

"Save Regina" Update - March 12, 2007  
Dates and book news...

Regina and David Bakala's Asylum Hearing  
Monday, April 2, 2007, 9:00 a.m.  
U.S. Immigration Court of Judge O. John Brahos, Chicago, Illinois

"Celebration of Thanksgiving!"  
Sunday, April 15, 2007, 3:30 p.m.  
St. Mary Church, 9520 W. Forest Home Ave., Hales Corners (Use upper lot.)  
Hosted by Regina & David Bakala and the "Save Regina" Committee

Good news from Sister Josephe Marie, the writer of Regina's story - I have a great literary agent!

The agent is the writer's advocate with a publisher. To get a good agent, a writer needs a well-crafted proposal - query letter (synopsis of the book and why you're the one to write it), market analysis (how it's like current books and how it's better), publicity plan, paragraph summaries of each chapter, and three finished chapters. Three weeks ago after sending all this to my proposal coach Carolyn Kott Washburn, I met her in a coffee shop.

I had not yet tasted my my tea when she said, "Sister, with or without an agent, this book *will be published*." I was stunned. "But it should be published by a *major* firm," she continued, "and to do that you need a good agent." She looked into my wide eyes. "I'm talking New York, Sister."

I spent the next three weeks editing the proposal and researching agents. Meanwhile, I signed up for UWM's annual Spring Writers' Festival, March 8-11. For an additional fee, I applied for Friday's all-day workshop, "Researching, Pitching and Working with an Agent" with agent Sheree Bykofsky, founder and president of Sheree Bykofsky Associates in Manhattan.

Sheree began her workshop giving her background, then invited the sixteen of us to introduce ourselves and our book in five sentences or less. When all were finished, Sheree wrote something on a paper, then turned it face down. "I just wrote the name of someone whose book I want to read," she said. "Now, apart from your own book, whose book do you want to read and why?"

We went around the circle again. My name was mentioned most. Then Sheree said, "Guess whose name I wrote? Josephe." She noted my enthusiasm for my book, then pointed her finger at me. "Sister, I want your book." The group grew quiet, then started to twitter. She repeated, "I mean it. *I want your book!*" During our break, she repeated, "*I want your book!*" I asked, "Are you willing to be my agent?" "Yes, that's what I'm saying. I want to be your agent and I want exclusive rights. That means I want you to promise me that you won't contact any other agent

until I have the opportunity to see your manuscript.” I stared at her. “Wow!” was all I could say. I came back into the room after most of the group had returned. Sheree stopped talking to those around her chair and looked at me. “What do you want from me?” I asked. “As soon as you have a polished manuscript, send it along with a single-page query letter saying when and where we met so my staff will be sure I get it. And promise me exclusive rights to review your manuscript before you send it to anyone else.” I said, “I promise,” and the congratulations and hugs from other writers began.

All that day, Sheree kept referring to me. After telling us to send a query letter to prospective agents, she pointed at me, “But not *you!* You write only to me!” The others laughed and clapped. “Look at her,” said Sheree. “Isn’t she cute? Send me a photo, too.” One of them said later, “This was so encouraging to all of us, to see an agent connect with a new author right before our eyes.”

Discussing what agents do, Sheree explained, “I take an editor to lunch every day. I know all the editors of New York’s big publishing houses. I know the kinds of books each likes. And they know me. I am the kind of agent who likes to have a personal relationship with each of my authors because I am their advocate. When I discuss contracts with publishers, they do not take out the boiler plate version, they take out the Sheree Bykofsky version.”

Needless to say, I am off the charts with excitement!

After her Saturday post-dinner presentation to the whole group, Sheree said to me, “I know Regina’s hearing is April 2 - she remembered! - but I don’t want you to wait. Polish your manuscript as far as it is, then send it. I can’t wait to tell my associates that I found you.” Then she put her arm around me, “We=re going to become good friends.”

To say I am grateful for your prayers is wholly inadequate. I am somersaulting in praise for all God’s goodness to me! ...through, with, and in *you!* May all blessings come back to you a hundredfold! (And forgive me if I don’t answer e-mails. I have some very busy weeks ahead!)

Sister Josephe Marie Flynn, SSND  
[jflynn@ssnd-milw.org](mailto:jflynn@ssnd-milw.org)