

# REFORMA DE FLORIDA

## Noticias del mes/News of the month

### Notes from the Editor

Welcome to our relaunched newsletter! Alejandra Rodriguez, new member from our Central region, is a welcome addition to the staff, and you'll read more about her in the *Member Spotlight*. If you want to join the Publicity Committee, email me at [reformafl@gmail.com](mailto:reformafl@gmail.com).

Meet & Greet in the Central & Southern regions, the Pura Belpré Book Donation Grant, and the amazing work members have been doing in Florida and Nationally are the tip of the iceberg in this issue. Articles about *Noche*, reviewing books for CAYASC, our new Board members, and more await. We're overflowing with good news!

Please forward this newsletter to Florida librarians who serve Latino populations and encourage them to join our chapter. Let's work together to grow our community. Juntos podemos!/Together we can!

Until next time,

Alma Ramos-McDermott, Editor  
(Southern region)

Alejandra Rodriguez, Reporter  
(Central region)

### "Meet the President" August 2 in Orlando

The Florida Library Association (FLA) will host an event at the *John C. Hitt Library* Friday, August 2 from 1-4 pm. President Maria Vega, will be at the Networking Social at the *Island Wing Company's* Cabana Room at 4 pm. Food and beverages are on your own. The FLA and networking event is free. Registration closed July 25th for FLA events, but you don't need to register for the Networking Social. Show up, bring a friend, and let Maria know you're there!

### Pura Belpré Book Grant (August 15 deadline)



As reported in the May 2021 newsletter, Pura Belpré migrated from Cidra, Puerto Rico to New York City in 1920. A year later, she became the first Latina hired by the NYC library system at the NYPL's Harlem branch on 135th Street.

Recently, Alicia K. Long (Central region) and Lucia M. Gonzalez (Southern region) had an idea to create a book grant. Based upon the legacy of Pura Belpré, we're proud to announce the 2024 *Pura Belpré Book Grant* of 100-200 Latinx children and YA books to a Florida library or organization serving Latinx youth that demonstrates how their community might benefit from receiving these titles submitted to the *Award Selection Committee*. The grant aims to bring books created by Latinx authors and illustrators portraying the Latino cultural experience into the lives of children. You do not have to be a member to apply.

For more information, go to our [website](#), and [email](#) proposals by August 15th. Applicants may include public or school libraries, and/or other institutions providing literacy-based family programs to Latino communities based in Florida. You don't have to be a member to apply, so submit your proposal today. Good luck!

*Pura Belpré information & photo from Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pura\\_Belpr%C3%A9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pura_Belpr%C3%A9)*



## **“Meet, Mix, and Mingle” August 17 (Broward County Library)**

Members and non-members are invited to the Hollywood branch of the Broward County Library (Southern region) on Saturday, August 17th from 12-2 pm for an informal “Meet, Mix, and Mingle” social. Enjoy coffee, drinks, and snacks, network, and tour the library. Meet your Board members and learn more about the chapter and how to join if you’re a member-at-large or not a member, and how to volunteer to make us bigger and better than ever. Bring a friend and join us. (\*More information on pg. 8.)

## **Libros Libres: Freedom to read Latino books**

*by Alejandra Rodriguez*

*“All stories are important, and when we share them, we begin to understand each other.”  
(Margarita Engle, 2016 Belpré Author Award acceptance speech)*

Alicia K. Long, Library and Information Science Instructor at USF (Central Region) and Freda Mosquera, Community Library Manager at Broward County Library (Southern region) hosted a breakout session at the 2024 FLA Conference. The session focused on censorship and book challenges in Florida with an emphasis on books by and about Latino authors. (\*A printable copy of this list is available at the end of the newsletter).

According to the ALA, “titles representing the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals made up 47% of those targeted in censorship attempts.” Concern for the recent wave of challenges, especially those including popular and beloved titles by Latino authors, inspired Alicia and Freda to bring awareness to the problem and do something about it.

The presentation highlighted several banned and challenged books, including Isabel Allende’s *The House of Spirits*, *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh, and Pura Belpré award winner *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina; among many more. Some takeaways included ways we librarians can acknowledge this problem, bring awareness, and act. The session also emphasized the importance of reading banned and challenged books to become more familiar with their content and better understand how to defend them.

A type of action mentioned during the session is the implementation of *Book Sanctuaries* by Broward County Libraries. These book sanctuaries are designated areas where endangered stories are protected and made accessible for exploration or checkout. For more information about *Book Sanctuaries* at Broward County Libraries please see the following [link](#). Creating *Book Sanctuaries* is one of many ways we can support the right to read.

*ALA Book Ban data: <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data>*



- o *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- o *Islandborn* by Junot Díaz
- o *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- o *The Disturbed Girl's Dictionary* by NoNieqa Ramos
- o *The Truth Is* by NoNieqa Ramos
- o *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera
- o *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz
- o *The God Box* by Alex Sanchez
- o *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez
- o *We Are Not From Here* by Jenny Torres Sanchez
- o *The God Box* by Alex Sanchez
- o *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh
- o *Roberto Clemente: Pride of the Pittsburgh Pirates* by Jonah Winter
- o *My Name Is María Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada
- o *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García
- o *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina
- o *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez

LIBROS LIBRES: FREEDOM TO READ  
LATINO BOOKS  
2024 FLA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



## **REFORMA + Graphic Novel & Comics RoundTable = Partnership**

*by Alma Ramos-McDermott*

Last October, the Graphic Novel & Comics Round Table (GNCRT) formed a joint committee with REFORMA National to highlight Latino/x voices in the world of comics. Together, REFORMA and

### *REFORMA + GNCRT = Partnership (continued)*

GNCRT created an annotated list of “*high-quality graphic novels that showcase Spanish-speaking and Latino stories and creators.*”

The Co-Chair of this joint committee (representing REFORMA) was President Maria Vega with Immediate Past President Mari Martinez-Serrano as a committee member. Both Maria and Mari worked hard with the committee to create the first-ever *REFORMA and Graphic Novel Round Table Core List*, which will be announced shortly. The list is expected to “*recognize the best published graphic novels for all ages and in a range of genres with diverse characters and stories.*”

In May, the GNCRT and REFORMA presented a webinar, in collaboration with the International Roundtable (IRC), on “*Portrayal of Latinos in comic books.*” The committee presented another webinar with BOOKLIST titled “*Comic Resources for Libraries*” on July 25th. Stay tuned to the [GNCRT & REFORMA Collaboration page](#) for more information on the final annotated list, as they’re still working through a tremendous list of selections.

We look forward to seeing the annotated list of graphic novels showcasing Latino stories when it’s released. Thank you for your hard work and representation Maria and Mari!

Press release: <https://www.ala.org/news/2023/10/reforma-and-ala-graphic-novels-and-comics-round-table-announce-formal-collaboration>  
GNCRT and REFORMA Collaboration: <https://www.ala.org/gncrt/gncrt-x-reforma-collaboration-core-list>

## **Conference on Children’s literature**

*by Alejandra Rodriguez*

The Broward County Library’s 2023 Conference on Children’s Literature featured a panel highlighting Hispanic authors titled *Honoring Hispanic Heritage with Florida Authors*. The panel, moderated by ReDeFL President Maria Vega and Immediate Past-President Mari Martinez-Serrano, featured Vanessa Garcia, Chantel Acevedo, and Jenny Torres Sanchez. Jenny’s book, *With Lots of Love*, was one of the featured titles.



Topics of discussion centered on how cultural backgrounds influence the creation of the storyline, the overall creative process, and using identities to create stories. Another talking point was the obstacles Latino women must overcome to become successful in the publishing industry. Chantel Acevedo also discussed her love of the Hialeah Public Library, which led to her hosting a program there. (\*Read more on pg. 5).



## **Lucia Martinez Gonzalez Tot Lot**

*by Alma Ramos-McDermott*

The North Miami Library’s groundbreaking ceremony for the *Lucia Martinez Gonzalez Tot Lot* took place in March.



REFORMA de Florida is thrilled to announce that Lucia, retired Director of the North Miami Public Library, and Vice-President/President-Elect of ReDeFL, is being honored for “*her contributions to children’s literature, libraries, and education.*” The tot lot will contain “*state-of-the-art amenities and innovative design elements to promote physical activity, creativity, and social interaction among children...[and] will accommodate children of all abilities.*”

*Lucia Martinez Gonzalez Tot Lot (continued)*

The *Lucia Martinez Gonzalez Tot Lot* will have its grand opening sometime at the end of August. Stay tuned to our social media pages for an announcement once the date is made public. Congratulations Lucia! We're very proud of you.

*Jane Addams Peace Association: <https://www.janeaddamschildrensbookaward.org/lucia-gonzalez-honored-with-construction-of-a-new-playground-with-her-name/>*

## ***FLA Board Representative from REFORMA de Florida***

*by Alejandra Rodriguez*

REFORMA De Florida is represented on the FLA Board of Directors with a permanent representative seat. Our president, Maria Vega, joins other ex-officio representative seats on the FLA board from the University of South Florida and Florida State University. The ReDeFL representative is tasked with representing REFORMA National's policies on the board and updating our members on what's happening at FLA. Additional responsibilities include attending monthly meetings and presenting REFORMA's stance on issues.



Maria will also represent REFORMA National in the creation of FLA's strategic plan, as the REFORMA Representative plays an advisory role and provides guidance on aspects of the plan. Maria hopes to influence the strategic plan by advocating for REFORMA's goals and priorities, particularly, how Florida libraries can better service Latino populations.



## ***Noche de Cuentos***

*by Alma Ramos-McDermott*

At the recent ALA conference in San Diego, REFORMA National held its annual *Noche de Cuentos* (Night of Stories) event, "an enchanting evening of performances celebrating and affirming the richness of Latino heritage and culture" (REFORMA National FB pg.)



Southern region member Lucia M. Gonzalez is the *Noche de Cuentos* Coordinator for REFORMA. Her role involves inviting authors and storytellers to present, and recruiting volunteers to set up, work, livestream, and record the event. She also works with author/storyteller publishers to make sure books are shipped to the correct location and available for signing, seeks event sponsorships, and MCs the night. Pura Belpré award winning author Pam Muñoz Ryan, as well as Storytellers Nelly Cantú, Jorge Tetl Argueta, Eduardo Isaac, and Antonio Sacre were part of this

year's well-attended event.

If you're a publisher interested in becoming an event sponsor for *Noche de Cuentos*, please contact Lucia at [luciagonzalezbooks@gmail.com](mailto:luciagonzalezbooks@gmail.com)

**NOTE:** Each year REFORMA National offers ten \$500 mini-grants for current members to hold a *Noche de Cuentos* event at your library, school, or institution (between September and December.) The deadline for 2024 was July 14th, so be sure to stay a member of REFORMA de Florida and keep your eye on REFORMA National's [Noche de Cuentos page](#) to apply for the 2025 grants.



## ***Hialeah Public Libraries author presentation with Chantel Acevedo***

*by Alexandra Rodriguez*

The Hialeah Public Library hosted an exciting author presentation and book signing with Cuban American author Chantel Acevedo. Prior to the program with Chantel, the library hosted a youth writing competition.

The author program featured Chantel's 2023-2024 Sunshine State Young Readers Awards novel *The Curse on Spectacle Key*. Fifty copies of the book were purchased by ReDeFL for all youth in attendance. During the program, Chantel discussed her work. She also shared her personal connection with the Hialeah Public Library and how it influenced her journey as a writer.



## ***Are you interested in reviewing Latino books for CAYASC?***

*by Alma Ramos-McDermott*

Besides being your Secretary, I'm also the Chair of *REFORMA National's Children and Young Adult Services (CAYASC) Book Review Committee*.

ReDeFL members interested in reviewing books created by Latinx authors and illustrators for Children and Young adults that portray the Latino cultural experience are being recruited for my committee. Our reviews will assist public and school librarians in curating their collections and will also be used by the public. Books may be bilingual, written in English or Spanish, and may be published by large, small, or independent publishers. Books by and about marginalized Latinos, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Latinos with disabilities, undocumented Latinos, etc. are also welcomed to be reviewed.

We have a [Book Review page](#) on our website, and reviews are also posted on my blog "[You decide: Should I read it or not?](#)" REFORMA will soon create a *CAYASC Book Review* webpage and, once completed, our committee reviews will be posted there.

Committee members don't need experience reviewing books as I'll send information to help you, so join us! Besides book reviews, we'll create a list of past Pura Belpré winning and honor titles with short summaries (not reviews) for each, starting with the 2024 winning titles and working our way back to 1996, to be published on REFORMA's *Pura Belpré* web page. We'll also brainstorm lessons, activities, or discussion questions to go with the summaries. With the 30th anniversary of the Pura Belpré awards coming up in 2026, this would be a great way to honor her legacy.

If interested in serving on the *CAYASC Book Review Committee* to review Latino books in the categories mentioned above and participate in producing summaries/lessons/activities discussion questions for Pura Belpré winning titles, [email](#) me. You must be a member of REFORMA de Florida to participate.

If you're a large, small, or independent publisher, and would be willing to send committee

*Reviewing Latino books for CAYASC (continued)*

members recent titles from the above categories via email or snail mail for us to review, please email for logistics. I look forward to what we can accomplish. Junto podemos!/Together we can!

## **Miami Book Fair**

*by Alejandra Rodriguez*



Mari Martinez-Serrano, Youth Services Librarian at Broward County Library and REFORMA de Florida's Immediate Past President, moderated a panel at the Miami Book Fair titled *Through the Looking Glass: Adventures in Alternate Universes*. The panel focused on middle grade titles with a spooky fantasy theme and featured authors Monica Magaña and Angela Cervantes.

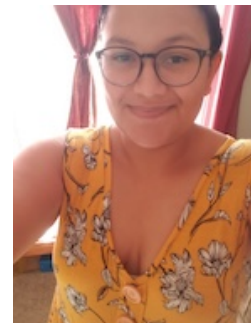
The 2024-2025 Sunshine State Young Readers novel titled *The Cursed Moon* by Angela Cervantes follows eleven-year-old Rafael Fuentes who discovers the ghost story he made up about The Caretaker might be real. In the graphic novel *Doña Quixote: Rise of the Knight*, illustrated by Monica Magaña, Lucia discovers her town's mayor is secretly a shapeshifter beast of Mexican lore. She and her best friend must stop the mayor from unleashing evil on their town.

Some topics discussed during the panel included the writing process, specifics of the middle grade fiction genre, and the importance of making connections between one's heritage and the story. For more information about the Miami Book Fair please visit: <https://www.miamibookfair.com/>

## **Member spotlight**

### **Alejandra Rodriguez: ACRL DEI Officer**

**Editor's note:** *As mentioned in the Notes from the Editor, new member Alejandra recently joined ReDeFL's Publicity Committee, and has done a fine job as a reporter in this issue. When I found out she was a DEI officer I asked her to write about her role, as I thought readers would find it interesting. Congratulations on your new position Alejandra. We're very proud of you. Below is her summary. NOTE: If you're a member interested in being spotlighted in a future newsletter, email your name, title, a short summary of your job, and a photograph. We'd love to hear from you!*



Alejandra Rodriguez (Central region) was recently elected to *The Florida Association of College and Research Libraries (FACRL)* Board of Directors as the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer*. The role was introduced on the 2023 ballot, but the position has remained vacant until this year.

Per the FACRL Bylaws, "*The diversity officer will be responsible for assessing the organization's current representation of underrepresented groups and advising the organization on actions that should be taken to increase the number of members and leaders from protected classes. The diversity officer will work with members of the organization's underrepresented populations, addressing their concerns and ensuring the Board is aware of and responsive to their specific needs.*"

Alejandra's responsibilities also include attending virtual monthly board meetings and two in-person meetings, one during the fall at the FACRL annual conference and the other in the Spring during the FLA annual conference.

## *Spotlight on your 2024-2025 Board*

Congratulations to the 2024-2025 Board of REFORMA de Florida, who are already working hard to take our chapter onward and upward.

Help is needed in many different areas so, if interested in volunteering to help your chapter grow, send an email with your name, contact information, and area(s) of interest.



President Maria Vega is Assistant Library Manager at the Hollywood Branch Library in Hollywood.



Vice-President/President-Elect Lucia M. Gonzalez is a Library Consultant after retiring as Director of the North Miami Public Library.



Treasurer Isabel Castro is Assistant Director of the West Orange Public Library in West Orange, New Jersey.



Secretary Alma Ramos-McDermott is a Fifth grade Science teacher at Avalon Elementary School in Naples and is a former School Librarian.



## *Are you a Corporate member of REFORMA de Florida?*

Corporate members are an important part of our chapter. Send a photo, business card, and/or a short blurb about you and your company to appear in a future newsletter. If interested, email them with the subject *“Corporate member.”* We want to know more about you!



## *“Meet, Mix, and Mingle Social” Saturday, August 17th (12-2 pm)*

Broward Public Library, Hollywood Branch

2600 Hollywood Blvd. (see below for parking info.)

Call Maria Vega (President) at 561-931-8600 if you need directions.

Network and meet Board members. Enjoy coffee, drinks, light snacks, and tour the library.

Invite non-members!

Register here or email to let us know you're coming.

### *(Parking map)*





## ***Libros Libres: Freedom to read Latino books*** ***(Printable list of challenges)***



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### ***What's happening in your region? (Northern, Central, or Southern)***

Any news or events happening in your library or region related to our Latino community? Email your name, region, title, library name, a short summary of your news or event, and any pertinent photos with the subject “*Qué pasa?/What's happening?*”

Your news can grow membership in your region, and for our chapter, so we look forward to hearing from you.

### ***Were you forwarded this newsletter but are not yet a member of REFORMA de Florida?***

To join or renew, go to REFORMA National's Membership page and make sure to check REFORMA de Florida as your chapter.

### ***Is your membership getting ready to expire? Are you a Member-at-large?***

Not sure if your membership is expiring? Email with the subject “*Is my membership expiring?*” I'll let you know your status.

If you're a Member-at-large (not associated with any chapter), email with the subject “*Member-at-large*” for information on how to join the chapter as a full-fledged member.