



Thoughts on Reflection: “A People Should Not Long for Their Own Image”

By **Maya Christina Gonzalez**

As a very young child, I started drawing my face on the backs of books.

Intuitively, I knew that I wasn't

there, yet I belonged there. I had used art as a child, and then as an adult, to heal myself.

I started going to school to write, and in university I got thrown into this graduate level thing that was super white, straight, male, middle/upper class. I was not anywhere near anything that we were looking at, nor was I like any of the other people in the group. I had also been disowned by my family because of their homophobia. So I went silent. I literally could no longer speak. So I went back to the art that had saved me as a child.

I came to San Francisco when I was 30. I was going to be the Chicana icon artist, painting big naked women, *Día de los Muertos*, *calaveras*—and I was so excited that people could see me as Chicana. People were walking up to me speaking Spanish. This wasn't happening to me in Oregon where I grew up; I was invisible there. In San Francisco I began to understand the power in being reflected, feeling like I belonged, not having to explain myself. Then I met Harriet Rohmer, the founder, publisher, and executive director of Children's Book Press. She asked me to illustrate a book by Gloria Anzaldua. And the answer was, of course, “Yes!”

Around then I saw this graffiti that read, “a people should not long for their own image.” I realized that I had been longing this whole time. I realized what I was longing for was Self. That's how I first got into using art in schools. I was painting naked women; I was a radical artist, not a children's book author at all.

(continued on page 3)

Visibility Politics: Why Representation Matters

By **Carla M. Peña**

Born and raised in Queens, New York, I thought I was living in the cultural mecca of the United States, dare I say the world. In my mind, New York City had always been the ultimate intersection of race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender/sex, class, and then some. Particularly my hometown neighborhood, Jackson Heights, the most ethnically diverse urban area on the planet. As if that weren't enough reason to be hype about Jackson Heights, it's also home to the Queens Pride Parade route. All of this to say that one would imagine a native New Yorker such as myself would have had plenty of mirrors reflecting their identity.

I discovered identity initially through cultural pride. My father was born in Havana, Cuba and my mother is Nuyorican; her parents were born on the island of Puerto Rico. I knew early on that I was Cuban and Puerto Rican, and I was taught to carry those identities with pride. But my identity as queer/gender non-conforming (GNC) is something that I did not come to as easily, or as proudly. That took years.

I knew I was different from my peers from a very young age. I didn't have the words to be able to articulate those differences until I was in middle school. Even then, I felt in my heart that everything I was was nothing short of deviant,

abnormal, or simply not possible. I didn't know anyone who was queer or GNC. There were no real life examples around me. No television characters I could relate to. No one on the big screen nor any love stories in books that would spell out the very connections and role models I longed for as an adolescent.

I knew what it meant to be Latinx from my family. But what about being queer? What about being a masculine woman? I had no examples around me or resources I could readily find when I was just starting to piece everything together for myself. When I came out of the closet at 21 and declared who I was publicly, I found the first foothold of belonging in community. In community I drew strength, learned self-confidence, pride, and self-love. From the LGBTQ community itself I found authenticity and celebration of people like me; from queer musicians who were underground, from LGBTQ-focused organizations that I was introduced to, and from films that my queer peers would share with me.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Process of Becoming

by Renata Moreira, Executive Director



As we prepare to enter a new year, I invite you—dear member of our beloved community—to join me for a moment of reflection and to honor the “process of becoming” in which we are all engaged.

For me and my loved ones, this period tends to be one of contemplation, a moment to honor what was accomplished this past year and to envision how and who we wish to be in the world next year. Whether the milestones achieved involve learning new colors—my adorable almost 2 year-old beams with joy pointing to “purple/roxo” these days—or managing to secure LGBTQ-inclusive textbooks for over 6 million students in California—it’s mommy who beams with pride this time—it is important for us to take a moment to celebrate what we’ve done.

And as we consider our individual and collective experiences, we also work to heal unacknowledged fears and name unheard needs as an important part of becoming who we wish to be. We intentionally practice compassion with ourselves and others for, perhaps, not realizing dreams or meeting goals, detoured or obstructed by life’s circumstances, the political environment, or more. We take the time to regenerate and recalibrate the process of becoming the people, caregivers, family members, friends, or allies that we truly wish to be in the world.

This is certainly not a comfortable process for many of us. I, for one, am considering all of the privileges I have—despite being an immigrant queer mama in the U.S.—and how I may still be benefiting from classist, racist, heterocentric, transphobic, and ableist systems of oppression, whether

consciously or not. I am honored to be able to lead the intersectional work we do at Our Family Coalition, but also suffer knowing that many folks in our communities are still unaware of how all of our struggles and wins connect with each other. I am grateful that my child and I can access affordable healthcare, and still am in pain knowing that children of LGBTQ parents are less likely to have access to culturally competent providers—as well as coverage—simply due to our family formations. I know that, because of the fight that so

We take the time to regenerate and recalibrate the process of becoming the people, caregivers, family members, friends, or allies that we truly wish to be in the world.

many of us have fought for decades, LGBTQ parents and caregivers are fully protected under the law in California. But I’m also keenly aware that we still have a long way to go to achieve equity and justice for all families in our home state. That’s the process of becoming: an always evolving celebration and reflection, both personal and collective.

It is my hope that you, too, can take a few minutes to honor your own process over the past year and start envisioning your “new becoming.” Did you learn things about yourself and your ability to give, or help others transform or grow this year? What unheard needs of your own or of others must you revisit? Are you excited about fresh perspectives and innovative ideas you can bring forth for your family, communities, Our Family Coalition, and the world next year?

My year-end wish for you and your loved ones is that you will be able to feel the great joy and pride about (y)our achievements of 2017 and will continue bringing forth the deep loving parts of yourself in order to manifest further healing, justice, and equity for all in 2018! Our Family Coalition and I are grateful, and here for you. Cheers to a transformative new year! 🌈

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Thoughts on Reflection...

(continued from page 1)

But with my first book, I started to go into the classrooms. I wanted kids to be able to access the tools I used to heal and was still using. It was shocking to me to come into contact with third or fourth graders who were having the same kind of experiences I had been having as a child. The lack of reflection was still as profound for IPOC (indigenous, people of color) children now as it had been for me so long ago. So as a children's book author/artist, I am disseminating all the stuff that everyone else holds really close to their chest. Because people like us do not get to know these things.

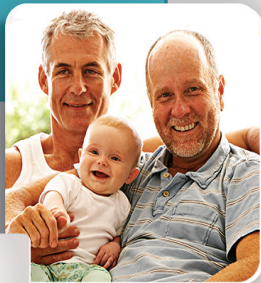
It was not until I became a co-parent that I found there was nothing I could use to talk about my community to my child. So I started Reflection Press in 2009 with my partner. We published our first book, *Gender Now*, in 2010. We then got School of the Free Mind up in 2012–13. I created Claiming Face, a curriculum to teach children about self-empowerment through self-portraiture and using creativity. It was more impactful than I anticipated. I saw how challenging of a situation educators were in. I then started working with Gender Spectrum, really trying to disseminate this in as many ways as possible.

Gender Now was the first children's book to bring trans and intersex issues to young people. Being documented as such is really exciting. By starting my own press and disseminating my "propaganda," as I like to say—my queer-centric, holistic, nature-based propaganda—I started understanding the power of it. When we realized we could do all this on our own, we wanted to share it with everyone. This is true power: being able to create anything that we need to get out to our communities.

We lead now with the belief that we can change the world through our own actions and our own healing. It's very important to get that into the minds of children and educators and parents. My latest book, *They She He Me: Free to Be*, literally came from my partner Matthew going over *The Gender Wheel* with our four year-old. We need to be able to talk to very young children about gender: at home, in the classroom, all the time. To open children's minds up to the possibilities.

I always tell kids, "If you don't see yourself in a book, then you need to make that portrait yourself." 🔄

Maya Gonzalez is an artist, progressive educator and award-winning children's book illustrator and author. For more info visit: www.mayagonzalez.com



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CALENDAR

SAT Jan 6 Jan 13 Jan 27 3-4:30pm	<i>Bollywood Dance for LGBTQ Families (all ages)</i> DESTINY ARTS CENTER, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND We are bringing Bollywood to OFC! Join other LGBTQ families and dance instructor, Mitali Purkayastha, for a high energy Bollywood Dance Party. There will be time for instructed dance and choreography, free dance, and fun dance performances! Sign up for all 3 classes, and come dance with us. See you at the dance floor!	EB
SUN Jan 7 12-2pm	<i>Ice Skating</i> YERBA BUENA ICE SKATING AND BOWLING CENTER, 750 FOLSOM ST., SAN FRANCISCO Do you love ice skating, or have you always wanted to learn how? This skating party is for novices and experts alike. Join us and other LGBTQ+ families at San Francisco's favorite year-round facility at Yerba Buena. There will be a special tot area for our littlest skaters. Space is limited so RSVP now!	SF
SAT Jan 13 5-8pm SUN Jan 14 9am-6pm	<i>Surrogacy Conference and Expo</i> MARINES' MEMORIAL CLUB & HOTEL, 609 SUTTER ST., SAN FRANCISCO In partnership with Men Having Babies: an educational conference for gay men who want to become parents through surrogacy, featuring in-depth panels on insurance, budgeting, medical and emotional issues to consider, and a broad range of domestic and international parenting options..	SF
WED Jan 17 6-8pm	<i>Healthy Eating for Children</i> RECESS URBAN RECREATION 970 CAROLINA ST., SAN FRANCISCO Come learn about child nutrition, establishing healthy eating habits, tips for quick nutritious meals, and more at this free workshop for LGBTQ families provided by SF Dept. of Public Health's Child Care Health Program.	SF
SAT Jan 27 2-5pm	<i>Talking to Kids About Race III: Nurturing Justice</i> SAN FRANCISCO MAIN LIBRARY, 100 LARKIN ST., KORET AUDITORIUM, SAN FRANCISCO Join us for a discussion about how to create environments for kids that nurture racial justice. We will practice concrete and developmentally supportive conversation starters, read-alouds, and games, as well as build community and learn from each other (and the kiddos)! For parents, caregivers, and educators of children 2-10 years old. Facilitated by Abundant Beginnings.	SF
WED Feb 7, 15* 21, 28 Mar 7, 14, 21, 28 Apr 4, 11, 18, 25 6-8pm	<i>Positive Parenting Program for Parents of Teens & Tweens</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Dawn Stueckle, ED of Sunset Youth Services, will lead LGBTQ parents and caregivers through the teen-tested curriculum of the Positive Parenting Program. Gain insights about supporting tweens and teens through the changes of adolescence, and learn ways to strengthen your relationship with one another. This is a 12-session series for parents and caregivers with youth ages 10 and up. *Group meets on Thursday because of Valentine's Day.	SF
THU Feb 8 6-8pm	<i>KidPower Child Protection for Adults Workshop</i> OAKLAND LGBTQ CENTER, 3207 LAKESHORE AVE., OAKLAND This adults-only workshop focuses on how to protect kids from harm and help them build age-appropriate skills to take charge of their own safety and well-being. Emphasis is on how to factor this kind of skill building into standard, everyday actions with the young people in your life.	EB
FRI & SAT Mar 23 & 24 all day	<i>California Adoption Conference</i> OAKLAND ASIAN CULTURAL CENTER, 388 9TH ST., OAKLAND OFC joins PACT and a host of other agencies in supporting the annual California Adoption Conference, a two-day event featuring talks and workshops for adoptive and foster families, adult adoptees and foster alums, birth parents, and adoption professionals.	EB

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SAT Mar 3 10am–12pm	<i>Kidpower Safety Workshop for kids (6–11) with their adults</i> OAKLAND LGBTQ CENTER, 3207 LAKESHORE AVE., OAKLAND Together, kids and their own adults learn and practice age-appropriate social safety skills such as boundary setting, projecting awareness, protecting our feelings from hurting words, advocacy, and effective help-seeking. This workshop is strictly for kids aged 6 to 11 and they are to be accompanied by their adult/s.	EB
SAT Mar 10 5pm–8:30pm	<i>20TH ANNIVERSARY LGBTQ Family Night @ Downtown Berkeley YMCA</i> DOWNTOWN BERKELEY YMCA, 2001 ALLSTON WAY, BERKELEY Join OFC for the 20th year of our signature event, LGBTQ Family Night at the Berkeley YMCA! Swimming for all ages, kindergym, raffle, activities for older children, sports, arts and crafts, and loads of entertainment.	EB

SUPPORT GROUPS

WED Feb 7 Mar 7 5:30–7:30pm	<i>Rainbow Family Night</i> HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY LGBTQ parents are invited to join our facilitated support group to connect, share experiences, swap tips, and discuss issues relevant to our families, while kids have a great time playing at Habitot.	EB
THU Jan 11 Feb 1 Mar 1 6–8pm	<i>Support for Parents of Tweens & Teens</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Monthly group for LGBTQ parents and guardians to talk, connect, decompress, and navigate together the experiences of raising teens and tweens. During group, COLAGE facilitates a “queerspawn-only” space for youth in LGBTQ-headed families to build support, leadership and communication skills, as well as participate in engaged activities together. Dinner provided with advance registration. Join us!	SF
SAT Jan 20 Feb 17 Mar 17 12–2pm	<i>Trans & Non-Binary Parent Support Group</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO Trans and non-binary parents, prospective parents, and co-parents connect and share anything from the workplace to trans activism, transition to temper tantrums, in a safe space with friendly, supportive people. Lunch and child care provided with registration. Newcomers welcome!	SF
TUE Jan 23 Feb 27 Mar 27 6–8pm	<i>LGBTQ+ Family Night for Solo & Partnered Parents</i> CHILDREN'S DAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 333 DOLORES ST., SAN FRANCISCO Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ families, then join one of two parent groups—for solo parents or for co-parents/caregivers—for facilitated discussions about family and child-rearing issues. Dinner and childcare provided with advance registration.	SF
THU Jan 25 Mar 22 6:30–8:30pm	<i>LGBTQ Provider Support Group</i> BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND This is an on-going support group that meets every other month for child care providers from the LGBTQ community who play unique roles in our communities and with families we work with. We may be out and proud or struggling with how to be ourselves with our families, co-workers and children. Join us for support and how to create inclusivity in our child care, and early childhood programs!	EB
THU Feb 22 Apr 26 6:30–8:30pm	<i>LGBTQ Parent Support Group</i> BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND This is an on-going support group that meets every other month for parents from the LGBTQ community looking for the right ECE—Early Care and Education arrangement. Join us for support and how to create inclusive environments in our child care settings. Facilitated by ECE professionals Shawn Bryant and Rainbow Markell, both from the LGBTQ communities.	EB

***Free childcare and food are provided at all events, with advance registration.
For further information and event registration, visit www.ourfamily.org.***

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PLAYGROUPS

TUESDAYS

Jan 9, 16, 23, 30

Feb 6, 13, 20, 27

Mar 6, 13, 20, 27

10–11:30am

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FRIDAYS

Jan 5, 12, 19, 26

Feb 2, 9, 16, 23

Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

9–10:15am

Toddle with Me: Music & Movement Class (18 months–5 years)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

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FRIDAYS

Feb 23

Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Apr 6, 13, 20, 27

May 4, 11

10:45am–12pm

Baby & Me: Infant Class (0–18 months)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

Want more quality time with your little one? OFC will be hosting a 12-week infant class for LGBTQ parents and caregivers. This parent-child interactive helps support child bonding, health, and increases your know-how about your infant's cognitive, physical, and language development!

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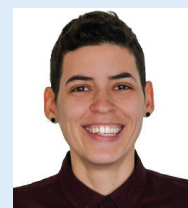
NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Carla M. Peña, Social Media and Communications Associate

Carla has built her career around a variety of experiences, roles, and initiatives, equipping her with a breadth of skills and a knack for storytelling. The most personal and deeply rooted connection in her social justice advocacy work has been around LGBTQ rights, youth work, and community organizing.

Previously, Carla served as the Public Education Manager for SAVE (Safeguarding American Values for Everyone), the oldest LGBTQ advocacy organization in South Florida. As a Public Allies AmeriCorps alum she has also worked at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center as Program Assistant and Outreach Specialist for Project Q Youth Services, assisting in development and implementation of youth programming, case management, and public education.

Born and raised in New York City to a Cuban father and Nuyorican mother, Carla is a first generation, Queer Latinx graduate of New York University. As a recent East Coast transplant, she now lives in Oakland with her partner, Mireya, and their shorkie, Rumi.



Visibility Politics ...

(continued from page 1)

I had to actively search out all of this. No one should have to search to see themselves reflected in the society they live in.

It was not until I started my work here at Our Family Coalition that I saw more than one representation of the possibilities for me as a masculine of center, queer adult. I hadn't thought seriously about having children or a family of my own because, until recently, I didn't know any LGBTQ parents—in real life or on the small screen. What we see around us becomes, in our minds and hearts, what is possible. And when you do not see what you are searching for—even if you are not consciously searching—it becomes, subconsciously, impossible. Seeing is very much believing.

I have focused my professional career around LGBTQ advocacy,

particularly around public education and youth work. Now at 32, I feel I have moved onto the next frontier of not only my life but the very work that both moves and sustains me. Working for an organization that puts LGBTQ families on the map is something I never would have imagined existed until moving to the Bay Area and seeing it for myself. My future as a prospective parent seems a little less like a reach, and a little more like possibility. ↗

Carla Peña is OFC's new Social Media and Communications Associate. See New Staff Spotlight above.

*What we see around us becomes,
in our minds and hearts,
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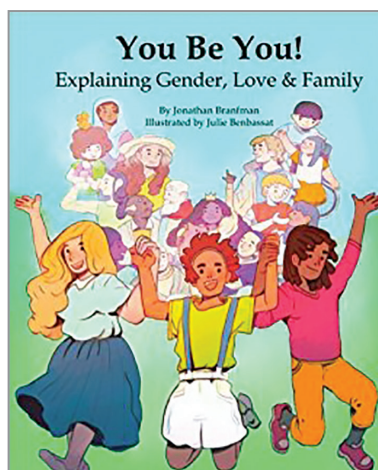
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BOOK CORNER

You Be You: Explaining Gender, Love & Family

By Jonathan Branfman

This LGBTQIA children's book explains gender, sexual, and family diversity for children. Illustrated by Julie Benbassat, *You Be You* also supports adults who are new to these topics. Additionally, the book introduces the concepts of oppression, privilege, intersectionality, and allyship. To complement these ideas, the illustrations convey not only many LGBTQIA identities and family formations, but also a spectrum of racial identities, ages, and ability statuses.



Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy.

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Oakland Pride & Family Garden

SEPT

10

Thanks so much to all who showed up for Oakland Pride! What greater way to celebrate pride than with family. We loved seeing you and your kiddos!





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