

The Book of Life : A Revi ew

My family and I were recently invited to a pre-screening of *The Book of Life*. I have to admit, I was torn between to go or not to go at first. Granted, just knowing that Guillermo del Toro has his magic hand in on this and that MY Diego was cast as the main character made it hard to resist. I was also tempted to check out what Jorge Gutierrez, director and writer, had come up with since his work on Nickelodeon's *El Tigre: The Adventures of Manny Rivera*. On the other hand, I am so tired of Latino culture being marketed through "mainstream" tactics! Let's face it, with an estimated 54 million [Latinos in the U.S.](#), is there any reason why this film should ever be marketed as a Halloween movie?

The beautiful animation and big names finally moved us to take a chance and take a peek. I was thrown back to see that this movie has more big names than I've ever seen in an animated film put together. Not only is there a beautiful diversity in the cast, there is enough talent to make your head spin!

Diego Luna, Kate del Castillo, Ricardo Sanchez "El Mandril," Eugenio Derbez (the Mexican); Zoe Saldaña (the Dominican-American); Cheech Marin, Danny Trejo, Gabriel Iglesias, Angela Johnson (the old and the new school Chicano kings and queens); Hector Elizondo (the Boricua); Placido Domingo (the Spanish tenor); Channing Tatum and Christina Applegate (the Anglo); Ron Perlman (who is of Ashkenazi

Jewish decent); and Ice Cube (the Black brother)! Although everyone is just amazing, I do have to add, that only a true G like Ice Cube could bring his character, the Candle Maker, to life and flow with the family vibe of the film as well as he did.

Autistic son and all, my husband, sister and I headed to the theater. And then MAGIC happened! Where do I even start? I kept waiting for the moment when the little sir would have a freak out, or be too scared, or let us know the volume was too high. Let me just say that this NEVER happened. Every now and then we struggled with keeping his 3D glasses on, but considering this child CANNOT sit still for more than 15 minutes, I'll take it as a win.

What did happen? Despite the fact that our Little Love has limited verbal skills, his reaction to La Muerte, voiced by Kate del Castillo, was an incredibly excited "Pretty!" His non-stop laughing made my heart melt. When the music started I could literally see my entire family's jaw drop. Husband could not keep his eyes away from the screen the entire time and little love to this day will not stop singing "I will wait, I will wait for youuuu" (at all hours of the day AND night). Heads up for all, if you already LOVE my Diego, wait until you hear him sing!

It is refreshing to know that [Gustavo Santaolalla](#) has given this film his magic musical touch. Husband immediately pointed out that he was also

responsible for the Amores Perros (starring Gael Garcia Bernal) soundtrack. If you've never seen Amores Perros, the Mexican love drama, perhaps you'd be familiar with his work in Babel, The Motorcycle Diaries, or Broke Back Mountain. As a side note on Garcia Bernal, keep an eye out for as he plays an Iranian Canadian journalist in John Stuart's production, [Rosewater](#).

I'd be lying if I said that I didn't have ANY issues with the stereotypes, particularly with the exotic representation of Latinas. Luckily, and without giving too much away, our heroine Maria, voiced by Zoe Saldaña, kicks butt! This is always a fantastic message to send to our girls and young women. You don't have to be the güerita ice queen to be smart, strong, independent, and fierce. The film is simply loaded with beautiful and empowering messages of friendship, forgiveness, bravery and selflessness.

This is a movie, an animated film, in which our brown children can see characters like themselves. One in which they can see the beauty of our cultures and our traditions. This is a gift to parents like myself who didn't have cartoon characters that we could identify with, who didn't hear our accents, our beautiful accents, in movies or television as heroes and sheroes. This is a gift to los abuelos, like my own and like my son's, who hold tradition and authenticity dear to their hearts! Make sure to keep an eye out for cultural icon Frida Kahlo; religious icon la Virgen

de Guadalupe; and the pre-Columbian Aztec mother of the gods, goddess Coatlicue.

Thank you. Thank you for making a movie about Día de los Muertos that is not scary, a common misconception about our holiday. Somehow, zombies, witches, and monsters are all acceptable and profitable in mainstream America without them being problematic. Thank you for giving such a well thought out and thorough explanation of what it is and why it is celebrated. Thank you for making a movie that spotlights tradition, authenticity, beauty and talent. But above all, thank you for making a film that anyone from any cultural background can watch, understand and appreciate.

Thank you for giving our kids, thank you for giving ME, an animated film that I can finally identify with in mainstream America.

[The Book of Life](#) hits theaters tomorrow, Friday, October 17. Check your local theaters for availability and show times.

Gay Rights

In pre-school we are taught to share, be nice, and respect the feelings of others; but as we become adults some lose these essential values. Nationally racism and sexism have become less acceptable by society, but what about homophobia? With no [federal anti bullying laws](#) in place, kids, specifically LGBT youth, are not feeling safe in schools. While national political

are Human Rights: All Kids Deserve to be Safe in School

debates about gay rights commonly center on [gay marriage](#) and more recently on [discrimination in the work place](#), how much attention do the rights of LGBT kids and youth in schools receive? Statistics that have been put out by organizations such as the [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network](#) and the [Human Rights Campaign](#), agree that LGBT youth are victims of bullying at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts. It is because of these findings that federal legislation such as the [Obama administration endorsed Student Non-Discrimination Act](#) is necessary to protect all students.

According to the recent publication of the [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network's 2011 National School Climate Survey](#), an alarming 81.9 percent of the youth who participated in the survey reported verbal abuse. Worst yet, more than half of the participants also reported homophobic remarks from teachers and other school staff. If students reported hearing adults at their school make racist or sexist remarks at any rate the teachers would be placed under investigation. This is the case in a New Jersey high school at which a [teacher is under investigation for bullying students](#). Unfortunately, research shows that LGBT kids and youth are facing more than verbal abuse at their schools.

The 2012 infographic on [The Unhealthy Impact of Bullying on LGBT Youth](#) put out by [Fenway Health](#), shows that four of 10 LGBT students have been

physically harassed in school. The infographic also shows that LGBT youth are at a higher risk of smoking, dating violence and suicide attempts. When adults do not support a measure as basic as including gay history in education, they send the message to kids and youth that LGBT people are different and unworthy. For example, how do you explain to a child that despite the adversities that [Harvey Milk](#), one of the first openly gay officials faced, his name and accomplishments should not be included in the history books?

In 2011 California Governor, Jerry Brown passed the [California Senate Bill 48](#) for inclusive education to include the contributions of LGBT people, people with disabilities and those of several ethnic groups in history and social study courses. The [Class Act Initiative](#) to repeal SB 48, which fortunately did not pass, argued that it would teach children to accept and endorse homosexuality. Although the opposition to bills such as SB 48 continues, the fact that gay history will be included in California is a sign of hope. Hope that some day all kids in school will feel safe despite their race, sex, abilities, and sexual orientation or identification.

#SPIRITDAY

HEALTHY IMPACT BULLYING LGBT YOUTH



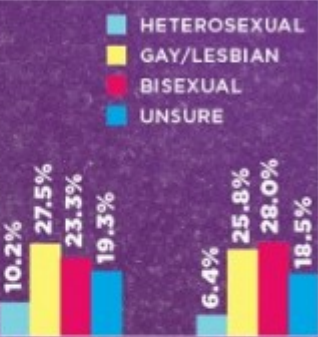
STUDENTS HAVE BEEN
HARASSED AND 4 OF 10
PHYSICALLY HARASSED



HEAR HOMOPHOBIC
REMARKS LIKE **DYKE**
OR **FAGGOT** OFTEN
OR FREQUENTLY.

MINORITY YOUTH
FACED RISK OF:

**DATING
VIOLENCE** **SUICIDE
ATTEMPTS**



80% OF TRANS
STUDENTS REPORTED
FEELING UNSAFE AT
SCHOOL BECAUSE
OF THEIR GENDER
EXPRESSION.



OF HOMELESS
YOUTH ARE LGBT.
THE #1 CAUSE OF LGBT
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS
IS FAMILY REJECTION
OF ORIENTATION OR
GENDER IDENTITY



OF ALL CASES OF
HIV AMONG YOUNG
PEOPLE AGED 13-24
DURING 2003-06
WERE FROM MALE-
TO-MALE SEXUAL
CONTACT

FENWAY HEALTH FENWAYHEALTH.ORG

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org/lgbt/2012/07/12/515641/study-40-
-youth-are-lgbt-family-rejection-is-leading-cause/
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Impact of Bullying on LGBT Youth by Fenway Health