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Picture Books

The Storyteller's Candle: La velita de los cuentos
Lucia Gonzalez
Lulu Delacre, illustrator
Children's Book Press
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Pura Belpré was the first Puerto Rican librarian in New York. She was also a storyteller, author, and advocate for the Puerto Rican community. *The Storyteller's Candle* tells how that community was welcomed into the library through Belpré's efforts.

Just before her first New York Christmas, a little girl asks her aunt why they don't go inside the library they pass every day. Her aunt answers her: "We don't speak English, and the people in there don't speak Spanish." However, that day in school Belpré comes to tell the children stories and to invite them to visit: "The library is for everyone, *la biblioteca es para todos,"* she says. The children take their excitement home with them that day, and suddenly the entire community becomes involved, culminating in a Three King's Day celebration at the library.

González and Delacre were awarded the Pura Belpré Honor Award by the American Library Association for their collaboration on *The Bossy Gallito*, which was González's first book. They also worked on *Señor Cat's Romance and Other Favorite Stories from Latin America*. González is also a children's librarian, storyteller, and puppeteer. Her text is charming and so filled with the voices of her characters that one gets a rich sense of community, and most of all, of Pura Belpré.

Using sepia tones, Delacre's illustrations are anchored in the past. Collage from a January 1930 *New York Times* underlines the sense of history. Often the news correlates with the illustration, as in a piece discussing how children prepare for the Three Kings collaged with a scene of the family around the table remembering their favorite aspects of *Navidad* in Puerto Rico.

With an introduction explaining the influx of Puerto Ricans to New York during the Great Depression, a biographical note on Belpré, a glossary of terms and an invitation to explore

the text in the collage, this wonderful storybook deeply engages young readers through the story of an important and beloved woman in the Latino community.