



# The House of Six Doors



Media Kit 2010-2011



Publishing by the Seas

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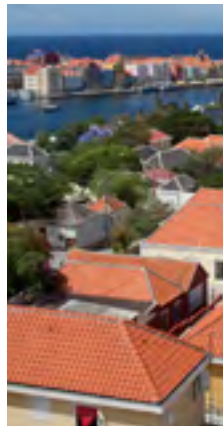
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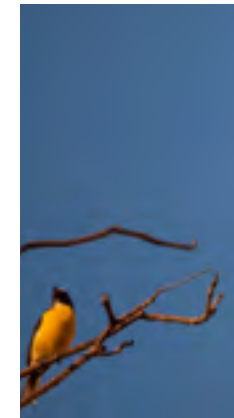
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# Interview

PATRICIA SELBERT was raised on the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao, speaking four languages. She immigrated to California at age 13, later representing the Netherlands Antilles in equestrian events at the World Championships and the Pan American Games. Her work has been published in numerous newspapers and magazines. She lives in Santa Barbara, California, with her husband, two sons, and three dogs.

**Question:** How much of the book really happened, and how much of it is made up?

**Answer:** The story is loosely based on my life. I came to the US at the age of thirteen and that was the starting point for the novel. All the characters are fictional. Many of the places in the book are real and you can visit them, but they've been used fictitiously. The House of Six Doors described in the book does not exist, but there are many beautiful *landhuizen* in Curaçao.

**Q:** *The House of Six Doors* narrates the tale of a young girl who leaves Curaçao for Los Angeles in the 1970s and faces many challenges. Could you tell us about her struggles as an immigrant?

**A:** I drew on my own experience as an immigrant to write the main character's story. In the novel, Serena learns that moving to a new country involves much



more than just going to live there. She discovers that in order to assimilate and take advantage of what her new country has to offer, she has to expand her beliefs and values. When she learns to do that, without letting go of her history, she is able to recognize and grasp the opportunities that present themselves and create a new life for herself.

**Q:** An exotic part of *The House of Six Doors* is Serena's grandmother, Oma, recounting their family's history to Serena. Can you tell us why these stories are essential to the novel?

**A:** I've found tremendous value in knowing my own family history. In the novel, Mama is desperately moving forward, away from her family history. She makes decisions based on what is happening at the moment. Oma, on the other hand, preserves and shares the family's history. It's through this history, passed on by Oma, that Serena gains perspective on, and an understanding of, both her mother and herself. Having the past from Oma and the pull into the future from Mama, Serena can make the wise decisions that allow her to create the life she wants.

**Q:** Where did the idea for the book come from?

**A:** I joined a women's writing group and wrote weekly stories for almost a year. I wove some of them together and had the beginnings of the novel. After that, it was a process of several years.



## The Author — Interview

**Q: How did you keep your ideas organized?**

A: I didn't; I'd just write. I'd wake up in the morning and I would see a scene from beginning to end, as if it had been packaged. I could hear the voices. It was as if the novel wrote itself through me. It was later that I strung all the scenes together and checked the characters for consistency and integrity.

**Q: What was your writing schedule like?**

A: I wrote about seven to fifteen pages each week. I didn't write with a goal in mind, but rather wrote what wanted to be written. If something needed to be written that was not part of the novel, I'd write it anyway and return to the novel later.

**Q: How did you choose the title for *The House of Six Doors*?**

A: The original title was "In the Seventh House." Astrologically, this is the house of relationships. One of my editors suggested *The House of Six Doors* and I immediately loved it. It's perfect. It captures the heart of the novel. Most of the *landhuizen* —the large country houses in Curaçao— have a salon in the center part of the house with three doors on either side. They are directly across from each other in order to let the trade winds breeze through, which is why one of the characters in the book says, "Three doors to bring in gratitude, wisdom, and compassion and three doors to let out greed, ignorance, and anger."



## The Author — Interview

**Q: Can you tell us about your next book?**

A: I'm working on a couple of books. I don't want to discuss them much, but the one that is just about finished tells the lives of three wealthy women, one in a turbulent marriage, one in the middle of a divorce, and one divorced, as they travel together around the world, trying to find the secret to eternal love, relationships, marriage, and happiness.

**Q: What advice would you give to someone wanting to write a novel?**

A: Write. Sit down and write. Don't worry about it making sense at first. That will come later. Just put everything on paper and see what you've got. You'll discover gold.

**Q: What were the biggest obstacles you experienced in writing the novel?**

A: English is my fourth language and I'm dyslexic so writing didn't come easy. I was lucky because I received a lot of positive feedback during the process, including from editors and agents. That helped to stay disciplined, dedicated and committed.

**Q: What is the most important idea or thought that you would like readers to keep after reading your book?**

A: There are two major ideas. One is that happiness is found in your heart. It's not found out there somewhere: it's not found by being with someone or by doing

## The Author — Interview

something. Happiness is always present in your heart, you just have to tap into it. The second idea is that if you see through the eyes of love, you will see beauty.

**Q:** The book is very easy to read. It's as if the emotions of the story grab you and you can't let go.

**A:** I believe a written scene should evoke emotion. These emotions are, to me, like the notes and phrases in music. Just as notes and phrases are strung together to make a song, scenes are strung together to tell a story. The way the scenes and their emotions are strung together makes the story compelling and brings it to life.



*View of Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao, and the St. Anna Bay.*

## Synopsis

Thirteen-year-old Serena is torn from everything that's familiar on her island home. She leaves her beloved grandmother, her father, and two of her siblings to move with her mother and older sister to Florida and then to California.

"Everything will be better in America," her mother tells her. They arrive in the US to find nothing as they expected. Speaking fluent Dutch, Spanish, and Papiamentu (the colloquial language of Curaçao), but limited English, Serena learns to pretend that everything's fine while struggling to live up to her mother's impossibly high expectations; always afraid to send her mother into another downward spiral of depression. She juggles responsibility for her mother's well-being with school, a secret boyfriend, and a growing desire for independence, in a foreign land: Hollywood.

The wisdom of her grandmother, a mixed-race mystic, gives her solace, which she clings to tenaciously despite the thousands of miles between them. Coming of age in a foreign land, faced with enormous obstacles, Serena finds her own feet and the acceptance that sets her free.



## Praise

“If you feel as though the circumstances of your life are against you and you wonder whether this will ever change, this is a story that will fill you with hope.

If you have ever wanted to believe that the circumstances of your life really do work for your ultimate best interest, read *The House with Six Doors*.”

—David Robert Ord, author *Lessons in Loving—A Journey into the Heart*

“An honest tale of love, acceptance, and American dreams.”

—*El Mundo*

“Weaving Curaçao island wisdom into a story of persistence, acceptance, and renewal in the face of rejection, generations of family racial tension, and hard realities, Patricia Selbert has given us a gripping and inspiring tale of culture shock; including sex, drugs, first love, mystical spirituality, and a young girl’s struggle with her mother’s demons. Once in hand I couldn’t put it down.”

—Nancy Black, syndicated columnist, *Chicago Tribune*

## Trailers

The launch of *The House of Six Doors* is accompanied by a number of interactive features. There are several book trailers which will be launched at regular intervals through Publishing by the Seas' YouTube Channel. The first two trailers include excerpts beautifully narrated by Perry Norton, and illustrated with photography by Isaac Hernández. The third is an animation of the evolution of the cover painting, with an original song. Other trailers include author interviews.

Please visit <http://www.youtube.com/publishingbytheseas> to enjoy the trailers.



*Trailer 1: Oma arrives in Willemstad.*



*Trailer 2: Serena tours Curaçao's countryside.*

## Glossary

***Bolo Pretu*** — a cake soaked in Curaçao liquor, rum, apricot brandy, cherry cordial, and Marsala wine for six months.

I found myself sitting in the back seat of Opa’s car cradling on my lap the cake Oma had made six months before for his upcoming birthday. It was a Bolo Pretu, a black fruitcake soaked in rum, Curaçao liqueur, and Marsala wine, and decorated with snow-white icing and tiny silver balls of candy. Bolo Pretu was made only for very special occasions and tasted best six months to a year after it had been made.

*From The House of Six Doors*

***Sint Nikolaas*** — Santa Claus.

Every December Fifth, Sint Nikolaas sailed into the harbor on board a large ship, pretending he had come from Spain to celebrate his birthday with the children of Curaçao. He’d stand on the deck dressed in his elegant bishop’s robes and miter; with his bishop’s crook in one hand, waving to the crowd with the other.

*From The House of Six Doors*

***Landhuis*** — Dutch-style plantation house.

**1963 Ford Galaxie** — American landyacht with air conditioning and power windows.



## Art

Photographer and artist Isaac Hernández traveled to Curaçao to capture the flavor of the island in photographs and in a colorful oil pastel painting of *The House of Six Doors*, which became the cover of the book.

The video will premiere on Publishing by the Seas' YouTube Channel, with an original song and an astonishing animation that captures the artistic process of letting go, and continuing to take risks.

The classic style of the painting meets the latest technology. Smart phone users can download the free application CLIC2C, and "scan" the top left of the sky on the book cover to access interactive media. *The House of Six Doors* is the first US book to feature CLIC2C.



*The House of Six Doors* comes to life on PBTS' YouTube Channel.

## Caribbean Treasure

Where's Curaçao? Curaçao is 40 miles north of the Venezuelan coast, and the largest of the five Caribbean islands that constituted the Netherlands Antilles. On October 10, 2010, Curaçao became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Willemstad, the capital, surrounds the St. Anna Bay. The city is connected by a floating bridge, nicknamed the "Swinging Old Lady," which swings open to let ships into the harbor.

Curaçaoans speak Dutch, English, Spanish, and Papiamentu, a creole language created over the centuries by African slaves, Arawak Indians, Sephardic Jews, and Dutch colonists.



*Curaçao is situated in the Caribbean, north of Venezuela.*



*The flag of Curaçao.*

## Curaçao — Caribbean Treasure

*The House of Six Doors* captures the flavor of the Caribbean, bringing it to life in vibrant color.

All the rooflines of the buildings were decorated with plaster, like icing on a wedding cake. Some roof trims had stair-step patterns, others had undulating lines with spiral endings, and still others had combinations of both. It was like looking into the window of a pastry shop and admiring all the different creations.

*From The House of Six Doors*



*Above: Wedding Cake House in Waigat.  
Left: Penha, in Handelskade.*



*Police station in Otrabanda.*

## Judaism

After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, many came to Curaçao, where they came to constitute a large percentage of the community and became important traders between Spain and the Americas. The Sephardic Congregation Mikvé Emanuel is the oldest in the western hemisphere, in existence since 1651.

The floor was covered with sand. Opa bent over and took a handful. He explained that the sand had come from the land of Israel and had been placed there to remind us of the forty years the Jewish people wandered in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. The grains fell through his fingers. He stood up and pointed to the mahogany cabinet. Inside, he said, were the handwritten scrolls of the Torah. One of them had come from Spain and was six hundred and fifty years old. From the tone of his voice I knew he was telling me things that were very important to him.

*From The House of Six Doors*



*Mikvé Emanuel Synagogue.*



*Home to a 650-year old Torah.*

## Nature

Curaçao's dry land and almost constant trade winds contribute to a unique flora and fauna, including an abundance of tropical fruit trees and a diversity of animals.

Scrubby divi-divi trees, with their gnarly trunks and their branches all leaning in the same direction, were reminders that the trade winds always blew the same way.

Oma pointed out the window. "Serena, look at those trees. Curaçao doesn't get enough rain to grow big shade trees so it gets strong winds to shape the trees we have into giving shade." It was true; a divi-divi tree had the perfect shape to lie under in the midday sun.

From *The House of Six Doors*



Above: Divi-divi tree (*Casalpinia coriaria*).  
Left: Kadushi (*Cereus repandus*).



Caribbean brown pelican  
(*Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*).

## Curaçao — Nature

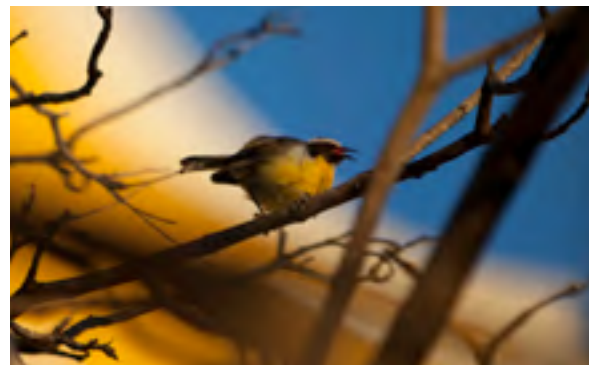


As the trade winds caressed my face, the scent of kadushi cactus flowers enveloped me. I thanked Oma for sending it and I thanked the house for the many happy memories it had given me.

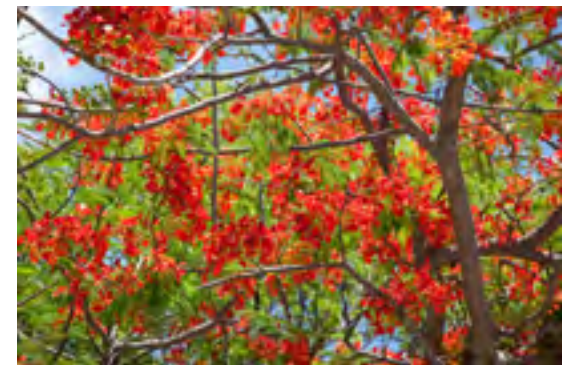
*From The House of Six Doors*

I went to the back door and stepped out onto the porch. The ocean was the same sparkling cobalt blue it always had been and the fluffy white clouds still danced in the baby-blue sky. The waves pounded the rocks, spraying white frothy water into the air. I had forgotten how loud the ocean could be. I licked my lips and tasted salt.

*From The House of Six Doors*



*Above: Barika hel (Coereba flaveola).  
Left: Green iguana (Iguana iguana).*



*Flamboyant (Delonix regia).*

## Herbal Traditions

Curaçao has a long tradition of herbal remedies, many of them brought by the slaves from Africa. This knowledge has been passed down through generations, providing cures for numerous problems such as the common cold, kidney stones, or a broken heart.

Because of Gabriela's illness, Oma became good friends with the six-foot-two, black, muscular herbalist, Shon Mirto, who lived around the corner. Shon Mirto was a great admirer of Oma. He knew she had special healing powers and that she knew as much about herbs as he did.

*From The House of Six Doors*



*Herbs of Curaçao.*

## Recipes

Follow the recipe below for Patricia Selbert's version of a classic Curaçao Coconut Fish soup, or Sopito —tropical, light, and infused with Caribbean flavors. "When I am homesick, a pot of this soup makes me feel right at home."

### Sopito

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients\*

4 cups of coconut milk

3 lbs wild caught white fish

Salt, pepper, and nutmeg

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper

1 stalk of lemongrass

1 large onion, chopped

½ green pepper, chopped

1 medium tomato, chopped

2 celery stalks, diced

3 tbsp olive oil

2 tbsp tomato paste

4 cups vegetable stock

*(\* Patricia prefers organic and locally grown ingredients)*



### Procedure:

Season the fish with salt, pepper, and nutmeg, then sauté in olive oil. Add tomato, onion, green pepper, celery, and seasonings (cayenne, lemongrass, tomato paste) and simmer until fish flakes with a fork. In a separate pot, combine coconut milk, vegetable stock and fish with the vegetables. Boil for 5 minutes. Remove lemongrass, garnish with cilantro, and serve a wedge of lime.



Don't miss the recipes of the author in her blog [JournalbytheSeas.com](http://JournalbytheSeas.com). You'll be surprised by healthy, colorful, and tasty dishes that combine her love for Curaçao and California.



*Wild caught fish and organic vegetables.*



*Sopito, light and infused with Caribbean flavors.*

## Midwifery

Curaçao tradition of midwifery and natural birth comes alive in the pages of *The House of Six Doors*. Traditional natural midwifery techniques are centered on the mother and child; on supporting and allowing the natural process of birth to progress with practical support and pain-management techniques, but without drugs or major interventions. These techniques are illuminated in the book, as the character of Mama expresses her distress at working in a big hospital in California, where these practices are rarely used.

*“Ach, Ramón, it is terrible. This is not what I am used to. I am a midwife, and I know how to deliver babies. In Curaçao, the women in labor call me when they are ready to deliver. I deliver their babies at home, teach their families how to help the new mother, and explain to them what the mother and baby will need. I know the mothers because I have taken care of them before their babies are born, during the pregnancy, and after the baby has arrived. Here everybody is a stranger. Nobody knows each other. Such an intimate moment and only strangers around! Ay no, this is not right. I do not enjoy my work.”* Mama shook her head while she was talking. We all sat quietly for a moment.

*From The House of Six Doors*

## Mysticism

It's common to find a mixture of mystic traditions among the people of Curaçao, often combining beliefs in *bruberia* (witchcraft) and Catholic spirituality.

“Sell it to us for \$500,” Mama said, putting her hand on his arm and smiling. “I have to drive these girls to California, and \$500 is all I can spend on a car.” Mama was almost begging. “I will light some candles for you. I will say a special prayer so that you will get more customers. It will be worth it to you. I have a special relationship with Saint Anthony, the saint you were named for. He helps me all the time—he could help you, too. The money you don’t make with us you’ll get back three times over in the next two weeks.”

*From The House of Six Doors*

Her eyes were glazed. I felt confused. If Oma had been here, she would have said “*Kos ta tur brua.*” (Things are all mixed up.) In Papiamentu the word for a mix-up and a witch are the same, meaning that when things are mixed up they are bewitched or bedeviled. Now I understood how people could be bewitched.

*From The House of Six Doors*

*Left: A card at a store in Willemstad says, “May God give you twice as much as you wish for me.”*



## Papiamentu

Papiamentu, a language unique to the Netherlands Antilles, evolved during colonial times as a mixture of different African languages, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish.

Konta bai? — How are you?

Mi ta kontentu — I'm happy

Bon dia — Good morning

Bon tardi — Good afternoon

Bon nochi — Good evening

Masha danki — Thank you very much

Dushi — Sweet

Te awero — See you later

*“Shon Lulu su kurpa no ta bon,”* my grandmother answered in Papiamentu. Shon Lulu’s body did not feel well. In Papiamentu, one refers to the body as a separate part of one’s total being.

*From The House of Six Doors*

## Releases

Read the complete press releases online at:  
<http://www.publishingbytheseas.com/media/>

### **The Independence of Curaçao**

Curaçao will become independent within the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 10/10/10. The future of independence brings many possibilities, but the rich cultural history of the island remains. The new country will find an ally for the promotion of its culture in the pages of *The House of Six Doors*, a story of independence itself, which captures the flavor, the colors, the traditions and the wisdom of Curaçao.

### ***The House of Six Doors*, first novel to use CLIC2C technology.**

*The House of Six Doors* is the first novel in the world to include CLIC2C, a revolutionary technology that brings multimedia content to the printed page, with the use of a smart phone. Publishing by the Seas found this technology in Europe, where it has helped magazine publishers enrich the reader's experience and increase circulation.

To request an interview with the author or for additional information, email [jeanna@publishingbytheseas.com](mailto:jeanna@publishingbytheseas.com) or call +1.480.298.0928.

## Images

The images below may be used in articles about *The House of Six Doors* or Publishing by the Seas, upon request. Email us at [info@publishingbytheseas.com](mailto:info@publishingbytheseas.com). Photographs must have the following credit: ©2010 IsaacHernandez.com. The rest of the images in this media kit, plus other images of Curaçao, are available for licensing through Mercury Press International. There's a city collection and a countryside collection. Please email [isaac@publishingbytheseas.com](mailto:isaac@publishingbytheseas.com) for further information.



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Articles: Jeanna Zelin, Erika Römer, Nancy Black, Isaac Hernández

Photography: ©2010 IH/MercuryPress.com

Concept & Design: Helena Hernández, IH/IsaacArt.com