



CELEBRATING A DECADE OF *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces*

It's hard to believe it's been ten years since the incomparable *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero hit the literary stage. Gabi, a modern-day, teenaged, sassy Chicana, came in sharp as a blade, taking no bs, and with a poet's nopal-shaped heart the size of California. She swung that door open wide, took center stage, and made us all fall in love.

I was a grown woman and a mother of a young daughter when I read Gabi's story and yet, when I turned that last page, the seventeen-year-old in me called all my Chicana girlfriends and said, "There is a teen book about us, really about us!" Never before had I read a story that so authentically straddled the tightrope complexity of those of us who are teen first- and second-generation daughters of Mexican parents. We, who find our strength as we navigate the collision of the old world's ideas and the new world we are still making. It is a book that healed my inner teen for all the connections it made that I could not when I was that age. Of course, I couldn't wait to give it to my daughter when she got older. It is no surprise that it became one of her most treasured books.

If you've never read *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces*, you will find a roller-coaster ride of drama, moving through Gabi's deep feelings of newness, sassy-ness, and wonderment but also through what it feels like to lose. We are privy to Gabi's exploration of what it means to be a hormone-filled, sensitive, intelligent, and sometimes flawed human being. We are uniquely privileged to have a front seat view of how Gabi navigates each moment, emerging sometimes broken and sometimes triumphant because of her own emotional reserves and smarts.

As a Chicana author and avid reader of Chicana literature, I understand how monumental *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* is to this literature. Before Isabel Quintero, there were other giants in our fiction—Helena Maria Viramontes, Ana Castillo, Cherrie Moraga, Sandra Cisneros—some of whom (spoiler alert) happily make cameos in the story. Though, these Chicana writers primarily wrote for adults. Only Guadalupe García McCall preceded Isabel Quintero in writing a modern-day teen Chicana's experience with her gorgeously heartbreaking *Under the Mesquite*. Quintero's *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* expanded the Chicana YA literary conversation with an edge, insight, irreverence, and a lyrical nuance that was a departure from the Chicana writers who came before. The conversation became loud, unapologetic, and so pointedly for young people in a way that was truly revolutionary.



On its tenth anniversary, I celebrate this powerful book and Isabel Quintero for that expanded and lively conversation, for spellbinding us with a truth about our Chicana identities we had not yet seen on the fictional page, for a truth that continues to have resonance as it dances into young adult readers' hearts and souls, and will do so for years to come. ¡Adelante, Gabi! ¡Hasta tocar el cielo!

Con mucho amor,

Aida Salazar
Américas Award and Caldecott Honor Author



¡QUIERO
CHOCOLATE CAKE!



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