



Carlos Hernandez received the 2020 (Pura) Belpré Author Award for *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* (Disney-Hyperion). He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

For more information about the Belpré Award, visit <http://bit.ly/belpre-award>.



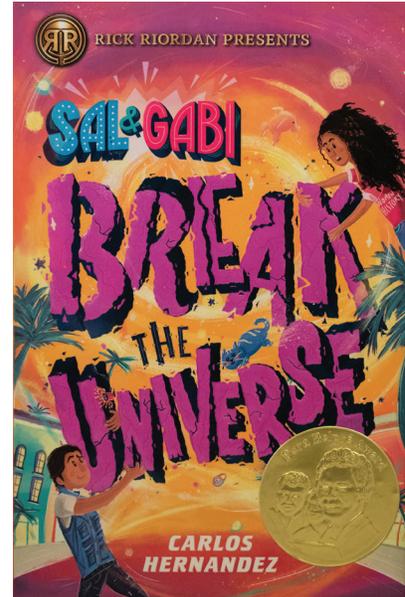
# Belpré

## AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Friends, I had no idea the Pura Belpré selection committee was even considering *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* for their award. When I received the call, I was cleaning shrimp for dinner at my friend Fran Wilde's house. (And by the way, do you know Fran's award-winning work? Please buy all of her books!) As I slowly, unbelievably, received the news that I had won, I was holding my phone the whole time with *both* of my slimy, shrimpy hands to make sure I didn't drop it, while Fran and my wife, Claire, watched me with growing curiosity, wondering who it was on the other side of the phone call making me hop up and down. To all future Pura Belpré winners, I have this advice: take a moment and wash your hands, and *then* go answer the phone.

In all seriousness, though, I want to give my eternal thanks to all the members of REFORMA, the ALSC, and the ALA who make this award possible year after year. This is the first major award I have won for my writing, and, given the Pura Belpré mission to honor the achievements of Latinx writers and illustrators, I couldn't be prouder to put this honor at the top of my biography from now on. Change is hard, and progress is slow, but the Pura Belpré Award is an example of how it gets done: by building institutions devoted to the mission of reform.

While I wish that we all could be celebrating together at the ALA an-



nual meeting, I am so honored and delighted to be able to express my thanks to you virtually. The most important thing we can do for each other right now is keep each other safe and healthy.

The second most important thing we can do is to bring joy and inspiration to each other. Nothing happens without inspiration: hunger inspires our trip to the kitchen; the love for our families and friends inspires us to make sacrifices to better their lives; and art, that great possibility engine, inspires us to reimagine the feasible, the preferable, the ideal, and the just. Inspiration is always step one to a better world.

Inspiration is what I hoped most of all *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe*

Carlos Hernandez is a Cuban-American writer who has authored more than 30 works of fiction, poetry, prose, and drama. A Ph.D. in English, Hernandez also is an associate professor at the City University of New York (CUNY), Borough of Manhattan Community College, where he teaches English courses. He is also a game writer and designer. Hernandez lives in Queens.



# Belpré

## AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

would offer to readers. Middle graders are smart, thoughtful, and ready to engage the larger world, with all its beauty and all its tragedy. I went into writing *Sal and Gabi* with those assumptions, and let me tell you, after a year of school visits and readings where I've been talking to gymnasiums stuffed to brimming with kids, I can tell you that those assumptions were on-point at least! That's why I wrote a book that didn't focus exclusively on the difficulties of having a Latinx identity, nor only the difficulties of being a Type 1 diabetic, nor only the pain of having a baby brother in the NICU, nor only the difficulties of being in possession of a power that could potentially break the entire universe. I tried to balance all those difficulties with hope, and the good hearts that beat within the ribcages of good people, and the ways in which we can recover from our mistakes, and, even when we don't have all the answers, the courage to take action and try to make the universe a better place to live.

We need that kind of courage more than ever. But that's why we have art. Art begets art. It's the good angel sitting on the shoulder of inspiration, sharing wisdom and lending strength and, most of all, fostering the desire to create.

But I have to be careful with that metaphor. I would love to expunge from human rhetoric the trope of novelists toiling away in the middle of the night, galvanized by their self-made genius, the weak light of the candle on their desks no match for the brilliance emanating from their glowing heads. My own experience, and the experience I've heard from more or less every writer I've ever spoken to, is basically the exact opposite. Claire read every word I ever wrote for *Sal and Gabi*,

including the 100,000+ words I cut out before I even put the manuscript on my editor's desk. Talk about love! My current writing group remains one of the most supportive groups of people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing: so thank you Claire and Delia and Ellen and Joel and Liz Duffy for the many angles from which you've helped me view and improve my work. My dear friends and beta-readers, Chris Kreuter, Julia Rios, and Jessica Wick saved the manuscript from ignominious errors and terrible ideas through their careful reading. My agent, DongWon Song, wrote pages in response to a draft of *Sal and Gabi* that clarified and reinforced key points in the book that I then bolstered as I revised.

Then the book went to my editor at Disney Hyperion, Stephanie Lurie. To all the writers out there, wherever you are in your career, I have this blessing for you: may you someday work with an editor as brilliant, joyful, and supportive as Steph. *Sal and Gabi* was not an easy book to edit: I was making up words left and right, in two languages, and in a comic mode, which depends so much on brevity and timing and a shared context. I learned so very much about writing from her and am eternally grateful for the way she helped me both push my writing to new territory and remain true to my original vision. Steph Lurie improves everything she touches with her magic pen, and I am so glad now to be able to say she is not only my editor, but a dear friend. Thank you, Steph, for the chance to work with you.

And speaking of chances, the main reason *Sal and Gabi* came into existence is because of Rick Riordan. You know that old saying, "Don't meet your heroes"? Well, I am here to

tell you now that you can feel free to meet Rick. He is just as wonderful in person as his narratorial voice would lead you to believe. But he's not just a great guy one on one. He created the imprint Rick Riordan Presents in conjunction with Disney Hyperion to give people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds a chance to tell their stories in their own voices. I certainly would never have had the platform to tell my zany Cuban-American multiverse story without the imprint. Thanks to him, my book, and the books by an ever-growing number of people of multicultural voices, are getting printed, reviewed, and read. Thank you forever, Rick Riordan, for making the world a little more inclusive.

And I have so many more people to thank! I should be going on for hours thanking the many people who made *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* possible! Please, hágame un favor: read my acknowledgments at the end of the book to see how many more people to whom this book owes a debt of gratitude. I've been made to understand that those acknowledgments are fairly long, but, to my mind, that's as it should be. Writing, in just about every case, isn't a solitary act. As the author of a novel, I'm much more akin to a movie director who collaborates extensively in the creation of a work of art than some suffering, genius-ridden poet, scratching out midnight truths, tormented and alone.

I think there are two main kinds of acceptance speeches: those that try to use this chance to share a philosophy of art or a political concern, and those that try to find as many different ways of saying thank you as possible. I wrote this one firmly in the thank-you camp, since I still can't believe my luck at being published,



# *Belpré*

## AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

by Disney Hyperion, under the Rick Riordan Presents imprint, which helped me reach a larger audience than I could have reached otherwise, including the members of REFORMA, the ALSC, and the ALA, who have

bestowed on me this award, which I will treasure forever.

And anyway, if you want to know my philosophy and my politics, I've written a few books that you might want

to check out. Thank you so much, readers. And thank you, librarians, for helping people read more!

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For more information about the Belpré Award, visit <http://bit.ly/belpre-award>.

### 2020 BELPRÉ AWARD COMMITTEE

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# Belpré

## ILLUSTRATOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

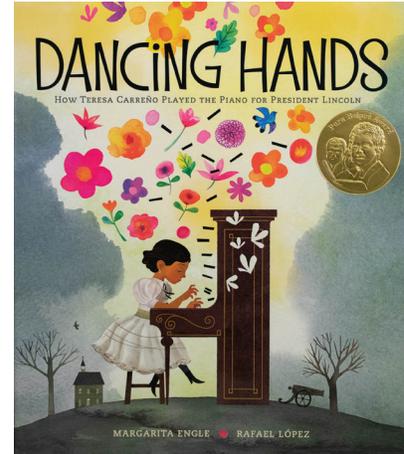


Rafael López received the 2020 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Award for *Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln* (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster). He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

Here we are, confined to our homes and the security of social distancing. Looking at what is and what is not important and essential in our lives, and trying to make sense of it all. We look for things to help us deal with this isolation. In the silence, the book becomes a friend and the musical note a soothing companion for the long days confined to four walls.

And so we have time to think and reflect on what really matters. By comparing real worries to manufactured ones. To value people like Teresa, the heroine of this story, who might speak different, look different, or think different. After facing real challenges, we can see more clearly. We are a nation, a world of immigrants and can find common ground when we can share a story or play music together. Soothing notes, jungle notes played by exuberant dancing hands bringing stories from far away. A place different than the sameness of these four walls. A reminder that a remarkable, diverse world is waiting for us. That the notes played by a young girl, who just arrived from Venezuela, can bring us comfort, healing, and joy. Because her music is her voice and her story and it brings dimension making our country, our home.

I am grateful to the Pura Belpré committee, REFORMA, ALA, and ALSC for giving the story of Teresa Carreño wings to find its way into the hands of



more young readers. I want to thank Simon and Schuster and my editor Reka Simonsen for their trust and giving me the freedom to interpret Teresa's compelling story with pictures. To my agents, Stefanie Von Borstel and Adriana Domínguez, for guidance and opening doors of opportunity. To my family for the unequivocal love and support even during days of doubt and introspection. Finally, to my friend Margarita Engle for crafting the story of an amazing, young immigrant in search of a better life. She enriched the lives of those she met along the way, including President Lincoln. A president who worked to unite us all in times of struggle, pain, and division. Listening to the voice of soothing notes, comforting notes, migrating from far, far away.

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Rafael López, an internationally recognized and award-winning illustrator and artist, grew up in Mexico City, immersed in the rich visual heritage, music, and surrealism of his native culture. A founder of the Urban Art Trail movement in San Diego, López has designed community-based mural projects nationwide. He divides his time between San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and San Diego.



# Belpré

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH



Angela Cervantes received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *Lety Out Loud* (Scholastic). She delivered her acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

**H**i, I'm Angela Cervantes, author of the 2020 Pura Belpré Honor Book *Lety Out Loud*.

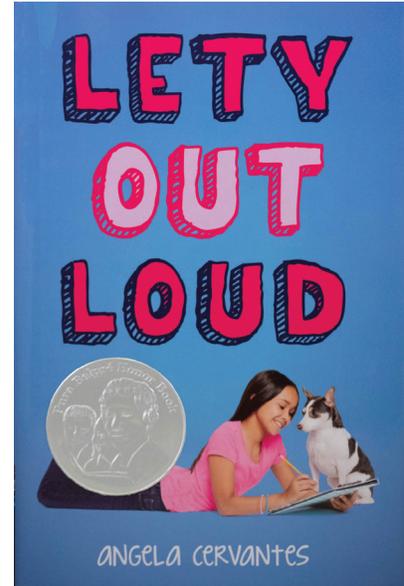
The first time I learned of Pura Belpré was many years ago from my mom, who was a fifth grade teacher in Dallas, Texas. We were talking about my dream to write children's books and she told me about a book called *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. She said she loved it and suggested that I read it, so I could learn how to write an award-winning book. I asked what award it won, and she said many, but the most important to her was the Pura Belpré because it was an award named for a Latina librarian.

Since then, I've learned so much more about the life of Pura Belpré and I've read many of the books that have received this prestigious award. I never thought I'd be among the recipients one day.

This honor means so much to me, not only because *Lety Out Loud* is a story that I wrote from my heart, but also because I'm now included on a long list of so many talented authors whose books I admire, including this year's winners.

For this honor award I want to thank the American Library Association, the Association for Library Service to Children, and REFORMA, and, especially, the Pura Belpré committee for believing in my novel.

*Lety Out Loud* would have never happened without my Scholastic and Full



Circle Literary family, including my wonderful editor, Anna Bloom, and Lizette Serrano and Emily Heddleson for always cheering me on.

And my agent, Adriana Domínguez, for telling me ten years ago that my writing "showed promise" and then guiding me to this point and beyond.

I'm grateful to the wonderful school librarians and teachers I've met at school visits, who have shared with me how much *Lety Out Loud* means to them.

I can't forget my family either. It's because of them and the many adventures we've shared, I'll never run out of story ideas.

Finally, I must thank the many children whose experience learning

Angela Cervantes is the author of contemporary middle-grade fiction. Her other titles include *Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring*, a Texas Bluebonnet Master List finalist, *Gaby, Lost and Found*, and *Allie, First at Last*. Cervantes also authored the novelization for Disney/Pixar's film, *Coco*. In 2008, she was named one of *Kansas City Star Magazine's* Emerging Artists. Cervantes lives in Kansas City.



# *Belpré*

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

English in this country inspired this story. I've witnessed firsthand their courage, their diligence and grit even when faced with being underestimated, misunderstood, and often feeling left out. Now, they have a book that

represents one of their many stories. I hope that they can see themselves in this book and know that they're not invisible, their stories matter. And that stories celebrating them can *even* win awards.

Again, muchas gracias for this honor.

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Rebecca Balcárcel received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *The Other Half of Happy* (Chronicle). She delivered her acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

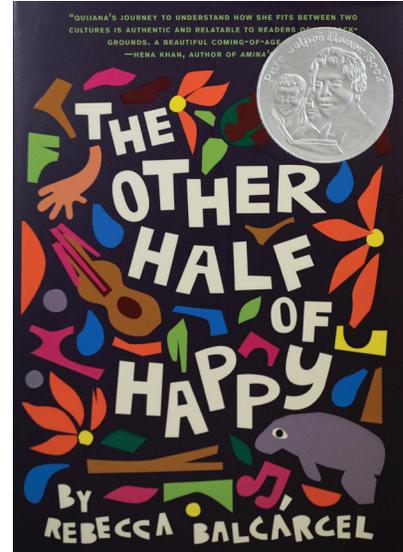
# Belpré

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

This is my dad's guitar. His songs were the soundtrack of my childhood. "Cielito Lindo," "Guantanamera," "La Bamba." My mother always joined him, harmonizing by adding in the alto line. In fact, the three of us sang. I was only seven years old when I found myself at the front of the church singing a Spanish Christmas song, performing in native clothing. As we drove home, I remember feeling a little down. The truth was, I didn't understand the words I was singing. I'd memorized the syllables, and I loved the melody, but I didn't feel legit. When we visited my Guatemalan-born cousins, same thing. They immediately recognized me as more salt than cilantro. Like Quijana in *The Other Half of Happy*, I was a mixed kid and I couldn't switch languages like bike speeds.

In *The Other Half of Happy*, Quijana manages to embrace both sides of her heritage, and through the love of her abuela especially, finds validation, self-acceptance, even self-celebration. Without fluency in Spanish, she still finally belongs. My favorite comment on *The Other Half of Happy* came from a young person tweeting, "I have never felt so seen in a book." Her tweet made *me* feel seen. I'm not alone; my kind of family is real. Apparently, validation and self-celebration can flow from reading a book. The book alone will do if abuelas are few.

This is why the Pura Belpré Awards carry such importance. Whether it's kids juggling two or more cultures or just searching for that path to self-celebration, REFORMA, the ALSC,



and the ALA are pointing them to books. So many novel readers this year are going to be meeting Sal and Gabi, Lety, and Quijana. I'm deeply honored that my book is among these and past winners. And I say "my" book, but a book takes a community, so thank you, family. Thank you, agent Katie Grimm; thank you, editor Taylor Norman; thank you, Chronicle, for producing a beautiful book and sending it into the world with such energy and love. And of course, thank you, committee, for your reading and organizing and your commitment to this work. My heart is with you all: librarians, readers, teachers, book lovers of all kinds, as we celebrate the books being honored today and their power to connect hearts, ignite self-confidence, and make a better world. Que le vaya bien, thank you.

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Rebecca Balcárcel received an MFA from Bennington Writing Seminars where she also received their Jane Kenyon Poetry Prize. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Third Coast* and *North American Review*. Balcárcel is an Associate Professor of English at Tarrant County (Texas) College. When not writing and teaching, she analyzes literature on her YouTube channel, SixMinuteScholar. Balcárcel lives in Bedford, Texas.



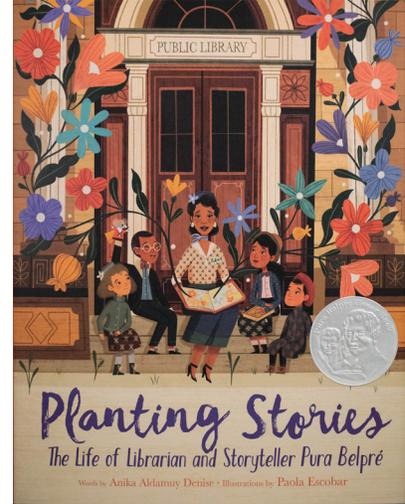
Anika Aldamuy Denise received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré* (HarperCollins), illustrated by Paola Escobar. She delivered her acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

# Belpré

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Thank you so much. I am incredibly grateful to the Pura Belpré committee, REFORMA, and ALSC for this honor. I was so looking forward to being together in Chicago, celebrating, hugging, and thanking you for choosing *Planting Stories* as a 2020 Pura Belpré Honor Book. And, even though we can't connect in person, we can and we must continue to connect to celebrate our stories. Our picture books, our novels, our poetry are essential right now. They're how we make sense of the human condition. They provide us a long lens on history so that we remember that we have before, and will again, come through difficult times. They give us words to hold on to when we lack them, and the quiet spaces to retreat to when we need them. This is something that Pura Belpré knew in her bones: that stories are vital and that every child deserves to see their lives and experiences reflected in the pages of their books. Not just in stories of struggle, but of magic and triumph, invention and adventure, bravery and hope. Stories like Sal and Gabi's, Lety's, and Quijana's, and Daisy's and her Papi's—full of humor and heart. Like the stories Pura planted, nurtured, and kept blooming for us all.

So now I need to thank a few folks and I'm going to try not to cry. First, thank you to Paola Escobar for her exquisite illustrations. To my marvelous editor Nancy Inteli, to Chelsea Donaldson, Manny Blasco, Erika DiPasquale, Sam Benson, Patty Rosati, and everyone at HarperCollins. I also want to thank



my agent Emily van Beek for her endless support. A huge thank you as well to the archivist at El Centro, The Center for Puerto Rican Studies, without whom I could not have written this book and we would not have the treasure of the Belpré archives. Thank you to my daughters Sofia, Isabel, and Esme and to my husband Christopher for supporting my writing journey with patience, encouragement, and love. To my titi Rosie who introduced me to the stories of Pura Belpré. To my Papi in heaven who is smiling so wide right now. And lastly, I want to thank all the librarians and educators who are supporting our Latinx communities especially in this time where so many are suffering. You inspire me by walking the path Pura lit with her storyteller's candle every day. Mil gracias a todos.

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Anika Aldamuy Denise is the author of picture books including *Starring Carmen!*, *Lights, Camera, Carmen!*, and *Monster Trucks*. Her books have been featured in the *New York Times*, *Junior Library Guild*, *Book Riot*, and *Latinx in Kidlit*. Her forthcoming title is *A Girl Named Rosita*—a picture book biography of Puerto Rican actress and singer Rita Moreno, illustrated by Leo Espinosa. Denise currently lives in Rhode Island with her family.



# Belpré

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH



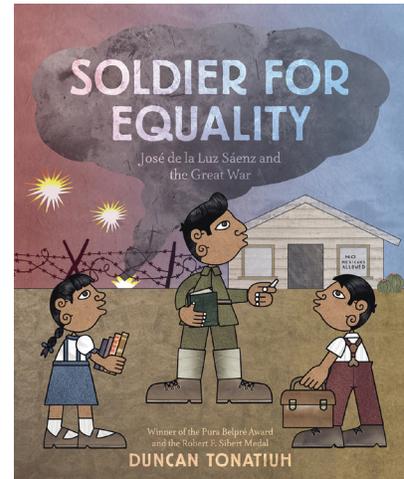
Duncan Tonatiuh received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *Soldier for Equality: José de la Luz Sáenz and the Great War* (Abrams). He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

**H**i, everyone. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you.

I want to say thank you to the Pura Belpré committee for this wonderful honor. I'm very thankful for it. I'm very happy and pleased that my book received an honorable mention for writing because this book, in particular, I had to revise, reimagine, start from scratch several times over. It was quite a long writing process, so it's very rewarding to see some of my efforts pay off.

I want to say thank you to my editor and friend, Howard Reeves, who believed in the project, who guided me in finding the right shape for the book, who asked questions, and helped me make the book better. And to the ABRAMS team—the people who helped me design and produce the book; it's always a joy to work with them. They have always been so supportive, and they do such great work. In this book, I was a little behind schedule, and they were always very patient with me. I really appreciate that. And, to the marketing and salespeople who make sure librarians, teachers, and everyone sees the book, I'm really happy and thankful to be working with you.

I want to say thank you to my family, especially my wife and children, who always support me, who love me, who always encourage me. I remember when I was working on some of



the last details for the cover while we were supposed to be on vacation, and they were always very encouraging and supportive. I am very grateful for their love.

This book, *Soldier for Equality*, is a story that takes place about a hundred years ago, and it's about José de la Luz Sáenz and his involvement with the U.S. Armed Forces as a soldier fighting in World War I. But it's also about his struggle and his fight against prejudice, against discrimination, for equality back home in the United States and Texas. And even though this is a historical book, I think it's a book that is very relevant to our world today. As I'm recording this, there've been protests in response to the killing of George Floyd over the last few days all across the United States. That frustration Luz felt as a Mexican American a hundred

Duncan Tonatiuh, a native of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, graduated from Parsons School of Design in New York City. The author-illustrator of numerous books, his work has received multiple accolades, among them the Pura Belpré Medal, Sibert Medal, Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award, and The Américas Award. He currently lives in San Miguel with his family but travels to the U.S. often.



# *Belpré*

## AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

years ago because of discrimination is very much alive. Prejudice and racism are still very much a part of our world, and that frustration that he experienced is very much there still, and that fight for a better society, for

a more equal America, is very much alive today. This book is very relevant to young readers nowadays.

And again, I want to say thank you. I'm very thankful; I'm very grateful. I

wish we could be together celebrating in person, and, hopefully, sometime in the future we will be.

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# Belpré

## ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

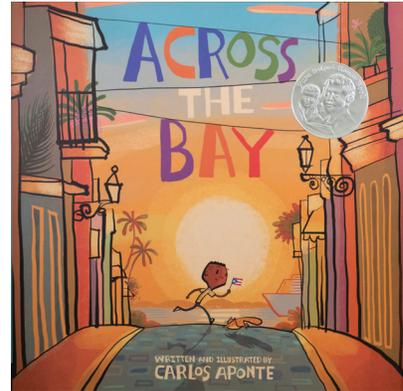


Carlos Aponte received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor for *Across the Bay* (Penguin Workshop). He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

Thank you, American Library Association, for awarding me one of the Pura Belpré medals [sic] for illustration. I'm deeply honored to be part of this group of beautiful image-makers like Zeke Peña and Raúl Gonzalez, who brought life to *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* and *¡Vamos! Let's Go to the Market*. Congratulations to both of you! I can't wait to see your next projects!

*Across the Bay* is my story, a true story. But this tale of this kid looking for his father is an excuse for a deeper one. Rediscovering my roots, my love of my culture, family, and appreciating what we have. *Across the Bay* is also across the Atlantic Ocean. This book is also about the diaspora, longing for the warmth, reconnection with the island.

Last year I traveled to Puerto Rico to present the book to a group of students who, just like my character, Carlitos, made the trip from the town of Cataño to Old San Juan. I was delighted to read them the book. I wish you could see their faces when they discovered the story was about a kid who lived in their hometown; they were thrilled; they were proud. I told



them if I was able to tell my story, they could do the same.

I accept this award on behalf of those Puerto Rican kids. They might live in a small, forgotten town, but they have love, family, and big dreams.

I am them, and they are me, and that connection will always be there.

Thanks to Penguin Workshop, my editor Max Bisantz for shaping a very emotional story, and Francesco Sedita for his fantastic support.

A todos ustedes un gran abrazo. Gracias.

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Carlos Aponte is an artist, designer, and author. His fashion illustrations have appeared in numerous books including *Menswear Illustration* (Thames & Hudson, 2015) and *The New Icons of Fashion Illustration* (Laurence King, 2013). Aponte is represented by Art Department where his clients include the *New Yorker* and Coca-Cola, among others. His first children's book, *A Season to Bee*, was published in 2017. He lives in Jersey City.



# Belpré

## ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

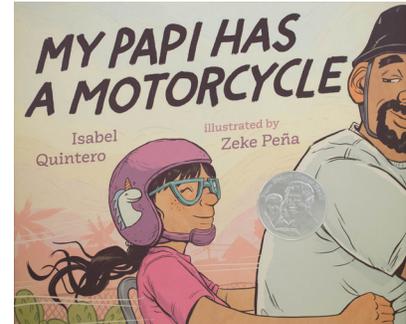


**Zeke Peña received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor for *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* (Dial/Penguin), written by Isabel Quintero. He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.**

Greetings, friends. My name is Zeke Peña. I hope this finds you and your family in good health and spirit. For this amazing honor, thank you, ALSC, REFORMA, as well as all the librarians and educators doing hard work in our communities. I'm thankful to the committee that generously gives their time to consider our books. To be honest, it's been difficult trying to get into the head space to record this video. But today I'm reminded that this is a special time we're in. It's a blessing to witness the years of hard work from community organizers meeting the energy of youth activists in the streets against systemic racism, police murder, and oppression. For people of color, this moment challenges our ability to remember the resilience of our ancestors who have been fighting for generations.

As storytellers we have a responsibility. We wield the power to rewrite, reclaim, and document – to help remember. We hope our stories will resonate through future generations to be a stronghold for empowerment and self-determination. If we don't see ourselves in the books we read, how can we remember where our people have been and imagine what we can become?

*My Papi Has a Motorcycle* is our small offering to the people in our communities who make our neighborhoods a home. We remember the people who build our houses and pick the food we eat. We acknowledge them and honor their work. Our hope is that



young people find a little bit of themselves and their communities on the pages of our book. We also hope they have fun on the way, zooming along with Daisy and Papi.

This award is for Isabel Quintero, her papi, her mama, and her brother—without their story my illustrations are empty. Also to my late father who always made time for me after work, my mom, my partner, my family, and my community. To our agent Peter Steinberg who represented us on this project. And to Namrata Tripathi, our editor, Jasmin Rubero, our art director, Joanna Cardenas, and the Kokila family at Penguin Young Readers, who gave us the support to tell our story and do our thing. Congratulations to other award recipients. Especially my friend Raúl The Third, two people from El Paso, that's pretty amazing. That we all continue to grow toward liberation. To defund the police, abolish ICE, liberate all detained migrants and prisoners. Black Lives Matter. Thank you.

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Zeke Peña was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and grew up in El Paso, Texas. He earned a degree in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin and is self-taught in drawing and painting. Peña has published work with REMEZCLA, VICE.com, *Latino USA*, *The Believer* magazine, and *The Nib*, among others. *My Papi*, his first children's book, also won the Ezra Jack Keats award.

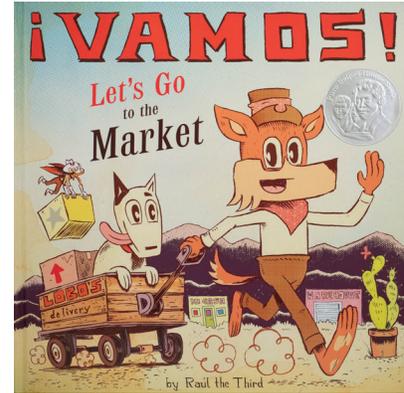


Raúl Gonzalez received a 2020 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor for *¡Vamos! Let's Go to the Market* (Versify/HMH). He delivered his acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

# Belpré

## ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Hello, my friends. My name is Raúl the Third. I'm super honored to be here with you today. I want to thank the Pura Belpré committee for honoring me with the Pura Belpré Honor; it looks awesome on this book, so thank you so much. Thank you to ALA and to REFORMA. I have three minutes, so I'm going to try to rattle this off as quickly as I can. I'm really honored to be sitting on this stage—let's pretend this is the stage, alright—honored to be sitting on this stage with Rafael and Carlos Aponte and Zeke, and to the writers, Carlos Hernandez and Angela Cervantes, Rebecca, Anika, Duncan, your work is so inspiring and so important; it's awesome to just be here with you today. I also want to thank my team at Versify and HMH, so Kwame, man, thank you so much for putting together Versify, and thanks for inviting me to be on the first list. It's been such an amazing adventure to put these books together. I also want to thank Arielle Eckstut; you have been one of my biggest supporters from the get-go. None of my career would be possible without you and The Book Doctors, and for giving me that phone call and asking me to come up with ideas for Kwame's new imprint. I don't know how it happened, but I'm so glad that I was able to create *¡Vamos! Let's Go to the Market*. I want to thank my amazing editor Margaret Raymo. Margaret, you are such an inspiration, and you give me a lot of confidence to write and illustrate books. I couldn't do any of this without your amazing guidance and without your help, thank you. I can't believe we're



working on our fifth book together; I pinch myself continuously over that and the many more books we have coming out soon. I want to thank my amazing art director, Natalie. Natalie, thank you so much for everything. You make these books look so amazing in every which way. Look at this—that little cucaracha there—that's so cool. Trish, thank you for making sure that these books are printed so magnificently, and, of course, I'm going to thank Elaine Bay. Elaine, your coloring on these books is so amazing. I'm so lucky to live with you and to have your inspiration around me constantly. Also, quick shout-out to my family in Juarez and in El Paso, specifically thank you to my familia in Juarez, working at the Mercado Cuauhtemoc and to the amazing photograph that my cousin Annette Torres handed to me, so that I could be inspired to create this book. A todos muchisimas gracias y un día ojala estaremos juntos sin estas mascararas. Goodbye, peace.

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Raúl Gonzalez—Raúl The Third—is an award-winning illustrator, author, and artist living in Boston. His work centers around the contemporary Mexican-American experience and his memories of growing up in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. *¡Vamos!*, which Gonzalez wrote and illustrated, is his first authorial project.