



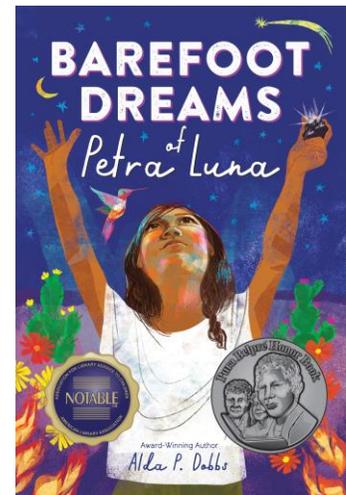
# Pura Belpré Children's Author Honor Acceptance Speech



**Alda P. Dobbs** received a 2022 (Pura) Belpré Children's Author Honor for *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna* (Sourcebooks Young Readers). She delivered her acceptance remarks at the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 26, 2022, during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

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Twelve years ago, while sitting at a café in Naples, Italy, I took the plunge. I decided to become a writer. Coming from a background in physics and engineering, the writing world seemed as foreign and daunting as if I'd traveled to another planet. The emotions that ran through me when I attended my first writing conference mirrored those I'd felt as an immigrant child. I felt lost, confused, and out of place. I didn't speak the language of writers, I was unfamiliar with their culture, but I was determined to share my stories, my observations, and things that had moved me so much as a child.



I soon made writing friends and learned lots of rules, such as, show don't tell, read everything under the sun, and most important, make sure your characters aren't ordinary, make sure they're larger than life. With time and perseverance, I put into practice those rules and saw my writing improve, but the most difficult rule proved to be creating a larger-than-life character. In my mind, I needed to give birth to a character who would motivate people to seek the truth. One who would refuse to be seen as a victim but would rather be hailed as a fighter.

It turns out, I'd always known this larger-than-life character. She'd lived inside two women very dear to me: my grandmother and my great-grandmother. These two formidable women led lives of courage and determination. From them, I inherited stories rich with wisdom and a work ethic that, when combined with luck, allowed *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna* to come to life.

From a very young age, I embraced the United States, my adoptive country, and all the opportunities it presented. Despite the poverty that surrounded me and my family, I felt rich. I was learning a new culture, a new language, and thanks to my mother, my Mexican roots ran deep. I'm grateful for the many family stories of courage, bravery, resilience, and astuteness. I carry these stories close to me and use them as a shield to fend off insecurity and rejection.

Like the blacksmith or the woodworker who left tools for his son, my family left a legacy of stories. When I became a writer, I faced rejection after rejection and soon learned that my shield of stories was also a tool that allowed me to create *Petra Luna* – a character larger than life.

I want to thank my family for their endless love and support in this journey, and Sourcebooks for believing in my story. I'm also grateful for the dedication of Pura Belpré, whose passion and relentless work paved the way for us to be here. I want to thank the Pura Belpré committee, REFORMA, the ALA, and the ALSC, as well as the many librarians and educators, who embraced *Petra Luna* from the start. You're the ones who introduce children to books that help them make sense of the world and their place in it. Thank you for sharing Petra's struggles, joys, and triumphs.

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