



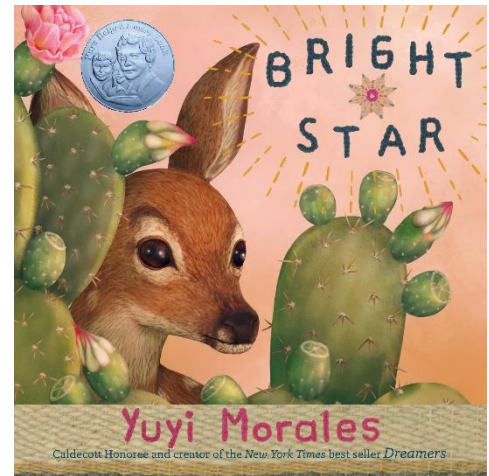
Pura Belpré Youth Illustrator Honor Acceptance Speech



Yuyi Morales received a 2022 (Pura) Belpré Youth Illustrator Honor for *Bright Star* (Neal Porter Books/Holiday House). She delivered her acceptance remarks at the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 26, 2022, during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

When I began imagining *Bright Star*, I didn't know what kind of book I would make. All I had was a question: How do you heal something that feels irreparable?

I had been seeing, like you did too, that in the world we have created many children were—and are—suffering irreparable hurt: They are being discriminated for how they look or who they love; they are being rejected for where they come from; they are being yanked from their families; they are denied of care, health, and love and have experienced emotional torture; and they are even being killed.



The story of a white tail fawn, a sacred animal, creator of the corn and light for the new journey, who follows her mother through the borderlands to look for the things they need to survive, is not only the story of wildlife at la frontera but is also the story of many people trying to cross from Mexico into the USA. It was through making this book that I went looking for an answer to my question.

Among the things I learned while making *Bright Star*, is that baby deers are born without scent. This is a survival trait used by some animals, as when *Bright Star*'s mother senses danger during their journey, and she pats her baby with her snout between the shoulders, making her lie very low and still on the ground. When the pungent mother leaves the baby all by herself, she is doing all she can for her young to not be found.

At a No Border Wall campout at the New Mexico bootheel, people shared the things they were doing to protect the desert and its habitants from the seizing of lands and their destruction due to the implementation of immigration policies and of border wall construction. One young woman who recounted their fight at congress to stop the overturning of environmental laws, expressed her rage out loud, “they are going to have to build that wall over my dead body! And if they build it, we will topple it down!” Right there I knew she would be in my book. May the strength of snakes and jaguars always accompany those of you and those of us who fight to protect our earth and each other’s lives. We are going to need it.

By the time I put the last touches on the illustrations of *Bright Star*, I had not found an answer yet. Instead, I have found a universe of answers. Like my friend Sergio Avila told me one afternoon as we sat by a riparian desert: “Yuyi,” he said, “you won’t find your answer to your question because there is no one answer. Instead, we should get up and do our lives so we can do our job.”

Bright Star's journey also has to continue. She will need to look for the food, water, and shelter she needs to thrive. Hopefully she will find her mother one day. From our part as humans and book bearers, I believe our job ahead will be arduous and long. And so, in the meantime, I want to leave children with this blanket of a book I weaved and embroidered with stars; I made it for you to feel embraced if you are alone, and I also leave you with these words that I hope will accompany you when you most need them:

Wherever you are, you are a bright star inside our hearts.

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