

## **Interview: Pedro Medina (with Caitlin Culp)**

**December 1, 2014 \*\*\***

### **Where are you from?**

I was born in Lima, Perú on August 1, 1977.

### **When did you move to the United States?**

I moved here in September of 2002.

### **Why did you immigrate to the United States? Or are you a second generation immigrant?**

En mi país, estudié Leyes (Derecho y Ciencias Políticas) y no me gustó. Estudié esa carrera porque me gustaba leer, pero estando en la Facultad de Leyes me di cuenta que había elegido lo equivocado. Decidí emigrar acá con la idea de estar un tiempo y luego irme a España o a algún otro lugar donde pudiera hacerme escritor. Pero me terminé quedando y acá estoy. Cuando decidí establecerme acá, estudié Literatura en FIU.

(In Peru, I studied Law (Law and Political Sciences) and I did not like it. I studied law because I like to read. But, when I was in the Law classes, I realized that I had chosen the wrong career. I decided to immigrate to the United States and stay here for a short time and then move to Spain to begin my career as a writer. But, I ended up staying in Miami, Florida. When I decided to stay here, I began to study literature at Florida International University (FIU)).

### **Why did you decide to become a writer?**

La escritura lo decide por ti. Tú no puedes decidir: soy o no escritor. Es algo que uno lleva dentro y no puedes hacerlo a un lado.

(Writing decides for you. You cannot decide yourself: I'm a writer or not. It's something you carry inside you and you cannot do it on the side.)

### **When did you begin writing?**

Cuando era adolescente. Pero más o menos a los 18 ya tenía claro que tenía que concentrarme en ello.

(I began writing when I was an adolescent. But I knew, more or less, that I had to concentrate on writing when I was about 18 years old).

### **I know that Spanish is your primary language and that you speak English...más o menos! Do you speak any other languages?**

Nope.

### **When did you begin to learn to speak in English?**

Desde la primaria, en Perú. Me eduqué en un colegio estadounidense que tiene una escuela allá. Muchos cursos y materias se estudiaban en inglés

(I began to learn to speak English when I was in primary school in Peru. I was educated at an American high school. Many courses and materials were all in English).

**Have you written any pieces in English?**

Nope.

**Do you have family? Where do they live?**

Sí.... ¿quién no tiene familia? Un poco difícil no tenerla. Mi madre y mi hermana viven acá. Mi padre también. Y tengo una hija que también vive acá.

(Yes, who does not have family? It is a little difficult to not have family. My mom and sister live here. My father too. I have a daughter that also lives here).

**What do you prefer to write?**

Ficción. Cuentos y novelas.

(Fiction. Stories and novels).

**Where do you prefer to write?**

De noche, solo y en mi casa.

(At night, alone, and in my house).

**What inspires you to write?**

Las calles y su lado menos agradable. Mucho de esto relacionado con Miami y los inmigrantes.

(The streets and their less pleasant side. Much of this is related to Miami and immigrants).

**What message do you hope to send through your writing?**

Ningún mensaje. Solo me gustaría que disfrutaran mis libros.

(I do not have a message; I only want people to enjoy reading my books).

**Did you attend high school? Did you attend college? Do you have education beyond high school or college? Where?**

Sí. Sí. Sí.

Estudié Leyes en la Universidad de Lima. Literatura y un minor de Sociología en FIU.

(Yes. Yes. Yes. I studied law at the University of Lima. I received a Bachelor's degree with a major in literature and a minor in sociology from FIU).

**If “yes” to 14, what did you study?**

I attended high school in Perú.

I studied Law in Perú. (J.D.)

I studied Literature in Miami (BA)

I studied Sociology in Miami (a Minor)

I'm currently studying a Bachelors degree in Management. I'm running a publishing business ([www.suburbanoediciones.com](http://www.suburbanoediciones.com)) and I need to learn how to manage and deal with people.

**Can you tell me more about your publishing company (in English or Spanish)?**

Suburbano Ediciones SED es el sello editorial independiente de los autores hispanos en Estados Unidos. Nuestro objetivo es darle a la literatura escrita en español en Norteamérica, el reconocimiento que no tiene. Es una propuesta de la Revista Cultural Suburbano.net, que opera desde hace seis años en la ciudad de Miami. [www.suburbanoediciones.com](http://www.suburbanoediciones.com)

(Suburbano Ediciones is an independent publishing house focusing on Hispanic writers in the United States. Our objective is to give literature written in Spanish in North America the recognition that it currently does not have. It is an objective of Revista Cultural Suburbano.net that has been operating for about six years in Miami. [www.suburbanoediciones.com](http://www.suburbanoediciones.com))

**What is your favorite piece that you have written? Why? What inspired you for that piece of literature?**

No puedo decir qué es lo que más me gusta de todo lo que he escrito, es difícil que un escritor pueda decir cuál de sus libros le gusta más, eso lo dirán en todo caso los lectores. Pero la novela que estoy terminando de revisar en estos días y espero se publique el próximo año, es la que más trabajo me ha costado sacar adelante, que ha sido mi reto más grande como escritor. Llevo trabajando en ella mucho tiempo, varios años, no menos de 4.

(I cannot say what I like most about everything that I have written because it is difficult for any writer to tell which of his books he likes best. Generally, readers will tell the authors how they feel. But, the novel I'm finishing editing these days, and that I hope to publish next year, is the piece that has cost me more work to move forward. The book has been my biggest challenge as a writer. I have been working on it for many years, no less than four years).

**What is your best memory from college (either here or in Peru)? How did your college experiences differ in Peru and in the USA?**

Mis amigos. Los amigos que hice en Perú, en la escuela, son y serán mis mejores amigos para siempre.

(My friends. The friends I made in Peru and in school are and will be my best friends forever).

**Could you also send me a list of your published writings/pieces?**

*Streets de Miami / Mañana no te veré en Miami / Viaje One Way -antología de narradores de Miami-*. Este acaba de ser elegido mejor libro del año por la fundación Artes Miami. La novela *Lado B*.

(*Streets of Miami; I Won't See You Tomorrow in Miami; One Way Trip: An Anthology of Writers from Miami*, which has just been named best book of the year by the Miami Arts Foundation; my novel *Side B*).

**I would also love to know about your childhood and family in Peru. For example, what did your parents do for a living? What did you do outside of school? How was life at home?**

La verdad es que tuve una infancia muy bonita, al menos la recuerdo con mucha nostalgia. En mi casa éramos 4: papá, mamá, hermana y yo. Mi mamá no trabajaba y mi papá tuvo 2 fábricas, una de productos lácteos (queso, crema de leche, dulce de leche, etc) y otra de cajas de cartón. Vivíamos sin mayores problemas. Afuera del colegio hacía las tareas, iba a la casa de mi abuela los fines de semana, pasaba mucho tiempo con mis primos. Nada del otro mundo, como verás. Luego estudié Leyes en la universidad.

(The truth is that I had a very nice childhood and I remember it with nostalgia. There were four of us living in my house: my dad, mom, sister and me. My mom did not work and my dad had two factories, one for dairy products (cheese, cream, caramel, etc.) and one that made cardboard boxes. We did not face any major problems. Outside of school, I did homework, went to my grandmother's house on the weekends, and spent a lot of time with my cousins. Nothing from another world, you see. Then, I studied law at the university).

**You said the streets, immigrants, and Miami inspire you to write. How do these three things connect? Can you tell me about a specific story or instance in which you were truly inspired?**

Las calles de Miami me llaman mucho la atención, porque son muy diferentes a lo que todo el mundo cree sobre la ciudad. Y Miami es sinónimo de inmigrantes, entonces: las calles de Miami están llenas de inmigrantes, y ahí yo encuentro unas historias fabulosas. Por ejemplo: uno de mis cuentos se llama *La noche de poesía y rosas*. Es sobre un vendedor de rosas en las calles de Miami Beach, en los bares. Pues resulta que al café donde suelo ir, siempre entra un señor a vender rosas. Nunca le he hablado, pero siempre lo observo, y pienso cómo será su vida. De dónde vendrá. Cómo habrá sido su vida en su país de origen.

(The streets of Miami attract me a lot because they are very different from what everybody believes about the city. Miami is synonymous with immigrants, so the streets of Miami are full of immigrants and there I find fabulous stories. For example, one of my stories, *La Noche de Poesía y Rosas (The Night of Poetry and Roses)* is about a rose vendor in the streets of Miami Beach in bars. The man selling roses always comes in the café that I usually go to. I have never spoken to him, but I always watch and think about his life. Where did he come from? What was his life like in his home country?)

**Do you have any intentions of publishing a piece in English or translating some of your pieces into English? Why or why not?**

Me encantaría, claro que sí. Solo debo encontrar alguien que esté interesado en hacerlo.

(Yes, I would love to, of course I would. I just have to find someone who is interested in doing it with me).

**Do each of your pieces evolve from a personal story or just from your imagination? Can you give me an example?**

Acaban de hacerme la misma pregunta, hace diez minutos, para una entrevista :) Respondí lo siguiente: un autor es un pedacito de su literatura, de sus personajes, de sus historias. Digamos que el punto de partida para la ficción es la realidad, y luego ésta se deforma, se transforma y se convierte en historias. Por ejemplo: uno de mis personajes trabaja en una agencia de envíos a Latinoamérica, yo nunca he trabajado en una, pero siempre paso por una, que queda cerca de mi casa, y me despierta curiosidad ver al muchacho que atiende, sentado solo, sin nada que hacer, horas de horas ahí. También, otro ejemplo, es que uno de mis personajes es una prostituta, evidentemente yo tampoco he sido una nunca, pero acá en Miami Beach, donde vivo, están paradas en cada esquina de la Washington Avenue; entonces siempre pienso también en cómo será su vida, les gustará lo que hacen? lo hacen por necesidad? El punto de partida de la ficción, en ambos casos, ha sido la realidad, lo que he visto, lo que me rodea, pero no lo que soy.

(They just asked me the same question ten minutes ago in an interview :) My answer is the following: an author is a piece of their literature, their characters, and their stories. Let's say the starting point for fiction is reality, then it is deformed, and becomes transformed into stories. For example: one of my characters works in an agency that ships to Latin America. I have never worked in one, but I always go by one that is near my house and it makes me wonder, seeing him sitting there alone, without anything to do for hours. Also, another example is that one of my characters is a prostitute. And obviously I have never been a prostitute, but here in Miami Beach, where I live, they stand at each corner of Washington Avenue; I always also think of what their lives are like, and do they like what they do? Do they do it out of necessity? The starting point of fiction, in both cases, is what I have seen around me, but not what I am).

**You began to write when you were a teenager. Why/where did you begin to write?**

Porque necesitaba hacerlo. Me gustaba contar historias.

(Because I needed to do it. I liked storytelling).

\*\*\*The English translations that are in parentheses are Caitlin Culp's translations of Pedro Medina's responses.