



Award-winning author **Anika Aldamuy Denise [She/Her]** writes stories that tickle her funny bone, tug her heartstrings, feed her curiosity, and celebrate her multicultural Puerto Rican-American heritage. She is the author of ten picture books including the Pura Belpré author honor-winning *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré* and *A Girl Named Rosita: The Story of Rita Moreno: Actor, Singer, Dancer, Trailblazer!*. Learn more about Anika and her books at [www.anikadenise.com](http://www.anikadenise.com).

**Anika is accepting applications for:** a writer of fiction or pb bios.

**Anika is accepting applications from:** unagented/unpublished creators only

**1. What's one non-publishing-related career that you wish you could have?**

Juggler (Oh, wait, I already do that! Um...) Screenwriter! ☐

**2. If you could have dinner with one person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?**

My dad. I'd have so much to fill him in on.

**3. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?**

Since all-time favorites are just too hard to narrow down, I'm listing five that have been published recently-ish.

- *Your Mama* by NoNieqa Ramos; illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara
- *Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away* by Meg Medina; illustrated by Sonia Sánchez
- *Truman* by Jean Reidy; illustrated by Lucy Ruth Cummins
- *R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, Queen of Soul* by Carol Boston Weatherford; illustrated by Frank Morrison

- **Zombies Don't Eat Veggies** by Megan and Jorge Lacera

**4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?**

Receiving the Pura Belpré Author Honor for *Planting Stories* was a very proud moment. □

**5. What about mentoring excites you most?**

I get excited about helping great stories by diverse writers get out into the world!

**6. What are your strengths as a mentor?**

I'm kind. I'm responsive. I give actionable critique.

**7. What is your feedback/critique style like?**

While my feedback is actionable, it's not overly prescriptive. Often I ask questions, pose possibilities, and make suggestions, but I always aim to respect a writer's voice and vision. That said, sometimes I'll encourage you step back and try bold revisions.

**8. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?**

Open-mindedness, willingness to be fearless in revision, a sense of humor.

**9. Who are you not the best mentor for?**

I lean towards spare texts so if your picture book is 1,800 words, I'm perhaps not the best fit for you.

**10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?**

I always begin by asking my mentee what would be most helpful to them, what their challenges have been so far, and what they'd most like to work on. I think it's important to set intentions and articulate goals at the outset so they have something tangible to work towards. I'm happy to work with them to develop their strongest ideas or critique a specific manuscript. I love using mentor texts, so once I get an idea about what interests them and what we'll be working on, we'll explore mentor texts together. (Oh, and happy to share marketing tips, too!)

**11. What is your style of communication like?**

Open and relatively informal. You can email me anytime with questions. But we'll also have scheduled sessions for us to chat and check in.

**12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?**

I love lyrical texts. I love books with heart, humor, or both. The first thing I look for in any picture book is kid friendliness. The second is a strong voice. Everything else—we can work on together.

**13. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?**

For pb bio writers, I want to know why you are passionate about the person you're writing about and why you think it's a story kids need to read. For fiction (and for bios), I look for a strong hook (see kid friendliness in answer above). So maybe give some thought to your elevator pitch along with polishing your manuscript.

**14. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?**

Hi, mentee whose name I don't know yet. I can't wait to meet you!

First, I promise we're going to have fun. I believe the best picture books are created from a place of joy and curiosity. What feeds your joy? What sparks your curiosity? What books did you love (or need) when you were a kid? What made you giggle? What made you worry? What made you wonder? Let's bring that kid reader along on our #PBChat journey.

I also promise that this will be a safe space where you will feel supported—and challenged!

And for a last dash of inspiration, I'll share this: my mentee from my previous round of #PBchat landed an agent and a multi-book deal from the manuscript we worked on together. She had a great idea and fun characters but needed to work on structure and write a more satisfying ending. Her willingness to work joyfully and revise fearlessly paid off big time! Often what separates the pre-published from the published is simply showing up, doing the work, and believing.

You've shown up. Now let's do the work. I believe in you!