



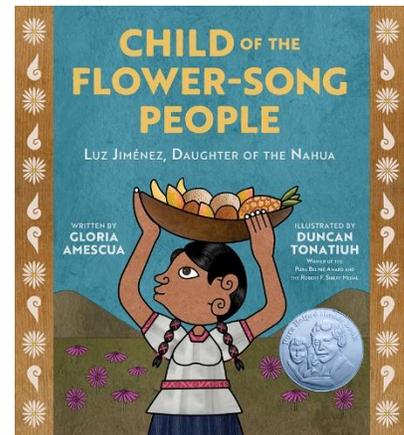
Pura Belpré Children's Author Honor Acceptance Speech



Gloria Amescua received a 2022 (Pura) Belpré Children's Author Honor for *Child of the Flower-Song People: Luz Jiménez, Daughter of the Nahua* (Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS). She delivered her acceptance remarks at the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 26, 2022, during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

I'm thrilled *Child of the Flower-Song People: Luz Jiménez, Daughter of the Nahua* has been awarded this wonderful Pura Belpré Author Honor.

I want to first give my heartfelt thanks to ALSC, YALSA, REFORMA, ALA, educators, and librarians. Librarians are the ones who get those books to kids.



Thank you to the Pura Belpré founders and the 2022 committee who had the difficult job of choosing among all the beautiful and wonderful Latinx books published last year.

I am grateful for my agent Taylor Martindale Kean and Stefanie Sanchez Von Borstel at Full Circle Literary for seeing promise in my writing and helping me shape it into this book. Their belief in me means the world.

I cannot thank my editor Howard Reeves enough for his insightful guidance, as well as realizing how Duncan Tonatiuh's pre-Columbian artistic style would be perfect for our book. Thank you also to the whole ABRAMS team who have been so supportive, especially Andrew Smith, Sara Sproull, Jenny Choy, and Gaby Paez. And, of course, thank you to Duncan for his fabulous illustrations.

I wouldn't be here receiving this award if it weren't for my late mother and father, Antonia (Tony) and Anacleto, who valued family and education even though they didn't have that opportunity. My father left Michoacán, Mexico, as a teenager and later met and married my Mexican American mother. He taught himself the basics with workbooks he bought, and my mother had only been able to attend a sporadic two to three years of elementary school. As an adult she continued to go to night school to learn the basics of how to read and write. Yet they had three children all of whom finished high school and had further education.

My father milked our neighbors, the Rev. and Mrs. Kidd's, cows every morning, worked as a dry cleaner, came home and milked them again every evening for decades. My mother was a cook in schools and also washed my neighbors' linens and clothes. Both as rent for a house I always thought was ours. These neighbors also gave us books, among other things, that inspired me to write and to write poetry. I also had the library's bookmobile. That was my saving grace in the summers where I carried out stacks of books. Thank God there weren't limits to those stacks. And it kept me going. I fell into that world of books. I hope that my parents know that this award honors them, their sacrifices and their hopes for us.

Why did I write this particular biography about Luz Jiménez? I wrote it because I connected with Luz on a very personal level. Luz was proud of the indigenous people, the Nahua, their culture and language. She kept the stories and connections to the ancients in her heart. By being herself, by being Nahua, she honored her people through the representations in art and through helping preserve the language, Nahuatl. So, why was this important to me? When the Mexican government mandated schooling, the students were shamed about their native language and clothing. The same happened to indigenous communities in the United States and across the globe. A similar shaming of Spanish-speakers in the US and punishments for speaking Spanish in school affected me, but not in the way you might think. My parents took in society's pressures and didn't speak to my younger brother or me in Spanish, though they had with my older brother. They thought it was best that we only speak English. I feel I lost my Mexican culture and language. I had no grandparents to pass on their stories or culture. I felt ashamed and as if I didn't belong anywhere as a child and teenager, though I worked to regain these as an adult. I was proud of Luz for not losing her culture or language.

I would say to young Gloria and what I want all kids to have is pride in their uniqueness, their special gifts, even if they don't know what they are yet, to get to know their history and culture (and everyone

has a history and culture, whatever it might consist of). I want all kids to feel seen and be proud of who they are, especially kids who haven't seen themselves represented in books until recently. I believe all kids should have hope and great expectations of themselves. The magic of books can help.

I want to thank Bethany Hegedus and The Writing Barn, Las Musas, fellow Latina writers, SCBWI, and all the supportive, genuine, and giving friends, many of whom I've met through these groups.

I'm grateful for the support of Jeff and my family, especially my son Corbin, daughter-in-law, Jennifer, and my granddaughters Ruby and Violet, who inspired me to write books for children.

This is an honor that I never expected but that I will keep in my heart always.

Mil gracias a todos.

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