

Latinidad - Summer 2016: Origins Journal

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BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“Entrusting one’s work to a third party can always make one a bit skittish, but Marcela Landres put me at ease in a heartbeat with clear, cogent advice, generously given, from the heart. Not only was I impressed with her knowledge and confidence, doled out with basic common sense, but her invaluable critique was so artfully crafted and genuine that, to my surprise, I found myself wishing for more. This was an investment well-made as since working with Marcela I have acquired an agent, who has already read and line edited the work and has commented on it in such glowing and hyperbolic terms I am embarrassed to reproduce them here. Needless to say, Marcela Landres is a resource that I’ll return to in the future.”

—Cy Stein, author of *The Medicus Codex*, <http://balcony7.com/authors/multiple-titles-by-cy-stein/>

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1. Saludos

Latinidad readers and those who follow me on social media know I spotlight literary journals that are actively seeking submissions from writers of color. Over the years, I’ve noticed numerous journals want diverse voices, yet few seem to have staff who come from the communities they aim to represent. As such, Origins Journal—a litmag founded by a Latina—is by definition noteworthy.

Dini Karasik, Editor and Publisher of Origins Journal, has the goal to “normalize” the voices of writers of color and other artists who have been historically marginalized by the publishing industry. This is a goal I wholeheartedly support, which is part of the reason I agreed to be an Origins Journal Advisory Board member. I bet this is a goal you, dear reader, want to support, too. To learn how, read the Q&A below with Dini Karasik.

Helping Latinos get published,
Marcela Landres

marcelalandres@yahoo.com
<https://marcelalandres.com>

2. Q&A

Dini Karasik is a Mexican-American lawyer and writer whose work has appeared in several literary journals, including *The Más Tequila Review*, *Kweli Journal*, *Bartleby Snopes*, and *The Butter and Literal Magazine*. Her story “Amalia on the Border” was a finalist in *The Texas Observer’s* 2013 Short Story Contest judged by Dagoberto Gilb. She is also the recipient of a 2016 Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County Individual Artist Award. For more information, visit <http://www.originsjournal.com>.

Q: You have a very cool resume: you’ve worked on Capitol Hill for then-Senator Al Gore; co-founded the Latino Legal Assistance Project at the Public Justice Center in Baltimore, Maryland; and staffed the immigration desk at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, among other jobs. How does your background in politics and law inform your work as the editor and publisher of *Origins*?

A: You know, I’ve always been interested in advocacy, even long before I worked in politics or became a lawyer. I realize now that this has everything to do with my background. My mother was Mexican and immigrated to Laredo, Texas as a child, and my dad was born in Detroit, the son of an immigrant from Northern Ireland. This inheritance, being borne of two cultures, living with dual identities, really informs everything I do.

I think the need I have to advocate for others, whether as a lawyer or as a writer, is deeply connected to the ways in which I have never been able to help my mother and family overcome some very difficult challenges, mental illness and poverty among them. But I’ve also been influenced by a father and stepmother who were very politically astute and civic minded. All of this has left me with a skill set that drives my professional, personal, and artistic life, and more recently the launch of a literary magazine.

Origins is a journal that explores the narrative arts through the lens of identity. We want to “normalize” (to borrow a term from writer-director Shonda Rhimes) the voices of women, writers of color, LGBT artists and others who have been historically marginalized by the publishing industry or otherwise relegated to invisible literary corners. But it’s not enough to cast a wide net and publish alone. I want the magazine to do more. I want to engage with writers who have never before accessed the literary world. I want to promote

them in the process, as well as create opportunities to foster empathy—which is the power of storytelling.

For example, we are in the planning stages of a new initiative called Project Amplify. It will consist of specially curated online issues that showcase the work of writers and poets currently enrolled in literacy and other nonprofit arts programs here in the United States and abroad. Examples of such groups include at-risk youth, the mentally ill, refugees, veterans, and the elderly. The issues will also highlight the work of the collaborating nonprofit organization—one for each special issue—and feature essay introductions by well-known authors from the communities the nonprofit serves.

We will publish the first Project Amplify issue this summer in collaboration with Artworks for Youth in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, an educational program working with Xhosa youth who have endured poverty and, in some cases, physical abuse and emotional hardship. Project Amplify will be meaningful to these young artists and storytellers who have never before had the chance to express themselves on such a worldwide platform. It will also lend visibility to the Artworks for Youth program as well as promote empathy and awareness among *Origins*' readers and supporters.

Q: Now that you're on the other side of the desk, how does your experience as an award-winning writer who has been published in a number of literary journals influence how you run *Origins*?

A: Being a published writer has given me the self-confidence to keep writing, in spite of set-backs and rejections, and to commit myself to what is fast-becoming a second career. It's validating. When others you respect think there's something compelling about the stories you tell and the ways in which you tell them—well, it not only makes you feel competent but it also makes you feel as though you have something worthwhile to say. That's what I mean about how I want to do more with *Origins*; publishing the work of unknown and/or marginalized writers is but one way to let them know that their stories matter, that they are capable of telling them, and that the world needs to hear them.

Q: What specific kinds of pieces would you love to see submitted?

A: There's not a specific kind of piece, really. We want work that comes from an authentic place, illuminates some aspect of one's identity, upends stereotypes, transports us across abstract and tangible borders. Every single human being grapples with issues of identity. The story bank is infinite.

Q: What specific kinds of pieces would you prefer not be submitted?

A: We're not interested in reading stories that contain gratuitous violence or the harming of children or other vulnerable people. Or animals. We're not a venue for romance writing. If your work is experimental in some way, it has to really hit the mark or we are not likely to take it.

Q: Aside from submitting polished work, how can writers improve their chances of being published in Origins?

A: It's always a good idea to read past issues and online content. Follow us on social media so that you are aware of our leanings, interests, and organizational developments. I also highly recommend that writers pay close attention to the submission guidelines. It creates extra work for us to have to respond to or reject submissions because of a careless mistake, like sending in multiple submissions when our guidelines clearly state that we don't accept them.

Q: What's next for Origins?

A: We recently published a new print issue on the theme of Borders. It features some outstanding poetry and prose as well as the art of a very important Iraqi artist named Nazar Yahya.

<http://www.originsjournal.com/coming-soon-print-issue/>

Also, we recently became a fiscally sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a nonprofit arts service organization. This allows us to fundraise in a more strategic and robust way because individuals and funders are now able to make tax-deductible donations. We are at a pivotal stage in our development and in order to execute our vision, we need this support. There are a lot of expenses involved in publishing a literary magazine and, thus far, we are a 100% volunteer staff, each of us writers and artists in our own right. I'd like to change this. I want to compensate our staff but also pay the writers we publish. I want to build an organization that is sustainable, one that will demonstrate that a literary magazine can publish quality work and, at the same time, effect social change.

I invite your readers to learn more about us and support us either with a tax-deductible donation or an introduction to a potential funder.

<http://www.originsjournal.com/donate-originsjournal/>

People can also sign up to receive our very occasional newsletter by visiting our website and entering an email in the footer where indicated.

<http://www.originsjournal.com/origins-online/>

We can be found on social media, too:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/originsjournal>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/OriginsJournal>

And let us know how we're doing. We'd love to hear from you.

originsjournal@gmail.com

3. Success Story

“Latinidad changed my life. I signed up as soon as I heard about it. You had a post about VONA, I went and it changed my entire life, writing, outlook. I met my best friends there, my champions. I learned how to dedicate myself to my art because of VONA. Thank you!”

—Lizz Huerta, <http://lavagenius.blogspot.com/>

4. Resources

HOW EDITORS THINK

“I read How Editors Think in one sitting and was engaged from beginning to end. It is well written, highly informative, and humorous—I found myself laughing out-loud in a few spots! Thanks for sharing the secrets of the trade.”

—Mayra Lazara Dole, author of Down to the Bone

Inspired by my experience as a former Simon & Schuster editor, How Editors Think: The Real Reason They Rejected You reveals what it really takes to get published. For more information, visit: <https://marcelalandres.com>

PRESS 53 POETRY PRIZE

Deadline: July 31

The Press 53 Award for Poetry offers \$1000 and publication by Press 53 for a poetry collection. The winner will also receive an all-expense-paid trip to give a reading in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. For more information, visit

<http://www.press53.com>

FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX OFFERS PAID INTERNSHIPS

Deadline: August 15

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, renowned for its international list of literary fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's books, offers paid internships that run for approximately 10-12 weeks. For more information, visit <http://us.macmillan.com/fsg/about>

NOVELLA/SHORT STORY COLLECTION AWARD

Deadline: August 31

The Serena McDonald Kennedy Award offers \$1000 and publication by Snake Nation Press for a novella or short story collection. For more information, visit <http://www.snakenationpress.org/>

REAL SIMPLE ESSAY CONTEST

Deadline: September 19

A prize of \$3000 and publication in Real Simple magazine is given for an essay that speaks to the question: What was the most dramatic change you ever had to make? For more information, visit <http://www.realsimple.com/magazine-more/inside-website/contests-sweepstakes/eighth-life-lessons-essay-contest-rules>

\$5000 FELLOWSHIPS

Deadline: September 30

Sponsored by the American Academy in Berlin, The Berlin Prize Fellowships offer up to five residential fellowships to poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers. Fellows receive a \$5000 monthly stipend, lodging, partial board, and round-trip airfare. The Academy's furnished apartments at the Hans Arnhold Center are suitable for individuals and couples; limited accommodations are available for families with children. Past fellows include Francisco Goldman and Sigrid Nunez. For more information, visit <http://www.americanacademy.de/home/fellows>

SEEKING TEEN WRITERS

Ember is a semiannual journal of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction for all age groups. Submissions for and by readers aged 10 to 18 are strongly encouraged. For more information, visit <http://emberjournal.org/>

CICADA MAGAZINE

Cicada is a YA lit/comics magazine fascinated with the lyric and strange and committed to work that speaks to teens' truths. They publish poetry, realistic and genre fiction, essays, and comics by adults and teens. Especially welcome are submissions by people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQAI+

folks, genderqueer folks, and other marginalized people. For more information, visit <http://www.cicadamag.com>

SEEKING SCI-FI AND FANTASY

EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing seeks high-quality novel-length science fiction and fantasy submissions of all types. They work with new and established authors. For more information, visit <http://www.edgewebsite.com>

TINDERBOX POETRY JOURNAL

Tinderbox Poetry Journal seeks new voices and poems. They want a diverse range of voices and experiences, and well-crafted poems that move beyond the MFA workshop into the mettle of life and experience. They want their understanding of the world to expand, leave them silent and struck, lead them in song and in praise. Their editors want to be challenged out of their comfort zones. They are looking for the well-written but also, more importantly, the well-lived. They recognize that the cover letter can be a crucial component in the reading process. Rather than a hoop through which to jump, a cover letter can become a lens through which they can better understand the work you are submitting. They want to know the places from which you write, the identity with which you identify, so they encourage you to introduce yourselves and your poems to them in your cover letter. Their fee-free reading period is open in June. For more information, visit <http://www.tinderboxpoetry.com>

JUST PUBLISHED: VERDICT IN THE DESERT

Maria and Ben Curry's tumultuous marriage was well documented by Maria's many visits to the ER. The couple was also well-known at local bars, where they often drank to excess. But the killing of a white man by a Mexican woman—even in self-defense—is not permissible in 1959. Also unacceptable is the growing relationship between Michael Shaw, Maria's alcoholic lawyer, and Toni Garcia, Maria's interpreter. Former crime reporter Patricia Santos Marcantonio crafts a stirring tale of forbidden love in a world where democracy rules but due process and fair treatment aren't as readily available on the wrong side of the tracks. For more information, visit <https://patriciasantosmarcantonio.com>

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER ONLY WHEN SHARED

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“If you write one story, it may be bad; if you write a hundred, you have the odds in your favor.”—Edgar Rice Burroughs

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