All Around Us

Anne M Giangiulio
ALL AROUND US
By Xelena González
Illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia
GRANDPA SAYS circles are all around us. We just have to look for them. He points to the rainbow that tints high in the sky after a thundercloud has come. “Can you see? That’s only half of the circle. The rest of it is down below, in the earth...”
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Grandpa says circles are all around us. We just have to look for them.

He points to the rainbow that rises high in the sky after a thundercloud has \color{white}been gone. "Can you see that's only half the circle?"

He traces the colorful arc with his hand and says, "Can you see that's only half the circle?"
GRANDPA SAYS CIRCLES ARE ALL AROUND US. WE JUST
WE WALK WAY BACK IN OUR YARD AND SIT UNDER A TALL PECAN TREE.
“Even our bodies return to the earth,” he says and pats the ground with his big hands.

“But that’s only half of the circle. That’s the part we cannot see.”
DEAR READER.

When I was six, I was given a class assignment to draw a timeline of my life. Birth was the beginning. First steps and first fallen tooth were milestones. I wondered aloud how my timeline would continue, and more importantly, how it would end.

My father shook his head when he heard me. “People will tell you it’s a line, but we believe it’s a circle,” he said, gathering two imaginary points of a timeline and joining them midair to form a circle. By “we,” he meant our family of four, as well as our larger family of people, whom we call mortuari. This name refers to our biracial mix of Native American and Spanish ancestry.

We were taught to revere our elders, even those who had passed on. We were also taught not to fear death, as it is an essential part of life. In my family, we have cremated our relatives who have passed on, but we do not bury the ashes, as the family does in the story. This is from my imagination—a nice way of returning to the times of ancestral burial grounds and family plots. It is the way I wish to return to the earth.

Like the family in the story, we also plant our children’s placentas after birth. This is a custom practiced by many cultures around the world, most notably the Navajo of America and the Maori of New Zealand. We find this practice, along with the art of gardening, to be a vital way of re-connecting with the earth, especially our little piece of land where my family has lived for five generations.

These days it seems more people are finding ways of honoring the earth and their ancestors. More people are creating birth and death rituals that are right for their families.

And more people are seeing themselves as part of a greater circle.

Thank you for opening this book and opening your mind to the ideas inside.

—XELENA GONZÁLEZ
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ADRIANA M. GARCÍA is an artist who has worked with acrylic and oil for over 20 years. But All Around Us, his first, she ventured into the world of digital creation. Using a graphics tablet with a stylus pen and working in a painting software program, she created the illustrations for this book. Adriana took photos of Xelena’s father and daughter as references to inspire the illustrations in this, her first picture book.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE: The type for this book is set in the contemporary typeface Letrino Yellow Sun designed by Harrold. It is tall, with all caps and named after a font from its creator’s favorite Pearl Jam song, “Jeremy.” The rest of the type (like this type you are now reading) is set in Adobe Caslon. It is a serif font first designed by William Caslon in 1722. Benjamin Franklin used it extensively and in fact it was the first used to set both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Design by Anne M. Gianguido
ADRIANA M. GARCIA &
XELENA GONZALEZ
are long-time friends who were born and raised on
the Westside of San Antonio, Texas. Adriana is an award-winning artist,
ceramist, and scenic designer. Xelena is an
accomplished journalist, dancer, and
librarian. They are both avid travelers
whose passions and curiosities have
carried them to various parts of the
world—including Valencia, Spain,
where Adriana studied fine arts, and
Guangzhou, China, where Xelena serves
as an international school librarian. But
their roots always bring them back to
the beautiful neighborhood pictured in
this book. Here, they regularly prepare
tacos and dream about their next artistic endeavors. All A-and U’s
is their first picture book.