

REFORMA DE FLORIDA

Noticias del mes/News of the month

Notes from the Editor

It's October. Welcome to teeny tiny bits of cooler air!

Several of us attended the recent REFORMA National Conference, including Lucia M. Gonzalez, Alicia K. Long, Jenny Lizarraga, Mariela Diaz, Veronica Cervera, and myself.

Lucia, Alicia, and Jenny wore many hats, while Corporate Sponsors Jenny (*Cinco Books*), Mariela/Lucia (*Spanish Publishers LLC*), and Veronica (*Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial*) worked the Exhibits.

There's lots to read, including Gaby and David's articles, our first Corporate Sponsor article, information on the Broward County Conference on Children's Literature, and my whirlwind adventures at the REFORMA conference.

So, fasten your seatbelts because it's going to be a wild ride!

Your Board hopes to see you on ZOOM, Oct. 7th at 7 pm.

Enjoy!

Alma Ramos-McDermott,
Editor

President's column

by Lucia M. Gonzalez



Happy Latino/Hispanic Heritage Month to all! I just returned from the National REFORMA Conference (NRC VIII) in Long Beach, California, and I am excited to share my experience! The moment the doors to the Exhibits floor opened on the first day, a wave of energy washed over us as a sea of REFORMistas

poured in. I was filled with euphoria and positivity; it was an incredible experience!

REFORMA de Florida was well represented at NRC VIII. Alicia Long, Alma Ramos-McDermott, and I presented at the first *Pura Belpré Award Book Evaluation* Pre-Conference on Thursday, September 18. The three-hour training culminated in a panel discussion on the panelists' experiences serving on the Belpré Award Selection Committee. This panel, moderated by Jenny Lizarraga, included Ana-Elba Pavón, Alicia, Alma, and myself. The training also featured welcoming remarks from ALSC President Dr. Claudette McLinn.

In addition, Alicia Long and I led a Friday breakout session on how to plan a *Noche de Cuentos* event. On Saturday Alicia presented a session, with two other REFORMA LIS faculty members, on their research in how a sense of belonging empowers Latine Librarians and MLIS students.

For us REFORMA de Florida members, the highlight of the conference was Alma's receiving the *Elizabeth Martinez Lifetime Achievement Award* and her inspirational message.

At the conference, every time I mentioned I was from Florida, I was met with responses like, "Oh no, it must be so tough," "I'm sorry you're in Florida," or "What's going to

President's column (continued)

happen in Florida?" These statements, and the outpouring of empathy, made me reflect on the significant work we still need to do as an organization dedicated to promoting library services to Latinos and Spanish speakers.

How can we make our efforts truly impactful? How can we contribute to the sustainability of organizations like the Florida Library Association? Questions like these are part of our discussions during the monthly REFORMA de Florida Board meetings. We invite and encourage you to attend our virtual Board Meetings, which this month will take place Tuesday, October 7th at 7 pm EST. A link to join the meeting will be emailed to all members. Please share it with non-members interested in joining our chapter.

Let's celebrate our Hispanic and Latino heritage with pride and joy from September 15 to October 12, and every day! Our roots extend far back, from San Agustín to Tampa to Miami and everywhere. The history of Florida is our history!

Lucia M. Gonzalez
2024-2025 President, REFORMA de Florida

You are invited!

Every month, the Executive Board of REFORMA de Florida holds an online meeting to discuss the business of the chapter, work on ways to encourage growth, and fine-tune our community involvement. President Lucia Gonzalez started her presidency by inviting members and those interested in joining the chapter to attend.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday October 7th at 7 pm EST. A link to join us will be sent to members, so be sure to check your email. Get to know your Board members, find out what's going on with the chapter, as well as how you can help. Add your voice!

Dear Future Librarian

by Gaby Gomez



Fall Semester & Flu Season: A Cataloging Tragedy in Three Acts.

Ah, fall semester. The season of cinnamon candles, color-coded planners, and lies. Because somewhere between the golden leaves and the cute sweaters, reality hits: your immune system is on strike, your sinuses are plotting your downfall, and your professor just said the words "*Dublin Core*" like it's the most natural thing in the world.

The truth is, transitioning into fall as a grad student is like being dropped into a corn maze blindfolded, with a laptop, three discussion posts due, and a box of tissues. One minute you're enjoying your PSL (or in my case, sugar-free spiced tea), and the next you're coughing your way through metadata standards while wrapped in two blankets and desperately Googling, "*Can you die from reading too many MARC records?*"

Dear Future Librarian (continued)

Just when you think you've got a rhythm, October hits, and suddenly you're juggling Dublin Core and Halloween programming. You're formatting a LibGuide in one tab while DIY-ing a spooky book display in another. Should you be citing a book review or carving a book-shaped pumpkin? No one knows. Not even you.

Then comes Thanksgiving break (aka "*the illusion of rest*"). You dream of mashed potatoes and stretchy pants, but your inbox is full of group project reminders and calls for annotated bibliographies. You're trying to explain to your family what a digital repository is while someone asks why you're "*still in school*."

And yet... there's something kind of magical about fall study. Maybe it's the quiet. Maybe it's the freedom to wear pajamas with zero judgment. Maybe it's that weird sense of pride in surviving what feels like an escape room of legal jargon, sneezing fits, and holiday distractions.

As I write this I'm bundled up with Hazel, my little feral chihuahua, my best friend "The infamous" *Foundations of Library and Information Science* book by Richard E. Rubin and listening to *Soda Pop* by Saja Boys (Yes, I fell for K-Pop Demon Hunters too) on loop like it's my emotional support soundtrack. It's the only thing keeping me from melting into a puddle of unsubmitted assignments and expired cough drops.

So, if you're also sniffing your way through semantic metadata, balancing spooky season, and dodging awkward Thanksgiving conversations, just know you're not alone. The fall semester is a beast, but you've got this. Cough, catalog, caffeinate, repeat.

P.S. I'm still on the lookout for MLIS students to interview! If you'd like to be featured in the next *Dear Future Librarian*, email me at gaby.gomez.26@outlook.com.

With love, struggle, and a cup of spiced tea,
Gaby

P.P.S. Remember: If Dublin Core doesn't break you, group projects will. Stay strong, metadata warrior.

***!Latineando!***

by David Hernandez Rivero

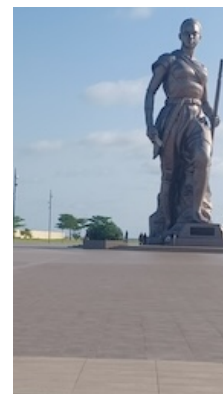
Saludos y felicitaciones a los reformistas de South Florida.

October is a special month of numerous interesting celebrations that bring us great opportunities for events and programs in libraries. October is also when Autumn comes to our lives with feelings of change, mystery, preservation, and life

balance. Fall is also associated with harvest, nature, and seasonal changes. Children, especially, will love fall themes in Story time and special displays.

Latineando (continued)

National Book Month and Banned Books Week are two October library themes we should celebrate in our branches. National Book Month is an awesome way to celebrate the social and cultural impact of books in our daily lives. Even today when digital technologies and artificial intelligence transform our lives, we still rely on books to share complex ideas and express creativity. I'd love to create displays that explore diverse genres such as Science Fiction, Fantasy, Juvenile classics, and others. For Banned books we have been creating displays so patrons can find those books that have been banned or challenged. Please explore the importance of books in our lives in some of your programs such as Story time.



We continue celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month (NHHM) in October. NHHM allows you to produce new programs depending on your budget and resources. Remember that you can always do in-house programs such as arts and crafts celebrations. There are numerous ideas to explore such Mexican fiestas with papel picado, a traditional Mexican craft. In your arts and craft programs you could also explore the idea of Murals and encourage children to paint on a large canvas. Other ideas for arts and crafts are musical instruments, Mesoamerican calendars, Latin-Americans flora and fauna, etc.

For adult programs there are numerous possibilities such as dance classes featuring Latinos' dancing rhythms like salsa, cumbia, merengue, tango, and others. Check the list of performers in your area and you will be surprised to learn the diversity of Latino performers including Andean music, Afro-Cuban dance, tango classes, and others.

I recently hosted an art and poetry event celebrating Hispanic National Heritage Month. This gala event was co-sponsored by the library and the Latino Poetry foundation *Memoria Cultural*. The event was curated around the idea of diversity of Latino cultures as explored in media arts such as painting, photography, and poetry. The event featured 12 artists representing six Latin American Countries. It's the third cultural event with *Memoria Cultural* involved, and each of them has brought audiences of 50 and 60 participants, a number that is outstanding for a small-size library. As a result, a recurring monthly event each featuring two or three poets is being organized.

It is of great value for libraries to partner with local institutions and organizations looking to create community spaces. In our local area, numerous organizations with diverse interests (environmental, artistic, scientific, educational, or health related) are seeking to create physical spaces to further their mission and goals. Knowing our community by constantly researching what resources and organizations exist will help us build great partnerships.

Finally, we have the celebration of Halloween. It is a great opportunity to explore the spooky and different side of reality. The Latin American experience gives us ample leeway to explore creativity. With a tendency to magical realism, Latino writers explore the unexplained in a unique way. Numerous popular stories such as "*La Llorona*," "*el chupacabras*," "*el cucuy*," and others have fascinated and scared numerous generations. We could use these ideas for spooky decorations and displays, or even for programming. A few recommendations for Latino horror books are "*Goddess of Filth*" by V. Castro, "*Our Shadows Have Claws: 15 Latin American Monster Stories*" edited

Latineando (continued)

by Yamile Saied Méndez and Amparo Ortiz, “Coyote Songs” by Gabino Iglesias, “Certain Dark Things” by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, “Five Midnights” by Ann Dávila Cardinal, and “Small Town Monsters” by Diana Rodriguez Wallach, among others.

Let's enjoy fall and make our libraries produce outstanding programs and services. Let's use creativity to make our libraries the special place our communities deserve. Have a great fall and enjoy October's wonderful library celebrations.

Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial: Corporate member of REFORMA de Florida

by Veronica Cervera

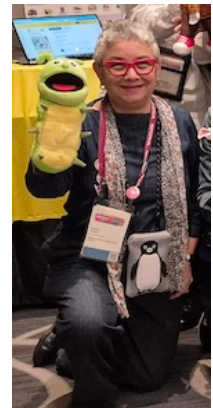
**Editor's Note: Corporate members of our chapter are always invited to submit a short article for the newsletter. I'd like to thank Veronica Cervera (who I met at the Conference) for submitting our first article. Veronica is the Sales Manager for: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. If you're a Corporate member,, please submit your article and photos to me for the November issue. Gracias!*

Thank you REFORMA!



I went to Long Beach with fear and returned with strength and recharged batteries. Thank you! This was my first REFORMA Conference, with the support of my parent company *Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial*, despite having been in contact with many of you for years in person and virtually (in fact, I participated in the virtual Conference during the pandemic!) I am more grateful than ever for THIS FAMILY.

I had the pleasure of reuniting with some of you, and made many new contacts and new friends. What a joy to receive your visits at our stand and see that the vast majority of you know our authors, are aware of our new releases, want to know more about them, run Spanish Book Clubs, and support our communities all across this vast geography where we continue to fight for every little piece of bookshelf space for books in Spanish for our people.



It is a pleasure to share this endeavor with you. The cherry on the cake was that a book published by us won the first REFORMA National Book Award, *Malas*, by Marcela Fuentes!

I take this opportunity to tell you again that any help you need from our side, here I am. We have an average of 150 new releases in Spanish each month, of which between a third and a quarter are children or YA books; so, for sure, you will find books for everyone among them. You can count on me to prepare a list on any subject you need, and then you can find our books at your preferred distributor.

Thank you once again to everyone, especially the organizing team of the REFORMA Conference, for all their efforts to make such a wonderful and unforgettable event possible.

Penguin Random House (continued)

I leave you with a [list of our new releases for 2025](#). It includes a special addition - the ISBNs of our books in audiobook and eBook formats, as almost all are also available in those formats.

Yours truly, Veronica Cervera: Veronica.Cervera@penguinrandomhouse.com

Broward County Conference on Children's Literature

by María Vega



REFORMA de Florida was happy to hold three presentations at the *Broward County Conference on Children's Literature* this past September. The Executive Board provided financial support to bring children's author and illustrator Yesenia Moises to present three workshops - one for librarians and educators, and two for children. Yesenia Moises is an Afro-Latina and a proud Dominicana. Her work portrays people of diverse backgrounds playing leading roles in fantasy adventures that brim with color. Her debut picture book as an author-illustrator, *Stella's Stellar Hair*, received a *Kirkus* starred review and was named a Best Children's Book of 2021 by *Parents Magazine*. Her latest book, *Sounds Like Joy*, is out now! In a time where the world can be a scary place, she wants it to be filled with big hair, bright colors, and lots of sazón from the heart.



Yesenia's workshop for librarians and educators was titled "*Drawn to Joy: Visual Storytelling as a Tool for Connection and Curiosity.*" She shared how drawing can spark joy and strengthen emotional connection with young readers by having adults try their hand at drawing, and even accepted an impromptu drawing challenge. She let the children rediscover their own creativity by having them make an ocean-themed musical instrument.

Early 2026, Yesenia will be back in Florida as an artist at Epcot's *Festival of the Arts* and is an outstanding presenter (in case ReDeFL librarians are interested in having her in their libraries). Learn more about Yesenia at her website: <https://www.yeseniamois.com>.

REFORMA de Florida Board Member María Vega presented a session on the best Latine graphic novels for children and teens. School and public librarians learned about the novels on REFORMA and GNCRT's Core list as well as new and upcoming graphic novels by Latine authors and illustrators. REFORMA de Florida Secretary Mari Martinez Serrano presented "*Storytime Planning: Creating an Outline for Success,*" which focused on how to craft the perfect storytime by



Broward County Conference (continued)

knowing your audience, creating a plan, including transitions and visual cues, and practicing. Her audience was reminded that they could see Mari's storytimes in action by watching her Bilingual Storytime videos on REFORMA de Florida's website.

My Amazing Adventures at the REFORMA Conference

by Alma Ramos-McDermott

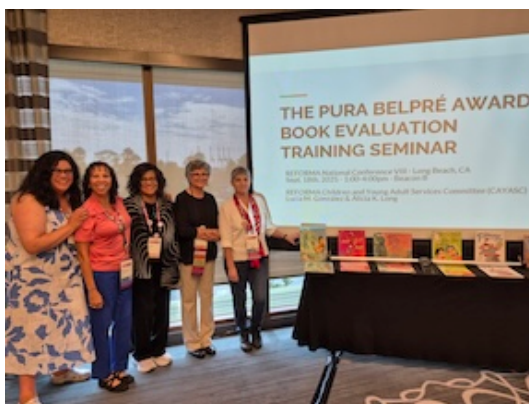
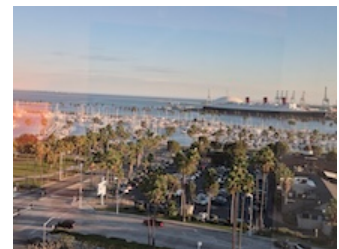
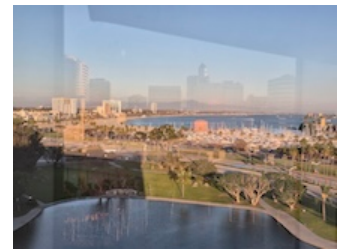
I attended the National REFORMA Conference VIII two weeks ago in beautiful Long Beach, California. It was my first time in attendance and my first time in Long Beach. As a School Librarian and Teacher it had been impossible to take off during the first month of school for any conference. But, I'm now retired so I can go! (BTW: Lucia coined the word "LIBERATED" instead of "Retired" so, going forward, that's the new description of my official status.)

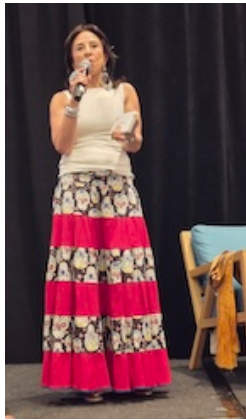
Upon arrival, I was especially thrilled to find that my 12th floor, corner room did NOT face the usual brick wall I've always had at ALA, AASL, and YALSA conferences. I actually had a view of the harbor! The beach! The Queen Mary!

I spent so much time with Lucia and Alicia during the conference that I started calling us *The Three Amigas/The Three Musketeers* in my head. I renewed friendships with members from other chapters, met newbies starting out, student attendees, and a public librarian who travelled all the way from Bolivia. Below is the very true story of how I spent my time at the conference.

Thursday September 18 (Pre-Conference): Lucia and Alicia presented "*The Pura Belpré Award Book Evaluation Training Seminar*" with a panel discussion moderated by Jenny Lizarraga. More information about what it entailed is in Lucia's Presidential column.

Later that evening I attended the PACKED (500+ attendees) Opening Reception.



Adventures (continued)

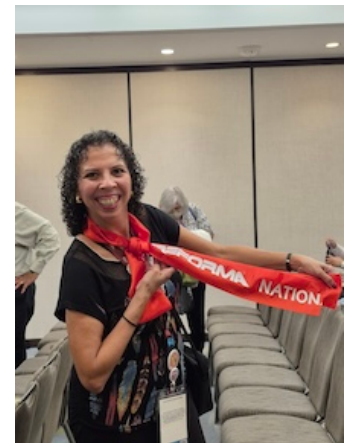
Friday September 19: I went to bed super late, as usually happens at conferences. It was hard to get up early, but I got a good seat for our Opening Speaker: Pulitzer Prize winning-journalist, and first Latina hired by NPR, Maria Hinojosa.

Steering Committee Conference Chairs Cynthia Bautista and Madeline Peña welcomed us, followed by ALA President-Elect Maria McCauley and a few others before it was time for Maria to speak. In 2023, when I was a member of REFORMA's Executive Committee, Maria was at ALA. She asked to meet Latino librarians before her talk, and we were invited backstage. She was thrilled to learn about our work with Latinos, and spoke about REFORMA that day. Today, she told us she jumped at the opportunity to speak at the conference when she was invited. We all laughed

and cried with her as she didn't feel like a regular Opening Speaker. Maria felt like familia.

At the Exhibits ribbon cutting I caught part of the red ribbon flung into the air. I fashioned a tie, and wore it for the rest of the day to showcase that REFORMA Nation is in da HOUSE!

Exhibitors displayed their wares, including members Jenny, owner of Cinco Books, Lucia (Consultant)/Mariela Diaz (Sales Manager) Spanish Publishers, LLC, and Veronica (Sales Manager) Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. Exhibitors worked hard to support REFORMistas with whatever they needed.



I attended a session on the "*Early History of REFORMA*." John Ayala (nicknamed *El Padrino de REFORMA*) explained how REFORMA started in 1971, talked about its early leaders and beginnings, discussed how he wound up becoming our 2nd and 3rd President, and had a Q & A.

I then rushed to a screening of "*Jodón*," a short film, chatting and singing with the audience for 25 minutes as we waited for it to start. When the first PPT slide rolled onto the screen I realized I was in the **WRONG** room! OOPSY! I raced to the correct one, just in time. Whew!!

Adventures (continued)

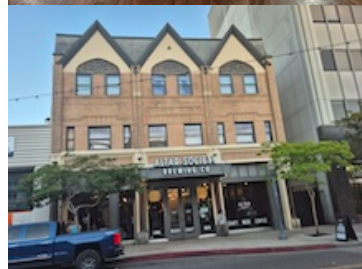
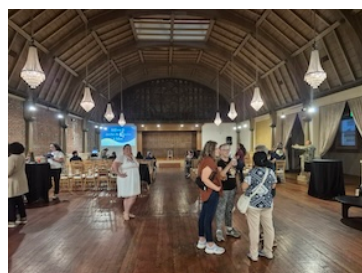
"Jodón" is based on a true story about the filmmaker's brother. She and her brother Joel, nicknamed "Jodón," shared a special bond growing up in the Bronx with their immigrant Dominican parents. Joel loved to draw, and hoped to make a career out of it. Instead, he was deported for holding a marijuana cigarette he hadn't smoked and the family was torn apart. I cried, along with others in the audience. Afterwards, the producer/writer (Joel's sister Marilyn Jimenez Mark) and the director (Erin Ramirez) held a Q & A. I asked Marilyn what happened to her brother after he was deported. She said that would be the topic of another film, but shared that he spiraled into drug use. It was a very powerful short film.

Next, I ran to Lucia and Alicia's presentation *Noche de Cuentos: A Night of Stories: A Celebration of Culture, Language, and Tradition.*" (BTW: Wear sneakers to conferences because you're going to do a lot of walking, standing, or running!) *Noche de Cuentos* is a REFORMA family initiative, begun by Camila Alire during her ALA Presidency, and is now in its 16th year.

Lucia began the session by entertaining the audience. Cats-cradle style, she wove a piece of yarn into various patterns as she enthralled us with her storyteller's version of Hansel & Gretel versus the Witch. We saw the witch's hat, broom, cat, children crossing a bridge, a palm tree, and much more.

Attendees learned the history of *Noche de Cuentos*, the cultural importance of stories and oral traditions, and had a crash course in resources available on the *Noche* website - which include how to apply for the 2026 Noche Mini Grants offered yearly by REFORMA National.

Later, I attended a Poster session showcasing *Día/Noche* mini-grant winners.



REFORMA held a *Noche de Cuentos* event at 7 pm at the *Altar Society Brewing & Coffee Company*. A former Masonic Temple built in 1903, it was one of only four buildings to survive the earthquake of 1933. I found it very architecturally interesting.

Lucia was MC and, one-by-one, introduced amazing storytellers who transfixed us. Irania Macias told stories through music as well as call-and-response. Antonio Sacre made us laugh with the story of his many names. Yosimar Reyes, whose stories of being queer and undocumented, (as well as his side comments and facial expressions had us rolling with laughter.



Adventures (continued)

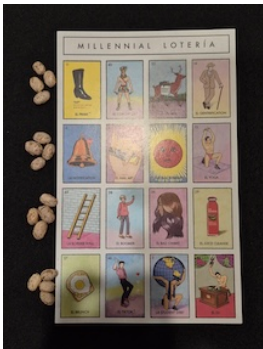


Attendees purchased items at tables set up by each storyteller after the event. Alicia manned the table for Yosimar. Thank you Alicia!

I zipped past, finding a seat at the packed Lotería tables. I had only played once, on ZOOM during COVID, so this was my first time with a live audience.



Mike Alfaro created a very entertaining *Millennium Lotería*, which meant we had cards like “La Karen, El Selfie, El Prime, El Tik Tok,” etc. He was very funny, with a story for every card. Pura Belpré winning Illustrator Marcelo Verdad got rousing applause when “El Man Bun” was called because his man bun matched Mike’s card! Of course the card and Marcelo’s man bun had to pose for our amusement.



My beans began growing roots as Mike called card after card, and they didn’t move. I started chanting “new card! new card!,” cracking up my table. However, after a few games, I won. Twice! A table full of prizes was cleaned out by the end of the evening.

Afterwards, a DJ had everyone on the floor. I had gone downstairs to catch an Uber but my group decided to order pizza. So, when I heard music, I ran back up to dance 5 or 6 songs before we left.



Saturday September 20: I slept in because Jenny’s session didn’t start until 9:30. In “*The Pura Belpré Award turns 30: A Milestone in Latinx Representation*,” she discussed the award’s importance and how REFORMA’s founders wanted Latino children to see themselves in the literature. We watched a video from the 10th anniversary, then Jenny moderated a

panel with 2025 winning authors and illustrators Karla Arenas Valenti, Marcelo Verdad, and Ashley Granillo.



Jenny asked each panelist to tell what winning the award meant. They entertained us with stories of how they wouldn’t pick up the phone when the Awards Committee called and described their stunned reactions. All emphasized how winning the Pura Belpré award made them feel as if they finally belonged.



Adventures (continued)

My next session was the *Los Angeles Libros Festival*. For 7 years, the Los Angeles Public Library has put on a free bilingual book festival for the whole family with more than 5000 attendees. Members of REFORMA's LA Chapter showed photos, and gave tips on how attendees could hold their own event. During the Q & A I asked if the festival was held outdoors, wondering if it was difficult to secure permission from the city to close streets. I was amazed to discover it's held entirely **inside** the LAPL Central Library. Wow!

BTW - Don't forget about the *Miami Book Festival* coming up November 16-23. ReDeFL helps in some way every year, so stay tuned for how you can help too.

Later, I took a short break to tour the Queen Mary with my husband. Shhhh! Don't tell anyone!!

Tonight was REFORMA's "*Fiesta & Awards Celebration*." Beautifully decorated tables awaited us, and we were entertained by the *Trio Renacimiento* while eating delicious food. We first heard them at our ALA San Diego event, and knew we wanted them at the conference. I was thrilled to hear them again because they're **really** good (and handsome)...[Don't tell my husband! LOL.]



President Ady Huertas began the Awards portion of the night by introducing Marcela Fuentes, winner of the inaugural REFORMA National Book Award for "*Malas*." Celia Avila de Santiago received the *Dr. Arnulfo D. Trejo Librarian of the Year* award. I was one of two receiving the *Elizabeth Martinez Lifetime Achievement Award*. Manuel "Manny" Figueroa gave his speech, and then I was called.

A few months ago, I received an email saying I was awarded the Elizabeth Martinez Lifetime Achievement Award. I cried. I cried again when Madeline Peña announced it at the ALA BOD meeting, and cried once more when it was announced at REFORMA's Membership meeting at ALA.

I cried because my fellow REFORMistas thought my 40 years of work with poor Black and Brown students as a simple School Librarian and Teacher was enough to join the incredible group of Public and Academic Librarians who won this award in the past, starting with the amazing Sandra Rios-Balderrama (co-founder of the Pura Belpré award), and continuing with names like Camila Alire (first Latina President of ALA), Patrick Sullivan (long-time co-chair of the Children in Crisis project) and our Lucia M. Gonzalez (two-time Pura Belpré Honor winner, and past ALSC/REFORMA President).

I'm honored and proud to be among the ranks of these esteemed leaders. Muchisimas gracias! (It was requested that I include my acceptance speech for those unable to attend. You'll find it on p. 14.)

Elizabeth A. Martinez Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients

- 2025 - Alma Ramos-McDermott and Manuel "Manny" Figueroa
- 2024 - Dr. Romelia Salinas
- 2023 - Lucia Martinez Gonzalez
- 2022 - Oralia Garza de Cortés
- 2021 - Patrick Sullivan
- 2020 - Luis Chaparro and Susan C. Luévano
- 2019 - Camila Alire and Orlando Archibeque
- 2018 - Luis Herrera and Teresa "Tess" Tobin
- 2017 - Ana Elba Pavon
- 2016 - Dr. Kathleen de la Peña McCook
- 2015 - Loida García-Febo
- 2014 - Sandra Rios Balderrama

Adventures (continued)



After the Awards ceremony, we put on our dancing shoes for the *Trio Renacimiento*. When they finished, a DJ took over until midnight. I was perfectly fine dancing for hours in heels, however, when the music stopped the pain began. I was now Cinderella, and it felt like 9 toes were broken as I hobbled back to my room. What a night!



Sunday September 21: I decided to wear my conference “*Chismosa*” t-shirt, and yawned my way to the 9 a.m. award-winning documentary “*Backstreet to the American dream,*” narrated in English, Spanish, and the Indigenous Náhuatl language, presented by Director/Producer Patricia Nazario. I quickly woke up.

It was about the food truck industry in LA, which traced its Latino roots to the 1980’s and not to a BBQ truck that tweeted out its offerings in 2008 and attracted gigantic crowds. With that particular success, blue-collar food trucks began to proliferate in LA. As a result of crowds from those new food trucks, storeowners became upset and petitioned local governments for more control.

Laws unfair to the original Latino family-owned trucks were passed, and they began paying the price brought on by those who were in the business for the first time. Constant health department inspections, police harassment, as well as costly fines threatened Latino families who depended on food trucks for their livelihoods. It was interesting and very educational.

I grabbed a quick breakfast at the Exhibits. As I set down my food, I caught the tail end of a puppet presentation of Pura Belpré’s “*Pérez and Martina*” by Lucia and Yokaira López-Tifa, a Doctoral student at UMass Amherst. I snapped a photo, but missed the puppet action. Bummer! I want a do-over!



Adventures (continued)



I headed off to the Closing Session where attendees were thanked and the site of the next conference was announced. The Colorado chapter will host REFORMA National Conference IX on September 23-26, 2027 at the Grand Hyatt Denver. Mark your calendars!

Dr. Gina Ann Garcia and her puppy discussed her studies on Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). She noted our Latino population is huge, yet many aren't going to college, and talked about ways libraries, including school libraries, could reverse this trend. During the Q & A I noted school libraries were included as part of the "get Latinos to college" mindset, yet Black and Brown students don't have them - especially inner cities. I said we need to do more to keep or bring them back if we want more Latinos in college.



The Three Amigas had a final selfie, and then we left the building...

I hope you enjoyed my adventures, and it inspires you to join us at the 2027 conference in Denver to have your own adventures. I'll be there. Will you?



Elizabeth Martinez Lifetime Achievement Award: Acceptance Speech on September 20, 2025

by Alma Ramos-McDermott

On the Spectrum Scholarship's 20th anniversary, Elizabeth Martinez wrote an article detailing the difficulties in getting the Spectrum Initiative program approved when she was Executive Director of ALA. The award I am gratefully accepting today is named for a woman who endured much to help diversify our libraries. I stand here as a product of her hard work.

I graduated high school in 1979 and began working full-time as a secretary. That's what we did. We went to school and then we worked. No one I knew had ever gone to college, but that winter I learned about it and wanted to go. I entered in the fall of 1980 and was the first in my family of 8 to graduate from college.

As is usually the case in poor Brooklyn neighborhoods, we didn't have a school library when I began teaching in 1984. I believed in the power of books so, over the years, bought over 400 with my own money and built a classroom library on different topics and reading levels from all the grades I taught starting with pre-k, then kindergarten, 1st, 3rd, and 4th grade. When my students moved to other grades, they came back to borrow books. They knew I'd be teaching and all they had to do was write their name on a little card I had in the book, leave the card, and take the book. My Principal noticed so, in 2001, he asked if I wanted to start a school library in the building and I said yes.

*I already had a master's that took 6 yrs. of my blood, sweat, and tears to earn so I **did not** want another one. However, starting a library from scratch was really HARD so I realized I had to go to school to figure it out. It was because of Elizabeth Martinez that I was able to go to school because I won the Spectrum Scholarship in 2007. Elizabeth Martinez was at the Spectrum Institute that year and, even though I didn't know her, she offered me a job here working here at her California library. I was touched that she offered me a job without knowing me, but I had to turn her down because I had just gotten married in 2005 and moved to Boston, and I KNEW my husband was not going to want to relocate to California. Plus, I was training to become a school librarian so I didn't feel I could become a public librarian.*

While I worked as a School Librarian I saw a lot of inequalities. Elizabeth Martinez fought for diversity in libraries and I had to start a fight for equality in school libraries because many poor, inner city schools with black and brown children don't have school libraries. Meanwhile the suburbs are full of them. I worked throughout my career to try to change that. I taught in Brooklyn, Boston, and in Florida. Wherever I found inequality in school libraries I would be at School Board meetings, speaking to state legislatures, and doing whatever I could for it.

I thank REFORMA's Awards Committee for recognizing my 40 years of work with the poor and communities of color as a School Librarian and Classroom Teacher. I thank my 82-year-old husband for spending every single one of our almost 20 years of marriage helping me pack and unpack books, decorate libraries and classrooms, hammer, paint, staple, and more. I just retired in June or, as Lucia Gonzalez likes to say, "I Liberated myself." This is going to be our first year of starting our 20th year of marriage where he's NOT helping me at school!



Acceptance speech (continued)

I am proud to accept this Lifetime Achievement award, acknowledging Elizabeth Martinez's role in my life, and acknowledging that diversity in libraries and equality in school libraries is still a work in progress. It's up to us to keep diversity and equality in the public eye. Our work is not over. We will not be erased. Thank you.

In the Know: We want to hear from YOU!

What's going on in your Florida library? Readers want to learn about it, to stay "in the know."

If you want to contribute to future columns of "In the Know," informing members across the state about something going on in your library, send us an email and we'll make sure your event is featured in our next newsletter. Are YOU in the know?

Are you a Corporate member of REFORMA de Florida?

Corporate members are an important part of our chapter. Send a photo, business card, or a short blurb about your company for a future newsletter. We want to know more about you!

What's happening?: Northern, Central, or Southern regions

What's 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 photos. Your news could help grow membership in your region, so we look forward to hearing from you.

REFORMA

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If you're a REFORMA National **Member-at-large** (not associated with ReDeFL or any chapter), **join the REFORMA de Florida chapter** as a full member. Just log in to your membership account, and check REFORMA de Florida as your chapter. It's as easy as that!