



## Antonio's Card/ La Tarjeta de Antonio

Story/Cuento Rigoberto Gonzalez, Children's Book Press, 2005

Illustrations/Ilustraciones Cecilia Concepcion Alvarez

Recommended for ages 6 and up

**SYNOPSIS:** "Antonio loves words because words have the power to express feelings such as love, pride, or hurt. Mother's Day is coming soon, and Antonio searches for the words to express his affection for his mother and her partner, Leslie. But he's not sure what to do when the kids in his class make fun of Leslie, an artist who wears paint-splattered overalls and towers over everyone else. As Mother's Day approaches, Antonio must choose whether—and how—to express his connection to both of the special women in his life." (From *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio*)

**RIGOBERTO GONZALEZ:** Rigoberto was born in California and raised in Mexico. The son and grandson of migrant farm workers, he is an award-winning writer of poetry and fiction.

**CECILIA CONCEPCION ALVAREZ'S** artwork makes Antonio's story come alive.

**Review:** "*Sensitively written...the narrative captures the social worries and concerns that children in nontraditional families may experience...This story deals brilliantly with issues of inclusion.*" — School Library Journal

### Cultural Significance:

A story written both in English and Spanish includes readers of both languages. The story's extravagant welcome has two layers. Readers are introduced to a Mexican-American family and same-gender parents. The story as a whole will resonate with children who have been faced with speaking up for the people they love. Children in same-gender parent families of any racial or ethnic background face similar dilemmas and can identify with Antonio's story. More importantly, however, children from traditional families learn through the story what children go through in a same-gender parent household. It invites them to enter their world. May this story provide children insight and empathy for the feelings and lives of those who are different.

This story highlights a same-gender parent family that is Mexican-American, but there is something different. The absence of extended family is noticeable, an important characteristic of Hispanic cultures everywhere. From the lens of outsiders the Hispanic families seem to have a grand fiesta all the time—in-laws, relatives, neighbors and friends galore are part of the family dynamics. Antonio's family, however, is only made up of his mother and Leslie. Where are the tios (uncles) and the tias (aunties), the abuela (grandmother) and abuelo (grandfather)? Is it because the family is nontraditional that they are nowhere in the story? You may want to point out and talk about that often in Mexican-American or Hispanic families, there will be many people in one household.

The deeper the human experience is God seems to meet us when we move out in faith. Young Antonio's humanity led him there. Something transforming enabled him to say quietly, "Yes, I will make a stand to the love of my life." God is still speaking! The leading character was transformed in the story, and the readers, after reading the story, share part of that transformation, too.

**Faith focus:**

**W**hen did Antonio become aware of his conflicting thoughts about his classmates knowing he has two mothers? He knew his classmates would laugh at his Mother's Day card. He seemed to be ashamed for his classmates to find out that he has two mothers instead of a father and a mother. But something transforming happened to him after he saw the Mother's Day painting of Leslie. Suddenly, he became so sure of what he will do for Leslie. He was now proud to show his own card in the cafeteria, not minding if his classmates would be there. What happened to him? A new life has sprung in Antonio!

**Bible passage:**

*"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."* 1 Timothy 1:7 (NRSV)

**P**erhaps when Antonio faced his conflicting thoughts, he found the spirit of love and of self-discipline instead which is God's gift to us.

**Family activity:**

Who can name the families you find in the picture?

**PRAYER** (for children) or one can pray from the heart or just have a silent moment:

**Dear God, Thank you for a loving family who in turn teach me to love. In Jesus' name, Amen.**



Reproduced from 2006 Family Resource: Family Values

Used with permission from: Committee on Families and Children, Education and Leadership Ministries Commission, National Council of Churches, USA