



# Bank Street Occasional Paper Series

Occasional  
Paper  
Series

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Volume 2024  
Number 52 *The Adventures of Trans Educators:  
A Comic Book Issue*

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Article 6


November 2024

## Socrates and Me

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*CASA Children's After School Arts, San Francisco, California*

Ali R. Blake

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### Recommended Citation

Sia, P., & Blake, A. R. (2024). Socrates and Me. *Occasional Paper Series*, (52). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58295/2375-3668.1550>

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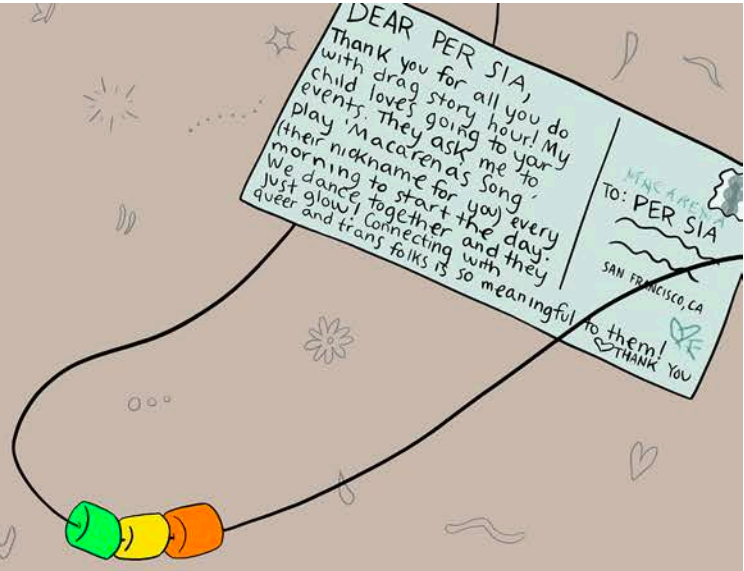
**educate**

# Socrates and Me

*Per Sia and Ali R. Blake*

DEAR PER SIA,  
Thank you for all you do  
with drag story hour! My  
child loves going to your  
events. They ask me to  
play 'Macarena' Song'  
(their nickname for you) every  
morning to start the day.  
We dance together and they  
just glow! Connecting with  
queer and trans folks is so meaningful to them!  
THANK YOU

MACARENA  
TO: PER SIA  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA



# Socrates and me

WRITTEN BY:  
Per Sia

ILLUSTRATED BY:  
Ali R. Blake





IT'S BEEN THIRTY-SOMETHING DAYS SINCE MY LAST DAY OFF, BUT IT'S OK BECAUSE TODAY IS MY LAST DRAG STORY HOUR OF THE SUMMER, AND AFTER THAT I AM HEADING TO OAKLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR A MUCH NEEDED VACATION. THIS YEAR HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING, WITH ALL THE HATE DRAG STORY HOUR HAS RECEIVED.



DRAG STORY HOUR HAS HEALED THE QUEER PERSON I WAS AND STILL CARRY WITH ME. I WISH I HAD THIS PROGRAM GROWING UP. MAYBE IF I HAD THIS PROGRAM GROWING UP IT WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN ME FOUR DECADES TO DECLARE MY TRANSNESS.

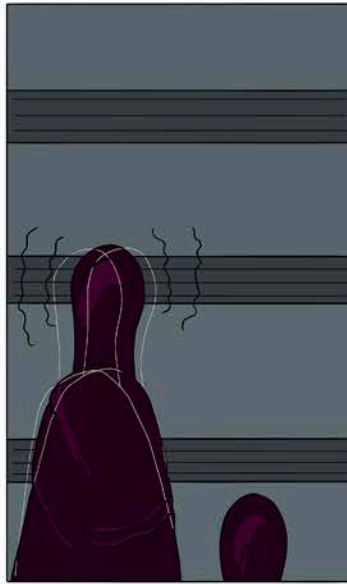


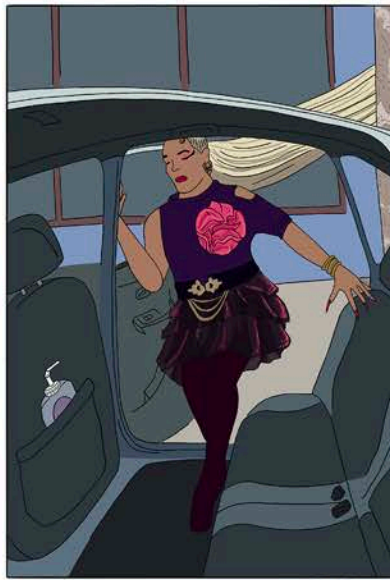
TIME TO ORDER THE UBER TO THE FRIENDS GOLDEN GATE LIBRARY IN OAKLAND!

THE WAIT IS FIVE MINUTES, WHICH IS PERFECT BECAUSE THAT'S HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE ME TO GET TO THE CURB.

I LIVE ON THE TOP FLOOR OF A THREE-STORY BUILDING WITH NO ELEVATOR, SO IT'S A CHALLENGE.

ESPECIALLY IN MY HEEL-LESS HEELS.





LOOKING LOVELY THIS MORNING. WHERE ARE WE HEADED, A LIBRARY?

← Trip Details

IT IS A SHAME THAT THERE HAS BEEN SO MUCH HATE AND CONTROVERSY ABOUT A WONDERFUL PROGRAM FOR KIDS.



I LOVE THE DRAG STORY HOUR, AND SO DO MY GRANDCHILDREN!



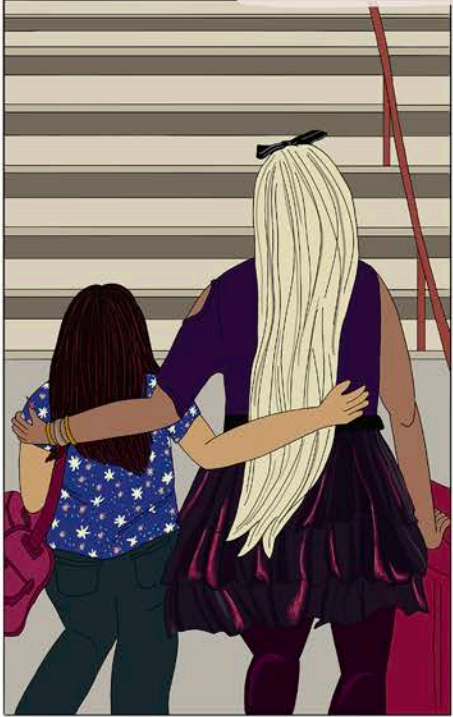
YES, I'M A FOUNDING MEMBER OF DRAG STORY HOUR, AND I AM OFF TO DO MY LAST ONE OF THE SUMMER BEFORE A MUCH-NEEDED VACATION!



35 MINUTES LATER...

I AM GREETED BY MY "BODYGUARD," LAURA. I'VE NICKNAMED LAURA "MY BODYGUARD" BECAUSE SHE IS ALWAYS AT MY SIDE WHEN I AM DOING DRAG STORY HOUR IN OAKLAND.

SHE HAS SET PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ANTI-TRANS/ANTI-DRAG PROTESTERS, INCLUDING SAFE ESCAPE ROUTES IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.



I SET UP ALL MY BOOKS ON THE STAGE AND SYNC MY PHONE TO THE SPEAKER WHILE FAMILIES START TRICKLING IN.



HI EVERYONE!  
MY NAME IS PER SIA (PRONOUNCED IN SPANISH) OR PER SIA (PRONOUNCED IN ENGLISH). EITHER ONE WORKS, BECAUSE TRUST, I'VE BEEN CALLED WAY WORSE!



WHO I AM IS TRANS

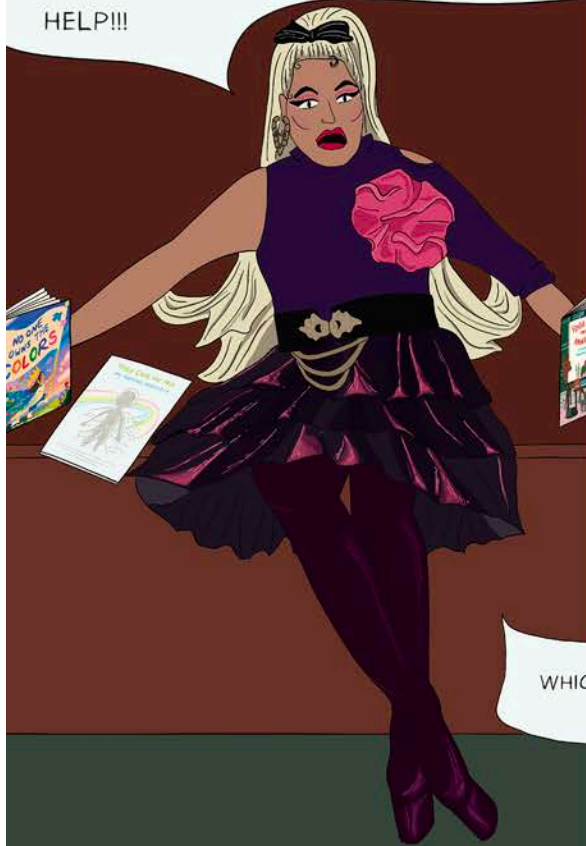
WHAT I DO IS DRAG.  
ARE WE READY FOR SOME BOOKS?  
AND A LIP SYNC OR TWO?







I HAVE A BIG PROBLEM!! TOO MANY BOOKS,  
AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO READ,  
HELP!!!



WHICH BOOK WOULD YOU  
LIKE ME TO R-



YAAA

WEEE!

MY NAME IS SOCRATES AND MY  
PRONOUNS ARE HE/HIM AND I AM  
TRRAAANNSSSSGGGENNNDDEERRR!!!

IN THIS MOMENT I AM FLOODED WITH SO MANY  
EMOTIONS. IT TAKES EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH  
TO NOT BURST INTO TEARS, HAPPY TEARS. TO  
KNOW THAT SUCH A YOUNG PERSON WAS SO IN  
TOUCH WITH THEIR BODY AND WHO THEY ARE  
MAKES IT SUCH A MOMENT OF HAPPINESS, AND  
EVERYONE CHEERS.

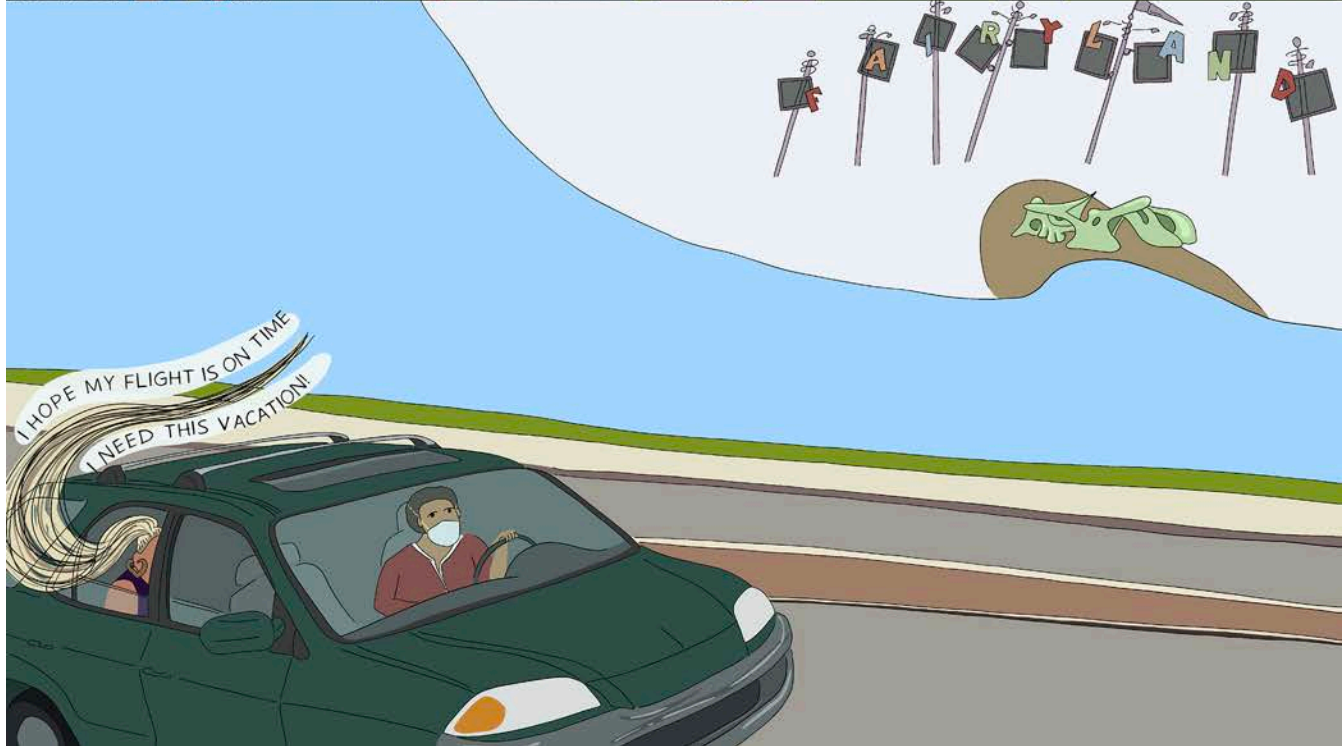
HIS HAPPY AND CONFIDENT FACE GIVES ME  
SO MUCH QUEER JOY!

AS I READ MY STORY BOOK TO THE  
CHILDREN, I AM REMINDED OF HOW  
IMPORTANT THE PROGRAM IS, NOT  
JUST FOR QUEER KIDS AND THEIR  
FAMILIES, BUT ALSO FOR US, THE  
PERFORMERS. HOW AS EDUCATORS,  
WE CONTINUE TO LEARN FROM OUR  
STUDENTS.

\* SNAPS \*



IT FEELS SO SPECIAL TO KNOW THAT THE BOOKS I READ CELEBRATE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE, BUT ESPECIALLY QUEER FOLKS, ESPECIALLY DURING VERY CHALLENGING TIMES FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

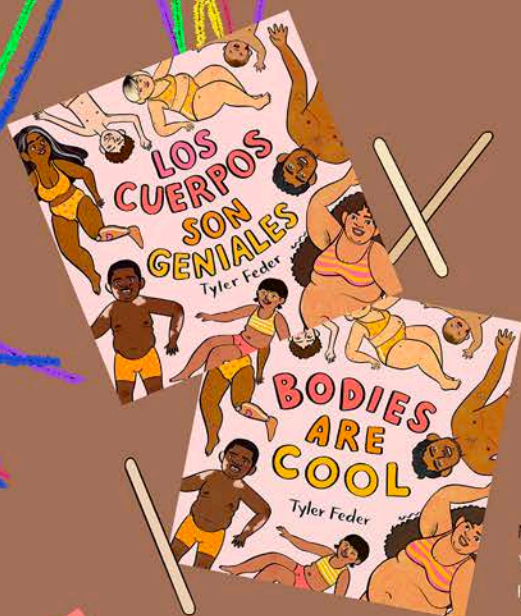


I AM THE LUCKIEST DRAG QUEEN  
IN THE WORLD

AS I SIT IN THE OAKLAND AIRPORT WAITING  
FOR MY FLIGHT, I FEEL THE TEARS BUBBLING  
UP FROM THE JOY I CAN'T CONTAIN INSIDE.  
TO KNOW THAT WHAT I DO HAS AN IMPACT  
MAKES ME FEEL DEEPLY GRATEFUL.



# WHAT'S IN PER SIA'S DRAG BAG?!



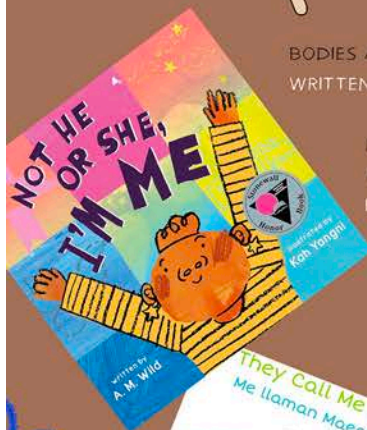
BODIES ARE COOL (LOS CUERPOS SON GENIALES)  
WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY: TYLER FEDER



NO ONE OWNS THE COLORS  
WRITTEN BY: GIANNA DAVY  
ILLUSTRATED BY: BRENDA RODRIGUEZ



FRIDA KAHLO AND HER ANIMALITOS  
WRITTEN BY: MONICA BROWN  
ILLUSTRATED BY: JOHN PARRA



NOT HE OR SHE, I'M ME  
WRITTEN BY: A.M. WILD  
ILLUSTRATED BY: KAH YANGNI



WE ARE WATER PROTECTORS  
WRITTEN BY: CAROLE LINDSTROM  
ILLUSTRATED BY: MICHAELA GOADE



THEY CALL ME MIX/ME LLAMAN MAESTRE  
WRITTEN BY: LOURDES RIVAS  
ILLUSTRATED BY: BREENA NUÑEZ



A LIFE MADE BY HAND:  
THE STORY OF RUTH ASAWA  
WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY: ANDREA D'AQUINO



IT FEELS GOOD TO BE YOURSELF:  
A BOOK ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY  
WRITTEN BY: THERESA THORN  
ILLUSTRATED BY: NOAH GRIGNI

DID YOU SEE THIS POSTER HUNG UP IN THE LIBRARY?  
THE POSTER WAS CREATED BY MICAH BAZANT.



"THIS PIECE WAS CREATED IN 2016 WITH THE ALLIANCE OF SOUTH ASIANS TAKING ACTION, AND INSPIRED BY MUSLIM WOMEN IN A LITERACY PROGRAM IN OAKLAND, CA." FOR MORE ON THE CREATION OF THE POSTER AND TO DOWNLOAD A POSTER TO HANG IN YOUR SPACE:

<https://www.micahbazant.com/buy-art/everyone-is-welcome-here>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



With a pedigree from weekly performances at the late, iconic *Esta Noche*, **Per Sia's** trajectory has gone on to include art curation, stand-up, television, and maybe a quinceañera or two, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and México. Currently, she is a regular performer in the nationally acclaimed "Drag Story Hour" as well as an educator in residence at an after-school arts program in the San Francisco Unified School District profiled on *KQED Arts*, *National Public Radio* and *CNN*.



**Ali R. Blake** is a teaching artist and education researcher cultivating spaces for people to imagine and create the worlds we want to live in together—definitely more queer and more trans worlds! When Ali is not drawing, reading, writing, gardening, singing and dancing while cooking, or cuddling with cats, they organize a queer and trans communal clothing making space rooted in multidimensional struggles for self-determination. If you're lucky, you may meet them performing, too, as *AI iteration*.