

While fourteen-year-old YALSA was figuratively entering high school, a sister organization was being born. REFORMA (The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking), was founded in 1971 by Arnulfo D. Trejo to improve library services for the nation's Spanish speakers. The name REFORMA was chosen because it meant "to reform," something Dr. Trejo hoped this organization would accomplish.<sup>1</sup> With twenty-six REFORMA chapters across the nation and thirty-seven years of history, much has been achieved; however, there is still a great deal to be done to reach Latinos and the Spanish speaking in the United States.

In keeping with YALSA's new diversity campaign, it is fitting that YALSA join with REFORMA to reach a very important segment of the Latino population: our nation's Latino youth. According to the 2006 U.S. Census Report, Hispanics constitute 42.7 million, or 14 percent of the United States population. In addition, the census showed that 63 percent of children in 9.5 million Hispanic families are under the age of eighteen.<sup>2</sup> These represent the "YA" in YALSA and the "REFORM" in REFORMA; namely, an underserved young adult population that needs to be reached.

This article came about as a direct result of a dozen or so YA Latino titles published on a YALSA discussion list. I posted this list onto the REFORMA discussion list along with several questions that puzzled me: Why were almost all of them about the Mexican quinceañera (sweet fifteen) and the Mexican holiday of the Day of the Dead? Why weren't other Latino groups represented (Puerto Rican, Cuban, and so on)? And where could I find more YA Latino titles? These innocent questions led to great conversations on the REFORMA discussion list; with one librarian stating that since Mexicans make

# REFORMA and YALSA

## Working Together to Reach Latino Youth

*By Alma Ramos-McDermott*

up the majority of the U.S. Hispanic population, it made sense that books would be written about their culture. She agreed with me that there was plenty of room for all the Latino groups to be represented in the literature, and suggested that aspiring Latino writers representing the other cultures should begin to add to the available writings.

A very interesting insight was offered by another REFORMA librarian who mentioned that in our libraries many second- and third-generation English-speaking Latinos are being lumped together with first-generation, mainly Spanish-speak-

ing Latinos, even though second- and third-generation Latinos have different needs. He suggested having books available to give them a variety in genres; however, they should have Latino characters with whom they could identify, and should also include topics of family dynamics and self-esteem.

The original list of titles that I posted began to grow as others on the REFORMA discussion list suggested favorite Latino authors, and included GLBQT titles. A great collaboration began to take place as one of our members volunteered to collect titles to post onto her blog, while the chair of the Children and Young Adult Services

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Committee (CAYASC) offered to take over the growing list to have CAYASC members look through it to make additions and revisions. As of the writing of this article, a longer list of YA Latino titles is in the process of being posted on the REFORMA website by CAYASC.

The annotated list of YA Latino titles at the end of this article is a direct result of many REFORMA librarians collaborating to reach our Latino youth. The summaries came from my readings, REFORMA librarians on the discussion list, the CAYASC committee, and the Austin (Tex.) Public Library Hispanic teens book review website.<sup>3</sup> Since reaching America's youth is part of YALSA's mission, it is important that YALSA members have a sneak peek at these titles so you can start ordering those not currently in your libraries for your Hispanic teens.

In addition, with the launching of YALSA's new diversity campaign, it is essential for librarians to show diversity on their bookshelves. Diversity in the ranks of librarians is an issue that YALSA is seeking to address through the diversity campaign and the recent funding of their first-ever Spectrum Scholarship; however, I feel that diversity should also extend to the books that we have in our libraries. The patrons we serve will learn about other cultures and peoples through what we have available for them to borrow. This partial list of young adult Latino titles will give you a good start toward that goal.

For more resources, and the latest updated list of YA Latino titles, go to the Children and Young Adult Services page on the REFORMA website ([www.reforma.org](http://www.reforma.org)). In addition to the Young Adult Latino titles, you will find a link to "Online Resources for Librarians working with Latino Children," put together by CAYASC. It contains information on locating Latino books, planning Latino programs, finding publishers and distributors of Latino

books, as well as a link to a sixty-two page document by the U.S. Department of Education detailing more than sixty programs across the nation for Latino youth. All of this information, and more, awaits you on the REFORMA website.<sup>4</sup>

Collaboration is very important in reaching the Latino youth of our nation. What better way to continue this collaboration than for REFORMA and YALSA to join hands, pool our collective resources, and do all we can to make sure that the children under the age of eighteen in Latino homes are adequately served by all librarians who are interested in the youth of the future? If you're not a member of REFORMA, I suggest you join this rapidly growing group of librarians who want to keep Dr. Trejo's vision of improving library services for the nation's Spanish speakers alive. Membership information is located on the REFORMA website.

While we're diversifying our bookshelves, let's also diversify the groups we belong to in ALA. You don't need to speak Spanish to become a member of REFORMA. REFORMA welcomes YALSA members to start a new joint partnership, one in which the young adults in Latino homes are served by the best of both worlds—REFORMA and YALSA. Collaboration is the key to this partnership. Let's become the keys that open new worlds of knowledge for the Hispanic teens we serve.

Junto podemos—together we can.

## Latino YA Titles

*Estrella's Quinceañera*, Malin Alegria, Simon Pulse, 2007.

Estrella doesn't want a gaudy quinceañera, but her mom still gets carried away. (grades 7–10)

*Sofi Mendoza's Guide to Getting Lost in Mexico*, Malin Alegria, Simon & Schuster, 2007.

When Southern California high school senior Sofi lies to her parents and crosses the border for a weekend party, she has no idea that she will get stuck in a Mexican village with family she has never met before, unable to return to the United States and the easy life she knew. (grades 9 and up)

*Finding Miracles*, Julia Alvarez, Laurel Leaf, 2006.

Fifteen-year-old Milly is an average American teenager until Pablo, a new student at her school, inspires her to search for her birth family in his native country. (grades 6–9)

*How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, Julia Alvarez, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2004.

The story of the Garcia family's adjustment to life in the United States. The Garcia girls tell their stories about how they came to be at home—and not at home—in America. (grades 9–12)

*Once Upon a Quinceañera: Coming of Age in the U.S.A.*, Julia Alvarez, Viking, 2007.

Alvarez weaves in interviews with quince girls, her own memories of coming of age as an immigrant, and the history of the custom itself. (grades 7–10)

*Bless Me Ultima*, Rudolfo Anaya, Quinto Sol Publications, 1972.

Set in a small New Mexican community during World War II, Antonio speaks of the dignity, traditions, and mythology of Chicano life. (grades 9–12)

*Araña: The Heart of the Spider* (a graphic novel series), Fiona Avery, Marvel Comics, 2005.

Fiesty teenager Anya Corazon is saved from death by a mysterious mage named Miguel. Now, Anya is pledged to fight alongside Miguel and the Spider Society. First, she must prove herself to the society, and keep her father and her friends from discovering her new secret. (grades 7–9)

*Jumping Off to Freedom*, Anilú Bernardo, Arte Público Press, 1996.

Courage and desperation lead fifteen-year-old David and his father to flee Cuba's repressive regime and seek freedom on a raft headed for Miami. (grades 7–10)  
*Trino's Choice*, Diane Gonzales Bertrand, Piñata Books, 1999.

Frustrated by his poor financial situation and hoping to impress a smart girl, seventh grader Trino falls in with a bad crowd led by an older teen with a vicious streak. (grades 7–9)

*The Tequila Worm*, Viola Canales, Random House Children's Books, 2007.

Sofia grows up in the close-knit community of the barrio in McAllen, Texas, and then finds that her experiences as a scholarship student at an Episcopal boarding school in Austin only strengthen her ties to family and her "comadres." (grades 6–9)

*The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros, Knopf, 1984.

Esperanza Cordero is a young girl growing up in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago with all its hard realities of life. She captures her thoughts and emotions in poems and stories to rise above the hopelessness and create a space for herself. (grades 9–12)

*Call Me Maria*, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Scholastic, 2006.

Fifteen-year-old Maria leaves Puerto Rico to live with her father in the barrio of New York City. (grades 6–9)

*Riding Low on the Streets of Gold*, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Piñata Books, 2003.

This vibrant collection of 11 poems and 12 stories is made up of memoir, poetry, and fiction by Latino writers who muse on *las luchas*, or struggles, of young people's daily lives: the universal coming-of-age experiences and the specific issues of Latino youth. (grades 6–12)

*Adios to My Old Life*, Caridad Ferrer, MTB Pocket Books, 2006.

As a talented singer-guitarist with a dream of going pro, Alegria Montero is getting fed up with the endless, boring parade of *quinceañeras*. She's longing for something bigger, and *Oye Mi Canto*—a new reality TV show that's searching for the next Latin superstar—is definitely that. Ali figures that auditioning seems like a good way to get her overprotective father to take her ambitions seriously. (grades 6–8)  
*Raining Sardines*, Enrique Flores-Galbis, Roaring Books Press, 2007.

The artistic Ernestina and the analytical Enriquito use their ingenuity to save a herd of wild horses and stop an evil landowner from spoiling their Cuban village. (grades 6–8)

*In the Shadow of the Alamo*, Sherry Garland, Harcourt Children's Books, 2001.

Conscripted into the Mexican Army, fifteen-year-old Lorenzo Bonifacio makes some unexpected alliances and learns some harsh truths about General Santa Ana as the troops move toward the Battle of the Alamo. (grades 6–8)

*Chasing the Jaguar*, Michele Dominguez Greene, Harper Teen, 2006.

After having unsettling dreams about the kidnapped daughter of her mother's employer, fifteen-year-old Martika learns that she is a descendant of a long line of curanderas—Mayan medicine women with special powers. (grades 8 and up)

*Lorenzo's Secret Mission*, Lila Guzmán and Rick Guzmán, Arte Público Press, 2001.

In 1776, fifteen-year-old Lorenzo Bannister leaves Texas and his father's new grave to carry a letter to the Virginia grandfather he has never known, and becomes involved with the struggle of the American Continental Army and its Spanish supporters. Includes the historical figures of Bernardo de Gálvez and George Gibson. (grades 6–9)

*Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child*, Elva Trevino Hart, Bilingual Press, 1999.

A memoir describing the life of a child

growing up in a family of Mexican American migrant farm workers. (grades 6–8)  
*White Bread Competition*, Jo Ann Yolanda Hernández, Arte Público Press, 1997.

Luz, a ninth-grade Latina student in San Antonio, wins a spelling competition; however, her success triggers a variety of emotions among family, friends, and the broader community. (grades 8 and up)  
*Cinnamon Girl: Letters Found Inside a Cereal Box*, Juan Felipe Herrera, Joanna Cotler Books, 2005.

Yolanda, a Puerto Rican girl, tries to come to terms with her painful past as she waits to see if her uncle recovers from injuries he suffered when the towers collapsed on September 11. (grades 8–10)  
*CrashBoomLove: A Novel in Verse*, Juan Felipe Herrera, University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

Sixteen-year-old Cesar struggles through high school after his father leaves town. (grades 8 and up)  
*La Linea*, Ann Jaramillo, Roaring Books Press, 2006.

Miguel is set to leave his Mexican village to join his parents in California, but his little sister is determined to join him. (grades 6–8)  
*Breaking Through*, Francisco Jiménez, Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

A sequel to *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*. Having come from Mexico to California ten years ago, fourteen-year-old Francisco is still working in the fields but fighting to improve his life and complete his education. (grades 6–8)  
*The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*, Francisco Jiménez, Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

These independent but intertwined stories follow the family through their migrant circuit, from picking cotton and strawberries to topping carrots, and back again, over a number of years. (grades 6 and up)

*And Now Miguel*, Joseph Krumgold, Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

The young son of a New Mexico sheep rancher longs to go with the men when they take the sheep to the Sangre de Christo Mountains. (grades 6–8)

*The Girl from Playa Blanca*, Ofelia Dumas Lachtman, Piñata Books, 1995.

When Elena and her little brother, Carlos, leave their Mexican seaside village to search for their immigrant father in Los Angeles, they encounter intrigue, crime, mystery, friendship, and love. (grades 7–12)

*Call Me Henri*, Lorraine M. Lopez, Curbstone Press, 2006.

Henri has big dreams for his future but first he has to get his school to let him take French instead of English as a Second Language. (grades 6–9)

*Heat*, Mike Lupica, Penguin Group, 2007.

Pitching prodigy Michael Arroyo is on the run from social services after being banned from playing Little League baseball because rival coaches doubt he is only twelve years old and he has no parents to offer them proof. (grades 6–8)

*Drift: A Novel*, Manuel Luis Martínez, Picador, 2003.

At sixteen, Robert Lomos has lost his family. His father, a Latin jazz musician, has left San Antonio for life on the road as a cool-hand playboy. His mother, shattered by a complete emotional and psychological breakdown, has moved to Los Angeles with Robert's little brother. Robert has a plan: duck trouble, save his money, and head to California to put the family back together. Trouble is, no one believes a delinquent Mexican American kid has a chance—least of all, Robert himself. (grades 9–12)

*Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida*, Victor Martinez, HarperCollins Children's Books, 1999.

Manny relates his coming-of-age experiences as a member of a poor Mexican American family. (grades 6–8)

*Cuba 15*, Nancy Osa, Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2005.

Violet Paz, a Chicago high school student, reluctantly prepares for her upcoming “quince,” the celebration of a Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday. (grades 6–10)

*Emily Goldberg Learns to Salsa*, Micol Ostow, Razorbill, 2007.

Forced to stay with her mother in Puerto Rico for weeks after her grandmother's funeral, half-Jewish Emily, who has just graduated from a Westchester, New York, high school, does not find it easy to connect with her Puerto Rican heritage and relatives she has never met. (grades 7–10)

*Graffiti Girl*, Kelly Parra, MTV, 2007.

A Mexican American high school student in a small California town is drawn into the underground world of graffiti art, feeling that it is the only way to express herself artistically and still remain true to her cultural identity. (grades 9–12)

*Sisters: Hermanas*, Gary Paulsen, Harcourt Children's Books, 1993.

The lives of a fourteen-year-old Mexican prostitute, living in the United States illegally, and a wealthy American girl dramatically intersect. (grades 8–12)

*Crazy Loco*, David Talbot Rice, Puffin, 2003.

This collection features nine stories about Mexican American kids growing up in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. (grades 7–12)

*Haters*, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, Little, Brown Young Readers, 2008.

Having tried for years to deny her psychic abilities, high school sophomore Paski has disturbing visions about the popular girl at her new high school in Orange County, California. (grades 9 and up)

*Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, Luis Rodriguez, Curbstone Press, 1993.

In this memoir, Rodriguez describes his experiences as a former gang member in and around the South San Gabriel Valley

during the late 1960s. (grades 9–12)

*The Republic of East L.A.: Stories*, Luis Rodriguez, HarperCollins, 2002.

Twelve gritty, hard-hitting snapshots taken from the lives of careworn characters struggling to survive amid crime, poverty and racism in the barrio of East Los Angeles. (grades 9–12)

*Esperanza Rising*, Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic/Blue Sky Press, 2002.

Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave their life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression. (grades 6–9)

*Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood*, Benjamin Alire Saenz, HarperCollins, 2006.

Sammy faces the challenges of “gringo” racism in 1969. (grades 9 and up)

*The Whole Sky Full of Stars*, René Saldaña Jr., Random House Children's Books, 2007.

Eighteen-year-old Barry competes in a nonsanctioned boxing match in hopes of helping his recently widowed mother, unaware that his best friend and manager has his own desperate need for a share of the purse that may put their friendship on the line. (grades 6–9)

*Finding Our Way*, René Saldaña Jr., Wendy Lamb Books, 2003.

A collection of short stories depicting life growing up Hispanic in America. (grades 7 and up)

*So Hard to Say*, Alex Sanchez, Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Thirteen-year-old Xio, a Mexican American girl, and Frederick, who has just moved to California from Wisconsin, quickly become close friends. When Xio starts thinking of Frederick as her boyfriend, he must confront his feelings of confusion and face the fear that he might be gay. (grades 6–9)

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they're into the same pop culture stuff. I think of James, who is in a wheelchair. He wears huge baggy jeans that hang down past his butt, his undies all hanging out. He likes his bling too. He looks just like most of the kids hanging out in the library. I would suggest meeting with the teacher and caregiver first.

**YALS:** Wendy, do you have any anecdotes you care to share about a successful experience, or one you would have handled differently?

**WM:** Like I said, I look forward to these visits each month. I would love to be able to do more things like this. I'd have to say the wheelchair basketball game was a highlight this year. Watching Avis' students race up and down the court was amazing. They really creamed the other students. Neil, who likens himself to Shaq, could sink the ball from anywhere on the court.

Another highlight was when James (he's a character) asked if God and Mother Nature were married. He comes up with the strangest and funniest questions.

**YALS:** Thank you both for your comments! Is there anything else you would like to add?

**AK:** It is important to make as much available to the kids as we can. Everything we do helps them learn, either the good or the bad, but they learn. Let's all get on the same book page and get them learning to learning. At the library they can enjoy learning without the pressure they experience at the schools, without all the testing. OK, I will get off my soapbox. Good luck! **YALS**

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***How to Be a Chicana Role Model***, Michele M. Serros, Penguin, 2000.

A humorous novel about a young Chicana writer struggling to find a way to embrace two very different cultures, without losing touch with her own true identity. (grades 9–12)

***Accidental Love***, Gary Soto, Harcourt, 2006.

After unexpectedly falling in love with a "nerdy" boy, fourteen-year-old Marisa works to change her life by transferring to another school, altering some of her behavior, and losing weight. (grades 6–10)

***The Afterlife***, Gary Soto, Harcourt, 2003.

A senior at East Fresno High School lives on as a ghost after his brutal murder. (grades 7 and up)

***Buried Onions***, Gary Soto, Harcourt, 1997.

Eddie leaves college to return to his violence-infested home in Fresno. (grades 7 and up)

***Help Wanted: Stories***, Gary Soto, Harcourt Children's Books, 2007.

Ten short stories portray some of the struggles and hopes of young Mexican Americans. (grades 6–9)

***Behind the Eyes***, Francisco X. Stork, Dutton Juvenile, 2006.

Sixteen-year-old Hector is the hope of his family, but when he seeks revenge after his brother's gang-related death and is sent

to a San Antonio reform school, it takes an odd assortment of characters to help him see that hope is still alive. (grades 7–10)

***Grab Hands and Run***, Frances Temple, HarperTrophy, 1995.

After his father disappears, twelve-year-old Felipe, his mother, and his younger sister set out on a difficult and dangerous journey, trying to make their way from their home in El Salvador to Canada. (grades 6–8)

***Cubanita***, Gabby Triana, Rayo, 2006.

Seventeen-year-old Isabel, eager to leave Miami to attend the University of Michigan and escape her overprotective Cuban mother, learns some truths about her family's past and makes important decisions about the type of person she wants to be. (grades 10 and up)

***Prizefighter en Mi Casa***, E. E. Charlton-Trujillo, Yearling, 2007.

Following a car accident that left her with epilepsy, twelve-year-old Chula—with a little help from a visiting fearsome Mexican boxer—tries to deal with the repercussions her new condition has on her family, neighborhood, and school. (grades 5–8)

***Tommy Stands Alone***, Gloria Velazquez, Arte Público Press, 1995.

At Roosevelt High, a predominantly Hispanic and African American school in Laguna, California, Tommy's so-called

friends taunt him with degrading words until they learn to accept his sexual orientation. (grades 7–10)

***Hard Love***, Ellen Wittlinger, Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Tackles the delicate issue of unrequited love between a straight and gay teen. Features a feisty Cubana teen as a strong secondary character. (grades 7 and up) **YALS**

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