

**“LE DA LA MANO Y LE SONRÍE”:
A PLÁTICA ON CREATING QUEER CHICANX
CHILDREN’S LITERATURE**

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ISABEL MILLÁN is an Assistant Professor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Oregon. She is the author and illustrator of the award-winning queer bilingual children's picture book, *Chabelita's Heart/El corazón de Chabelita* (2022, Reflection Press), and author of *Coloring into Existence: Queer of Color Worldmaking in Children's Literature* (2023, New York University Press). Her research interests include queer of color theory, children's literature, and transborder studies.

KARLEEN PENDLETON JIMÉNEZ is the author of Lambda Literary Award finalists *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* and *How to Get a Girl Pregnant; Tomboys and Other Gender Heroes; The Street Belongs to Us*, and essays, such as, "Start with the Land': Groundwork for Chicana Pedagogy," and "Fat Pedagogy for Queers: Chicana Body Becoming in 4 Acts." She wrote the award-winning animated film *Tomboy*, has been recognized by the American Library Association, and was the 2022 recipient of The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Chicana Caucus Creative Works Recognition. She is Professor of Education, Gender, and Social justice at Trent University. Raised in Los Angeles, she lives in Toronto with her partner and daughter.

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ABSTRACT

In this conversation between Karleen Pendleton Jiménez and Isabel Millán, they reflect on their experiences as authors and their relationship spanning over a decade. As queer Chicana authors and scholars, they share many of the same academic spaces and communities, such as MALCS and NACCS¹. In 2022, Millán published her first children's picture book (*Chabelita's Heart/El corazón de Chabelita*), whereas Pendleton Jiménez has been creating children's literature since 1999². Her latest book for children is a middle-grade chapter book published in 2021 (*The Street Belongs to Us*). In what follows, they offer us a curated collection of their personal reflections and dialogues regarding their lives, their children's books, and their visions for the future.

KEYWORDS: queer/gender/sexuality; Chicana; children's literature; writing; illustrating; publishing.

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Isabel:

Karleen, your work in children's literature began well before *The Street Belongs to Us*. Can you please share some of your prior experiences writing for children?

Karleen:

I didn't set out to write for children, but I did want to write the stories of my childhood. I took Cherríe Moraga's Chicana/o Theatre course at UC Berkeley when I was 18 and childhood stories spilled out of me. It was the material I had. I wrote monologues of my earliest memories. The first one, which ended up being performed, was about the pride of my three-year-old self making a big poo in the toilet and running around the house to announce it to my family. I wrote it very sincerely, and it ended up being quite funny for the audience.

As I've gotten older, I think too that my little kid self was really hungry to be heard. My parents seemed to work all of the time, and my older brothers were often busy with their own lives. So, this kid had a lot to unload and I ended up writing an unpublished novel of many of my childhood stories for my Master of Fine Arts degree in the mid-90s (with the guidance of my supervisor, Chicana novelist Cecile Pineda). Some of the stories are too upsetting and should probably only be read by adults, but many others are adventures or difficult challenges (e.g., bullying against gender nonconformity,

racism, sexism) that could be lifted and made into their own books. My girlfriend Hilary Cook is actually the person who pointed out one of the stories, “Are You a Boy or a Girl?” and told me I should publish it as a children’s book. This book was my first, and has really shaped the rest of my writing and teaching career (fig. 1).

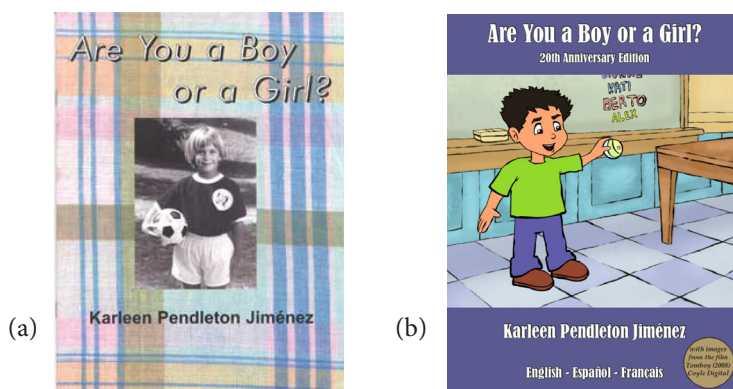


Figure 1. Covers of (a) *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* (2000, Green Dragon Press), and (b) *Are You a Boy or a Girl?*, 20th Anniversary (2020, Two Ladies Press). Copyright © 2000/2020 by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez.

Karleen:

How about you, Isabel? How did you first become interested in writing for kids?

Isabel:

Although I have fond childhood memories of reading and to this day, my mom still has all of our childhood picture books, I did not think I would write and illustrate my own children’s picture book, much less one that was queer and bilingual. That was, of course, until 2005, when my life was completely transformed. As an adult, I regularly visited Mexico while conducting research for my MA thesis on transborder queer/LGBTQ Chicana/Mexicana political movements. Thanks to a summer research trip, I attended a book reading in Mexico City for *Tengo una tía que no es monjita*, an adorable lesbian-themed picture book written by Melissa Cardoza, illustrated by Margarita Sada, and published in 2004 by Patlatonalli³. I was immediately enamored with this book, excited to discover queer children’s

literature written in Spanish and published in Mexico. While still invested in queer transnational political movements, I began to consider the potential political power of queer children's literature. I became fascinated with LGBTQ children's picture books, not only in Mexico, but across North America, wondering what other queer of color children's books existed. Determined to find out, I shifted my research focus from bilingual Latinx/Latin American children's literature and media (my doctoral research on "*niñas raras*") to queer and trans of color children's picture books across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico (my first academic book, *Coloring into Existence*).

Simultaneously, I began drafting the story that would eventually become *Chabelita's Heart* at least ten years before it was published. Every few years or so, I would return to these drafts, making revisions along the way. Through my research on children's literature, I was familiar with the deplorable statistics surrounding LGBTQ children's picture book publishing and was unsure I would be able to find a publisher since most LGBTQ children's picture books limited same-sex desire to adults (e.g., parents, aunts, uncles) instead of depicting queer kids. My picture book was explicitly about two little girls who liked one another. Serendipitously, after conducting an interview with author and illustrator Maya Gonzalez in 2016, I casually mentioned my story to her, and she offered to publish it under Reflection Press while mentoring me throughout the process. Thrilled at the possibility, but consumed by my academic research, I had to set aside my picture book once again until I was finally able to finish the text and all the illustrations, culminating in the 2022 publication of *Chabelita's Heart* (fig. 2).

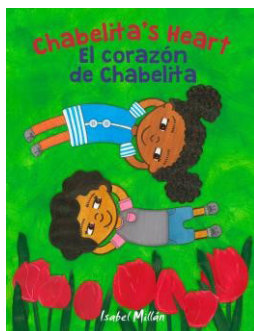


Figure 2. Cover of *Chabelita's Heart/El corazón de Chabelita*. Published by Reflection Press. Copyright © 2022 by Isabel Millán.

Isabel:

What was your inspiration behind *The Street Belongs to Us*?

Karleen:

One summer when I was a kid workers arrived and tore up our street. Instead of cars moving quickly and continuously past our house, the construction trucks blocked traffic and made a giant muddy patch of land. We kids claimed the land as our unofficial playground and it felt powerful (to take it away from the adults) and also absolutely fun. It was exciting to get dirty and make streetwars, and bike tracks, and mud paddies. I knew that if I wrote a children's book, I wanted the pleasure of that summer to set the scene.



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Figure 3. Illustration by Gabriela Godoy of Alex and friends in *The Streets Belong to Us*. Reprinted with permission from *The Street Belongs to Us* by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021).

Another huge influence was growing up with my grandmother's stories of México, the revolution, immigration, the Spanish Flu and coming of age in San Francisco in the 1920s. She was a nonstop storyteller and repeated them so often that they've probably formed the grooves in my brain. When she died in 2004 I promised her that I would not forget her stories and I would find a way to share them with the world.



Figure 4. Illustration by Gabriela Godoy of Alex and grandmother in *The Streets Belong to Us*. Reprinted with permission from *The Street Belongs to Us* by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021).

I also wanted to write a queer/trans book for middle-grade readers (ages 9-12), as they were between the picture book kids and the YA teenagers, and I didn't want them left out of the queer renaissance of children's literature.

Finally many of the issues in the world that I care about, spontaneously spilled out as I formed the story: challenging colonialism, fat-phobia, racism, classism, ableism, sexism; embracing environmentalism (developing loving relationships with the land), Chicana/o/x histories, Chicana feminism, gender diversity, neurodiversity, intergenerational relationships, mental health, grief, friendships, family, activism, quests.

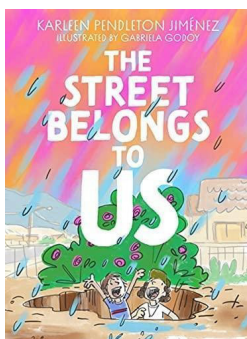


Figure 5. Cover of *The Streets Belong to Us*. Illustration by Gabriela Godoy. Reprinted with permission from *The Street Belongs to Us* by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021).

Karleen:

Chabelita's Heart was also inspired by your childhood experiences, right?

Isabel:

Absolutely! As a child, I think I practiced a queer of color and feminist way of being even before I learned any of those words. I often rebelled against gender norms and had crushes on both boys and girls. I would also make queer couples with my dolls and regularly got in trouble for questioning many of the Catholic stories I heard at home or in church. However, one of my most vivid memories, and the inspiration behind *Chabelita's Heart*, occurred in first grade during picture day. My mom had given me a Minnie Mouse necklace and earring set. To her surprise, I was not wearing the necklace in my class photo, but another one of my classmates was (fig. 6). I had lent it to her because I had a crush on this friend and that morning, before lining up for our class photos, she told me how much she loved the necklace and asked if she could borrow it for her photo. I couldn't say no. But I also was unable to share any of this with my mom. Years later, as I began drafting *Chabelita's Heart*, I kept returning to this experience and wondering how things could have gone differently.

This childhood experience inspired me to write and illustrate a queer Chicana/Latina and bilingual children's picture book, or what I like to call, my autofantasia. *Chabelita's Heart* can be summarized as follows: "With the support of her loving Chicana family, a girl named Chabelita discovers it's okay to like other girls." Instead of a Minnie Mouse necklace and earring set, the two girls (Chabelita and Jimena), share a bow tie. In the story, Chabelita's mom gave her a bow tie with pink heart-shaped conchas. Like me, Chabelita cannot say no to Jimena when she asks if she can borrow it for her class photo. But unlike in my experience, Jimena is able to take her photo and then return the bow tie to Chabelita so that they are each wearing it, or "matching" during their photos.



Figure 6. Photograph of Isabel Millán in first grade. Courtesy of the author.

Isabel:

Who do you envision as your target audience, and does it change depending on the genre you are writing in?

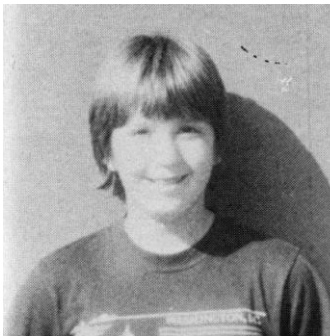
Karleen:

When I first published *Are You a Boy or a Girl?*, I ran 100 copies off on a school photocopier and thought to sell them as a zine at a queer women's public reading series in Toronto called Clit Lit. It was the late 1990s and one Wednesday night each month a little bar in the gay village filled with young dykes and trans men. Several of the writers who took the stage back then have since become acclaimed authors. It was a great place to pitch your stories and poetry to the world. I thought they might want my children's zine for their kids or nieces or nephews, as there weren't many queer children's books at that time. There was, and still is, a taboo about queers having any contact with kids (e.g., the panic around drag queen storytime).

What I found instead was that they also wanted the books for themselves. We had grown up without seeing ourselves in children's books. So then I thought, this is a book not only for the child relatives of queer and trans peoples, but also for queer and trans peoples who missed out on having ever been represented in children's books. Later, when I began sharing the books with teachers of all genders and sexualities, they would come and tell me their own stories of gender nonconformity. I realized at that point that the "audience" was widespread. However, my tomboy stories will never have as vast an audience as books on more general themes such as trains

and airplanes, so it has always been difficult to reach mainstream publishers, bookstores, and distributors.

With my newer book, *The Street Belongs to Us*, I have been able to reach a bigger audience. In this circumstance I came to realize that children spend a lot of their time reading, whether in schools, libraries, and homes, and I would guess much more than adults. They need as much good literature as they can get their hands on, and adults need meaningful literature to share with kids (believe me, as a parent, I know there is nothing more excruciating than reading boring children's books to your kids). In particular, I wanted to reach Chicanita/o/xs, mixed-race kids, gender nonconforming kids, queer kids, and kids in forgotten and overlooked places. I wanted to reach kids like me who never felt that books had anything to do with my life, my family, my community. It shouldn't take until college to find books that speak to our lives.



Karleen 1985



Alex 1984

Figure 7. Side-by-side comparison of (a) Karleen photographed in 1985, courtesy of the author, (b) Alex illustrated by Gabriela Godoy; Reprinted with permission from *The Street Belongs to Us* by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021).

Karleen:

What is your take on target audience and genre?

Isabel:

I always thought of Chabelita's story as a picture book and did not consider other forms it might take, such as a short story, or novel, but I am definitely open to the possibility of exploring these since they

might shift the story's target audience in terms of age range. That said, I agree with you, Karleen, and firmly believe all picture books are equally for children and adults. Within my "Author's Note," I state, "This book is for everyone, but especially for anyone who can relate to Chabelita and Jimena. Shine brightly like Jimena and love boldly like Chabelita." Before its publication, writing and illustrating this book was important for my own sense of self, serving as a way for me to process my own childhood experiences, and re-write these experiences into an ideal or utopic queer of color childhood.

At the center of *Chabelita's Heart* is the joy and awe of a childhood crush between Chabelita and Jimena. However, it was also important for me not to make this picture book solely about a crush between girls since my own experience as a queer person of color can never be reduced to only sexuality. Instead, (and in the tradition of queer/trans feminists of color literature and theory), it was important for me to create a picture book that could bridge sexuality and gender with other major themes such as migration, race/ethnicity, and social justice/activism. For example, both of Chabelita's parents are very present and supportive of her queerness, which counters stereotypes of homophobia within communities of color, and Mexican American or Chicax communities specifically. Jimena's mom and aunt are equally supportive. And both Chabelita and Jimena have parents who migrated to the U.S.

In addition to its focus on Mexican Americans, *Chabelita's Heart* also incorporates various racial/ethnic nuances such that the Latinx characters vary in skin tones and highlights Afro-Indigenous/Afro-Latinx identities by incorporating Garifuna communities from Honduras through Jimena's family. One activity that occurs within the book—and can also serve as an example of an accompanying activity for readers of *Chabelita's Heart*—is the choosing and drawing of role models. Chabelita chooses Nancy Cárdenas, a historical lesbian figure from Mexico, and Jimena chooses Berta Cáceres, an Indigenous environmental activist from Honduras. However, one aspect I struggled with that relates to genre and target audience was deciding how much of Cárdenas or Cáceres lives to include. This was especially true for Cáceres who was murdered because of her politics. Since they were not the primary focus of the book, I instead used the story to introduce them to readers and then incorporated a

bit more biographical information on each at the back of the book. While this does not at all do justice to either of them, I hope the book at least serves to introduce readers to two important Latin American activists and bridges communities of color in the U.S. with activist movements outside the U.S.



Figure 8. Chabelita and Jimena surrounded by loved ones; from *Chabelita's Heart/ El corazón de Chabelita*. Published by Reflection Press. Copyright © 2022 by Isabel Millán.

Isabel:

I am also curious about your process of writing, revising, and sharing drafts with others. What are some of the challenges or rewards of sharing your work before it is published?

Karleen:

The Street Belongs to Us is my first novel and was the most difficult work I've written. It took me about 12 years to write it, and I reached out to several friends and colleagues and family members for help. On an early draft, I asked an 8-year-old Mexican-Canadian son of a friend of mine for feedback. When I arrived to hear his feedback, he was quiet and kind of sheepish. I assured him that he could tell me anything. He admitted that he didn't like the book so much, that "nothing happened in it." His mother chimed in though, and told me that the grandma in the story was great and that I shouldn't give up. I shelved it for a few years, mostly because I knew the kid was right. The book was all setting and streetfights, but no real plot.

In the meantime, I began writing more for film, with director and close friend Barb Taylor. As I worked through many drafts of scripts (e.g., *The Butch and the Baby Daddy* & the larger work of

How to Get a Girl Pregnant), she and other editors emphasized that I needed to pay more attention to plot, pacing, themes, and character development. I could do this well for autobiographical works, but not yet for a novel. I think I was a good writer of settings and relationships, humour, angst, heart, romance, but I didn't really know how to make an invented story move forward. Barb saved me and the novel over lattes at nearby cafes, brainstorming potential plots. I began to love the challenge of writing myself into corners and back out again, and especially the moments when the many disparate pieces magically connected into a coherent narrative.

Finally, my award-winning editor Shirarose Wilensky was brilliant, telling me I needed to expand the book by another 50 pages and dig more deeply into my gender queerness, my Chicana/o/x histories, my family members' stories, etc. At first I was daunted, and again set the book aside for another year. However, I knew she was also right. I think one of the reasons Shirarose is such a strong editor is that she is like the best of therapists, someone with profound intuition who can locate for the writer the moments I have glossed over or feared or shied away from. Those moments that don't make sense, precisely because they have not been acknowledged nor processed yet, still hidden to the writer. Those moments that are gold. For example, such moments might include my protagonist's need to confront her parents, the origin of her best friend's anger, the relationship of the main character with her changing body.

Finally, you (Isabel) generously agreed to read one of my last drafts, helping me think carefully through everything from the politics of Aztlán to the emotional relationships we share with stuffed animals. Before you, I had never met an expert in Chicana/o/x queer children's writing/film, and I feel like your work has highlighted the significance of these stories for children as well as the broader field of Chicana/o/x Studies. You show us that our kids need to see, from an early age, that their lives are valuable. They are worthy to star in books and films and it is my hope that the entire class and nation and planet take notice of their lives.

Creating a novel is creating a whole world, and it's much richer with the conversations of insightful friends, family, and colleagues.

Karleen:

I was also able to read a copy of *Chabelita's Heart* before it was published. How was the process of writing, revising, and sharing drafts with others for you?

Isabel:

First of all, thank you (Karleen) for saying that about my work. I am equally inspired by yours! From *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* and *Tomboy* to your scholarship such as *Tomboys and Other Gender Heroes: Confessions from the Classroom*, I have learned a great deal about writing for children from you.

As for completing *Chabelita's Heart*, working with Maya Gonzalez was critical in finishing the book. Not only had Maya offered to publish it, but she also served as an important mentor throughout the process. We met regularly to discuss each draft of the story as well as the illustrations. She also gave me access to many of the resources she had previously created for her online school, School of the Free Mind, which included online courses such as “The Heart of It: Creating Children’s Books that Matter.” Maya was also instrumental in encouraging me to illustrate the book. Although I had no formal training as an illustrator, she believed I could and gave me feedback along the way. She was correct in reassuring me that illustrating *Chabelita's Heart* would also be an act of healing. I am forever grateful to her and her partner, Matthew, who co-founded Reflection Press. Together, they have built a powerful independent press dedicated to telling stories often ignored or silenced.

Sharing my initial sketches with Maya as well as other loved ones helped me build the confidence and skillset necessary to complete the book. For example, many of my initial sketches depicted the kids (Chabelita and Jimena) as older than they were in the text of the book. They appeared more like middle- school students (fig. 9a) rather than in elementary school. This was likely because I was used to drawing or sketching adults, not children. It was not enough for me to simply make their torsos and legs shorter. I needed to learn how to also make their faces appear younger by revising my overall illustration style. By the end of 2018, I finalized my character sketches for Chabelita and Jimena (fig 9b), and then took the next few years to develop the

rest of the characters and complete the final artwork. I sketched and re-sketched. I also decided to use more abstract backgrounds (in honor of Sada's illustrations in *Tengo una tia qe no es monjita*) and collage together everything else. All the details, whether they were characters or background items such as a house plant or birthday cake, were individually created and cut out before I could collage them together into two-page spreads (fig 9c).

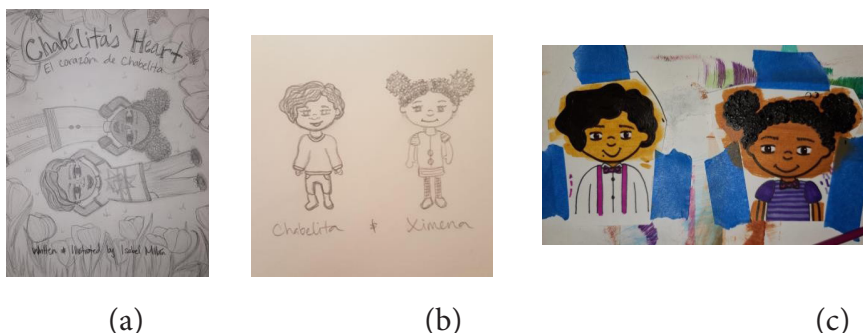


Figure 9. Initial sketches of Chabelita and Jimena (a and b), and (c) a photograph of these characters after being painted, but before being individually cut out and incorporated into the final artwork. Courtesy of the author.

It was equally important for me to share drafts and thumbnails or early sketches with a network of friends and family. This included my partner, Yvette, who not only listened to many, many drafts, but would also pose for me when I needed reference photos (such as a hand holding crayons). I also shared early drafts with friends and family in California, Kansas, and Texas, as well as Mexico and Canada—a testament to places I have lived or regularly visited and the collective power of one's network or communities. As for the drafts in Spanish, even though I translated the book, I am also *pocha* and many of the words were new to me (e.g., I did not know how to say “bow tie” in Spanish). I am equally grateful to my friends and colleagues who agreed to review the translations (a special thank you to Norma, Liliana, and Coco!). And when I could, I presented versions of the book in public such as at conferences.

Just as I was finishing up the artwork, I also had the pleasure of guest lecturing for your class in September 2021, Karleen. It was a very special moment for me to share the (mostly) finalized text with your graduate students, many of them educators or hoping to be. But I cannot thank you enough for your generous feedback following this talk, especially as it related to Jimena's birthday. You shared, "I wonder if you want to add a gift in here too. Gifts are number one thing on kid's minds —doesn't have to be a big capitalist venture—could be from the heart and/or both." Because of our discussion, I chose a globe. I considered adding another two-page spread, but after discussing it further with Maya, I realized I couldn't add additional pages. Instead, I thought about how I might reference the gift's contents within the illustrations through the way it was wrapped. Depending on one's reading, Chabelita either gifted Jimena a new globe similar to the one she had in her own bedroom (e.g., matching again). Or, another interpretation can be that Chabelita gave her own globe (symbolically, her world) to Jimena. Either way, the gift stands out for its sphere shape. This is just one concrete example of the way you helped shape this book. And of course, I cannot forget the heartwarming blurb you provided for the book's cover! It reads: "Through beautiful, brightly painted illustrations, Millán captures la pura emoción of a first crush. The worlds of Chabelita and Jimena feature familia, creativity, sparkling stars, and chile relleños made with love." Thank you!

As for children, even though most of my family is in California, I was fortunate enough to share an early draft with my niece (Penelope) on one of my visits. *Chabelita's Heart* also lends itself to interactive activities such as encouraging readers to create their own bow ties since the last page can be cut out or copied-allowing readers to decorate and wear a bow tie of their own, regardless of their gender identity or sexuality. While visiting Penelope, I was also working on the bow tie sketches and instructions that would become the bow tie activity. Penelope helped me test out different bow tie shapes and sizes. She was also the first kid to decorate and wear a bow tie from the book, appearing in my "Create Your Own Bow Tie with Isabel Millán" YouTube video. This is, of course, her favorite part of the video (fig. 10).

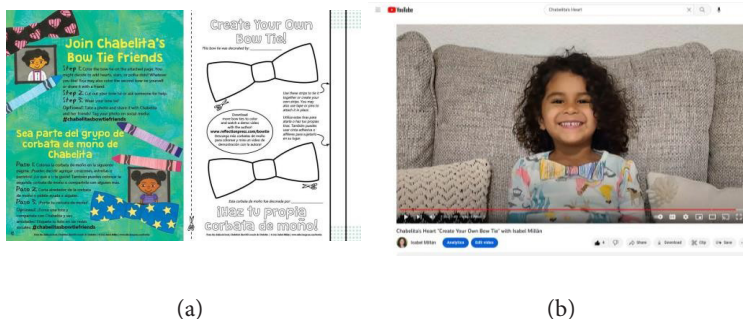


Figure 10. (a) bow tie activity pages from *Chabelita's Heart/El corazón de Chabelita*, and (b) a screenshot of Isabel's niece wearing a bow tie in the "Create Your Own Bow Tie with Isabel Millán" YouTube video. Copyright © 2022 by Isabel Millán.

Isabel:

We create books such as *The Street Belongs to Us* or *Chabelita's Heart* because they are important to us, and we hope others will also find value in them. Not everyone agrees. What do you make of the current political climate as it relates to the reception of our books?

Karleen:

Where there was the absence of Chicana/o/x, queer books when I was a kid, now there is a war. Our books exist and are met with hunger, encouragement, and gratitude by our communities, and fear and hostility by the gatekeepers who never wanted our stories. The battle is played out in state legislatures and school classrooms, some mandating Ethnic Studies/Queer & Trans Studies, some banning them. Like the champion Brazilian theorist/educator Paulo Freire, we are either beloved, or exiled. As Freire showed us, our stories and literacies are powerful, dangerous, beautiful, and transformational; they are life and the world.



Figure 11. Film frame of Alex and mom from the short film, *Tomboy* (2008), based on the original *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* The film is Directed by Barb Taylor and produced by Coyle Productions. Copyright © 2008 by Barb Taylor.

Isabel:

I wholeheartedly agree! Within my own research, I am tracking some of these book bans, hate crimes, and yes, extremist rhetoric against, for example, Drag Story Hours⁴. This also manifests in negative comments, for example, on Amazon, as well as very real tensions between librarians and school boards or parents. As Maya Gonzalez has shared on social media, even if librarians want to purchase our books, they are unable to, and this can severely hurt a small independent press such as Reflection Press.

I am hopeful, however, that these independent publishers will remain resilient. As for positive press and potential impact, I look forward to continuing to partner with local schools, giving book talks, and greatly appreciative of any educator or parent who can share the book with their children or students. Many things are possible! Even completely unexpected surprises. Thanks to Yvette's Christmas gift, custom-made *Chabelita's Heart* cookies (fig 12), I was asked to throw the honorary first pitch in a Minor Leagues game (Emeralds/Monarcas) in May 2023 in celebration of Latinx authors. I am humbled and honored that the book is being recognized and shared among so many people⁵.



Figure 12. Photograph of *Chabelita's Heart* custom-made cookies by Glitter and Sprinkles Sweetery. Courtesy of the author.

Isabel:

Looking toward the future, why don't we end by sharing any relevant future projects?

Karleen:

I am writing a sequel to *The Street Belongs to Us* and hoping this time it doesn't take another 12 years. It fills my daydreams and as I drift off to sleep. In this next book, I want to delve further into the story of the mother and the community politics that pitted women's childcare rights against Chicana/o/x language rights, and continued the long and misogynist tradition of attacking women who hold office. These adult stories though, of course, will play second to the children's adventures through the streets and park, under the desert sun of the San Gabriel Valley.

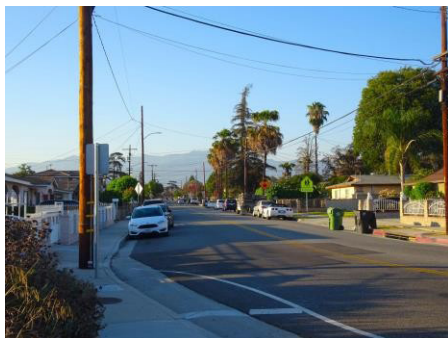


Figure 13. Photograph of a neighborhood street in the San Gabriel Valley. Courtesy of the author.

Isabel:

Can't wait to read it! Through my research and in publishing this picture book, I have also noticed a gap in scholarship on queer and feminist coloring books. This will hopefully become my second book project. As for Chabelita, I would love to continue Chabelita's story with other picture books, perhaps a series? I already have at least one idea for a second book...it involves dancing!

Final Thoughts from Isabel and Karleen

As we conclude this conversation, we leave you with a screenshot of January 28, 2023, depicting one of the many dialogues we have had, as we continue to share our work with each other, and with all of you.

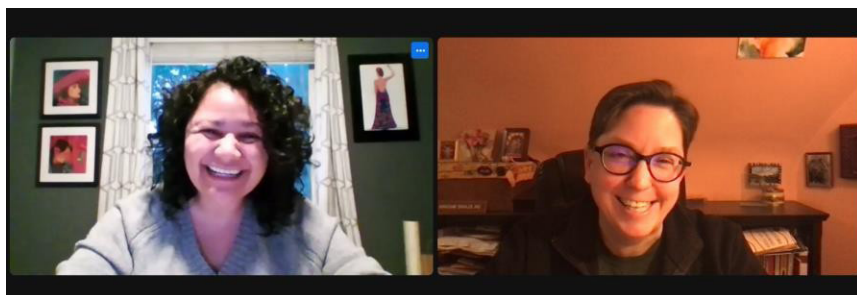


Figure 14. Screenshot of co-authors, Isabel and Karleen, during a Zoom session on 1/28/23. Courtesy of the authors.

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NOTES

- 1 Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) and National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS).
- 2 Karleen self-published a zine version of *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* in 1999, one year prior to its publication with Green Dragon Press (see fig. 1).
- 3 The book reading was part of LeS VOZ's "Semana Cultural Lesbica" (July 2005). For an analysis of this picture book, see Millán 2023; Millán 2015.
- 4 Drag Story Hour (DSH) was originally known as Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH).
- 5 In 2023, *Chabelita's Heart* also received several awards including the International Latino Book Award, the Skipping Stones Honor Award, and was listed as an Américas Award Commended Title.