

## Latinidad - Summer 2018: The Business of Being a Writer

Contents:

1. Saludos
2. Q&A: Jane Friedman
3. Resources: \$13,000 Poetry Prize

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BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“For all of us who are used to being ‘la unica’ in a crowd of writers, Marcela is an oasis. She is dedicated to Latinos/as not only being published, but being published well. She gave me a roadmap and a reality check that inspired me to create a calendar of contests, residencies, funding sources and submissions. I did research I never would have done alone and I share her wisdom with other writers all the time. Latinidad apoya a la comunidad.”

—Linda Gonzalez, author of *The Cost of Our Lives: A Memoir*, <http://www.lindagonzalez.net>

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1. Saludos

“Keep your day job” has traditionally been sound advice for writers, since a spectacularly small percentage have ever been able to make a living solely by authoring books. Now publishing expert Jane Friedman makes a compelling argument to the contrary. In her guide *The Business of Being a Writer*—which deserves a permanent home on every writer’s bookshelf—she offers realistic advice that may genuinely help you to one day quit your day job and write full time. Her Appendix 1: Contracts 101 alone is worth the price of the entire book. To learn more, read the Q&A below.

Helping Latinos get published,  
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2. Q&A

Jane Friedman has 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, with expertise in business strategy for authors and publishers. In addition to being a columnist with *Publishers Weekly* and a professor with *The Great Courses*, Jane has served on grant panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Creative Work Fund. Her expertise has been featured by NPR, PBS, CBS,

The Washington Post, the National Press Club and many other outlets. In her spare time, Jane writes creative nonfiction, which has been included in the anthologies *Every Father's Daughter* and *Drinking Diaries*. For more information, visit <https://www.janefriedman.com>

Q: In addition to being a published author, you were the publisher of *Writer's Digest* magazine, a professor of e-media at the University of Cincinnati, and managed digital publishing initiatives at the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, etc. How does your experience shape your own creative writing? And vice versa?

A: I think the greatest strength I have is the varied positions I've held as a writer and editor—both nonprofit and for-profit, literary and commercial, print-focused and digital-focused. It has given me a media agnostic perspective, meaning I welcome all approaches to writing and publishing. With each new piece of writing or publishing project, I consider the strategic goals at hand and the best way to reach those goals. It helps me better recognize when I'm pursuing something just for the sake of prestige or status, which can be a huge distraction and waste of time. It's not that it's wrong to write and publish for those goals, but they can get in the way of doing your best work and especially get in the way of building a sustainable business model.

Q: Which writers—of fiction, nonfiction, and/or poetry—have most influenced you?

A: While I was earning my BFA in creative writing at the University of Evansville, I was influenced by two professors there, Dr. William Baer and Margaret McMullan, who have backgrounds in writing and publishing professionally and pragmatically. Neither had what I consider to be the classic “status anxiety” of literary writers affiliated with creative writing programs. Dr. Baer invited Dana Gioia to come and speak to us (before Gioia was chairman of the NEA) and I greatly admired his essays in *Can Poetry Matter?*, looking at how insular the poetry community is—that is, disconnected from mainstream culture. Fortunately, I think we're seeing a potential turnaround given the Instapoetry phenomenon.

In 1998 I discovered UK author Alain de Botton through his novel *On Love*, but he mainly writes nonfiction books and helps people lead better lives through self-examination and philosophical thinking. I love his pragmatic approach and embrace of the intersection of art and business. (He runs the for-profit *School of Life*.)

Q: What are the three most common mistakes writers should avoid?

A: The first is rushing to publish or being impatient with whatever publishing process you'd like to pursue. Take your time to understand the process, establish some metrics for success, and learn something from it.

The second is expecting that you're "set" once you've got that first book deal or first book publication. Very few writers make a living on book sales, and most are disappointed with the outcome. Every writer has reason to be proud and celebrate the release of a book, but one book does not make a career. It's just one step on a long journey.

The third is thinking that your publisher, your agent, or anyone else will figure out the marketing and promotion side for you. Ultimately, the best marketing and promotion will arise from activities you can personally sustain and make part of your business model. Platform building—becoming more visible to your intended readership—is a career-long effort.

Q: Alternatively, what are three signs of a savvy writer?

A: A savvy writer takes responsibility for their career success and treats agents/publishers as partners rather than guides. They don't romanticize the creative process and understand that results are a mixture of persistence and consistency over a long period of time. They find a couple of tried-and-true outlets where they're comfortable engaging with other writers in the community, as well as readers, whether that's online or offline.

Q: Who is your agent and how did you meet him/her? If you don't have an agent, how did you come to be published by The University of Chicago Press?

A: I don't have an agent; I knew Mary Laur, who acquired my book, because I contributed essays to a couple of collections published by UCP. We set up a meeting at AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs) to talk about how we might work together, and ultimately that turned into *The Business of Being a Writer*.

Q: Aside from your invaluable book, *The Business of Being a Writer*, what resources would you recommend to writers who want to learn more about how to make a living from their writing?

A: For those interested in self-publishing fiction, Joanna Penn and David Gaughran offer some of the best guides available. Freelancers should take a look at the columns, essays, and resources put out by Nicole Dieker and Carol Tice.

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

A: Nothing upcoming, but my ongoing project, The Hot Sheet, is a subscription (paid) email newsletter for both traditional and self-published authors who are serious about staying on top of industry changes in book publishing and book marketing. <http://hotsheetpub.com>

### 3. Resources

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#### SEEKING ESSAYS ABOUT SEX

Deadline: July 16

Whether you're straight, gay, or other; alone, in a couple, or in a crowd; doing it for the first time or the last, or not doing it at all, Creative Nonfiction

Journal wants to hear your story. For more information, visit <https://creativenonfiction.org/submissions/lets-talk-about-sex>

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#### INNOVATIVE NOVEL AWARD

Deadline: July 31

The Kenneth Patchen Award offers \$1000 and book publication by the Journal of Experimental Fiction and JEF Books for an innovative novel. For more information, visit <http://www.experimentalfiction.com/>

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#### CREATIVE NONFICTION PRIZE

Deadline: August 1

The Constance Rooke Creative Nonfiction Prize offers \$1,000 (Canadian funds) and publication in Malahat Review for a work of creative nonfiction including but not limited to: the personal essay, memoir, narrative nonfiction, social commentary, travel writing, historical accounts, and biography. For more information, visit <http://www.malahatreview.ca>

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#### SUPERNATURAL FICTION AWARD

Contest Opens: August 1

The Supernatural Fiction Award offers \$1000 and publication on the Ghost Story web site for a short story with a supernatural or magic realism theme. For more information, <http://www.theghoststory.com>

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#### ECOTONE

Submissions Window: August 17-September 1

Ecotone, the literary magazine dedicated to reimagining place, welcomes work from a wide range of voices. Among Ecotone's contributors are winners of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, as well as MacArthur,

Guggenheim, and NEA fellows—but they’re particularly interested in hearing from writers historically underrepresented in literary publishing: people of color, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, women, and others. For more information, visit <https://ecotonemagazine.org>

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#### LITFUSE POETS’ WORKSHOP

Early Bird Rade Deadline: August 31

Dates: September 28-30

The Litfuse Poets’ Workshop offers workshops and readings. Financial aid is available. Faculty include: Cindy Williams Gutierrez, Imani Sims, and Gerardo Calderon, among others. For more information, visit [http://](http://www.litfuse.us/)

[www.litfuse.us/](http://www.litfuse.us/)

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#### \$13,000 POETRY PRIZE

Deadline: September 14

The Manchester Writing Competition offers £10,000 (approximately \$13,000) for the best portfolio of three-to-five poems. Open internationally to new and established writers aged 16 or over (no upper age limit). For more information, visit <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/writingcompetition/>

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#### SEEKING TRANSLATIONS

Deep Vellum, a not-for-profit literary arts organization, seeks submissions for future translations of contemporary international literature (high literary fiction and creative nonfiction) preferably by living authors, men and women alike, from all countries and language groups. For more information, visit <http://deepvellum.org>

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#### CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES

The Center for Cartoon Studies (CCS) seeks well-rounded students who are committed to creating visual narratives. They want students who can think and will work hard. Limited drawing skills are okay if they are offset by a fearless commitment to putting images on paper. CCS welcomes comic and non-comic book geeks alike. For more information, visit <http://www.cartoonstudies.org>

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#### JUST PUBLISHED: THE COST OF OUR LIVES BY LINDA GONZALEZ

When Linda Gonzalez is sixteen, her father’s son from Mexico appears at the front door of her Southern California home. Before that moment, neither Linda nor her siblings knew their father had another child. Linda’s family portrait slowly shatters as she discovers her father abandoned his first family. Secrets are unveiled and relationships forged and dissolved, often through painful and illuminating encounters with family on both sides of the Rio Grande. For more information, visit <http://www.lindagonzalez.net>

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Has Latinidad® been of help to you? E-mail your success stories to

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“But exceptionally few writers have ever been able to make a living solely off what they wished to write. While F. Scott Fitzgerald made good money writing short stories for magazines, he also pursued Hollywood writing stints, which he didn’t really enjoy. William Faulkner also wrote scripts. Chekhov wrote newspaper articles. Beckett translated for Reader’s Digest. And so on . . . . While there are far easier ways to make a living than as a writer, that is not because good writing is at odds with commercial success. It’s because most people are not willing to learn the business and do what’s required to make writing pay. They’re looking for what’s easy. And writing for publication isn’t, at least not for most writers at the start of their careers.”

—Jane Friedman