



FOCAL Points ~ ~



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FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AND LITERATURE -- CENTRAL LIBRARY

FOCAL winner 2015: Duncan Tonatiuh and his book *Separate is Never Equal*

By Rachel Kitzmann, FOCAL Committee Chair

In a year of great debate and standout titles, the FOCAL committee congratulates Duncan Tonatiuh and his wonderful book, *Separate is Never Equal*, as the winner of the 2015 FOCAL Award. In a list that included Alfred Hitchcock, sharks, and a celebration of the whole of California, the story of Sylvia Mendez and her family's fight to desegregate California schools emerged as the best example of the FOCAL award: A story of quality, with broad appeal, and an exemplar of the mandate for California content.

Tonatiuh's role as author and illustrator showcases the true life struggle of the Mendez family. In 1944 the Mendez family moved from Santa Ana to Westminster, California. The children, Jerome, Gonzalo, and Sylvia, were to enroll in the Westminster school, near where the family lived. Imagine the shock of being told *no*. The Mendez children would have to go the Mexican school, which had an electric fence, and bordered a cow pasture. It would take three years of court battles before the decision to desegregate all California schools would be made, and with every battle, Tonatiuh showcases the strength, dignity and resilience of the Mendez family.

The 2015 committee is immensely proud to have selected this book. Tonatiuh's art perfectly showcases the themes of Latino/a identity, and his words both infuriate (in the form of the terrible Mr. Kent, superintendent of the Garden Grove School District) and inspire (as when the Mendez parents, Gonzalo and Felicitas, ask fellow parents to join their lawsuit). In a time when discussions of race and power structures are more important than ever, *Separate is Never Equal* is a fantastic jumping off point for educators, both formal and informal. We are looking forward to hearing his thoughts at the FOCAL luncheon in December. [Reservation form is on Page 5]



LEO POLITI REMEMBERED

by Renny Day

“Love from Leo” was not the title of the exhibit at the Pico House at Olvera Street in July, but it would have been a fitting one. The first floor gallery was aglow with Leo’s paintings, arranged as a loving biography. First, his early works, followed by the many paintings he did of his adopted city, Los Angeles. There was one wall dedicated to the glorious works about Bunker Hill, and another to his paintings of mothers and children.

The section of works from his many books for children beckoned this librarian, and all of the colorful paintings and graceful sketches reflected Leo’s love of children and families.

On the closing Saturday of the exhibit there was a panel discussion entitled “Through the eyes of the Family.” It was moderated by Leo’s grandson, Mitch Politi, and included luminaries Dr. Bill Chun-Hoon, retired principal of Castelar School, who was a close friend of Leo; Jean Bruce Poole, former curator and director of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument; Bob Anderson, art dealer and collector; Brad Rumble, who was principal of Leo Politi School from 2008-2014, and who would get my vote for Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District, for his energy and enthusiasm.

Paul Politi and Suzanne Politi Bischof were introduced and shared memories of their father. But it was Mitch who gave us insight into the zesty and lovable character of Leo.



He told of overnights with his grandparents. Leo would come home from a day of sketching, and work through the night at his easel, working in oils or water color. Mitch and some of the neighbor children would work alongside at their own easels, all of them fueled by strong coffee and pastries.

Leo’s family and friends are seeking a permanent home for Leo’s paintings and sketches, and are forming a committee to find a location, preferably near Olvera Street. If you would like to become involved, please let me know, and I will forward the information to Mitch.

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KUDOS TO LAPL OVERACHIEVERS

Congratulations to current (and former) LAPL staff members

JENÉ BROWN received the *Joyce Madkins Sumbi Emerging Leaders Award*, presented by the California Librarians Black Caucus. The award was presented at the 9th Annual Leimert Park Village Book Fair on August 1, 2015. This award is granted to a librarian who, through his or her practice and example, **provides inspiration and leadership** in promoting exemplary library services to individuals of all ages and ethnicities.

ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

JOANNA FABICON, Librarian, Children's Literature: ALSC Notable Children's Video Committee.

LAURIE REESE, Hollywood Area Children's Librarian III: Caldecott Committee, 2017.

BROOKE SHEETS, Librarian, Children's Literature: ALSC Early Childhood Programs and Services Committee.

VIRGINIA WALTER, former Children's Services Coordinator: Wilder Committee, 2017

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

MADLINE BRYANT, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature: Councilor-at-Large, ALA Council. ALA Council is the governing and policy-making body of the Association.

LAPL AND FOCAL NEWS

EVA MITNICK is the new Central Library Director, succeeding Giovanna Mannino. Eva was formerly the Principal Librarian in charge of Children's Services. Her LAPL career has been an illustrious one, and her outside activities outstanding as well.

Virginia Walter, mentioned above, is Eva's mother. The apple didn't fall far from *that* tree !!!

DIANE OLIVO-POSNER is Acting Principal Librarian in charge of Children's Services.

It has been said that being a children's librarian prepares one for anything, and, it seems, especially for supervisory positions.

More good news about this year's luncheon !!! **Sylvia Mendez** will be attending the luncheon on December 12th. Her daughter will drive her up from Orange County. How exciting !!!!

Cecil Castelleucci will be FOCAL's next guest author on Nov. 7th, at 2pm in the KLOS Story Theatre. Cecil's latest book is ***Moving Target: A Princess Leia Adventure (Star Wars)***. The Force will be strong that day in Children's Literature !

IN MEMORIAM

FOCAL and the world of children's literature lost three illustrious friends this spring.

Muriel "Mickey" Pfaelzer Bodek May 7, 1926 - April 26, 2015

For over fifty years, Mickey was active in volunteer activities, from University Elementary School at UCLA, to Planned Parenthood. An ardent lover of books, Mickey was appointed to the Los Angeles Library Commission by Mayor Tom Bradley in 1975, where she served as both Vice President and President. It was her stalwart defense of the Children's Room that kept the department from being abolished in 1976. She and two other Board members voted to keep service to children. Twice, the vote came up, but Mickey and her colleagues prevailed. It was 3 to 2 to keep the department open.

Judy Cohn February 29, 1936 - May 31, 2015

Judy was lively, and full of fun, and passionate about libraries, theater, and music. She was Librarian at Granada Hills High School, and still found time to do substitute work at Los Angeles Public Library. She was a member of many book clubs, regularly wrote book reviews for *FOCAL Points*, and was always eager to help at the annual FOCAL Awards, and other FOCAL events.

Judy was President of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Affiliates, and served on the Boards of Hadasah, Brandeis National Committee, and Friends of Encino-Tarzana Branch of LAPL. We will miss Judy, her talents, and her good cheer.

Milly Lee 1933 - May 28, 2015

Milly Lee grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown, and experienced the discrimination so movingly described in her first book, *Nim and the War Effort*. She became a school librarian, and shared her love of books with many children. A close friend described her as "a brave, adventurous, intelligent and gutsy person who loved literature, books and travel. She lived life on her own terms and never let anything stop her from doing what she wanted to do."

Besides the book about Nim, Milly wrote *Earthquake* (her mother's story), and *Landed*. Milly Lee received the Thirtieth Annual FOCAL Award for *Landed*, a fictional account of (Milly's father-in-law) Lee Sun Chor's journey to America from China as a young boy. It was a memorable event, held at the Empress Pavilion Restaurant in Los Angeles' Chinatown in 2009.

by Renny Day

THIRTY-SIXTH ANNUAL FOCAL AWARD LUNCHEON
and
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

HONORING
The 2015 FOCAL Award Winner
**Separate is Never Equal by
Duncan Tonatiuh**

Saturday, December 12, 2015

at
Border Grill

445 South Figueroa Street #100 • Los Angeles CA 90071

PARKING

Westlawn Garage • 524 S. Flower St. (\$1.00 with library validation)
Union Bank Garage • 445 S. Figueroa St. (\$5.00 with restaurant validation)

11:00 A.M. Social Hour
No-Host Bar
12:00 Noon Luncheon

Reservation Form

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____
City, State, ZIP _____
Email _____

Reservation Options	Number	x	Price	Amount
Luncheon FOCAL Members @ \$40 ea.		x	\$40.00	
Luncheon Non-Members @ \$45 ea.		x	\$45.00	
Lunch + \$20 Basic Membership @ \$60 ea.		x	\$60.00	
Lunch + \$30 Associate Membership @ \$70 ea.		x	\$70.00	
Lunch + \$60 Contributing Membership @ \$100 ea.		x	\$100.00	
Lunch + \$100 Sustaining Membership @ \$140 ea.		x	\$140.00	
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED				\$

Please send this completed form and checks, made payable to FOCAL and postmarked no later than Monday, December 7, to: Renny Day, 15221 Via de las Olas, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

TICKETS WILL BE HELD AT THE DOOR

For questions, please contact Renny Day (310) 454-3667 or rennyday@msn.com

***** MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION *****

Please send renewals to: Renny Day / 15221 Via de las Olas / Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Membership is for calendar year, January through December. Dues are tax deductible.

New _____ Renewal _____ Basic \$20 _____ Associate \$30 _____

Contributing \$60 _____ Sustaining \$100 _____ Lifetime \$1,000 _____
(Free autographed book) (Seat at Head Table) (Book and Head Table)

Selena Terrazas, Department Manager
Madeline Bryant, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature
Helene Mochedlover, FOCAL Points Editor

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