

# KEYNOTES



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The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America / New York City Chapter #6 JUNE 2018

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**NEXT MEETING: SATURDAY, JUNE 27**

**LOCATION: TRS, 40 EXCHANGE PLACE, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR, 12 – 3 PM**

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**TOPIC: RECALIBRATING YOUR CREATIVE BRAIN**



**SPEAKER: Laura von Holt**

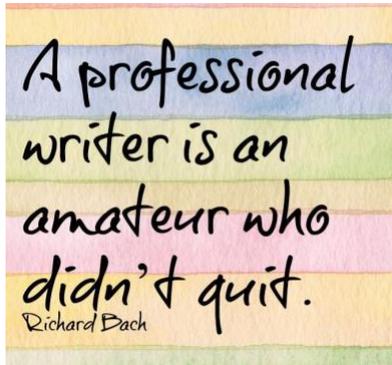
In this extraordinary workshop, you'll receive powerful techniques to silence your inner critic, get comfortable with change, and discover what is blocking you from reaching your highest potential. Tools from the Stanford University Master's Degree Course, *Creative Insight Journey (CIJ)*, which has revolutionized the art of success, will be used to demonstrate how to tap into your innate creativity to create massive shifts in your reality. You are sure to leave with new and profound insights as to how to get out of your own way, as well as a set of essential tools to help you grow and prosper with your limitless creativity.

*Laura von Holt is an author, entrepreneur and Fairy Boss Mother of Cinderly, a start-up run on sparkles. Her innovative personality and brand have been an inspiration to hundreds of artists living in New York City. She is well known for her speaking series "Don't Quit Your Day Dream!" and has been featured at SXSW & Seriesfest. Laura is a captivating voice for women of all ages, and works as a coach to harness self-expression and goal-setting, while battling the patriarchy and other oppressive forces, like self-doubt! Laura is an expert in the arena because she has followed a life of passion. Whether she is writing plays that earn her top marks by in the New York Times, or wild romance novels, she is a beacon to follow – which is easy to do because she leaves a trail of glitter behind her. Find her at [lauravonholt.com](http://lauravonholt.com) and [fairybossmother.com](http://fairybossmother.com)♥*

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For contest guidelines, please visit: [www.rwanyc.com](http://www.rwanyc.com).




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## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

LaQuette, Maria Cox, Alexis Daria,  
Maria Ferrer, Barbara James, Falguni Kothari  
& Joan Ramirez

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## MEETING INFORMATION

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RWA/NYC meets the first Saturday of each month. Meetings are held at TRS, 40 Exchange Place, NYC. 12 noon. Membership is at the discretion of the Board. Annual dues are \$40. Make all checks payable to RWA/NYC. There will be a \$20 fee on returned checks.

**ATTENTION:** The Board welcomes all comments/suggestions/etc. Please send emails to [info@rwanyc.com](mailto:info@rwanyc.com).

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## JULY THEME

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### A WRITER'S GPS

Why Setting Is So Important

PLUS! We welcome articles on all topics, book reviews, conference notes, etc., etc.

DEADLINE: 15<sup>th</sup> of the month

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## 2018 CHAPTER CALENDAR

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Jul 7 Aug 4 Sep 8 Oct 6 Nov 3 Dec 1

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## RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## KEYNOTES DEADLINE

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Send articles to [keynoteseditor@gmail.com](mailto:keynoteseditor@gmail.com) by the **15th of the month**. All articles must be typed and up to 500 words. Send pictures as attachments; not in article

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: SOMETIMES A HEROINE IS NEEDED TO SAVE THE DAY  
BY LAQUETTE**

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Strong isn't an adjective we normally apply to women. Usually, it's almost always used to describe a man. The same is true of romance novels too. Heroes are eternally strong. Heroines are beautiful. My question is, why can't heroines be both?

I think you've known me long enough to understand where this article is going, so let's get straight to the point. My goal as a writer is always to subvert what I see as the problematic normative culture. And to me, describing women as anything other than strong is a huge problem.

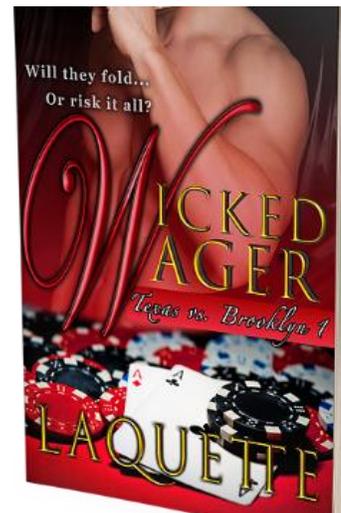
There is this false narrative that has often been a trope in romance and life that if a woman is strong, she can't be sexy and desirable. I call nonsense (I'd like to use another word, but since I'm supposed to be presidential in my communication, I'll just leave it at nonsense) on that notion. Strength is sexy, and in my books, there's nothing sexier than a strong woman wielding her agency in a story.

In *Power, Privilege, & Pleasure*, A. J. Tenetti is an exiled princess. She's got to keep the villain from overthrowing the royal family. She single-handedly devises a plan to save her family and her country. Do you think a woman like A.J. has time to wait around for a man to rescue her? Not a chance. She was too busy pulling off political coups and looking amazing while she did it, to wait for the hero to save her from the big baddie in the story. Why? The answer is simply because a strong woman will always do what she needs to do to survive.

You may wonder where this leaves the hero. What is the hero's job when he's falling in love with a woman that takes command of her own life and problems? In this case, Alan became her support system. He wasn't weak. In fact, for the first half of the book, he's locked in what appears to be ritual combat with A.J. Almost every encounter he has with her is confrontational.

It's also important to add that Alan doesn't take it easy on A.J. because she's a woman either. He respects her enough to know she's treacherous and would eat him alive if he displayed the slightest bit of weakness. He gives as good as he gets. Never relenting until the winner (usually A.J.) is definitively declared.

The struggle for power is a sexy way to ramp up tension between your characters without the benefit of sex. In fact, watching characters attempt to dominate one another is a sure way to keep your reader turning the page with anticipation. It makes them look forward to seeing how great it's going to be when your characters finally do fall into bed.



Strong women are a reality. There's no reason they shouldn't be so in romance either. All sorts of power dynamics can be experimented with when you place a strong woman in control of herself in your story. She doesn't always have to be the damsel in distress. Sometimes she can save her own day, and the hero's too. Keep it sexy!

*LaQuette-President of RWA/NYC, is the 2016 Golden Apple Award Author of the year winner. She writes bold & sexy tales for diverse characters who are confident in their right to appear on the page. Represented by Latoya C. Smith of the L. Perkins Agency. Visit her at [NovelsbyLaQuette.com](http://NovelsbyLaQuette.com) and [LaQuette@NovelsbyLaQuette.com](mailto:LaQuette@NovelsbyLaQuette.com)*

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**GOLDEN APPLE HONOREES 2018  
BY VICE PRESIDENT ALEXIS DARIA**

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RWA/NYC is proud to announce the 2018 Golden Apple Honorees:



Lifetime Achievement: **Rochelle Alers**

Author of the Year: **Alexis Daria**

Agent of the Year: **Sarah Younger**

Editor of the Year: **Elle Keck**

Publisher of the Year: **Dreamspinner Press**

 Bookstore of the Year: **The Ripped Bodice ♥**

*CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL HONOREES!*

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**EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 3**

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JOIN US! Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

RWA/NYC is having a mini-conference.

**Keynote speakers: Piper Huguley and Farrah Rochon.**

Details will follow shortly. Think about volunteering. ♥

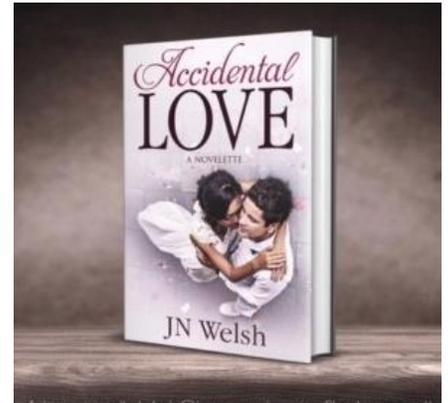


## MEMBER NEWS

**Jean Joachim's** quirky little Christmas story, *THE HOUSE-SITTER'S CHRISTMAS*, snatched Third Place (a tie) in the New England RWA's Reader's Choice Awards. AND...it picked up a second honor as it fined in the Oklahoma RWA Reader's Choice Awards contest!!

**Jennifer Welsh** showed off the cover to her new upcoming novel, *ACCIDENTAL LOVE*.

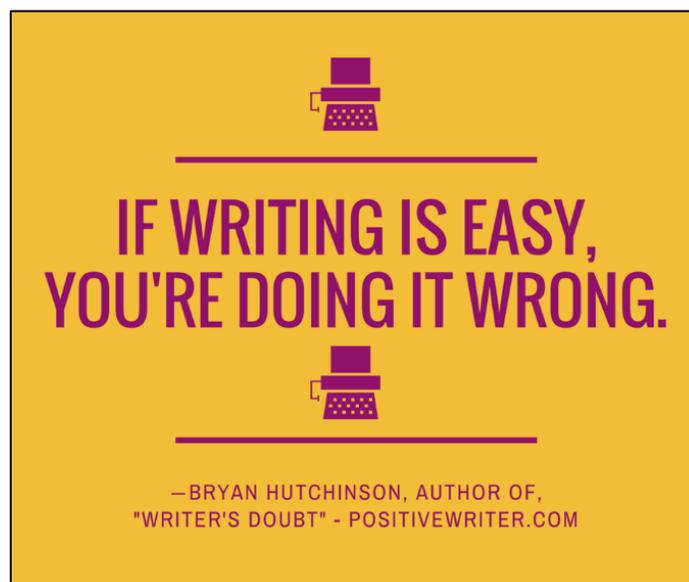
**INDUSTRY SHOCKER!** *Romantic Times*, the leading romance magazine of four decades, announced that it will closed its doors on July 1, 2018. It's the end of the world as we know it! ♥



## CONTEST

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

The **Kathryn Hayes "When Sparks Fly" Contest** is now open to published and indie-published authors. Visit the RWA/NYC website for guidelines and registration form. Digital entries only. Deadline: September 1. [www.rwanyc.com](http://www.rwanyc.com). ♥



**MAY BRUNCH PHOTO ALBUM HERE**

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Our Annual May Brunch was well attended. Joanna Shupe was our keynote speaker. The discussions ranged from RWA National’s diversity initiative, the upcoming RT conference, writing tips and how to Free the Cocky! ♥





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**WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!  
WHAT IS SEXUAL AGENCY AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT?  
BY MARIA COX**

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This topic has been on my mind for a while particularly since the onset of the #MeToo movement.

**What is Sexual Agency?** Well, the simplest way to describe agency is to say that 'having' agency is to have the ability to act in a way that accomplishes one's goals. So, in short to have sexual agency means you know what you want sexually and know how to go about it.

For some people, exercising sexual agency can be very difficult. Often times the issue stems from internalized shame, other times it is due to cultural and/or religious reasons.

Overall, sexual agency plays a vital role in sexual health. And, just like other aspects of life, sexual agency is developed over time through small, reinforceable habits.

Sexual agency includes:

- ✓ The ability to accept or decline any sexual activity.  
You choose whether or not you want to experience sexual activity.
- ✓ The ability to define your sexuality.  
Regardless of gender, you can identify yourself as: gay, straight, bi-sexual, asexual.
- ✓ The right to decide if you want to exercise safer sex.  
The right to accept or decline safer sex practices and/or birth control.

*\*Important\** Remember, your sexuality is defined by the choices you make yourself, not by the perceptions of others. ♥

Sources: to learn more about sexual agency and how to build deeper sexual confidence, see links below.

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/sexual-agency-3132581>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shameless-woman/201406/being-female-and-sexual-agency>

*Maria Cox is the 2nd Place winner of the 2017 MANA (MarketingNewAuthors.com) Blog Short Story Series Contest. Maria is also a PRO member of Romance Writers of America and the Treasurer of RWA/NYC. Maria served two terms as President of the Phoenix Writers Club. Maria has been writing stories since she was a young girl. She picked up her first romance novel when she was just eleven years old and has loved the genre ever since. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When not writing fiction, Maria works as a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York. Please visit her site [www.mariacox.net](http://www.mariacox.net) and/or follow her on Twitter.*



## MUSINGS ON WRITING BY BARBARA JAMES

I thoroughly enjoy writing, because I love exercising my creativity. Sometimes it seems like I have movies playing inside my head of my characters and their lives. Now that I have finished writing and editing the first draft of the *Wedding Bet: Lauren* and sent it along to my developmental editor, I have been musing on the craft of writing.

So my novels to date have been part of my "sweet and sensuous" series, four young women and men on their journeys into their happily after ever. *Starting Over: Rick* was the first, and *Going Home: Roger* was the second. Rick and Roger were best friends. Their partners, Annelise and Denise, were sisters. Lauren and Don are friends of Annelise and Rick.

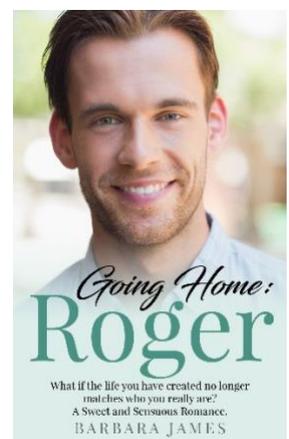
In my novels, I emphasize the emotional elements of the couple's attraction and relationship over time, with all the sex scenes happening behind closed doors, in a "fade to black." But in Lauren's book, I wanted to challenge myself even further. What if I added a bit of an inspirational touch? Inspirational novels are typically among the most conservative within the romance genre. Through the relationship, the partners work through issues of faith that are integral to their growing romantic bond and happily ever after.

But I have always been troubled when the characters in the novels I read seemed more like friends than romantic partners. So the challenge for me was whether an inspirational novel could be sweet and sensuous. Thus began my writing adventure, to demonstrate the passion Lauren and Don experienced and the needs they expressed, notwithstanding her religious conviction not to engage in premarital sex.

Another fun aspect of writing this current work in progress was that it took place immediately after Rick's book but a year before Roger's. I liked seeing how the characters developed over time from their introduction in the first book and through their own books.

The current sequel gave me a chance to revisit Roger. What was he doing before he began dating Denise? In Lauren and Don's book, he was a stronger secondary character, because he was supporting them on their road to their happily ever after. I gave hints about him and introduced conversations which took place in greater depth in his own book. The foreshadowing made it all the more interesting. ♥

*Barbara James is an avid romance reader and a former academic writer. Writing romance novels has been a wonderful creative journey. Feel free to follow her on twitter: @BarbaraJames75 or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/authorbarbarajames>. Earlier versions of this essay appeared in previous blog posts: [www.barbarajames.net](http://www.barbarajames.net) and [www.briannaremusbooks.com](http://www.briannaremusbooks.com).*



**MONTHLY THEME—WRITING STRONG HEROINES**

Our members weigh in on Girl Power and How to Write a Strong Heroine.



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**INDIA'S FIRST FEMINIST: KUNTI**  
**BY FALGUNI KOTHARI**

In ancient India, specifically the old Vedic period (c.1500 – c. 500 BCE), both men and women enjoyed equal rights. There existed feminist law makers like Gargi and Maitreyi, proving not only the prevalence of a gender-equal culture but also of a liberated society. How and why this status quo changed (with industrial progress, it seemed the world regressed socially) is another essay altogether.

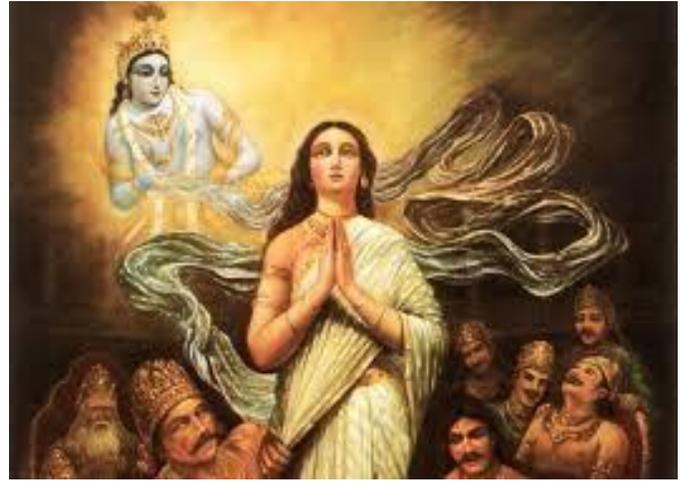
Let me shed light on one of India's first feminists: Kunti.

Kunti is an infamous figure in India's mythology. That she is a woman of myth more than history is of no consequence because behind every great myth lies a cultural truth. Especially, in a culture as old as India's where it's history and mythology coexist symbiotically. Kunti is a historical figure in so far as she represents the type of women that existed in such times because literature reflects mindset, and is, perhaps, a tool to gaze into the past. What makes Kunti's character great in the Mahabharata (an Indian epic said to be the oldest epic in the world) is that despite being wholly supportive of her family as a daughter, a wife and a mother, and cognizant of her duties thereof, she still marched to their own headstrong tune.

From a very young age, Kunti displayed a strong inner core, and a sense of self-preservation. While she disregards a warning Sage Durvasa gives her with regard to a mantra, which if used would summon a God and impregnate her, and chants it to satisfy her teenage curiosity, she shows a keen survivor's instinct to come out of the situation. When she finds herself pregnant, rather than panicking, she gets herself out of the less than ideal situation, first, by negotiating with the Sun God to keep her virginity intact, thereby saving her and her family's reputation. Then, she makes the God bless the child of their illicit union with super powers. She must have deduced she'd have to abandon the child, and wanted to

ensure his survival. Whatever her reason, to display such foresight about action and consequence shows Kunti's intelligence from a very young age. She isn't a woman who'd fall apart easily or be ruled by the heart.

So, there's a young Kunti, who seemingly without guilt or compassion abandons her newborn son (like Moses) so that her own good name remains above reproach. The adult Kunti is a far different creature. The adult Kunti is a single mother who raises five sons and stepsons all on her own after the passing of her husband and his second wife. The adult Kunti does not compromise with fate but through cunning and chicanery ensures her sons reclaim the throne their weak father had lost. Again, maybe this was a self-serving ambition. She was promised a kingdom by marriage. She wanted that kingdom. If she had to rule by proxy, so be it.



Even in modern times, women like Kunti are judged harshly for their bold, emotionless choices. What kind of mother abandons her child to white-wash her reputation? What kind of mother ruthlessly murders another hapless family to keep her own safe? This is not what an ideal woman is. This is not feminism but ambition and selfishness.

Is it, though? If we take away the horrific acts of child abandonment and inadvertent murder, and look at it purely as the only recourse Kunti had at her disposal at the time, then the ruthlessness of her actions makes sense. Nobody asks a king or a president—a man—why he chose to sacrifice one subject or one law to propagate another. A man is expected to rule and make decisions with his head, and not his heart. So I ask you, why not a woman? Why not Kunti? She clearly thought of herself as equal in intelligence and understanding to her father, and her husband, and her grown sons. In fact, she surpassed their abilities to make sound decisions most times. She did what she thought was best for her family, and did not expect a cookie in return. Nor did she beg for rescue.

This is why Kunti is a woman of substance and one of India's first feminists. ♥

*Falguni Kothari is the author of unconventional love stories and kick-ass fantasy tales. Her four novels, most recently MY LAST LOVE STORY, are all flavored by her South Asian heritage and expat experiences. An award-winning Indian Classical, Latin and Ballroom dancer, she currently spikes her endorphin levels with Zumba. She resides in New York with her family and pooch. She can be found online at FalguniKothari.com and you can get the latest updates at bit.ly/FKMAILINGLIST. Connect with her on Facebook @FalguniKothariAuthor and on Twitter and Instagram @AuthorFalguni*



### LET'S HEAR IT FOR GIRL POWER! BY JOAN RAMIREZ

My heroine starts out open to love but guards her heart because of past experiences. When a chance encounter with her former high school sweetheart goes sour, she vows never to let another man hurt her again. She really cared for Rocco. He stepped on her heart by trying to take away her dignity. When Mark enters her life, she sets the ground rules for their relationship. As she gains confidence in the work world and sees what her friends are giving up to have a man in their lives, my heroine is resolved to make her career her main priority. She emerges as a woman of substance who will not be taken for granted. ♥

*Joan is now working on her historical romance set in WWII.*



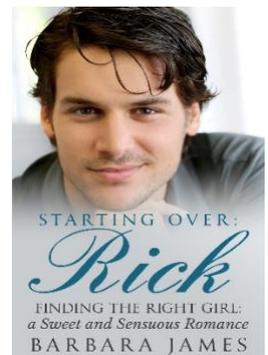
### WRITING STRONG HEROINES: SWEET BUT DETERMINED YOUNG WOMEN BY BARBARA JAMES

Strong heroines are such an important aspect of character development in romance novels, and the fun part is that characters can be strong in different ways. The heroines of my two books Annelise (STARTING OVER: RICK), Denise (GOING HOME: ROGER), and Lauren, from my latest work in progress, The Wedding Bet: Lauren, are all sweet but determined young women.

My heroines have a strong sense of self in that they know who they are and what their needs are. They are not afraid to express them. Their strength comes from their family backgrounds, being raised in stable two-parent family homes with nurturing relatives among their extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Their families provided safe environments for them to blossom.

So what do they want? When it comes to dating and relationships, they have looked at their elders and the world around them. They admire that their mothers and grandmothers were able to marry well by their mid twenties but that pattern has become less common in today's world. Believing that early marriage is the best model for a strong life foundation and effective work-family balance, they are determined to get their Mrs. degrees before finishing college.

Because they are attractive young women, all kinds of men are interested in them. But they are the ones who choose, because they have the self-confidence to go after what they want: men who want to marry and provide for a family. These young women know what prizes they are: smart, and accomplished who want to be wives, and this enables them to negotiate for what they want.



I love that my young heroines are counter-cultural, but in a way that is totally unexpected in light of today's world. They seek their empowerment, and it is on their own terms. I have thoroughly enjoyed being with them on their journeys into their happily ever after. ♥

*Barbara James is an avid romance reader and a former academic writer. Writing romance novels has been a wonderful creative journey. Feel free to follow her on twitter: @BarbaraJames75 or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/authorbarbarajames>.*

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## REAL LIFE HEROINES BY MARIA FERRER

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Here are five strong women, who took control of their lives and do it Their Way. They are strong and opinionated. They are admired and ridiculed. They are Role Models for girls and authors everywhere.

**Hillary Rodham Clinton** – This former Girl Scout was a lawyer, First Lady of the USA, a Senator and the first female presidential candidate of a major political party. She may never be President, but she is an inspiration for her tenacity and her fearlessness.



**Taraji P. Henson** -- From the projects in DC, she was a teenage mother and did not start acting until her 30s, when she decided to change her life and go after her dreams of Hollywood Fame, and she did!

**Isabel Allende** – This Chilean writer was a diplomat's daughter. She was a dramatist, journalist and a fan of Barbara Cartland romances. She has written numerous awards winning books and always with a strong determined heroines.

**Jennifer Lopez** – This Puerto Rican dancer from the Bronx has become a singer, songwriter, actress, producer, entrepreneur and media mogul. She's come a long way from the Bronx!

**Meghan Markle** – This Valley Girl is the luckiest woman on earth. She was an actress and now she's a Princess. She has a title and a castle and her very own Prince Charming. ♥

*Maria Ferrer is still committed to her writing and to finding a Prince of her own.*



**FREE PUBLICITY!**

**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF US!** Have a new book out? Entered and won a contest? Have an interesting topic, research, tips you want to share? An event, book, conference you'd like to review?

Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity. We welcome all subjects. Send in your articles, news, book covers, reviews, etc., to [keynoteseditor@gmail.com](mailto:keynoteseditor@gmail.com). Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for DOUBLE the promotion!

**Deadline: the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month. ♥**

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**ABOUT PAN  
(PUBLISHED AUTHOR NETWORK)**


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The purpose of the Published Authors Network (PAN) is to establish within the RWA framework a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of published romance authors; to open channels of communication between those romance authors and other publishing industry professionals; and to encourage professionalism on all levels and in all relationships within the publishing industry.

To be eligible for General PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have earned at least \$1,000 on a single novel or novella that meets the definition of Romance Fiction.

To be eligible for Provisional PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have: (1) contracted for the publication of a novel or novella for an advance of at least \$1,000, but said work is not yet commercially available ("Option One"); or (2) published a novel or novella, but not yet earned \$1,000 ("Option Two"). Works offered through Predatory Publishing companies shall not qualify.♥

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**About PRO**


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The purpose of the PRO Community of Practice is to establish within RWA a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of romance writers in the areas between manuscript completion and PAN eligibility.

To help members reach the next level, PRO focuses on the business side of writing rather than craft. This program is available to any active General or Honorary member who: (1) is not PAN-eligible and (2) has one complete original work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words, or multiple complete original works of romance fiction which combine for a total of at least 20,000 words.♥

ROYAL WEDDING ALBUM

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*Fairy tales DO come true.* Just ask Meghan Markle. She's a biracial, divorced American actress and she managed to find her very own Prince Charming. She now lives in a real castle, has a coat of arms, and is learning the proper way to wave to her subjects. We wish her and Prince Harry well. Here's are some fantastic photos to wish upon. ♥

