

Culturally Affirming Picture Books

(*denotes series)

General

I Am Every Good Thing by Derrick Barnes

The confident Black narrator of this book is proud of everything that makes him who he is. He's got big plans, and no doubt he'll see them through--as he's creative, adventurous, smart, funny, and a good friend. Sometimes he falls, but he always gets back up. And other times he's afraid, because he's so often misunderstood and called what he is not. So slow down and really look and listen, when somebody tells you--and shows you--who they are. There are superheroes in our midst!

The Powwow Thief by Joseph Bruchac*

Twins Jamie and Marie Longbow are excited about summer with their grandparents, traveling from powwow to powwow selling goods they helped make. When their grandmother's most beautiful necklace goes missing, it's up to the twins to solve the mystery.

I Believe I Can by Grace Byers

An affirmation for boys and girls of every background to love and believe in themselves.

I Am Enough by Grace Byers

This is a gorgeous, lyrical ode to loving who you are, respecting others, and being kind to one another.

All Because You Matter by Tami Charles

This powerful, rhythmic lullaby reassures readers that their matter and their worth is never diminished, no matter the circumstance: through the joy and wonder of their first steps and first laughs, through the hardship of adolescent struggles, and the pain and heartbreak of current events, they always have, and always will, matter.

Bindiya in India by Monique Chheda

Follow Bindiya as she meets her extended family for the first time, celebrates Indian wedding traditions, and creates memories and bonds to last a lifetime.

We Shall Overcome by Bryan Collier

"We Shall Overcome" is one of the most recognizable anthems of the Civil Rights movement, widely performed at protests and rallies to promote nonviolent civil rights activism. Now, these inspirational, empowering, legendary lyrics are brought to life with the stirring, evocative, and breathtaking illustrations.

Parker Looks Up by Parker and Jessica Curry*

Parker saw the possibility and promise, the hopes and dreams of herself in this powerful painting of Michelle Obama. An everyday moment became an

extraordinary one...that continues to resonate its power, inspiration, and indelible impact.

Paletero Man by Lucky Diaz

What's the best way to cool off on a hot summer day? Run quick and find Paletero José!

Oona by Kelly DiPucchio*

Oona and her best friend Otto love to search for treasure...and often find trouble instead. Messy trouble. Tricky trouble. Even shark-related trouble. That's never stopped them before, though! After all, no proper treasure hunt is without some adventure. But when the grandest treasure yet is stuck in a deep, dark rift, Oona's not sure if she can dive right in. What might be waiting for her in those unknown waters?

Ambitious Girl by Meena Harris

When a young girl sees a strong woman on TV labeled as "too assertive" and "too ambitious," it sends her on a journey of discovery through past, present, and future about the challenges faced by women and girls and the ways in which they can reframe, redefine, and reclaim words meant to knock them down.

Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho

A young Asian girl notices that her eyes look different from her peers'. They have big, round eyes and long lashes. She realizes that her eyes are like her mother's, her grandmother's, and her little sister's. They have eyes that kiss in the corners and glow like warm tea, crinkle into crescent moons, and are filled with stories of the past and hope for the future. Drawing from the strength of these powerful women in her life, she recognizes her own beauty and discovers a path to self-love and empowerment.

Eyes That Speak to the Stars by Joanna Ho

A young boy comes to recognize his own power and ability to change the future. When a friend at school creates a hurtful drawing, the boy turns to his family for comfort. He realizes that his eyes rise to the skies and speak to the stars, shine like sunlit rays, and glimpse trails of light from those who came before—in fact, his eyes are like his father's, his agong's, and his little brother's, and they are visionary. Inspired by the men in his family, he recognizes his own power and strength from within.

Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman

Grace loves stories, whether they're from books, movies, or the kind her grandmother tells. So when she gets a chance to play a part in Peter Pan, she knows exactly who she wants to be.

Bindu's Bindi's by Supriya Kelkar

This charming picture book is about a little girl who loves her bindis (and the many creative shapes they come in!). The bindis are also a connection to her Nani who lives in India. When Nani comes to visit Bindu and brings the bindis to her, it is just in time to wear something new to the school talent show. Bindu and Nani work together to shine their brightest and embrace their sparkle, even when they stand out from the crowd.

Crescent Moons and Painted Minarets by Hena Khan*

From a crescent moon to a square garden to an octagonal fountain, this breathtaking picture book celebrates the shapes-and traditions-of the Muslim world.

Go Show the World: A Celebration of Indigenous Heroes by Wab Kinew (JPN 970.004 KIN)

Wab Kinew has created a powerful rap song that showcases a diverse group of Indigenous people in the US and Canada, both the more well known and the not-so-widely recognized. Individually, their stories, though briefly touched on, are inspiring; collectively, they empower the reader with this message: "We are people who matter, yes, it's true; now let's show the world what people who matter can do."

Happy in Our Skin by Fran Manushkin

Just savor these bouquets of babies—cocoa-brown, cinnamon, peaches and cream. As they grow, their clever skin does too, enjoying hugs and tickles, protecting them inside and out, and making them one of a kind.

Saturday by Oge Mora

A mother and daughter look forward to their special Saturday routine together every single week. But this Saturday, one thing after another goes wrong--ruining storytime, salon time, picnic time, and the puppet show they'd been looking forward to going to all week. Mom is nearing a meltdown...until her loving daughter reminds her that being together is the most important thing of all.

Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o

Sulwe has skin the color of midnight. She is darker than everyone in her family. She is darker than anyone in her school. Sulwe just wants to be beautiful and bright, like her mother and sister. Then a magical journey in the night sky opens her eyes and changes everything.

Hey Black Child by Useni Eugene Perkins

This lyrical, empowering poem celebrates black children and seeks to inspire all young people to dream big and achieve their goals.

Always Anjali by Sheetal Sheth

Anjali and her friends are excited to get matching personalized license plates for their bikes. But Anjali can't find her name. To make matters worse, she gets bullied for her "different" name, and is so upset she demands to change it. When her parents refuse and she is forced to take matters into her own hands, she winds up learning to celebrate who she is and carry her name with pride and power.

Your Name is a Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

Frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her beautiful name, a little girl tells her mother she never wants to come back to school. In response, the girl's mother teaches her about the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx, and Middle Eastern names on their lyrical walk home through the city. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the young girl is ready to return the next day to share her knowledge with her class.

One is a Piñata by Roseanne Thong*

One is a rainbow. One is a cake. One is a piñata that's ready to break! Children discover a fiesta of numbers in the world around them, all the way from one to ten.

Snow Angel, Sand Angel by Lois-Ann Yamanaka

Claire has been surrounded by the deep blue waves of Hapuna Beach and the magnificent mountains of Hawai'i all her life, but has never, ever seen snow. When her father drives her and her family to the top of the Mauna Kea, she can't help but to be disappointed...it's not the winter wonderland she's always dreamed of. And that's what she wants, more than anything. But as Claire edges ever closer to the new year, she wonders if maybe-- just maybe--she can delight in the special joys of winter in her own way--right there, on her Big Island of Hawaii.

Hair

Laxmi's Mooch by Shelly Anand

Laxmi never paid much attention to the tiny hairs above her lip. But one day while playing farm animals at recess, her friends point out that her whiskers would make her the perfect cat. She starts to notice body hair all over--on her arms, legs, and even between her eyebrows. With her parents' help, Laxmi learns that hair isn't just for heads, but that it grows everywhere, regardless of gender.

Hair Love by Matthew Cherry

Zuri's hair has a mind of its own. It kinks, coils, and curls every which way. Zuri knows it's beautiful. When Daddy steps in to style it for an extra special occasion,

he has a lot to learn. But he LOVES his Zuri, and he'll do anything to make her -- and her hair -- happy.

My Hair is Magic! by ML Marroquin

This little girl knows her hair is great just as it is. When people ask, “Why is your hair so BIG?” she answers, “Why isn’t yours?” Her hair is soft, it protects her, it’s both gentle and fierce. While some might worry about how it’s different and try to contain it, she gives it the freedom to be so extraordinary it almost has a life of its own.

Don’t Touch My Hair! by Sharee Miller

It seems that wherever Aria goes, someone wants to touch her hair. In the street, strangers reach for her fluffy curls; and even under the sea, in the jungle, and in space, she's chased by a mermaid, monkeys, and poked by aliens . . . until, finally, Aria has had enough!

Princess Hair by Sharee Miller

Celebrate different hair shapes, textures, and styles in this self-affirming picture book! Princesses with curls wear pearls. Princesses with head wraps take long naps. And princesses with teeny-weeny Afros wear teeny-weeny bows.

Hair Twins by Raakhee Mirchandani

Every morning Papa combs through his daughter's waves like he does his own—parting it down the middle, using coconut oil to get all the tangles out. Some days he braids her hair in two twists down the side of her face. Other days he weaves it into one long braid hanging down her back, just like a unicorn tail. But her favorite style is when he combs her hair in a tight bun on the top of her head, just like the jooora he wears every day under his turban. They call this their hair twin look!

Stella’s Stellar Hair by Yesenia Moises

It’s the day of the Big Star Little Gala, and Stella's hair just isn't acting right! What’s a girl to do? Simple! Just hop on her hoverboard, visit each of her fabulous aunties across the solar system, and find the perfect hairdo along the way.

Hair Story by NoNieqa Ramos

Preciosa has hair that won’t stay straight, won’t be confined. Rudine’s hair resists rollers, flat irons, and rules. Together, the girls play hair salon! They take inspiration from their moms, their neighbors, their ancestors, and cultural icons. They discover that their hair holds roots of the past and threads of the future.

Bedtime Bonnet by Nancy Redd

The first-ever picture book to highlight Black nighttime hair traditions gives readers a heartwarming peek into quintessential Black nighttime hair traditions and celebrates the love between all the members of this close-knit, multi-generational family.

Food

Halal Hot Dogs by Susannah Aziz

Every Friday after Jummaḥ prayer at the masjid, Musa's family has a special Jummaḥ treat. They take turns picking out what the treat will be, but recently the choices have been . . . interesting. Week one, Mama made molokhia. It's perfect for sharing, but gives us molokhia teeth for days! Week two, Baba burned the kufte kebabs on the grill. Week three, Seedi made his favorite riz b'haleeb-creamy rice pudding with pistachio sprinkled on top with an unexpected ingredient. Last week, Maryam brought jellybeans. . . . Finally, it's Musa's turn to pick, and he picks his favorite-halal hot dogs! But actually getting to eat this deliciousness turns into a journey riddled with obstacles. Will he ever get his favorite tasty treat?

Soul Food Sunday by Winsome Bingham

At Granny's, Sunday isn't Sunday without a big family gathering over a lovingly prepared meal. Old enough now, our narrator is finally invited to help cook the dishes for the first time: He joins Granny in grating the cheese, cleaning the greens, and priming the meat for Roscoe Ray's grill. But just when Granny says they're finished, her grandson makes his own contribution, sweetening this Sunday gathering—and the many more to come.

My Day with the Panye by Tami Charles

In the hills above Port-au-Prince, a young girl named Fallon wants more than anything to carry a large woven basket to the market, just like her Manman. As she watches her mother wrap her hair in a mouchwa, Fallon tries to twist her own braids into a scarf and balance the empty panye atop her head, but realizes it's much harder than she thought. BOOM! Is she ready after all?

Cora Cooks Pancit by Dorina Lazo Gilmore

Cora loves being in the kitchen, but she always gets stuck doing the kid jobs like licking the spoon. One day, however, when her older sisters and brother head out, Cora finally gets the chance to be Mama's assistant chef. And of all the delicious Filipino dishes that dance through Cora's head, she and Mama decide to make pancit, her favorite noodle dish. When dinner is finally served, her siblings find out that Cora did all their grown-up tasks, and Cora waits anxiously to see what everyone thinks of her cooking.

Awâsis and the World Famous Bannock by Dallas Hunt

During an unfortunate mishap, young Awâsis loses Kôhkum's freshly baked world-famous bannock. Not knowing what to do, Awâsis seeks out a variety of other-than-human relatives willing to help. What adventures are in store for Awâsis?

Dumplings for Lili by Melissa Iwai

Lili loves to cook baos, and Nai Nai has taught her all the secrets to making them, from kneading the dough lovingly and firmly to being thankful for the strong and healthy ingredients in the filling. But when Nai Nai realizes that they are out of cabbage (Secret #8: line the basket with cabbage leaves!), she sends Lili up to Babcia's apartment on the sixth floor to get some. Babcia is happy to share her cabbage, but she needs some potatoes for her pierogi. What follows is a race up and down the stairs as Lili helps all the grandmothers in her building borrow ingredients for different dumplings: Jamaican beef patties, Italian ravioli, Lebanese fatayer, and more.

Tomatoes for Neela by Padma Lakshmi

Neela loves cooking with her amma and writing down the recipes in her notebook. It makes her feel closer to her paati who lives far away in India. On Saturdays, Neela and Amma go to the green market and today they are buying tomatoes to make Paati's famous sauce. But first, Neela needs to learn about all the different kinds of tomatoes they can pick from. And as Neela and Amma cook together, they find a way for Paati to share in both the love and the flavors of the day.

Fry Bread by Kevin Noble-Maillard

Fry bread is food. It is warm and delicious, piled high on a plate. Fry bread is time. It brings families together for meals and new memories. Fry bread is nation. It is shared by many, from coast to coast and beyond. Fry bread is us. It is a celebration of old and new, traditional and modern, similarity and difference. This wonderful story is an evocative depiction of a modern Native American family.

Salma the Syrian Chef by Danny Ramadan

All Salma wants is to make her mama smile again. Between English classes, job interviews, and missing Papa back in Syria, Mama always seems busy or sad. A homemade Syrian meal might cheer her up, but Salma doesn't know the recipe, or what to call the vegetables in English, or where to find the right spices! Luckily, the staff and other newcomers in her Welcome Home are happy to lend a hand—and a sprinkle of sumac. With creativity, determination, and charm, Salma brings her new friends together to show Mama that even though things aren't perfect, there is cause for hope and celebration.

Bilal Cooks Daal by Aisha Saeed

Six-year-old Bilal is excited to help his dad make his favorite food of all-time: daal! The slow-cooked lentil dish from South Asia requires lots of ingredients and a whole lot of waiting. Bilal wants to introduce his friends to daal. They've never tried it! As the day goes on, the daal continues to simmer, and more kids join Bilal and his family, waiting to try the tasty dish. And as time passes, Bilal begins to wonder: Will his friends like it as much as he does?

Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao by Kat Zhang*

Amy loves to make bao with her family. But it takes skill to make the bao taste and look delicious. And her bao keep coming out all wrong. Then she has an idea that may give her a second chance... Will Amy ever make the perfect bao?

Clothing

Leila in Saffron by Rukhsanna Guidroz

When Leila looks in the mirror, she doesn't know if she likes what she sees. But when her grandmother tells her the saffron beads on her scarf suit her, she feels a tiny bit better. So, Leila spends the rest of their family dinner night on the lookout for other parts of her she does like.

The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh by Supriya Kelkar

Harpreet Singh has a different color for every mood and occasion, from happy sunny yellow to courageous red. He especially takes care with his patka—his turban—making sure it always matches his outfit. But when Harpreet's mom finds a new job in a snowy city and they have to move, everything just feels gray. Can he find a way to make life bright again?

Under My Hijab by Hena Khan

Grandma wears it clasped under her chin. Aunty pins hers up with a beautiful brooch. Jenna puts it under a sun hat when she hikes. Zara styles hers to match her outfit. As a young girl observes six very different women in her life who each wear the hijab in a unique way, she also dreams of the rich possibilities of her own future, and how she will express her own personality through her hijab.

How to Wear a Sari by Darshana Khiani

Being a little kid isn't always fun and games. Sometimes, it's downright annoying. When a little girl tires of being treated like she's TOO little, she sets out to prove to her family that she can do ANYTHING she puts her mind to... including putting on a colorful, twinkly, silky sari. Sure, they're long and unwieldy—but that only means her family will be even more impressed when she puts it on all by herself. Naturally, there are some hiccups along the way, but she discovers that she's not the only one in her family who has set out with something to prove, with hilariously chaotic results. That's what photo albums are for!

The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family by Ibtihaj Muhammad

With her new backpack and light-up shoes, Faizah knows the first day of school is going to be special. It's the start of a brand new year and, best of all, it's her older sister Asiya's first day of hijab--a hijab of beautiful blue fabric, like the ocean waving to the sky. But not everyone sees hijab as beautiful, and in the face of hurtful, confusing words, Faizah will find new ways to be strong.

My Dadima Wears a Sari by Kashmira Sheth

Every day, Rupa's grandmother wears a beautiful sari. Dadima wears her saris around the house and around the town. Some are made of cotton and some are made of fine silk. Each is brightly colored and very beautiful. She shares with her granddaughter all the wonderful things that saris can do—from becoming an umbrella in a rainstorm to providing a deep pouch to carry seashells. Soon Rupa's imagination is sparked as she envisions saris protecting her in the scary Gir jungle, bandaging up an injured knee, and holding a special secret for her and Dadima to share.

Mommy's Khimar by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

A young girl plays dress up with her mother's headscarves, feeling her mother's love with every one she tries on.

Celebrations

Bowwow Powwow by Brenda J. Child

Windy Girl is blessed with a vivid imagination. From Uncle she gathers stories of long-ago traditions, about dances and sharing and gratitude. Windy can tell such stories herself—about her dog, Itchy Boy, and the way he dances to request a treat and how he wriggles with joy in response to, well, just about everything. When Uncle and Windy Girl and Itchy Boy attend a powwow, Windy watches the dancers in their jingle dresses and listens to the singers. When Windy falls asleep under the stars, Uncle's stories inspire other visions in her head: a bowwow powwow, where all the dancers are dogs. In these magical scenes, Windy sees veterans in a Grand Entry, and a visiting drum group, and traditional dancers, grass dancers, and jingle-dress dancers—all with telltale ears and paws and tails. All celebrating in song and dance. All attesting to the wonder of the powwow.

Ruby's Reunion Day Dinner by Angela Dalton

Once a year, each of Ruby's relatives prepares a special dish to share at their family reunion. Daddy calls it their "signature dish"—and Ruby wants one of her own. She wanders through the bustling kitchen looking for inspiration. As she watches Pop-Pop's chicken sizzling in the skillet, Uncle G slicing onions, and

Auntie Billie cooking corn on the hot grill, she wonders if she's just too young to have a signature dish. That's when she finds it— the perfect solution!

Josie Dances by Denise Lajimodiere

To gather all these essential pieces, she calls on her mom, her aunty, her kookum, and Grandma Greatwalker. They have the skills to prepare Josie for her powwow debut. As the months go by, Josie practices her dance steps while Mom stitches, Aunty and Kookum bead, and Grandma Greatwalker dreams Josie's spirit name. Josie is nervous about her performance in the arena and about all the pieces falling into place, but she knows her family is there to support her. The powwow circle is a welcoming space, and dancers and spectators alike celebrate Josie's first dance. When she receives her name, she knows it's just right. Wrapped in the love of her community, Josie dances to honor her ancestors.

Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Leitich Smith

The cone-shaped jingles sewn to Grandma Wolfe's dress sing tink, tink, tink, tink... Jenna loves the tradition of jingle dancing that has been shared over generations in her family and intertribal community. She hopes to dance at the next powwow. But with the day quickly approaching, she has a problem—how will her dress sing if it has no jingles?

Powwow Day by Traci Sorell

River wants so badly to dance at powwow day as she does every year. In this uplifting and contemporary picture book perfect for beginning readers, follow River's journey from feeling isolated after an illness to learning the healing power of community.

In My Mosque by M.O. Yuksel

No matter who you are or where you're from, everyone is welcome here. From grandmothers reading lines of the Qur'an and the imam telling stories of living as one, to meeting new friends and learning to help others, mosques are centers for friendship, community, and love.

Family

The Electric Slide and Kai by Kelly Baptist

Kai's aunt is getting married, and everyone in the Donovan family is excited about the wedding ... except Kai. The highlight of every Donovan occasion is dancing the electric slide--a groovy line dance with footwork that Kai can't quite figure out. More than anything, he wants to prove that he can boogie with the rest of his family and earn a cool nickname from his granddad. Can Kai break through his nerves and break it down on the dance floor?

Ten Ways to Hear the Snow by Cathy Camper

One winter morning, Lina wakes up to silence. It's the sound of snow -- the kind that looks soft and glows bright in the winter sun. But as she walks to her grandmother's house to help make the family recipe for warak enab, she continues to listen. As Lina walks past snowmen and across icy sidewalks, she discovers ten ways to pay attention to what might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Clam Digging with Grandma by Hannah Gifford

Silu can't wait to go clam digging! Follow along as Silu and her grandma spend a fun day digging for clams.

Where Three Oceans Meet by Rajami LaRocca

Sejal, Mommy, and Pati travel together to the southern tip of India. Along the way, they share meals, visit markets, and catch up with old friends.

For Pati, the trip retraces spaces she knows well. For Mommy, it's a return to the place she grew up. For Sejal, it's a discovery of new sights and sounds. The family finds their way to Kanyakumari, where three oceans meet, and delight in making it to the end of the earth together.

'Ohana Means Family by Ilima Loomis

Join the family, or ohana, as they farm taro for poi to prepare for a traditional luau celebration with a poetic text in the style of "The House That Jack Built."

When My Cousins Come to Town by Angela Shanté

Fitting in can be hard, but standing out isn't easy either! Every summer a young girl eagerly waits for her cousins to come visit and celebrate her birthday. All her cousins are unique in their own ways and have earned cool nicknames for themselves... except for the girl. But this year things are going to be different. This year before summer ends, she's determined to earn her own nickname!

I Sang You Down from the Stars by Tasha Spillett-Sumner

As she waits for the arrival of her new baby, a mother-to-be gathers gifts to create a sacred bundle. A white feather, cedar and sage, a stone from the river. Each addition to the bundle will offer the new baby strength and connection to tradition, family, and community. As they grow together, mother and baby will each have gifts to offer each other.

When Lola Visits by Michelle Sterling

For one young girl, summer is the season of no school, of days spent at the pool, and of picking golden limes off the trees. But summer doesn't start until her lola—her grandmother from the Philippines—comes for her annual visit. Summer is special. When Lola visits, the whole family gathers to cook and eat and share in their happiness of another season spent together. Yet as summer

transitions to fall, her lola must return home—but not without a surprise for her granddaughter to preserve their special summer a bit longer.