



Belpré

AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH



Ruth Behar received the 2018 (Pura) Belpré Author Award for *Lucky Broken Girl* (Nancy Paulsen/Penguin Random).

Her acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

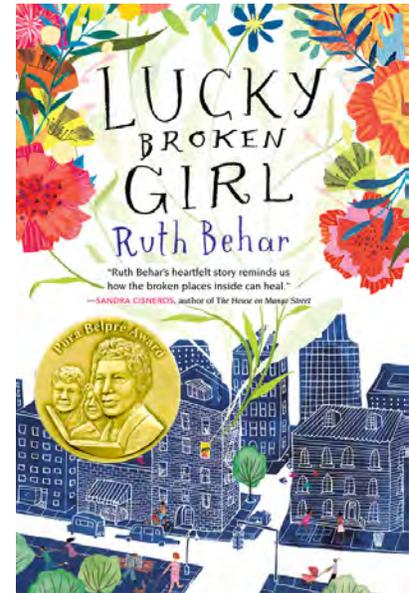
For more information about the Belpré Award, visit <http://bit.ly/belpre-award>.



When I was growing up in Queens, New York, we had a summertime ritual of going to Jones Beach every Sunday. My parents, my brother and I, together with a huge group of their friends from Cuba and their families, along with my grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins, would make the trek to Jones Beach and stake out our spot on the sand. It wasn't Cuba, the sand at Jones Beach was scratchy rather than silky, and the ocean was cold and rough, not warm and calm, but it was as close as we could get to the tropical island we had loved and lost.

In the evening, we would all reconvene at Asia Continental on Roosevelt Avenue—a Chinese-Cuban restaurant where you could order egg drop soup with your rice and black beans and fried plantains, and your grilled steak and onions came with fortune cookies for dessert. As the Chinese-Cuban waiters took our orders, I felt at home. We were Cuban Jews eating in a Chinese-Cuban restaurant in the middle of the most diverse borough in the most diverse city in the world. Confronted with a mix that most people would think was unusual, I realized that there are countless ways to be Latina and Latino. I had not yet been introduced to anthropology, but I saw firsthand that every culture is a mosaic of many histories.

Those of us on this side of the border feel a deep pride in our roots in



the other America of the south that remains a part of us no matter how much we merge into the America of the north. Now, as the largest ethnic minority in the United States, we Latinas and Latinos represent an enduring bridge between both Americas, and among us, no one is illegal.

My novel, *Lucky Broken Girl*, is a love letter to the New York of my youth, where people from different places and different backgrounds rubbed shoulders and lived as neighbors. Ruthie's best friends are a Bengali boy, Ramu, whose mother prevents him from playing with the kids for fear he will lose his Indian traditions, and a Belgian girl, Danielle, whose mother is Moroccan-Jewish and di-

Born in Havana, Cuba, Ruth Behar was five years old when her family came to live in the United States. She received a B.A. in Spanish literature from Wesleyan University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Princeton University. *Lucky Broken Girl* is her first novel for young readers and based on her experience as a child, spending a year in a body cast after a serious car accident. She currently lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Belpré

AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

voiced. There is a Mexican neighbor, Chicho, who introduces Ruthie to the art of Frida Kahlo, and a Puerto Rican physical therapist, Amara, who gets Ruthie up on her feet again. Clay is an African-American hospital attendant who came to New York from the South. In the hospital there's a mean nurse, Neala, who's Irish-American, and she's not really mean, Ruthie discovers, she's sad.

The multicultural mosaic of 1960s New York that I represent in my book is no longer unusual. It is, in fact, increasingly the day-to-day reality of many people in this country. I hope Ruthie's child's eye view, through which the story of *Lucky Broken Girl* unfolds, offers not only a fresh perspective on Latina/Latino identity, but also a jumping-off point to a larger conversation—that our national origins aren't all that define us. We are not born Latinas and Latinos. We become Latinas and Latinos by intersecting deeply with each other and with the ever-widening world.

*

Receiving the Pura Belpré Award, which honors the memory of the first Puerto Rican/Afro-Latina librarian in New York, is very exciting to me as a Latina New Yorker and also because Puerto Rico was part of my childhood. They say, "Cuba and Puerto Rico are as two wings of the same bird." Indeed, part of my family settled in Puerto Rico after the exodus from Cuba. My parents saved up and one summer we went to visit my Aunt Dora and Uncle Jacobo who lived by the beach in San Juan. It was magical. I recall my parents falling into a nostalgic trance, saying over and over, "Isn't this like Cuba?" And I wondered

who I might have been had I lived out my childhood in a tropical island.

Pura Belpré, an *isleña*, an island woman, brought the spirit of Puerto Rico with her to New York. Long before the phrase, "We need diverse books," was coined, she was enacting it through her visionary work. She wrote children's books inspired by her knowledge of the folklore of Puerto Rico, and as a librarian at the New York Public Library, she filled shelves with Spanish books and held bilingual story hours, showing Latina and Latino readers that they truly belonged.

I feel humbled to receive the Pura Belpré Author Award and inspired to keep writing books for young people that can open our hearts to the humanity in us all.

I was out dancing tango with a few friends that February night when the Pura Belpré Award committee was trying to reach me. The nostalgic music of Argentina filling the room, I took a break from dancing and noticed my phone was ringing. What amazing serendipity that it was Alicia Long, a native of Buenos Aires, calling to give me the exciting news. I told her I was dancing tango and she told me she was delighted I was enjoying the music of her homeland. It was a very Latino moment.

I want to thank the entire Pura Belpré Award Selection committee for presenting me with such a huge gift. Thank you to Alicia again, the chair of the committee, and to members Emily Rose Aguiló-Pérez; Stefanie Isabel Bailey; Amy C. Martin; Susan H. Polos; Patty Gonzales Ramirez; and Edwin Rodarte.

I am proud to be part of a spectacular group of Pura Belpré award winners this year—Juana Martinez-Neal, Pablo Cartaya, Celia Pérez, Adriana García, and John Parra—you are all incredible.

I want to offer a warm thank you to REFORMA (the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking) and the ALSC (the Association for Library Service to Children) and, of course, the ALA. Thank you for all the great work you do to promote literacy, reading, and writing.

My agent, Alyssa Eisner Henkin, read the manuscript of *Lucky Broken Girl* just weeks after giving birth to her second child and took a chance on it. She has stood by me ever since and I am forever grateful.

I wouldn't be here without my editor, Nancy Paulsen, who held my hand as I revised and finally let the story go. After I read Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* and learned Nancy Paulsen was her editor, my dream was to work with Nancy. I feel so honored to be one of her authors. Thank you, Nancy, for a beautiful book journey.

To everyone at Penguin Random House—Sara Le Fleur, Venessa Carson, Carmela Iaria, Elyse Marshall, and Dana Leydig, a tremendous thank you for all you've done to get my book into the hands of readers.

A special shout-out to my friend, Sandra Cisneros, whose words grace the cover, and who has encouraged me to believe I could be a writer.

Thank you to my husband, David, whose patience and love I couldn't



Belpré

AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

do without. Thank you to my son Gabriel, to whom *Lucky Broken Girl* is dedicated, for being so big-hearted always. David and Gabriel, you both are the anchors of my life.

I am fortunate to be able to say thank you to the two important stars of my book – Mami and Papi – my parents, Rebeca and Alberto Behar. They kept alive the memory of Cuba and it is thanks to them that I have such a strong sense of Latina identity. I know you did your best to understand me, a daughter who was always breaking the rules of what a good Cuban girl was supposed to be. Gracias for being here with your *niña vieja*, your old little girl, to celebrate. From what Mami has told me, very politely, this is the first book of mine you both read and actually enjoyed.

*

In writing *Lucky Broken Girl*, there was a lesson from my childhood that haunted me: your whole life could change overnight. Since early on, I knew the world was fragile.

From one day to another, we lost a country. We left everything in Cuba. In the one suitcase we were allowed, my mother packed the family photographs, so we'd never forget where we came from.

Starting from nothing in the United States meant we felt we were nothing.

I remember the fear: be polite, be nice, or they'll send you back to Cuba.

It pains me to think of all the children who, in our current moment of cruel deportations and detentions, are living in even worse fear, torn from their families, waiting in desperation, be-

ing polite, being nice, so as not to be wounded.

Your whole life could change overnight. If that lesson wasn't hammered into me by our immigrant experience, it struck again, literally crashing into me, when we were in a terrible car accident on the Belt Parkway soon after arriving from Cuba. You could lose a country. And you could lose your ability to get out of your bed.

*

These two experiences are interwoven in *Lucky Broken Girl*—being an immigrant child and being a girl stuck in bed for a year. They were the turning points in my life that led me to become a thinker, a writer, and a dreamer.

As an immigrant child, I was encouraged to learn English or remain forever in the “dumb class.” Fortunately, there is no “dumb class” in our schools anymore. I was able to experience this through my exciting visit with the fifth graders at my old elementary school, P.S. 117 in Queens, New York. When asked who came from immigrant families, they all raised their hands. There are twenty foreign languages spoken at my old school, ranging from Spanish, Russian, and Arabic to Bengali, Chinese, and Haitian Creole. The current teachers at P.S. 117, unlike mine years ago, teach the kids to take pride in their heritage. One of the teachers said the Latina and Latino kids in her class felt empowered explaining to her the Spanish expressions in my book, while the Bengali kids felt empowered discussing the meaning of the Shiva necklace given to Ruthie by her friend Ramu. Their families struggle to put food

on the table, as my family did. They'd never had an author visit until I came. But they are growing up knowing they don't need to erase any part of themselves to shine.

As a child unable to rise from my bed, I learned how a disability marginalized you. When I finally went back to school, I was the quiet kid who had devoured the World Book Encyclopedia my parents bought on the installment plan. I was awkward in my body. I no longer ran like a gazelle. In my mind I was still the girl in the plaster cast. I ambled around stiffly, afraid to stumble, afraid to get hurt.

I might have disappeared into the shadows when I entered high school, except I was blessed to have two extraordinary teachers, Mrs. Weinstein who taught history, and Mrs. Rodriguez, who had been a professor at the University of Havana, and taught Spanish literature. They pushed me to apply for scholarships to go to college. Thanks to their concern, I took my education seriously.

I wanted to be a writer and dreamed of writing a novel. But another part of me wanted to be a nomad and wander the world. Maybe because lullabies were sung to me in Spanish, I loved the language and wanted to immerse myself in its rhythms. That's what led me into anthropology, spending years living among strangers in Spain, Mexico, and Cuba who showed me great kindness. I look back with gratitude on those years. I found a home in many places where Spanish is spoken and I learned to listen to people's stories.

But I kept postponing my dream. In the end, it took a lifetime for me to get



Belpré

AUTHOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

around to writing my novel. I guess I had to take that long journey to find the path to everything I'd kept hidden from myself.

When I sat down to write *Lucky Broken Girl* what emerged were bits and pieces of a story. I heard a voice calling, faintly at first, then loud and clear—the voice of a ten-year-old girl trying to stay whole after she broke.

I had silenced that girl.

I had wanted to forget I had been that girl.

She embarrassed me.

She had not been brave enough.

She had cried too much.

She had taken too long to get well.

She was chubby, clumsy, cloying.

After years of listening to the stories of strangers, I finally listened to Ruthie. She'd been waiting for me to pay attention.

Writing for children gave me passage into a world of intense emotions that stretched me wide open like Piazzolla's accordion. I found a space for innocence and vulnerability, a space for sweetness, and possibility. Children shouldn't be shielded from things that are painful and tragic. I certain-

ly don't shy away from discussing death and sorrow in the book. But a child needs to be able to feel wonder, to know a little flower is waiting to sprout beneath the frozen ground.

There is a scene toward the end of the book that offers a touch of that essential magic. It is New Year's Day. The snow is falling gently. The two hospital attendants, Bobby and Clay, arrive and surprise Ruthie by taking her out on a stretcher, just so she can build a snowman with her brother and cousins. She is very touched and knows she'll never forget that precious moment.

When my mother read the book, she told me, "Oh, I remember that day in the snow. It was so beautiful."

I had to tell her, "Mami, but that never happened. I made it up!"

We all want the magic to be real. I discovered my most exciting superpower was that I could make the magic real. Writing fiction for kids gives us all the space to imagine how amazing life could be with a bit more kindness, generosity, and love.

But when you're around kids, you realize that kindness, generosity, and love are there in abundance and you don't need to do anything more than honor it.

Last November I spoke at a public school in Miami that had a gorgeous round library, but the space felt lonely and sad. They had just lost their librarian due to budget cuts. But the kids were excited to have a real live author visit them.

The school had received a donation of books from the Miami Book Fair, but it wasn't enough for all the kids who came to my event, so the school held a lottery. I brought plenty of bookmarks; everyone got one, but I felt bad for the kids who didn't get books.

The kids who won the books rushed over to me to get them signed. At the end of the line were two boys. When it was finally their turn, the boy who'd won the book, who was Haitian-American, smiled at me and pointed to the other boy and said, "I wanted to give your book to my friend. He was really hoping he'd win it. He's Cuban-American. But he said why don't we share it? That way we can both read it."

Then he looked into my eyes and asked, "Would you mind dedicating it to both of us?"

Now that was magic and it was real.



Juana Martinez-Neal received the 2018 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Award for *La Princesa and the Pea* (G. P. Putnam's Sons/Penguin Random), written by Susan Middleton Elya. Her acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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



Belpré

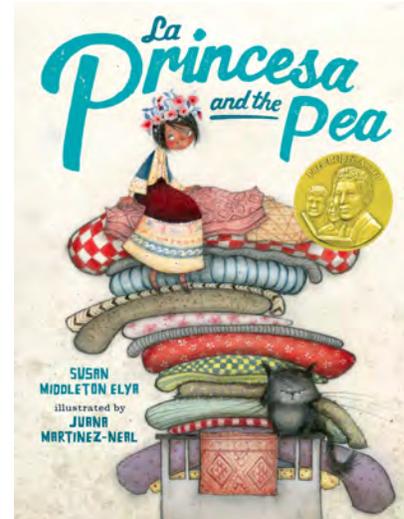
ILLUSTRATOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

I was born in Lima, Peru, a place where everything thought impossible is possible. A country rich in culture and beliefs, where we always make room for one more at our tables, homes, and hearts. The country of Machu Picchu, Cusco, llamas and alpacas, conquistadors, and the Incas. A country often romanticized because of these, too.

My parents came from two different worlds in Peru. My mom and her family came from the North. They were white matriarchs who got things done. My dad and his family were from the South. They were brown artists raised with less money and more books. My parents found each other in Lima and made a family together.

My dad was an artist, too. The subject matter of his work was the indigenous people of Peru—the same subject matter his father, who was also an artist, had chosen to paint decades before.

To paint indigenous people in Lima during that time, you had to go to paid events where once a week men and women would gather to sing, play music, and perform. The crowds were mostly people from the mountains of Peru who had left their cities and had moved to the capital in search of a better life. Some people wore western clothes, some wore their indigenous dresses that they kept on after their turn to perform at the stage was over. These men and women got together



on Sundays to share their longing for their old lives up in the highlands of Peru.

My dad was there to meet and photograph them. I assisted him by carrying his cameras and lenses, and loading new rolls of film. My dad brought me to help him, and also to share with me the indigenous traditions which were overlooked and dismissed by most Limeños.

My dad and I made trips to the provinces in search of hard to reach villages. He wanted to visit and experience the way of life of the people he admired and was so proud to paint.

I left Peru in early March of 1995. At the age of 24, I made the longest trip I had ever taken on my own. I came to the United States to find illustra-

Juana Martinez-Neal, born in Lima, Peru, currently lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, with her family. *Alma and How She Got Her Name*, the first book she has both written and illustrated, is being published this year. Martinez-Neal was named to the International Board on Books for Young People Honor list (2014) and received SCBWI's Portfolio Showcase Grand Prize (2012). She also illustrates for consumer children's media including Disney, Nestle Hispanic, and *Babybug/Ladybug* magazines.



Belpré

ILLUSTRATOR AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

tion. I moved to Los Angeles. My first impression of Los Angeles was everything related to Spanish and Latino culture centered around Mexico, and there was no room for other Latin American stories. Twenty years later, I started working on *La Princesa and the Pea*.

When I first began working on the book, the first character sketches felt flat and lacked life. In my first sketches I had created European royalty of princes and princesses, which I didn't care about nor understand, having been born and raised in Peru. The real reason I was having difficulty finding my characters was because I was not connecting to the story deeply enough.

Then something happened that changed the book. As I was working I realized that I had to go back to what I knew and I remembered the trips I took with my dad. The first character to make an appearance was La Reina wearing her clothes from the village of Huilloc, in the mountains of Cusco. Once I saw her, I knew I was moving in the right direction. I re-casted Princesa as a girl from the Colca Valley in Arequipa. The story finally started to make sense in the book. The people from Huilloc are famous for their weavings; the women in Colca are often found walking and handspinning wool into yarn while they are taking care of chores and talking to friends. Like a thread of yarn, the weavings and wool were the connection string in the story of the places my father had showed me when I was younger.

As I was working on the sketches for

La Princesa and the Pea, I wanted to show the people from Cusco removed from the stereotypes that often plague them in books, art, and movies. Instead I wanted to show the subtleties of their way of life. The reason why I fell in love with them and my country of Peru. I wanted to show the warmth, the open spaces, the activity of the towns, the amazing craft they pass on from generation to generation. I wanted to give readers a chance to get dizzy with the oranges, reds, and blacks that fill the ponchos, llikllas, skirts, chullos, hats, and monteras they weave and wear every day in Huilloc. I wanted to show the unevenness of the dirt roads that lead us into the homes and fields they inhabit. I wanted to share their full quality of life and not only a post-card view of life in Peru.

The first time I visited Huilloc with my dad, I saw young girls wear safety pins in their monteras. La Reina wears them as jewelry. The guinea pigs run throughout spreads of the book. You have to include cuyes in a book about the mountains of Peru. The donkeys and llamas are shown as working animals; the alpacas are raised for their wool. The chicken appears every now and then as chickens do as you walk the villages in Cusco. After twenty years in the U.S. and through books, I found a way to give voice to a different Latin American truth. A way to let those Peruvian-born children and adults feel seen without the stereotypes and romanticized view. I hope I achieved some of this in the illustrations of *La Princesa and the Pea*. Next time you look at the book, maybe you will keep these thoughts in mind.

Thanks to the 2018 Pura Belpré committee, more young readers will be given a chance to peek into the Peru I love and know. At the same time, it is humbling to think that I'm here today thanks to choosing to paint a book about some of the indigenous people of my country Peru. The same subject matter that my father and grandfather chose as the driving forces of their personal work decades before I found children's illustration and books.

I have to thank the 2018 Pura Belpré committee, REFORMA, and the Association for Library Service to Children for the honor they have given me with the Pura Belpré Medal. I still think there was a mistake somewhere.

Thank you to Susan Kochan, my editor, and Susan Middleton Elya, the author. They conspired to let me illustrate this story. Thank you to Cecilia Yung, my amazing art director, who pushed my work further. Even when I thought I was done, she shipped the artwork back and asked me to "make it sing." I hope I did, Cecilia. Thanks to everyone at Putnam for making me a published illustrator. Also a special thanks to Stefanie Sanchez Von Borstel, my incredible agent, for always being my biggest cheerleader.

Most of all, thanks to my dad who took me places and tried to show me the Peru I was simply not seeing when I lived there. A Peru full of color, patterns, and warmth. The Peru that always has room for one more at our tables, homes, and hearts. Now, you all live in my heart. Thank you very much. Muchas gracias.



Pablo Cartaya received a 2018 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora* (Viking/Penguin Random).

His acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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

REFORMA

ALSC

Association for Library Service to Children

Belpré

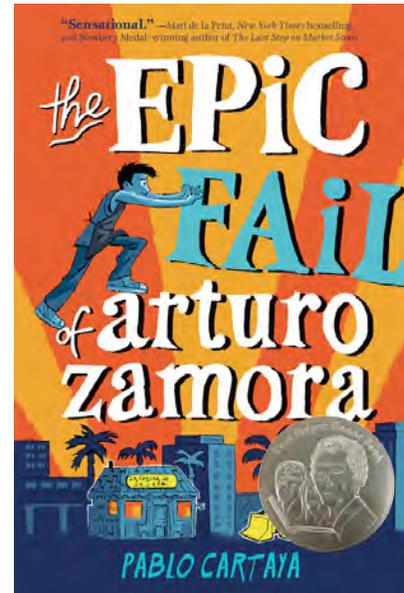
AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

I am here, aquí con todos ustedes, because of my abuelos. Well, I'm here because all of you honored my novel, and because I have the world's best editor, and an incredible publisher, and team at Penguin Young Readers who made sure my book got out into the world. But really, it's my abuelos who brought me here. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to talk about them for a moment:

I didn't get enough time with my Abuela. Ella falleció cuando yo tenía solamente cinco años. But incredibly, I remember her so fondly. "Mi Puchito," she used to tell me, a nickname that has carried me to this day. Okay, so embarrassing childhood name aside, I want to share why it was important for me to create the relationship between the titular character, Arturo Zamora, and his Abuela.

It is Abuela who helps him navigate life's inevitable changes. Both from within as well as external forces from the outside. This relationship is one of the main plot threads of the novel and one that holds a very deep, very personal connection.

Arturo is a fictional character as is the abuela in the novel. My family never owned a restaurant, nor did they all live in the same apartment. But I wanted to recreate the little memories I had of my own grandmother and put them into this story. The Arturo-Abuela relationship was, in many ways, an at-



tempt at giving myself more time with my own grandmother.

What would it have been like to have Abuela with me as I navigated the awkwardness of adolescence? Or when I felt my parents didn't understand me, or I couldn't talk to them, or I just wanted una galletita de azucar after school but mom insisted on giving me carrots as a snack!

True story: I was in Kindergarten and I came home from school one day and Abuela offered me a cookie. Mom complained to Abuela that the cookie wasn't a healthy afterschool snack. Abuela shrugged, "Aye, niña," she said. Then straight up looked at mom, pulled me aside and handed

Author Pablo Cartaya is also a speaker, actor, and educator. He holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and currently serves as faculty in the MFA Writing program at Sierra Nevada College. He has been a guest speaker in Florida International University's Exile Studies Program and University of Miami's Lowe Museum, and has visited schools throughout the U.S. His middle grade novel *Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish* is being published this year. Cartaya lives in Miami, Florida.



Belpré

AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

me *dos* cookies, not just one. And there I was acting all cool like, “Oh! Abuela *told* you, Mami!”

Fast-forward to adult me, now a parent myself, and well, let’s just say my mom, now an abuela, has enacted her own grandmotherly dominion of my children’s after-school snacks. A few months ago, she did me the favor of picking up my kids from school. She called me up and said she was taking them to Publix (the grocery store where I live) because the kids were hungry. When I gave her a list of recommended snack choices, she was quick to respond. “I didn’t ask what I could give them,” she said. “I said I’m at Publix because they’re hungry.” Twenty minutes later, Mom is at the front door with my son who is eating a gigantic pastelito de guayava and smirking because he knew I couldn’t do a darn thing.

You see Abuelas have that magic. That super power to be both a spoiler of grandchildren and a teacher—a guide that helps navigate cultural history for their grandchildren. What I remember of my abuela and my abuelo were the little memories of the past they shared with me. The immigration story. The story of packing their entire lives into a suitcase with their young daughters in tow and moving to a new place where the language and customs were different from their native Cuba.

They took jobs, my grandfather as a mechanic, my grandmother worked at Pan Am, and together they worked hard

and built a community so their children could have a sense of home after losing one. This is what my grandparents showed me and I suspect it is the same for many others who have heard and learned from the stories of their own grandparents. Stories of sacrifice. Hardship. Overcoming impossible circumstances. Keeping families together.

I wrote this book as a way to link my cultural past to a new generation. To pass on the history, the hard work, the commitment to community, family, and our heritage that my abuelos passed on to their grandchildren—even if it was only for a short time.

When I received the call from the committee saying that I had been honored with the 2018 Pura Belpré, my heart nearly flew out of my chest. My kids were jumping up and down not because they necessarily understood the magnitude of the honor but because they saw my face, they saw my joy. They saw me looking up smiling, thanking Abuela y Abuelo for always guiding me. This story is, in every sense, a love letter to them. To receive this honor has been one of the great joys of my life. So thank you all for this. Truly.

A mi abuela y abuelo, con todo mi corazon, gracias. Aquí estoy, tu Pucho, celebrando tu historia con todo el mundo.

Gracias.



Celia C. Pérez received a 2018 (Pura) Belpré Author Honor for *The First Rule of Punk* (Viking/Penguin Random).

Her acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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

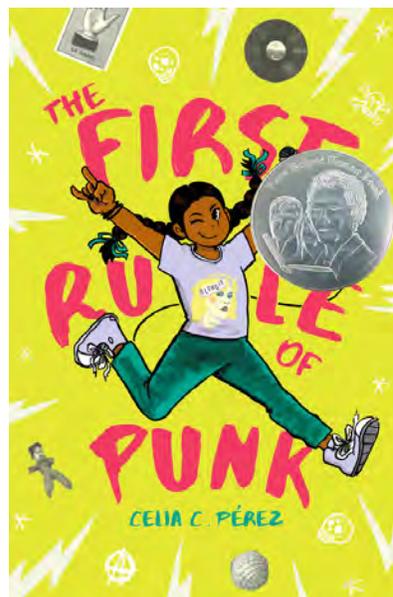


Belpré

AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

The first time I attended a Pura Belpré Celebración was in 2011 when the award was celebrating its quinceañera. Over the last seven years I've been in this room wearing different hats. I've been here as an audience member, swearing to myself that I wouldn't cry this time and then, sure enough, bawling my eyes out as I listened to the authors and illustrators give touching speeches. I've been here as a volunteer, scrambling around taping papel picado and hanging rebozos. I've been here as a committee member, celebrating the writers and artists we selected as the best of that year. I've been here as a co-chair of CAYASC, the Children and Young Adult Services Committee of REFORMA, collecting winning books from publishers' booths and welcoming attendees to the ceremony.

It's hard to pick which of these experiences has been the most important to me because they have all been significant in different ways. I've had the opportunity to see what happens on both sides of this stage, the amount of work that goes into being on the committee, into planning this event, into writing a book, and it makes me feel so happy and so grateful to have had all of these opportunities. I love the Pura Belpré Celebración, no matter the role I'm filling. Perhaps next year I'll infiltrate this event by trying to pass as a child performer! But today, I am here as a 2018 honor winner. Go figure!



The First Rule of Punk is my story in many ways. While there are a few specific details from my life throughout the book, it is more so my story because I was also a girl with parents from different backgrounds, who never felt enough, who wasn't sure how her own life fit into this thing called the Latino experience, and who found a place in zines and punk.

Punk has been an important part of how I've identified for more than half of my life. Like my protagonist, my own initial attraction to it was the music. I grew up in a household where we were not encouraged to talk about things that were important to us, to question things, or to express ourselves. I gravitated to

Originally from Miami, Florida, Celia C. Pérez lives in Chicago with her family and works as a community college librarian. *The First Rule of Punk* is her debut book for young readers. In addition to Belpré honors, the book also has received the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award, was a Junior Library Guild selection, and was included in several best of the year lists, including NPR's Best Books of 2017 and *School Library Journal's* Best of 2017, among others.



Belpré

AUTHOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

loud, aggressive music and to things that didn't fit in because that's how I felt growing up. Later, what I learned to love most about punk was seeing my peers expressing themselves and creating things from their own desire, by their own rules, through their own means. Punk and zines gave me the sense of agency I never felt as a girl, as a Latina, and as a child of immigrants.

One of the ideas I tried to convey in my book is that there is no one way to be anything. Sometimes what looks the least punk is very much the opposite. When I look around this room today I see the spirit of punk. Sure, we're in a massive, corporation-owned convention center instead of being packed into someone's living room, furniture out on the porch to make room for the band's equipment, sweating all over each other. But what is punk if not Pura, moving far away from her homeland, seeing a need among the families in her new community, and finding a way to fill it? What is more punk than a group of women insisting on an award to raise the voices of long marginalized creators?

One of the most distinct memories I have of a Pura Belpré Celebración is of hearing Oralia Garza de Cortés speak about the creation of the award, explaining that for her it came from a place of grief for the absence of these books. I think many of us create from that same place of grief for

what we missed out on as children. What is punk if not writing and drawing those missing stories into existence, even when you aren't sure they will sell, even if they don't sell, with the hope that at least one person will connect with them?

I am honored to share this experience with Ruth, Juana, Adriana, John, and Pablo. Each of you has brought to the world a new mirror, a new window (shout out to Rudine Sims Bishop), and a new interpretation of what it means to be Latino. I am proud to be here with you today.

Like most things, punk can be contradictory. On the one hand it's about being an individual, but it is also very much about community. The world sees the final package, but it doesn't often get to see what goes on behind the scenes so I would like to acknowledge the community that created *The First Rule of Punk*. I would like to thank my agent Stefanie Von Borstel, my editor Joanna Cárdenas, and my publisher Kenneth Wright. If not for you, this book would have been released to the world as one very long zine. Thank you to Kat Fajardo for bringing Malú to life on the cover, and to Kaitlin Kneafsey, Kate Renner, Dana Li, and everyone at Viking and at Penguin Young Readers who has put so much care, time, and work into this book. None of this is possible without you.

Thank you to the women who founded this award, Oralia Garza de Cortés and Sandra Ríos Balderrama, and to the people who make all of this happen year after year. Faces come and go, but one that is always present is that of Lucía González who, by the way, wrote one of my favorite Pura Belpré books, *The Bossy Gallito / El Gallo de Bodas*.

Thank you to all the librarians who put in the hard work of seeking, reading, and sharing our books with readers from all backgrounds, not just one month out of the year, but year round. The stories being celebrated today are not just Latino stories for a made up month, they are the stories of this country.

Thank you to my family who supports and puts up with me through good and bad, and especially to my mom Gloria, who came to this country alone as a teenager, who learned English by listening to the Beatles, and who, when I was about to chicken out and not live my dream of leaving home to go to college said to me, "Si fuera yo, ya me hubiera ido." So I did.

Finally, a huge thank you and mil gracias to the 2018 Pura Belpré Award committee for recognizing that a cranky, half-Mexican, green haired punk girl can be part of the Latino experience too.



Belpré

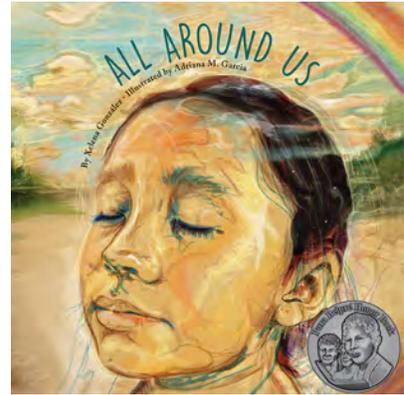
ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Have you ever met up with your *amiga* for coffee to chat about your lives and vocalize the dreams you want to make real?

Well, that is how this crazy journey started. My dear friend Xelena and I spent many sessions challenging and encouraging one another to do *exactly* that which moves us, what makes our hearts beat *con ganas*.

Over three years ago, she asked if I would illustrate a story she wrote about circles. Before she could finish her sentence, I responded with an emphatic *yes!* Knowing her work and the soulful person she is, I knew it would be a beautiful, mindful story even before reading *All Around Us*. She finished her pitch with, “But I cannot pay you,” to which I didn’t flinch. After actually reading the story, my belief in her and the story solidified, and it became a mission.

We misfired, got sidetracked, and grossly underestimated the amount of time and effort it took to complete a picture book. Then, a week before Xelena went off to serve as a librarian in China, we regrouped, brainstormed, and dusted off an old grant application to NALAC, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture. They eventually funded our idea, with the stipulation that we present the completed project to our community. So in this way, *All Around Us* began as a story walk, published on campaign



placards and installed on the grounds of the Mission Library branch in San Antonio, Texas. And it was the community’s response and enthusiasm that encouraged us to pursue a path of publication.

Now, as you might have guessed, I am new to the publishing world. And what I know now is that we did everything our own way and completely backwards—or should I say *counterclockwise*? Apparently, author and illustrator don’t normally know each other, much less collaborate on the image ideas. So when it came time to find a publisher who would take a chance on a “package deal,” we weren’t sure where to begin.

Turns out these *Tejanas* did not have to go far. Xelena suggested we present our baby, our only book prototype—a \$40 Kinkos copy—to Cinco Puntos Press, a family-run publishing house operating out of El Paso,



Adriana M. Garcia received a 2018 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor for *All Around Us* (Cinco Puntos), written by Xelena González.

Her acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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

REFORMA

ALSC

Association for Library Service to Children

Adriana M. Garcia is an award-winning artist, muralist, and scenic designer from San Antonio, Texas. She received a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and studied fine arts in Valencia, Spain. In 2013, Garcia won the Jose Cuervo Tradicional Mural Project, receiving a \$15,000 grant. She created a kinetic light installation piece as part of X-Marks the Art, a year-long public art initiative by Public Art San Antonio, and has exhibited work in California and Arizona.



Belpré

ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Texas. Lee, Bobby, and John Byrd saw something special and took a chance on us, and *All Around Us* was finally, properly printed.

We are tremendously honored and humbled to receive the Pura Belpré Honor Book award for illustration. I say *we* because *All Around Us* is the result of so many people holding each other up. This was a true collaboration between Xelena and me, even in the imagery; after all, it is her daughter and her father depicted in the book. I painted them in their natural surroundings of San Antonio's Westside, an area where both Xelena and I grew up and continue to live.

This neighborhood is known for its vibrant culture but also for its level of poverty; ours is one of the most economically-challenged zip codes in the nation. We were both raised by activist parents, who actually worked together to organize and help lift up our community. They worked and fought to ensure we had paved streets and equal education. They were part of arts initiatives that put culturally-themed murals up on the walls of project housing. These were the images that would inspire me to pick up paintbrushes—the tools that would eventually become my voice.

You see, growing up I was not confident with my words... but over time I learned to speak, to sing, to shout with colors! I felt heard. And today, this incredible honor makes me feel validated and my culture feel celebrated.

We are so grateful to the Pura Belpré award founders and the current committee for ensuring our stories continue to be honored and heard. We thank the Creator and recognize our ancestors, who made countless sacrifices so that we may pursue our dreams. We thank our parents, Evelyn and Francisco Garcia and Laura and Carlos González—for passing on the wisdom and stories of our *antepasados* and for fully supporting the way Xelena and I continue the struggle to improve and beautify our community.

Thank you, Lee, Bobby, and John Byrd for believing in us! Mil gracias to REFORMA and the ALSC. It has been inspiring meeting you librarians who make awards like this possible. Thank you for the good work you do in bringing good stories to life. Along with teachers and parents, you dedicate time every day to make sure books are accessible to young and older readers alike. It has been wonderful sharing this story of circles with you. Thank you all for recognizing the beauty in our book, *All Around Us*.

If we two Chicanas from the Westside of San Anto can accomplish this in our counter-clockwise way, then perhaps other little chicanitas will be inspired to find a special path to their dreams as well. To echo the words of my friend and creative collaborator, Xelena González: “Thank you for opening this book and opening your mind to the ideas inside.”

It is empowering being a part of this circle with you all.



John Parra received a 2018 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor for *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos* (NorthSouth/NordSüd Verlag), written by Monica Brown. His acceptance remarks were delivered at the Belpré Celebración on Sunday, June 24, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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

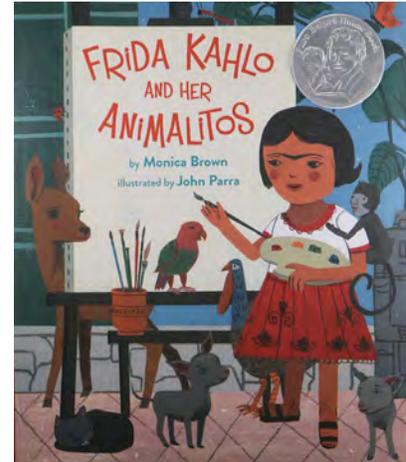


Belpré

ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Last year I was inspired to begin a quest to map my family tree. Armed with some handed down stories, DNA tests from my parents, and a few background facts, I was off. I began with my father's side, tracing his roots into Mexico. Questions swirled, "What town did my grandparents live in?" "When did they emigrate to the U.S.?" "Am I really related to Pancho Villa?" Thrilled to examine old records and historical photos, I found many connections with names and locations, familiar yet shrouded in mystery. I learned that my paternal grandfather, Delfino Sr., was born in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua in 1900. My Grandmother Adela was born in Guadalupe y Calvo, a mountainous mining town in 1904. Both came to the United States through El Paso, Texas, living in the little town of Canutillo. Eventually their family grew and migrated, to the central, San Joaquin Valley of California. To support themselves, my grandparents, along with my father and his siblings, became migrant farm workers, traveling up and down the state, picking potatoes in Bakersfield, prunes and cucumbers in Morgan Hill, or apples near Sonoma. It was a hard life but filled with family and love.

My mom's family journey was equally fascinating to me. Her ancestors came from Slovakia. They were farmers and coal miners that settled in



Pennsylvania. Their family life too was challenging but filled with love.

Throughout this process memories began to seep in. I remembered the tamales my aunts made growing up, I recalled the backyard piñata parties for birthdays with cousins, and I thought of my father's parent's small farm on Pacheco Road where they raised goats, sheep, and chickens. It was just the sort of place my five-year-old self wanted to explore. It is many of these memories, stories, and histories that influence my art today.

The book, *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos*, is based on the life of one of the world's most influential painters, Frida Kahlo, and the animals that inspired her art and life.

Frida always said she painted her own reality. Born on the outskirts

John Parra is an illustrator, fine artist, designer, and educator. He graduated from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. His work has received many awards, including three Belpré Honors, two SCBWI Golden Kite Awards, and The Christopher Award, among others. His forthcoming picture book, *Hey, Wall*, written by Susan Verde, will be released this fall. Parra also illustrates for commercial clients, including United Airlines, National Geographic, PBS, Virgin Records, and others. He lives in Queens, New York.



Belpré

ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

of Mexico City in Coyoacán in 1907, Frida grew up with three sisters in their family home, La Casa Azul. Her father, Guillermo Kahlo, came to Mexico from Germany as a photographer. Frida's mother, Matilde Calderón y González, was a proud indigenous native of Oaxaca, Mexico. Early on Frida wanted to study medicine but when she was eighteen she was in a terrible bus accident that left her bedridden for months. It was during her recovery that she began to create art.

As a passionate and independent thinker, Frida found much inspiration in nature, often championing a love for animals, Lots of them. Her own beloved pets including: two monkeys, a parrot, three dogs, two turkeys, an eagle, a black cat, and a fawn. They were her muses and she shared with them many of their diverse and charming characteristics. Of Frida's 143 paintings, 55 are self portraits, often featuring her treasured animals. My personal favorite is: *Self Portrait with Monkeys* (1943).

Since I was young, Frida Kahlo's art has had a huge impact on me as an artist with Mexican roots. I love the style, texture, themes, and pallet she uses. I know author Monica Brown's mother, also a gifted painter, was greatly inspired by Frida's work. Preparing for this book, I recalled a conversation with Monica about how specific colors would be important, especially the color "Azul," blue. With techniques and research I studied to map Frida's world. In my process of painting I added layers of acrylic paint onto board, then sandpapered back into them, giving the image a worn look, as if it's been sitting in my Abuela's attic for fifty years. I also wanted the art to infuse aspects from Frida's family, culture, and experiences, showcasing a strong and personal narrative. I am very proud of this book and how this special perspective celebrates Frida's life and passions. In addition I believe a message is offered, that despite appearances, the world is filled with creativity, friendship, and love—between people and places—and all living things.

Standing here today at this wonderful event, I am humbled and filled with such gratitude. It is a shared honor

that I receive this award and I must thank individuals who have shaped and supported my journey for this book and pursuit in art.

Firstly, I would like to thank author Monica Brown for writing this wonderful book. She is an amazing talent of words and heart that can be seen in all her work. This marks the third picture book I've had the pleasure to work on with her. Like this book, each of our previous collaborations had been based on biographies. My very first picture book was done with Monica, titled: *My Name Is Gabriela*, about Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral. Our second project together was *Waiting for the Biblioburro*, about a real life traveling librarian named Luis Soriano and his literary sharing efforts in the rural countryside of Colombia.

I would like to thank my publisher and the entire North-South team, especially: Heather Lennon, Beth Terrill, and Herwig Bitsche for their enthusiastic support for this book that started day one and continues through to today. NorthSouth originally published this book in English, Spanish, and German; I believe Frida's dad would be proud.

To F Isabel Campoy for her beautiful Spanish translation of our book.

To my incredible agents at Full Circle Literary: Stefanie Von Borstel and Adriana Dominguez.

Thank you to ALA, ALSC, REFORMA, and this year's Pura Belpré Award committee for their dedication and work throughout the year to serve our communities and enrich our lives in so many ways.

To the incredible bright stars and talented creative's who stand on this stage today, especially Juana Martinez-Neal and Celia Pérez, whom I've had the privilege of knowing now for a few years and whose works I have become a great admirer of, and to all the winners here who inspire us.

To my former art teachers, Sandra Tellefson, Frank Sardis-



Belpré

ILLUSTRATOR HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

co, Steve Love, and Larry Carroll, for sharing your knowledge and giving me the tools needed in becoming an artist.

Lastly, a special thanks goes to family: my parents, Del and Cecilia, for instilling in me a love for art and reading, for my older brother Joe, the first artist I looked up to for inspiration, and my younger brother Matt for keeping my creative energies current and diverse, and a heartfelt thank you to my wife Maria for all her guidance, love, and support.

I am always amazed, throughout all the journeys in our lives, by the inspirations we find. I see mine in family and history; Frida found hers in life, art, and animals; and today we find it here at the Pura Belpré Celebración in the stories and illustrations we honor.

Thank you.

REFORMA

ALSC
Association for Library Service to Children

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

2018 BELPRÉ AWARD COMMITTEE

Alicia K. Long, State College of Florida, Bradenton, Fla.
Emily Rose Aguiló-Pérez, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pa.
Stefanie Isabel Bailey, Las Vegas-Clark County Library District
Amy C. Martin, Oakland (Calif.) Public Library
Susan H. Polos, Bedford Central School District, Mount Kisco, N.Y.
Patty Gonzales Ramirez, Dallas Public Library, White Rock Hills Branch Library
Edwin Rodarte, Los Angeles Public Library