

# Writing Latinos Season 3 Ep 2

**Gerry:** Hi, my name is her Geraldo Cadava, and I want to thank you for tuning in to season three of Writing Latinos, a podcast from public books. We're back for more terrific conversations with Latino authors writing about the wide world of dial. As always, we aim to provide thoughtful reflections on Latino history, culture, politics, and identity, and how writing conveys some of its meanings.

**Gerry:** Don't forget to like and subscribe to writing Latinos wherever you get your podcasts. And now for the show.

**Gerry:** Marie Arana has had a super interesting career. She was the first Latina editor of the Washington Post's Book World, the inaugural literary director of the Library of Congress, and she's a celebrated author of several books, including a memoir called American Chica, two Worlds One Childhood, which was a finalist for the National Book Award.

**Gerry:** Bolivar American Liberator, which won the Los Angeles Times book prize and a silver sword and stone, the story of Latin America in three extraordinary lives, which won the American Library Association's nonfiction Book of the Year award. I. She's also written several works of fiction, and most recently she wrote Latino Land, A Portrait of America's largest and least Understood Minority, which just came out in paperback.

**Gerry:** This latest book is the one we're gonna talk about today, and we thank you so much for joining us, Marie.

**Marie:** Such a pleasure to be here.

**Gerry:** The first thing I wanted to ask you about is just a little bit about your story and your positionality, I guess, in connection with the topic of Latinos in the United States.

**Gerry:** So I, I read on one website, bio of yours that you are a Peruvian American writer and also I know from having read Latino land that you spent some time in, uh, places like Wyoming. So, a Peruvian American in Wyoming isn't. Always where we start our conversations about Latinos in the United States. So I wanted to ask you, um, first just to tell a little bit about your story, and then I'd like to even more so hear your thoughts about how that particular background or positionality, like shaped your approach and just thinking about the topic of Latinos in the United States.

**Marie:** Sure, of course. It's not the usual trajectory, is it? Peruvian coming to Wyoming? Believe me, there are more and more of us there now, but at the time, I think the first time that I came, I was, um, six years old. My mother. Wasn't American. My father was a Peruvian, and they had met during the war, the World War ii when United States was bringing up in the same way that they bring up farmers or, you know, agricultural workers or great pickers.

**Marie:** They were bringing up students from the South America to fill the, the university rooms and the classrooms. So my father came up as one of those. He is sort of a, a transient migrant. Student. And uh, it was at that point that he met my mother and took her back down to Peru. So I was raised completely in a Peruvian context.

**Marie:** And then suddenly at six years old, I was visiting my grandparents on my mother's side in Wyoming of all places. And it was not a very welcoming place. Um, Jerry for, um. For Peruvians or Latin Americans at any of, of any variety. At the time, I think people were very suspicious of us because we were speaking Spanish.

**Marie:** My, my brother and my sister and I, uh, we were not treated very well in general. It was sort of a go home thing. And then we did go home. We went back to Peru and that was just a visit, and then came back to live when I was almost 10 years old. And at this point. Going to New Jersey and New Jersey at the time, believe it or not, was not heavily populated with Latinos as it is now.

**Marie:** I mean, now it's, you know, Patterson, New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey, just lots of Latinos. But at the time, um, there weren't a lot of us and we were just called Mexicans at the time, you know, so. We, the adjustment at the time, this was, you know, very early on, just as the Cubans were beginning to come ToFl to Florida.

**Marie:** So, um, and the Dominicans had yet to come in great numbers to New York and the Puerto Ricans as well. So we were new to the neighborhood and in both in Wyoming and in New Jersey and, and, um, uh, we were. Considered to be part of this, uh, Mexican population that really did, uh, live in the United States and had, you know, for some time been living on the territory that the United States had become

**Gerry:** So interesting.

**Gerry:** And then how, how do you think that that experience or that set of experiences shaped how you've come to think of. Latino history, the Latino

community. Just kind of part of why I'm asking is that I think so many Latinos think about their personal experience and think like, wow, I'm not like really a representative Latino.

**Gerry:** But then the longer I study this question, the longer I read about it, the more I talk to people. I don't know that anyone feels like they are a representative Latino. So there Latinos always have this kind of like insider outsider perspective of their own. Identities. And so I'm wondering how that shaped your, uh, approach to this book that you wrote.

**Marie:** Yeah, well that's so perceptive because indeed I think we all come and we're put in the box or asked to check that box when in fact we don't necessarily see ourselves, uh, in that way. I think we all see ourselves to some degree. As a Latino or a Hispanic, whatever we're called when we're, uh, you know, when, when we come and we're, we're part of this group as, uh, an outsider or as a peripheral person, or as a marginal person.

**Marie:** Because we, particularly, since I would say the sixties are new, and at the time when I first came, there were maybe 6.5 million. Latinos and they were largely in fact, Mexicans since that time. Now we are 65 million. Jerry, we are, you know, gone from 6.5 to 65 million. 59 million of us have come in the last half century in the last 50 years.

**Marie:** So, uh, we are a sort of. New marginal people to a certain degree. And the, the people with the strongest roots and the, the roots that really are, are most meaningful in a historical way to the United States are in fact the Mexican Americans. And we all, we, we come describing ourselves as, as proven Americans or Colombian Americans or Venezuelan Americans.

**Marie:** Uh, we don't know the term Hispanic Latinos until we get here. Until we get here. And so that gave me a certain. Promontory sort of place to a perspective to, to view this population because indeed I think we all aspire to become a community, but it, it's kind of, uh, hard going as a Latinas to actually feel you are part of that community until, um, you start looking at it the way that I have.

**Gerry:** Do you remember what kind of phase of your life or period of your life where you. It first occurred to you that you too might be a Latina or part of a part of a group. Was that kind of foisted upon you where someone told you that or did you have that, uh, realization yourself? I.

**Marie:** For me, it was trying to make that part invisible because that's what you were encouraged to do.

**Marie:** You were encouraged to, you know, come on, be all American, and, uh, speak like an American and become you as a child, especially you're, you wanna become like everybody else. And in fact, when I first started, when I went to college, I went to Northwestern University, um, for. Almost a year. My roommate thought I was from Beirut because I had said I was from Peru and that the only place that she could think of that sounded like that was Beirut.

**Marie:** So, uh, I mean the, the actual invisibility of being a Latino at the time was, was. Encouraged one to not bring it up. And in fact, you know, in my first jobs out of college, um, it was not an issue. It was never a question. It was not where, where are you from? What's your background? Nobody ever asked that. So it was a kind of burying.

**Marie:** Of your identity. And I think that happens to a lot of Latinos, that their, their identity is buried. And then as time goes on, you have children, it gets buried even more in the next generation. So there is that cultural attrition that goes on in one's lifetime, much less, you know, when you have children and have to pass that identity on.

**Gerry:** And sticking, sticking with your story for just a minute, how did. You move into the world of arts and letters, as we might call it, I mean, from, from your kind of immigrant background, how did you kind of decide to commit yourself to the life of, of a, an author? And by this point you've written several books of both fiction and nonfiction.

**Gerry:** You've held very prominent positions. In the literary world is the editor of a book review section of a major newspaper, a trustee of Penn, the literary director of. The Library of Congress. And so how, how did you make that? Evolution.

**Marie:** It was not planned, Jerry. It was, uh, it was almost by, um, just, just the circuitry of moving from, from one job to another.

**Marie:** But I had thought, uh, and I, I had been so fascinated with languages. Languages was it for me, you know, I, I came, um, with. Spanish and English already. I began to learn French at a very early age. I majored in Russian and in college, and I had been studying Russian with, you know, the Kennedy program that started in the sixties and seventies.

**Marie:** They were pushing what they called critical languages. So I was very, I thought I was gonna be a, a linguist. Because I loved learning languages. It was the greatest thing for me. So after Russian, I, I studied Chinese. Then I thought, okay, I'm gonna be a linguist. And then I was studying, uh, linguistics and Chinese at the University of Hong Kong.

**Marie:** And I realized that what I enjoyed most was having been asked to. Put together a book from a conference of linguists and the process of putting together that book, and I was in my twenties at the time as a graduate student, and that process of putting together a book was the most exciting thing I had ever done in my life.

**Marie:** I loved that. I loved the actual coherence of a, something between two covers and, you know, making it logically work and making it. Cohere and making it tell you something that you didn't know before. And that was exciting for me. And when I finished graduate school and I came back to New York, I wanted a job in publishing and I started at the very bottom, absolute bottom of the, of the heap and, um, worked.

**Marie:** My way up and loved the process of, of editing. And so I started in books from the very beginning, just that one little assignment that I was given to put together a book from a conference of Ling of linguists that, you know, never went anywhere. The book never went anywhere. I, but it was just that process that was so exciting to me.

**Gerry:** Out of curiosity, what did they call you in Hong Kong? Were you a Peruvian? Were you a Latina?

**Marie:** No, I was not a Latina or, or anything like that. I was, um, you know, just this American kid trying to learn a lot of languages.

**Gerry:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Which is also just an interesting reminder that all of these identities are, uh, contextual depending on where you are.

**Gerry:** And was Hong Kong just a Totally, was that where you were doing your graduate school or was that a. Brief kind of study abroad thing during graduate school?

**Marie:** No, I spent a good almost 10 years in Asia. Oh, wow. Yeah. Oh. Doing, doing, um, linguistics and thinking that that was where I was gonna go. That I was gonna go into, uh, academics and, and you know, I.

**Marie:** Uh, probably teach at some point. And then, you know, this epiphany of that, the, the books, um, making a book that just seemed so fabulous to me. And then, uh, being assigned so many books in, uh, I, I worked for two publishers, Simon Schuster, in Hardcover Brace. At both of them, just the range of, of books, you know, doing anything from fiction to nonfiction.

**Marie:** Just learning a lot as I went, uh, and never imagining that I would write because it, uh, an editorial role is so different from actually writing. But in the process I was learning a lot and, you know, getting a lot of chops on, on fiction writing and nonfiction writing, putting together history books, putting, you know, encouraging writers to do their best, um, learning.

**Marie:** To, to, to do it well, and then I ended up at the Washington Post as a critic. So, you know, going from. Jumping fences really, because when you're, when you're working on the creative side, the last thing you wanna be is a critic. You know, the critics are the enemies. And I ended and I ended up, you know, try trying to harden my nose as a critic and then after that, becoming a writer myself.

**Gerry:** Thank you for all of that. I think I knew some of these details, but, and I'm sure you've talked a lot about your experience in Hong Kong and Asia. In other venues, but I don't think I knew that about you. So thank you for sharing. I wanted to return to Latino land and I remember in a conversation that we had about your book, Simon Bolivar, um, that you thought that ultimately Latinos would unite as, as Latinos, in part because we had to, we didn't have a choice.

**Gerry:** We have to have to unite. Um, but then. You know, I guess I'm kind of interested in this idea from the title of your book that this is a portrait of Latinos and a portrait's. Interesting. 'cause it's not a, some subtitled titles are like the epic tale or the unknown history of something like that. Mm-hmm.

**Gerry:** But a, a portrait. Can suggest a lot of diversity within the frame. And so, you know, your chapters focus on things like religion, military service. In some parts you do have these long historical sweeps, but you're dealing with a really diverse community. And you talk about different groups, Mexican Americans, Dominican Americans.

**Gerry:** So, uh, you know, the question is kind of about unity, the potential for unity, what some of the. The hindrances are to becoming unified. But the other thing about the term portrait is that ultimately, even if it is a picture of great diversity, it is contained within a frame. And so you expressed to me your hopefulness about unity.

**Gerry:** So how, how do you think about this tension between. Different groups that somehow make up a PO population, and then the group itself.

**Marie:** Well, I learned a lot from writing the biography of BVA because it was Bolivar who really in the wars of independence, his great hope was that all of Latin America would unite.

**Marie:** Create a huge force, uh, United States of Latin America that would be a bulwark against all the predators that had come with plans for Latin America and still I. Do, I mean to this, to this day, that's just the pro forma for Latin American history. So what, what you learn when you look at bolivars life and, and his dream of uniting that whole continent and then some, is that, you know, we do have this colonial past.

**Marie:** We do have, we look into the mirror of Spanish domination. So whether or not we are alike, because Spain worked so hard to keep us separate, the only way that they could keep such a stronghold on the hemisphere that they had made, um, was to keep us separate. Because to keep us small. To keep us small and not knowing one another.

**Marie:** So you have this situation where you, even though you were being. Shaped by the same identity of the Spanish, Hispanic, colonial world. You were taught really to. Uh, have suspicions about your neighbors. So you really, it, it, it, the, the Colombians in Venezuela, when they united to begin the Wars of Independence, was an extraordinary act because it was not meant to happen.

**Marie:** They you were all supposed to report to Spain like spokes of a wheel and therefore not have. Any communication with each other. It was illegal for us to travel. It was illegal for us to have any trade, um, that did not involve Spain. We were kept. If you were not born in Spain, you could not have any power, which is the reason why.

**Marie:** The wars of independence happened in the first place, much in the way that the, the American Revolution happened in the United States. People just got frustrated with being secondary citizens, so we were kept apart in this way. For me, looking back at the history and looking back at that colonial hold and looking back at that mirror that we look at, when we look at.

**Marie:** The Spanish domination of, of the countries that we've all come from, that is a unifying force in itself. We have that past, we did not share that past, but we both, we all of us, had the same past. So that to me, as an extraordinary

sort of unifying force, whether we know it or not, it's there. Uh, whether we perceive it or not, it's there.

**Marie:** So I was very convinced that the way to look at all of this, which is why History Keeps, keeps coming back into LA in my book Latino Land, because it's not just who we are today, it's who our ancestors were and what that meant. So if you consider Unity, you've gotta look all the way back 500 years, right?

**Gerry:** Writing Latinos is brought to you by public books, an online magazine of ideas, arts and scholarship. You can find us@publicbooks.org. That's P-U-B-L-I-C-B-O-O-K s.org. To donate to public books, visit public books.org/donate. When it comes to Latinos, I often think about the Pew Research Center's annual biannual report, like who the Latinos in the United States are.

**Gerry:** And I remember their definition ultimately is that a Latino is anyone who says they're a Latino. Uh, which is interesting. I mean, you couldn't really do that, that wouldn't work with, um, native Americans. So, but I've, I've talked with. Uh, scholars out in the world, uh, who study Latinos and they've had these different ideas.

**Gerry:** I always thought it was a matter of heritage and ancestry as well. Some, both Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans who I've talked to, said that they never thought that Latino was about ancestry. They thought it was about a shared commitment to a political project, which is also interesting.

**Marie:** Absolutely. It is that too because as I've said before, they, we were not Latinos until we come to this country.

**Marie:** Yeah. Uh, we're, we don't necessarily know that we have anything to do with. E either Mexican or Puerto Rican or whatever the other party is. Well, we don't feel that, uh, that unity until we're here, but it's an interesting sort of place to live in, isn't it? Because then you, you realize the history and you realize the fact that you, you do have this, this commonality.

**Marie:** But, uh, it's not obvious. It's not obvious at all.

**Gerry:** You are someone who likes to take on very big topics. You know, Simone Bolivar, like one of the most well-known people in human history, perhaps, certainly in the history of this hemisphere. Like, what? What can I say about him or your book about? All of Latin America is seen through the lives of these three people.

**Gerry:** And now you've done something similar with trying to capture this, this whole population or you know, set of groups who somehow come together under the banner of, so I wanted to ask, you know, as you set out to write this book and we're kind of survey. What was already out there about Latinos? What did you, I mean, was there some dissatisfaction that you had about how Latinos had been written about or thought about before that you felt like you wanted to correct or change our perspective on?

**Gerry:** You know, I feel like in the past few years, there actually have been a few books that are these big. Tales about Latinos, I think about Hector to Barr's work. I think about Mike Madrid's work. I think about Pa Ramos's work and I think about your work. So when you were serving this whole body of literature on Latinos, what was the particular angle that you wanted to show us?

**Marie:** Well, I think we're all trying to make sense of it, aren't we? Um, there have been, um, extraordinary books, very academic books that are truly important to the way that we understand who we are. And there are many of them really superb works, and I have used them and pointed to them in Latino land. But I think now, you know that we have become this, uh, sort of almost political entity and, and we, things keep changing for us, don't they?

**Marie:** I mean, suddenly we're told, okay, you are an ethnicity. You are not you, you can't possibly be erased because you're infused with so many races and you're this, and your thought, and, and then you have. Occasions of people representing you who look nothing like you. You know, I mean, this is the, this is the, um, the richness of this population.

**Marie:** Uh, you know, you can be Asian, you can be, um, black, you can be. Muslim, you can be anything. You can be Jewish, you can, and you are still a part of this group now, making sense of that. And I think this is what we're trying to do. Hector certainly, Paola, certainly. I mean this is, we are trying to make sense of this population of why we are our.

**Marie:** Are sort of clustered together and we've been clustered together in a kind of imposed way. Richard Nixon did it by calling us Hispanics and setting up the Hispanic, you know, heritage month or which began as a day and a week. But, and then others have tried to, uh, put these labels on us. I think we ourselves have gotten to the point where you wanna understand the totality of it because we are sort of randomly sort of being gathered up in this way.

**Marie:** We're made to check a box. When you look back at the history when, um, the United States. Invaded and took over so much Mexican land, you know,

all the way from Ca, California to Kansas, and all the way from the Rio Grande up to Colorado. They took over all of that land. You know, it, it was really, really interesting because the Mexico.

**Marie:** Suddenly was relinquishing all this land and at the end of the Mexican or the Mexican American War relinquishing all this land and you know, getting paid for it at the end. Um, but leaving all this population behind. And so that population, they insisted to Washington DC that, that population be called white.

**Marie:** So Mexicans of that time for all those years since 1848 and forward, were considered white, and then suddenly the color is changed on them. They're given a box that says Mexican after a while, and then that box has changed and you're made to be Hispanic. So. There have been all of this labeling that goes on so that we no longer, I mean, really have a coherent idea of who we are.

**Marie:** I think that is what we're trying to do, is to understand what all that history means and what all of these people who are being clustered by the census, that are by the United States census for reasons that. We can't understand necessarily in the beginning, a lot of them political, a lot of them sort of for just convenience and a lot of them, because our names are the same.

**Marie:** I mean, you can be an a, a, an Ana, you can be a a, you know, a from, from anywhere. You can be from Argentina, you can be from Cuba or whatever, but you're not necessarily have much to do with the Argentine cava, or I don't, wouldn't have much to do with El Salvadoran. You know? Mm-hmm. So there we're trying to make sense of this as we go.

**Gerry:** I like the idea that we're all kind of working alongside one another. Sometimes saying different things, but all kind of pushing towards some greater understanding. And I think sometimes that's a frustrating project for us because I feel like a lot of Latino authors feel like we have to keep saying the same things because Americans either mo, other Americans, non-Latino Americans either forget.

**Gerry:** Don't want to know or whatever. But then I also think part of what you're saying is that we're also involved in a project of trying to explain us to ourselves too. And part of what I'm wondering is are we supposed to arrive at some point of enlightenment about what Latinos are, what dini DA is? Or is it really just a, a joint commitment to continuously participating in the conversation?

**Marie:** I think it's an exercise, it's a process more than a destination. I, I think it's a process and I think it's a way of thinking about yourself. I suspect that, uh, and I know this, you know, from my own experience with Latinos who are, who are Afro Latinos, that the African-American population also has to think of.

**Marie:** Who they are in the same way, because, I mean, these are large groups, large populations, tens of millions of people in this country who are perceived as being the same. And perhaps they're not. And I, I think that's true for, for African Americans who, who may be from Louisiana or the African Americans from New York City.

**Marie:** I mean, they're just a different group. And we, we know as Americans that they are different. And I think that, um, I think that this, these past, I would say 10 years, at least 10, 15 years, have, um, made us look at ourselves differently. Because, uh, we are being seen as forces that might actually have power if we did unify.

**Marie:** And so that has made the difference in a way we haven't been important before.

**Gerry:** I, I actually have been thinking about the same timeline that it's in sometime in the past 10 or 15 years where the conversation about Latinos has. Evolved in really important ways. I mean, I, I was in graduate school from 2002 to 2008 and the, the now very present conversation about.

**Gerry:** Indigeneity among Latinos. I mean, I guess that was always there with like LSA or Jose VA Conello or something. But certainly the conversation about Afro-Latinos, that wasn't like part of my training. And of course, Afro-Latinos knew that there were Afro-Latinos. But thinking about the field of Latino history, that wasn't a very vibrant conversation.

**Gerry:** So I've been thinking about along the same timeline of 10 to 15 years. What's interesting to me is how that evolving conversation about Latinos over the past 10 or 15 years has also intersected with and ran alongside an evolving conversation about what is the United States over the past 10 or 15 years, and.

**Gerry:** I think it was in 2014 or so when there were a lot of new news reports about how for the first time ever, the majority of babies born in the United States are non-white, and that causes the kind of identity crisis and new conversations about what American identity is. But I've also been thinking about conversations maybe, maybe started by Nicole Hannah Jones with the

1619 project and then the how the Trump administration responded with the 1776.

**Gerry:** Uh, project or report, I can't remember what they called it. And I've been wondering, given that we're in this moment of kind of reevaluating America's origins, asking what America is all about, I'm wondering what you think Latinos can. Add to that conversation. You know, I think one of the things that Latinos always liked to do is talk about how well the first European language spoken in the Americas was Spanish, not English.

**Gerry:** We were here on the the coasts of Florida before anyone landed at Plymouth Rock or Jamestown. So I think there are those kinds of things to say, but what do you think Latinos have to offer to this conversation about what is America?

**Marie:** Well, that's so obvious to me, Jerry, because it to, to, to me, the absolute variety and the, the incredible experiment of race mixing that we, we represent as Latinos from the get go.

**Marie:** You know, from 1492, it was, uh, the, the race mixing began then and there in of the, the, the strongest way. There were just no women to be had except if in, and, and unless you were an indigenous woman. And then the, the importation of the African, um, Atlantic slave trade, there were 12 million that came over 11 million ended up in, in, um, Latin American countries.

**Marie:** The representation of the African infusion is so much greater in, in Latin America, so you have, you have the race mixing in the first place between the indigenous. The whites, the, the so-called whites, because the Spanish were already a mix of many, many things when they came over. And then the infusion of, of the African slave trade, and then the infusion of the Asians who came in.

**Marie:** Great number, the Japanese and the Chinese came in a great number to Latin America. So we arrive. In this country and our history is from the very beginning, a, a, a mixture. We represent a kind of the, the very unity that the United States is meant to represent, but in our very corporal, very corporal existence.

**Marie:** So, you know, uh, everybody who says United States is a, is an idea. No, it's human beings. It's human beings who are, who are a, a bit of everything because in as time goes on, this is what happens in a country of many, of, many colors and, and a hemisphere of many colors. My feeling is that, that the Latinos represent the kind of unification or the sort of democratic ideal.

**Marie:** If you wanna put it that way, that the United States is built on. And I mean if you look at it on human terms, instead of on the terms that we always seem to say in the history books that are prevalent today, which is we are an idea, no, we are not idea, we are human beings and nobody represents that more in my book than the Latinos, you know, the, the very.

**Marie:** Uh, we have been mixing it up for a whole lot longer than the United States has been mixing it up, and so we represent that ideal, if you will.

**Gerry:** I like that a lot. I'm gonna be thinking a lot about the idea that we are a people and a people from all over the place and from many different backgrounds, more than we're an idea.

**Gerry:** I think that's a good way of putting it. The, the version that you lay out of both American diversity and what Latinos have to. Offer to that story, is it going to be, uh, a winning or compelling or convincing argument in this new era where words like diversity and inclusion are really under attack? And I, I think, you know, that question has so many layers because I wonder, in a very concrete sense what the attack on diversity will mean for how we, or whether we can.

**Gerry:** Talk about Latinos and the teaching of American history. And I guess part of what, I mean, I work at a university and so like DEI programs are under attack, but I still can't let go of this idea that Latinos, as a group of 60 million Americans are still a population or, you know, several populations that we still need to know about.

**Gerry:** So you can't entirely whitewash American history and pretend that Latinos. Are just not here. I don't know if you read this story, but I read a story last week about how at some agency, some federal agency. The interpretation of the people working there of what anti DEI meant was that they had to go around and cover all of the pictures of women and people of color, and then the workers at that agency kind of had a little mini rebellion, and then the people were like, oh, oh, oh, yeah, let's, you know, reveal the pictures again.

**Gerry:** So I, I don't think you can erase the people even as you. Challenge what DEI programs have have been. So I don't know. I mean there, there's a lot of my own musing. You can hear that I'm wrestling with these things too. But in this moment when there are attacks on diversity, how can we still go about teaching American diversity?

**Marie:** The pretense that we can wipe diversity from the map of the American experience is mind boggling to me because that, that is at the root of who we are. I mean, that is, even if you, if you only go by the story of the pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, you've got diversity right there because you came into an indigenous country, an an indigenous continent rather.

**Marie:** Diversity is at the very, very. Heart and core of the story of this country. You can't make that rabbit disappear, but it's fake. It's a fake disappearance because it, there's no, there is, it's not the truth. It's not the reality. And there's a confusion about it too, because what is wanted to be disappeared here is not the diversity itself, but it is the.

**Marie:** The process of trying to become more aware and more and more inclusive of that diversity, so you can't erase us. You cannot erase us. We are here not only by virtue of history itself, but by a virtue of a forced history because the, the slave population that came here, the African American story is at the heart of what Americans used to call that binary diversity, which is now.

**Marie:** Very, very complicated and very much more of a, of a mosaic can't be erased. So I mean, it, it's, it's, it's, it's an entirely falsified notion that we can, we can talk about America as, without using the word diversity.

**Gerry:** I mean, as you're talking, I'm thinking about how it's interesting to be led by a real estate developer at the same time that we're talking about erasure, because I think.

**Gerry:** Real estate developers think that you can erase old landscapes and build new things instead of, or on top of them. I mean, he is talking about making the, the Riviera out of a flattened, uh, middle East and we have a Gulf of America Day. And on that point, I really want to. Uh, maybe you and I can start something where we'll bring a can of graffiti and anytime we see the Gulf of America, we'll just put a little accent over the e and change its meaning that way.

**Marie:** I'm already doing that, so yeah. Good. I love it.

**Gerry:** It's, that's one of those situations where like they don't even know what they're doing because America's the whole continent. It's interesting. Thank you so much for spending this time with us Marie, and congratulations on, uh, Latino Lands publication, but then now it's coming out again in paperback.

**Gerry:** That's very exciting and I have the feeling that we're, we're gonna be talking about the subject for a long time to come.

**Marie:** Thank you so much. Such a pleasure talking to you, Aldo. Jerry, you too. All always.

**Gerry:** Thank you so much. Take care.

**Gerry:** Thank you for listening to season three of Writing Latinos. We'd love to hear your suggestions for new books that we should be reading and talking about. So drop us a line at [gerald@publicbooks.org](mailto:gerald@publicbooks.org). That's G-E-R-A-L-D o@publicbooks.org. This episode is brought to you by Public Books. It was produced by Tasha Sandoval.

**Gerry:** Our music is City of Mirrors by the Chicago based band Do Santos. You can follow us on Blue Sky Instagram, and X to receive updates about season three of writing Latinos. I'm Geraldo Cava and we'll see you again soon.