

LAURIN MAYENO

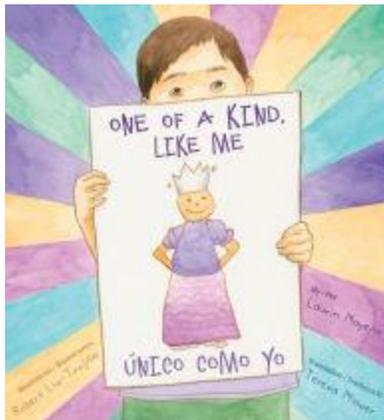


Laurin Mayeno is a consultant, educator, blogger, and first-time children's book author. Her experience growing up as a mixed race Japanese/Jewish/Anglo woman inspired her work for a more just society. Her son Danny who loved dressing up as a princess, helped her see the importance of supporting young people who aren't limited by gender boxes. [Danny](#), who is now an out proud gay man, also inspired Laurin to use her voice as a mother to organize and support other mixed-race families and families of color with LGBTQ children.

Laurin has worked with agencies, schools, and community groups to create supportive environments for gender-expansive and LGBTQ children, youth and their families. She founded [Out Proud Families](#) to build this support and fill a

gap in resources for mixed-race families and families of color.

Her education and organizing work includes co-founding [Somos Familia](#), which organizes families in the Latinx community to build support for LGBTQ young people and their families, and partnership with National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance ([NQAPIA](#)) to build a national network of API families in support of their LGBTQ children.



One of a Kind Like Me/Único Como Yo is a bilingual children's book (ages 4-7) based on a true story about a child named Danny who wants to be a princess in the school parade. He and his mom embark on a venture to find a purple princess dress. But will they find it on time?

The book is a labor of love by author Laurin Mayeno, who wrote it based on her son, independent publisher Janine Macbeth of Blood Orange Press, illustrator Robert Liu-Trujillo, and translator Teresa Mlwar.

What motivated you to write a book that is specifically inclusive of LGBTQ families?

I decided to write a book based on my son, because I wanted other children and families to have the book we didn't have when he was growing up. I wanted a mirror for children like Danny and know that they are beautiful. I wanted families like ours to know that they are not alone.

I also wanted a window for all children and families to see into our lives and be able to appreciate that gender diversity exists in different communities. When my son was very young, none of the other kids gave him a hard time and he could express himself freely. The other children hadn't yet formed judgments about what is and isn't okay based on gender. But that changed when he started elementary school and bullying became a daily threat. My conclusion: Educate young kids about gender diversity before they pick up negative attitudes.

What do you personally feel makes a family?

Family is a home base, where you can be yourself and be safe, loved, and supported. Family is people who are there to help each other through all the challenges in life. Family is people who aren't perfect, who get mad, make mistakes and have conflicts. But, in the end, we work it out, because our love for each other is unconditional.

What does "equality" look like to you?

I envision a world where everyone has equal ability to be free to be who they are and live a good life. In the world of children's books, it means a radical change. We need to have books that reflect the voices and diversity of our children and our communities. My publisher, Blood Orange Press (bloodorangepress.com), is one of the small independent presses working to make that happen.

Whose books do you admire and why?

I admire the books of Maya Christina Gonzalez and Reflection Press (reflectionpress.com). They are changing the world of children's literature, encouraging new ways of thinking about gender, and bringing more books about queer children and families into the world.

What's coming up next for you?

I am using the book to spark as many conversations as possible about gender diversity, with children, families, in schools, and with people who work with children and families. I am booking readings, talks, workshops, and consultations and have several planned in the near future. I'm also toying with the idea of another book...but not sure about that yet.