ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio
Rigoberto Gonzalez
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Cecilia Concepcin lvarez, illustrator
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Children's Book Press
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Childhood carries with it plenty of feelings of being different. When another reason comes along for peers to make fun of each other or try to find fault, it takes sensitive parents to help overcome the sadness of being singled out.

In this vivid book, Antonio makes a card for his two moms on Mother's Day. The author's depiction of the boy and his hesitation to let his schoolmates know about his family situation is handled with care, and aimed at the difficulty that people of all ages must face when grappling with their feelings.

Award-winner González has mesmerized audiences with his adult poetry and fiction, as well as with *Soledad Sigh-Sighs*, his previous book for children. While this is the illustrator's debut children's book, her artistic repertoire is extensive, including exhibitions at the Seattle Art Museum and the Mexican Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco. Her work has been published in *La Voz*, *Art in America* and *The Seattle Review*, among others.

Mother's Day has Antonio wrestling with his feelings of affection for his mother's partner, Leslie, and with telling his schoolmates that his family is not like theirs. "That woman looks like a guy," Antonio hears at school when Leslie comes to pick him up. Antonio's love for her makes it hard for him to decide how to handle the situation, and whether to show his classmates the Mother's Day card he has made.

Antonio's mother lovingly validates his feelings and affirms his experience of them. She understands the intricacy of the circumstances, and her patience with her son allows him to choose his own path.

In its bilingual format, this book crosses cultural, language, and generational lines. Families come in many forms, the book demonstrates, and openness to the range of human interaction is vital. Long gone are the days when the only kind of family was the kind with a

mom, a dad, and a kid or two or three. Today's families are more diverse and complicated in their make-up, and González depicts this reality with subtlety and insightfulness.

Álvarez's attention to simple lines, as well as her use of a palette of primary and secondary colors, is visually appealing. Her style could be viewed as overly simple, but in this case, the book benefits from having the subject matter take center stage.

A family is composed of people who love each other. *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio* articulates that telling the truth with a compassionate approach can make a sensitive subject easier to understand for children who live in any kind of family.

Katie Klein