight section, proves that submitting to contests can lead to a book deal.

"Hi Marcela,
Okay, here's my success story: in 2000, I submitted my then-unpublished short story collection, *Assumption and Other Stories*, to Helicon Nine Editions Willa Cather Fiction Prize. I ended up being one of ten finalists out of several hundred submissions. Though I

didn't win, when I informed Gary Keller of Bilingual Press of the news, he asked to read the manuscript. Well, the book was accepted and now it's in paperback with the first glowing review out: <http://www.borderlandnews.com/stories/living/20031005-29407.shtml>. And we learned that the *Dallas Morning News* (Texas' largest newspaper) has assigned my book for a full review. I found out about the contest in *Poets & Writers*.

Saludos,

Daniel A. Olivas

olivasdan@aol.com

<http://www.danielolivas.com>”

Email Daniel A. Olivas olivasdan@aol.com

Share your success story via marcelalandres@yahoo.com

Find more success stories <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id57.htm>

5. Recommendations

The Small Press Center is a non-profit organization which celebrates books published by small independent presses. While primarily geared towards publishers, they do offer resources for writers: a list of member publishers, organized alphabetically and by specialty; articles about how to find a publisher, and about self-publishing; and workshops on how to get published. Use the Small Press Center to research the right small presses to which you should submit your work.

Small Press Center web site <http://www.smallpress.org/>

Offer a recommendation via marcelalandres@yahoo.com

Find more recommendations <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id25.htm>

6. News to Use

Strategic aspiring writers pursue a career in book publishing in order to make valuable contacts and learn the tricks of the trade so they can

further their own writing careers. If you are like-minded, check out the *Publishers Weekly* article, “AAP, Book Industry Want College Grads” announcing the creation of a web site, <http://www.bookjobs.com/>, devoted to attracting college grads, particularly of color, to careers in publishing. Bookjobs.com features a list of continually updated job openings and internships, company profiles, and success stories. In addition, if you are serious about launching a career in book publishing, see the “Want a Career in Book Publishing?” entry in the Writing Opportunities section of this issue.

“AAP, Book Industry Want College Grads” article <http://www.publishersweekly.com/index.asp?layout=article&articleId=CA359429&text=ed%20mccoyd>
Suggest an article via marcelalandres@yahoo.com
Find more news to use <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id41.htm>

7. Author Spotlight

Assumption and Other Stories is a collection of short stories that displays Daniel A. Olivas’ range with characters and scenarios. From Jewish schoolboys to lesbian litigators, the characters are both familiar yet refreshingly new—they could easily be your neighbors, yet are uncommon in Latino literature. *Assumption and Other Stories* will whet your appetite for more of Olivas’ work, which will one day undoubtedly include a notable novel. Note in the interview below that Olivas sold four of his manuscripts to small presses, underscoring how open they are to unagented authors.

Which author or book inspires you, and why?

Many authors and books inspire me to write. But as I noted in my acknowledgments to my first short story collection, *Assumption and Other Stories* (Bilingual Press, 2003), I am particularly appreciative of all those wonderful Latino/a writers who, through their books, became the professors of my own, private MFA program: Sandra Cisneros, Dagoberto Gilb, Pat Mora, Kathleen Alcalá, Al Martinez, Gary Keller, Alejandro Morales, Rudolfo Anaya, Luis J. Rodriguez, Gary Soto, Junot Díaz, Aldo Alvarez, Demetria Martínez, Victor Villaseñor, and so many others. Latino/a writers also proved to me that we can tell our own stories in our own words.

Why do you love to write short stories?

I love writing short stories because for a limited period of time, I can be somebody else. The feeling I get from writing short stories must be similar to how a character actor feels when, for one film or play, he embodies the skin of a different person

How did you meet your agent?

I don't have an agent! I've placed all four of my books on my own. I've been told by many agents that I'm a fine writer but short stories by an

unknown are not “marketable.” So, they always invite me to write a novel.

What is your writing ritual?

I have no writing ritual. I'm a full-time lawyer, father, and husband so I squeeze in writing whenever I can.

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

Submit, submit, submit. And never let the rejection slips prevent you from submitting yet again

Read excerpt http://webdelsol.com/InPosse/olivas_anthology.htm
See reviews and bio on author's web site <http://www.danielolivas.com>
Obtain *Assumption* http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1931010196/marcelalandre-20/102-5000137-3132160?creative=125581&camp=2321&link_code=as1
Suggest an author to spotlight via marcelalandres@yahoo.com

8. Upcoming Workshops

3/19/04 – 3/21/04: For Love and Money Writers Conference, Manhattan Beach, CA

I will give a workshop on killer book proposals, and speak on a panel about ethnic markets.

Book Proposal workshop: 4-5:15 pm, Friday 3/19

Ethnic Markets panel: 9-10:15 am, Sunday 3/21

Where: Manhattan Beach Marriot, 1400 Parkview Avenue, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-3714, 310-546-7511, <http://marriott.com/property/propertyPage/LAXMN>

To register and for conference schedule: <http://www.lawritersconf.org>

Invite me to speak <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id49.htm>
Upcoming workshops list <http://www.marcelalandres.com/id22.htm>

9. Writing Opportunities

Please forward inquiries to the contacts listed below.

MAJOR PUBLISHING HOUSE SEEKS COMMERCIAL LATINA FICTION
St. Martin's Press is looking for fresh, hip fiction for their commercially driven list. Have you written the Latina *Bridget Jones* or the next *Dirty Girls Social Club*?? If so, send it in! We are currently looking for contemporary commercial women's fiction, chick-lit, and sophisticated Young Adult Novels (target audience: teens, NOT children). Ideally, the novel should be set in America and center around a spunky, young Latina heroine. Please send a query letter, author bio, synopsis, and sample 3 chapters to Elizabeth Bewley, St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010. Also, check out our website at www.stmartins.com and be sure to be on the lookout for *Friday Night Chicas* in winter '04.

MARKETING FOR AUTHORS

Do you want to build a step by step marketing plan? Do you want to write a press release that says exactly the right things? Do you want to ensure the way you think you should promote your work is indeed the best way? At the end of this six-week class you will know all that and more and you'll have a customized plan that is tailor made for your book- and only your book. **Classes run for six weeks from March 1st to April 5th.** To register and for more information visit <http://writersweekly.com/wwu/courses/marketing.html>

Hi Everyone,

I will be signing books at the Home and Garden Show at America's Center for Borders Bookstore, if you attend the show come by and say hello!

I will be there:

Friday, **March 5** from 4 - 7 PM

Saturday, **March 6** from 1 - 4 PM

Sunday, **March 7** from 1 - 4 PM

Thanks and please forward this email to your family and friends.

Edna Campos Gravenhorst

Author of *Historical Home Research in the City of St. Louis*

Founder of Three Nosey Broads/Historical Home Research

314-762-9192

314-304-7341

www.3noseybroads.com

TAOS INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS WORKSHOPS

Dates: **March 17-May 30**; June 9-Oct. 17

A variety of weekly workshops in writing: mystery, fiction, creative non-fiction, memoir, personal essay, and poetry. US Poet Laureate Billy Collins headlines the impressive line-up of working and published writers. To register and for more information visit <http://www.tiataos.com>

WANT A CAREER IN BOOK PUBLISHING?

Graduates of these publishing programs have a distinct advantage over non-graduates in securing coveted publishing jobs. In fact, many hiring managers will not interview candidates who have not attended one of these programs.

The Columbia Publishing Course: **Deadline is March 22nd**.

<http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/admissions/programs/publishing/>

New York University Summer Publishing Institute: **Deadline is March 19th**.

www.scps.nyu.edu/pubcenter

City College of New York Publishing Certificate Program

http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/publishing_certificate/index.html

University of Denver Publishing Institute: **Deadline is April 1st**.

<http://www.du.edu/pi/>

BORDERSENSES LITERARY MAGAZINE

The mission of BorderSenses Literary Magazine is to provide a venue for writers and artists of the Southwest and the U.S./Mexico border to share their words and images. BorderSenses Literary Magazine seeks diversity

of voices and welcomes writers and artists of all genres and styles in English or Spanish. **Deadline is March 24th.**

For submission guidelines and more information visit <http://www.bordersenses.com>.

REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES - THE PLAY

"Real Women Have Curves," Josefina Lopez's original play that was made into a movie, was a huge success in 2003. Now, back by popular demand, the play is being shown at her theatre in the heart of the Boyle Height's Artist District, CASA 0101 Theatre & Art Space. **Through March 28, 2004.** CASA 0101 Theater, 2009 E. 1st St., Los Angeles, CA 90033. To RSVP call: 323.263.7684. For more info/directions visit: <http://www.casa0101.org>

ESSENCE 2004 SHORT FICTION CONTEST.

Join best-selling authors Terry McMillan, Gloria Naylor, Jill Nelson and others, whose short fiction first appeared in the pages of *Essence*. First Prize includes publication of the winning story in a fall 2004 issue of *Essence* and \$1,000. First, Second, and Third Prize as well as seven honorable mentions will appear on *Essence.com* in June. **All entries must be postmarked no later than March 30, 2004.** For more info visit www.essence.com.

GLIMMER TRAIN SHORT STORY AWARD

Glimmer Train, one of the more widely read and respected literary publications in the nation, offers a prize of \$1200 and publication in Glimmer Train Stories twice yearly to a writer whose fiction has not been published in a nationally distributed publication with a circulation over 5000. Submit a short story of up to 12,000 words with a \$12 entry fee by **March 31**. For guidelines visit www.glimmertrainpress.com.

FIRST ANNUAL LEWIS "BUDDY" NORDAN FICTION CONTEST

Sponsored by Algonquin Books, a small press dedicated to publishing quality writing. The Lewis "Buddy" Nordan Fiction Contest welcomes unpublished manuscripts from all authors, including non-US citizens writing in English. We accept all genres of literary fiction in the form of short stories or novel excerpts not exceeding 5,000 words. **Postmark deadline: March 31.** For guidelines and more information visit www.pitt.edu/~nidus.

FREE JOURNALISM CAMP FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

The Asian American Journalists Association is pleased to announce J Camp, a high school journalism program for gifted students of color. There is no fee to apply and students selected will have all costs covered, including airfare, housing and meals. This program is not limited to Asian American students and is open to all young journalists. J Camp

will be held at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. from July 30- August 4, 2004. **Deadline for applications is April 1st, 2004.** Applications are available at: <http://aaja.org>. For more information contact Lila Chwee, AAJA Student Programs Coordinator, at 415/346-2051 or lilac@aaja.org.

ABEBOOKS.COM LAUNCHES "LIBROS EN ESPAÑOL"

Abebooks.com, the popular website for used, rare and out-of-print books, celebrates the launch of a new area on the website that features Spanish language books, booksellers, and authors. This new area makes it easy to find and buy—or list and sell—books of interest to Latino readers and collectors, in Spanish and in English. "Libros en Español", located at <http://www.abebooks.com/docs/Espanol/>, currently lists 200,000 books from the Abebooks database of 50 million books. Abebooks is inviting everyone—especially members of Latino communities—to visit "Libros en Español" and name a favorite Spanish-language book or author. Everyone who does so will be entered in a draw for a collectible, Spanish-language copy of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez valued at over \$300. The first 300 visitors to comment will receive a thank you gift from Abebooks. **Entries will be accepted until April 1.** Media contact: Marci Crossan, mcrossan@abebooks.com, 250-412-3258

SEEKING VENDORS FOR BARRIO BOOKFEST 2004

Barrio Bookfest, scheduled to take place May 14-15 in San Diego's Barrio Logan, is a book festival focusing on issues related to social justice and human rights. This event is free to the public and will feature readings, panel discussions, workshops, book signings, and live music. We are looking for progressive community oriented publishers, book stores, small businesses, non profits and community organizations to participate as vendors. Self-published authors are welcome. **Reduced rates for vendors are available if you register before April 1st.** To register and for more information visit <http://barriobookfest.org/>.

INVITATION TO VISIT IAMBIA MEDIA

Are you a new or established author? Are you seeking exposure for your book? Iambia Media, Inc. provides services including: Public Relations, Marketing, Graphics, Editing, Research, and Proofreading. Need an agent? We will market your book to publishing houses around the country. **Utilize our services before April 1, 2004 and receive a 10% discount on selected services.** Current clients include: Donna Hill, J.D. Mason, Kadiatou Diallo, Deborah Gregory, and Francis Ray. Visit us at www.iambiamedia.com or contact us at (718) 652-1251, or info@iambiamedia.com.

CUERPO MAGAZINE SEEKS WRITERS

I'm looking for writing pieces and artistic work to include in my prototype magazine test run issue called *Cuerpo Magazine* scheduled for July of 2004. The theme for this issue is "Powerful Latina" in case you're interested in submitting content related to this topic. We are accepting other more general content in the following categories: Non-fiction, self-help, pop culture, health/wellness, activism, book/movie/music reviews on Latino culture, women related studies, holistic living, artistic pieces of work, motivational fillers, spirituality, fashion/beauty/trend, celebrity profiles with a mission, poetry, and information/news related to Latino people. I welcome any other ideas and suggestions. You can visit the site for more detailed information at www.AmianaNetwork.com and email submissions to: Lisette@CuerpoMag.com. **The deadlines for submissions is April 10th 2004.**

MACDOWELL COLONY

Past attendees have included Pulitzer, National Book Award, and Rome Prize winners; some of the writers who have worked at the Colony are Oscar Hijuelos, Michael Chabon, Angie Cruz, and Alice Walker. MacDowell Colony offers residencies of up to two months to poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers in Peterborough, New Hampshire. **The deadline for applying is April 15th.** For an application and more information visit www.macdowellcolony.org.

LATINA AUTHOR STARTS NEWSLETTER FOR WRITERS

For nine years Mary Castillo worked towards publication and a five-minute call from her editor in New York made a seemingly impossible dream come true. Except she wasn't quite prepared for what happened afterwards. To help other writers who might be faced with similar dilemmas, Mary has created an online newsletter, "From the Inside Out." Readers can share her experiences as a new author going through the process of publishing her books. And Mary will answer questions readers ask. Or find an expert who can. Writers as well as readers are encouraged to sign up at marycastilloauthor@yahoogroups.com. For more information visit www.MaryCastillo.com.

LATINA HEROINE THRIVES IN VAMPIRE NOVEL

Caridad Pineiro Scordato, a leading author of multicultural romances, is putting some bite into her work with the release of *Darkness Calls*, a vampire novel with a Latina heroine. *Darkness Calls* will be released under the author's pen name, Caridad Pineiro, by Silhouette, a major publisher of romances and part of the Harlequin family. In *Darkness Calls*, Latina FBI Agent Diana Reyes has learned how to master her darkness, but it will tempt her again when she is forced to go undercover to solve a serial killer case and meets Ryder Latimer, the enigmatic owner of the Manhattan nightclub where the murders have occurred. When not writing, Caridad is a mother and wife, and a partner in a New York City

law firm. She also teaches workshops on various topics related to writing and heads a writing group at a local book store. For more information please visit www.caridad.com.

Buy *Darkness Calls*: http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0373273533/marcelalandre-20/102-5000137-3132160?creative=125581&camp=2321&link_code=as1

FIESTA FOR THE HISPANIC SOUL

It's fiesta time in America! Ruben Soto shares some of his personal stories, poems, and tales that will touch your heart. Soto offers hope, encouragement, peace for your soul, and taking pride in being Hispanic in today's America. You will find stories on Gloria Estefan, Selena, Sandra Cisneros, Jorge Ramos, the Hispanic family, successful Hispanic women, Hispanic foods, encouragement, love, a tribute to our famous Hispanics, a tribute to our Hispanic soldiers, and many other stories that will make Hispanics proud of their culture. Mr. Soto can be contacted at rubenso99@yahoo.com or <http://www.rubensoto.com>.

Buy it now at: http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0595299407/marcelalandre-20/102-5000137-3132160?creative=125581&camp=2321&link_code=as1

UN MUNDO DE PAPEL/ENTER A WORLD OF PAPER

Artist, writer, and community educator Carlos N. Molina just launched his website <http://carlosnmolina.com/>. In it you can view examples of his delicate paper sculptures, bold digital art, and touching but humorous writings.

PLEASE SHARE

If you have an announcement about a writing contest, job opening, call for submissions, book publication, or literary event that you'd like to share, contact me at marcelalandres@yahoo.com

DID YOU ENJOY THIS NEWSLETTER?

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

Find past writing opportunities <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marcelalandres/>

Changing the world one e-mail at a time,
Marcela Landres
<http://www.marcelalandres.com/>

If you wish to reprint portions of this newsletter, please credit Latinidad and include a link to <http://www.marcelalandres.com/>.

“Most people only do what they are asked to do;
success comes to those who do a little more.”

—Karl Kraus

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