



# Pura Belpré Children's Author Honor Acceptance Speech

*Donna Barba Higuera received a 2021 (Pura) Belpré Children's Author Honor for Lupe Wong Won't Dance (Levine Querido). She delivered her acceptance remarks during the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 27, 2021, on YouTube.*

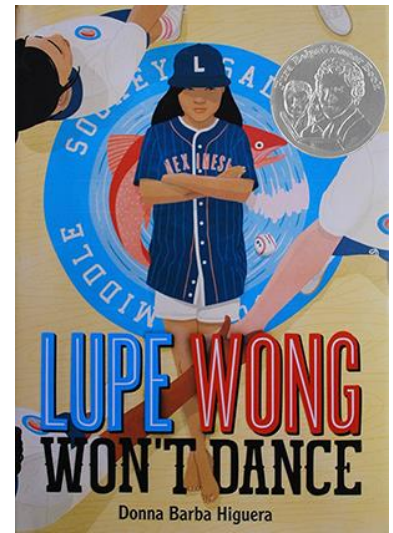
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Hi friends!

While I was hoping to give my thanks and see everyone in person, I'm happy for the opportunity to do that here. First, thank you to ALSC, REFORMA, ALA, educators and librarians, thank you to the creators of the Pura Belpré and the committee who chose these books. Thank you so much for this honor.

When I was writing *Lupe Wong Won't Dance*, I was just writing my experience, and that of my children, who like Lupe, are Latina and Chinese. I never dreamed, first, that anyone would read this book, then it would go on to win the Pura Belpré Honor. I will admit that I didn't fully realize why this book and this character are so important. Having books in which my own children and other biracial children can see themselves was something I never saw as a child.

I spent much of my childhood feeling inadequate. Parents from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Feeling that I was not enough of this, or not enough of that. Being told I had to mark one bubble. Just one.



Pura Belpré worked for children like I'd been, like my own kids, so we could see ourselves in books. She understood and promoted that being Latinx isn't just one thing, and why this award that celebrates Latinx culture and making sure children are seen is so heartfelt to me.

To the other writers, many of them my friends, or I just haven't met you yet, felicidades! Ernesto, Adrianna, Yamile, Jenny, Lilliam! We all have such different backgrounds and stories. All special and unique and fascinating. Our ancestors are proud!

So if I could speak to my eight-year-old self, which is the same message I would give any young reader, and perhaps a future writer. "Hold your head high. Never hide any part of what you are or who you are. Mark all your bubbles! There is great power in the history of your family and ancestors. Speak their names and their stories. Be humble and allow others who might be intimidated by their unfamiliarity of your culture to understand, empathize, and grow. And do the same yourself when listening to others who may have a different background than yourself."

I have many to thank: My family—my dad and late mother. I am so grateful for not only the love and nurturing you gave me, but the example. I saw go to work every day to educate and advocate for all children.

Thank you to my husband Mark and my own children, Elena, Sophia, Max, and Bethany, for your humor and support.

Thank you to my editor, Nick Thomas, and everyone at Levine Querido: Arthur A. Levine, Antonio Gonzalez Cerna, Alexandra Hernandez, Meghan McCullough. Thank you, all!

Huge thank you to my agent, Allison Remcheck, and the whole team at Stimola Literary Studio.

I need to thank my critique group family—The Papercuts. I love you guys.

My family of fellow Latina writers—Las Musas. Thank you for so much hermandad and support this past year.

Thank you to the children who will read *Lupe Wong Won't Dance*. I hope you see someone like Lupe has a story to tell, just like you do.

Finally, thank you to Pura Belpré for your work and legacy of putting Latino folklore and literature into the hands of young readers.

Mil gracias.

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