

Literature, Identity and the Creation of LA Librería

This is my first self-published piece, which I wrote as an "assignment" for an internship application but soon found that I genuinely loved the piece for myself.



ITZEL SOSA

MAR 18, 2026

Chiara Arroyo and Celene Navarrete, immigrants from Spain and Mexico, met in 2012 at a book fair for their children at Edison Language Academy in Santa Monica. In a *Los Angeles Times* interview the pair shared how they quickly bonded over the lack of adequate Hispanic representation and poor quality Spanish-language children's books. Arroyo stated "In English you don't publish a book with errors...In Spanish, [American publishers] don't care. They think that the Spanish-speaking families don't have money? There's negative values associated with Spanish." Out of their frustration with the literary world came an idea and goal: to provide their community with "more and better books in Spanish," and to help children who grow up speaking both English and Spanish, especially those who come from immigrant backgrounds as explained in an article by BoldLatina. As two native Spanish-speakers, both understood the importance of staying connected with your native tongue while immigrating to a country where language has a history of being stigmatized. From this moment, LA Librería was born.

They began with an online bookstore, organizing school book fairs across the nation and hosting private book viewings. What started as a "warehouse" in their homes quickly expanded as demand grew, pushing them into larger storage spaces. In 2015 they opened their first store in West Adams, Los Angeles. From there, their work expanded to include community festivals, contracts with schools—including Los Angeles

Unified School District—and became the only Spanish-language bookstore in Los Angeles, according to the *LA Times*. What started as an idea at a book fair quickly grew into a full bookstore-warehouse which continued to grow at a rapid rate as LA Librería reached new success and popularity. As of 2024 LA Librería is now located in the heart of Los Angeles on Washington Boulevard. In the same *LA Times* interview, the founders shared their long-term goal of expanding the Los Angeles Libros Festival—a bilingual fair they co-founded—to create their own publishing house for both children and adults.

Thanks for reading! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

✓ **Subscribed**

Their commitment to language learning and literature is rooted in the lack of diversity within the publishing industry. “We have learned that the book industry puts Latinos in the same box and we try to do the opposite. We try to represent and diversify the selection,” says Navarrete in the *LA Times* interview. Their response to this lack of adequate representation; curating diverse, culturally accurate, and representative children’s literature to communities of immigrant families, Spanish-speakers, and those who are willing to enter a bilingual community. Their approach represents a cultural resistance that is born of community and strength in one’s culture and one’s willingness to be open-minded about Spanish language learning. As they explained in the *LA Times*, “The interest for bilingualism is here,” highlighting a growing demand for spaces where individuals feel seen and represented in spaces that for so long have continued to miss the mark or perpetuated the stigmatization of their Hispanic culture. Navarrete also noted, “Spanish has always lived here along English—*all* kinds of Spanish...But most of what we could find was through Mexican eyes,” pointing to the limited scope of representation in published works. Through their work,

Arroyo and Navarrete have created a space that challenges stigma around the Spanish language and affirms the cultural and linguistic diversity of Hispanic communities.

In an interview with *De Los*, Arroyo emphasized the deeper impact of access to language, “To have access to these books in your family’s language is a huge thing and can open up a discussion, especially because the language has been so stigmatized in the past,” their bookstore provides support for not only language learning and literacy development but creates a bridge for identity formation building confidence in language usage and bilingualism overall. LA Librería works as a welcoming space that intersects children of all backgrounds within the larger Hispanic community. Including, but not limited to, children from immigrant households who require fluency in both English and Spanish and “no sabo” children who wish to reconnect with their mother tongues as a cultural reclamation and symbol of familial bonding as Navarrete shares in the *LA Times*, “A child learns to keep their parents’ language, or just learns it. For immigrant parents or grandparents, the books let them teach a new generation, but also let them remember.” Lastly it creates space for individuals who belong to a multilingual household and/or community who are immersed in an environment where Spanish language learning, if not a necessity, is a want. LA Librería is not just a bookstore in the greater Los Angeles area, but a community space that represents language as power and representation in education promoting inclusive narratives for youth by strengthening immigrant communities while challenging assimilation-only narratives in the literary world.

LA Librería was born from the passion for children’s literature and bilingual education after the two mothers struggled to find community spaces in Southern California, their goal now is to continue promoting “bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism in the United States with high-quality resources that enrich Spanish language learning and celebrate Spanish-speaking cultures” the founders state on LA Librería’s

homepage. LA Librería provides a space where children and families can visibly see themselves reflected in stories while preserving language and culture for future generations.

Thanks for reading! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

✓ **Subscribed**