

CARLOS GOMEZ KNOWS ALL ABOUT NOT FITTING IN. AS A MEMBER OF THE ONLY MEXICAN AMERICAN FAMILY IN TOWN, HE'S USED TO BEING THE ODD ONE OUT. A LISP, A PENCHANT FOR GIRL GLAMOR, AND BEING PICKED ON BY THE CLASS BULLY DON'T HELP, EITHER. BUT NOW THERE'S A TALENT SHOW COMING UP, AND CARLOS IS PERFORMING WITH THE BMX STUNT TEAM. HE'S READY TO WOW THE CROWD WITH HIS SPECIAL, FREESTYLING FLAIR. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

CARLOS GOMEZ FREESTYLES... HEAVY ON THE STYLE

CHUCK GONZALES

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WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
CHUCK GONZALES



REY CRAFT
BOOKS

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FREESTYLES

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Preface

Hi! I'm Chuck Gonzales, the artist and writer. *Carlos Gomez Freestyles* is loosely based on my childhood in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It is a lovely town which, at the time, was mostly filled with Anglos— white people. Which, given my Mexican-American heritage, I am not. This graphic novel exists in a time that is both current and also reflective of my childhood.

Because of when and where we were, I grew up without much LatinX cultural influence other than my immediate family, and was subjected to racism because of my dark skin and stiff black hair. In addition to my dark coloring, I had a pronounced lisp, no athletic ability, and, most importantly, a different sense of gender roles and sexuality than most of the kids around me. Which isn't always fun when you're just hoping to fit in. I also wanted to be as fabulously colorful as the pop stars I followed. None of whom looked anything like me. Basically, I wanted to be special AND not get picked on.

But it got better. I came to accept who and what I am despite, or because of, others' opinions. After a lot of work with a speech therapist, my lisp worked itself out. We left South Dakota for South Texas, where I went to high school and made great lifelong friends. I went on to college, became a professional illustrator and writer, traveled some, lived in Chicago, and met my husband, Michael. Who is the love of my life. We moved to New York City and have made a good life for ourselves. But I'm still pretty klutzy.

Carlos is a much braver and more colorful bird than I ever was. This book is the Hollywoodized version of my childhood I wished for. Since the story is semi-autobiographical, some characters are based on real people, some are a combination of people, some are complete fiction. This book is also a love letter to family members both alive and gone.



Carlos is worried about going home.
Today is the day report cards get
emailed to parents.







