

Behind The Scenes

Embodied Social Justice in Mental Health 2025-2026

Queer Affirmative Mental Health Practice



Behind The Scenes

Behind the scenes at the Embodied Social Justice Fellowship.

One of the many trainings at the fellowship is the Queer Affirmative Mental Health practices. Our curriculum goes beyond the “clinic” or the clinical, integrating queer theory, the Indian context and challenge the casteist, cis-heteronormative patriarchy deeply embedded within mental health discourse. We delve into the legal, socio-political, and historical legacies that shape mental health and queer and trans rights. This comprehensive approach not only highlights advocacy within mental health but also emphasizes the role of mental health professionals (MHPs) in navigating and fostering both individual and collective healing journeys.

*Queer Affirmative Mental Health
Practice*



Program Overview

8 week training in QAMHP starting 4th feb to 25th March 2025

Week 1: The single story of gender and sexuality

Week 2: Intersections of mental health and social justice-Historical legacies, activism, dominant discourses within QT lives and activism in India, subverting and centering LGBTQIA+ movement as protest.

Week 3: Unpacking gender and sexuality: Queer Theory

Week 4: Queer Trans Possibilities

Week 5: Psy disciplines and QT lives and queering MH.

Week 6: conceptualisation within the queer lens

Week 7: Lived Experience Reflections

Week 8: Lived Experience Reflections

Aarathi Selvan
Program Creator, Facilitator and Supervisor



Movie Screening and Film Discussion

Sarala Emmanuel and Ponni Arasu are queer feminist activists who live and work in a small town in Eastern Sri Lanka. They work in collaboration with many other friends, collectives and organisations with diverse marginalised communities. They do frontline work, research, community organising, building campaigns and influencing law/policy. They are both artists. Sarala's art practice is film and photography while Ponni is a performance artist. Their art and indeed all their work, emerges from and feeds back into social movements. Ponni is also an expressive arts therapist and works entirely in Tamil, pro bono. She is a founder-member of the Tamil Speaking Therapeutic Practitioners Network (TSTPN).

IF FROM EVERY TONGUE IT DRIPS (2021) is a hybrid-documentary film that uses the framework of quantum physics to explore the ways that personal relationships and political movements at once transcend and challenge time, space, identity and location.

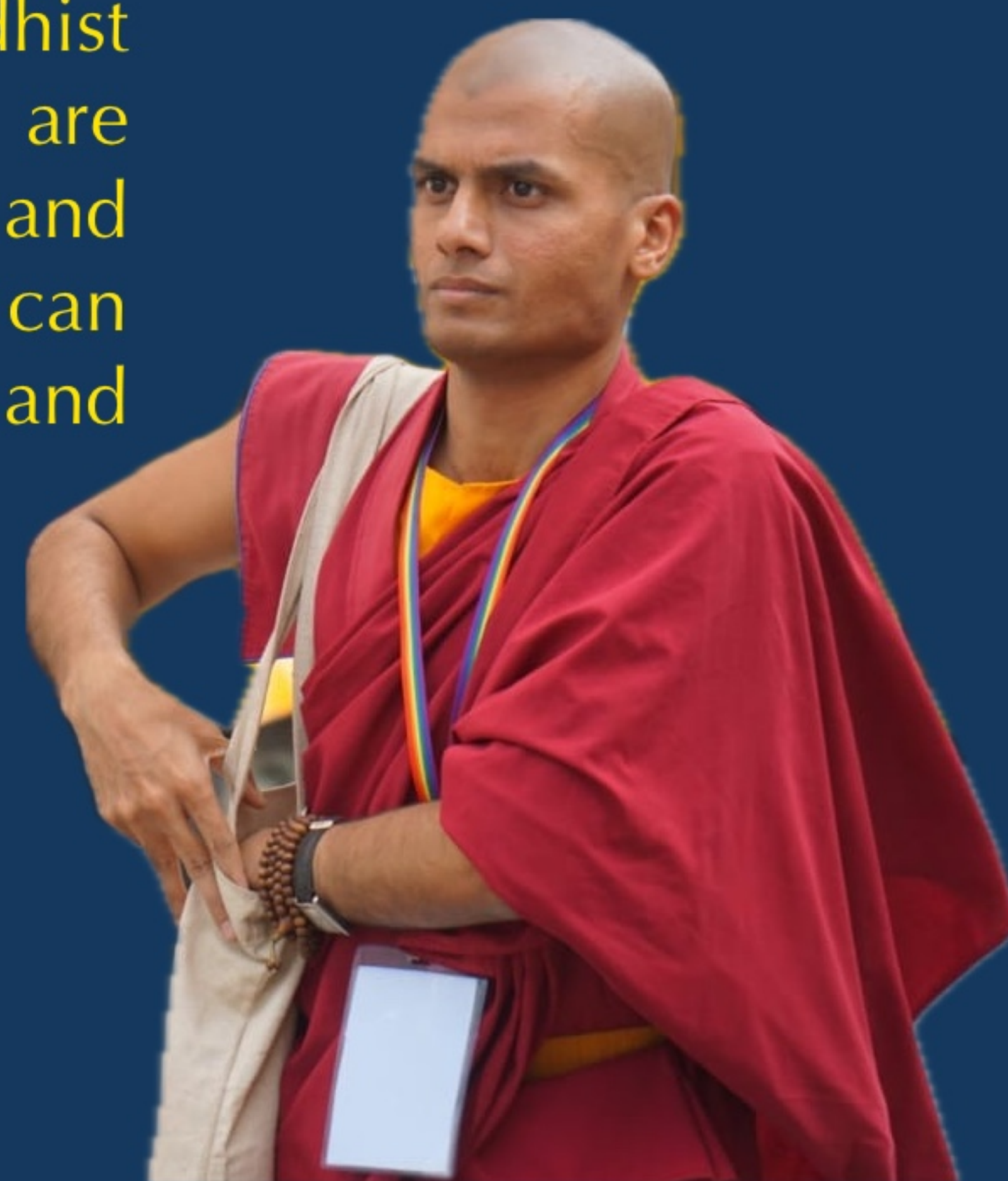
Sarala Emmanuel and Ponni Arasu



Our Guest Speaker on Mental Health and Social Justice

Tashi Choedup (They/She) is a trans feminine person who has been working in human rights, and social justice movement spaces for 15 plus years and has been a Buddhist monastic (nunk) in Tibetan tradition for over 7 years. Tashi is a founding member of Telangana Hijra Intersex Transgender Samiti, and Queer Swabhimana Yatra. They were also a member of the Telangana State Government's Welfare Board for Transgender Persons. Tashi also closely worked with Telangana Police Women Safety Wing in the conceptualization and creation of 'Pride Place: Transgender (LGBTQIA+) Persons Protection cell and continues to closely work with it in sensitising and training Police Officers. They are currently working at the Queer-Trans Wellness and Support Center (QT Center), Yugantar, Hyderabad. They are a core group member of the National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Minorities (NEFGSM) at the National Council of Churches of India (NCCI). Tashi engages as a peer counselor with LGBTQIA+ folks. They are a student of Buddhist philosophy and psychology and their primary areas of interest are community building, queer rights, mental health, religion, and faith and their intersections. Rooted in the firm belief that no spiritual practice can be apolitical they actively seek ways to integrate Buddhist philosophy and its contemplative practices with social justice activism.

Tashi Choedup





Law and Queer Trans Rights in India

Prakhar (he/him) is a queer lawyer based out of New Delhi. Whilst he primarily practices in corporate law, he advises queer folks on a range of legal issues, including on pro-bono basis. He is a news enthusiast and has worked with multiple news organisations, contributing on subjects of constitutional and legal importance, especially on subjects surrounding women, children and the queer community.

Prakhar



Community Mental Health Spaces Based on Embodied Social Justice for QT community

Trisha, Namrata, Gayathri, Rachana and Mansi are five passionate mental health practitioners who were a part of the Fellowship program at Pause for Perspective (Cohort 5). Their diverse identities shaped by gender, education, queerness, caste, class, neurodivergence, linguistic diversity and more supports their capacity to hold space for social justice based mental health community spaces. They constantly move towards weaving lived experiences, identities and intersections in informed, intentional and mindful ways to do the work they do.

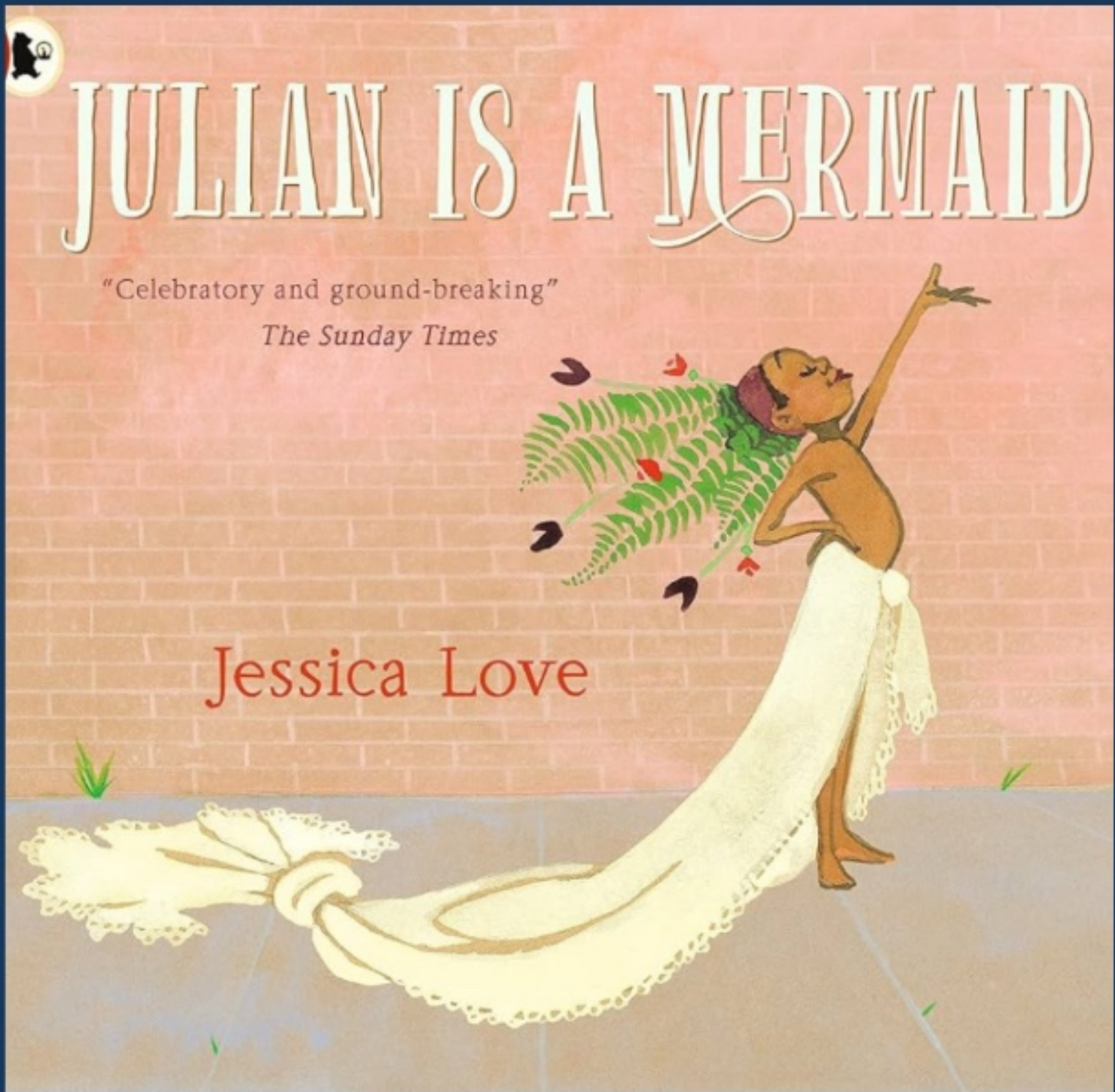
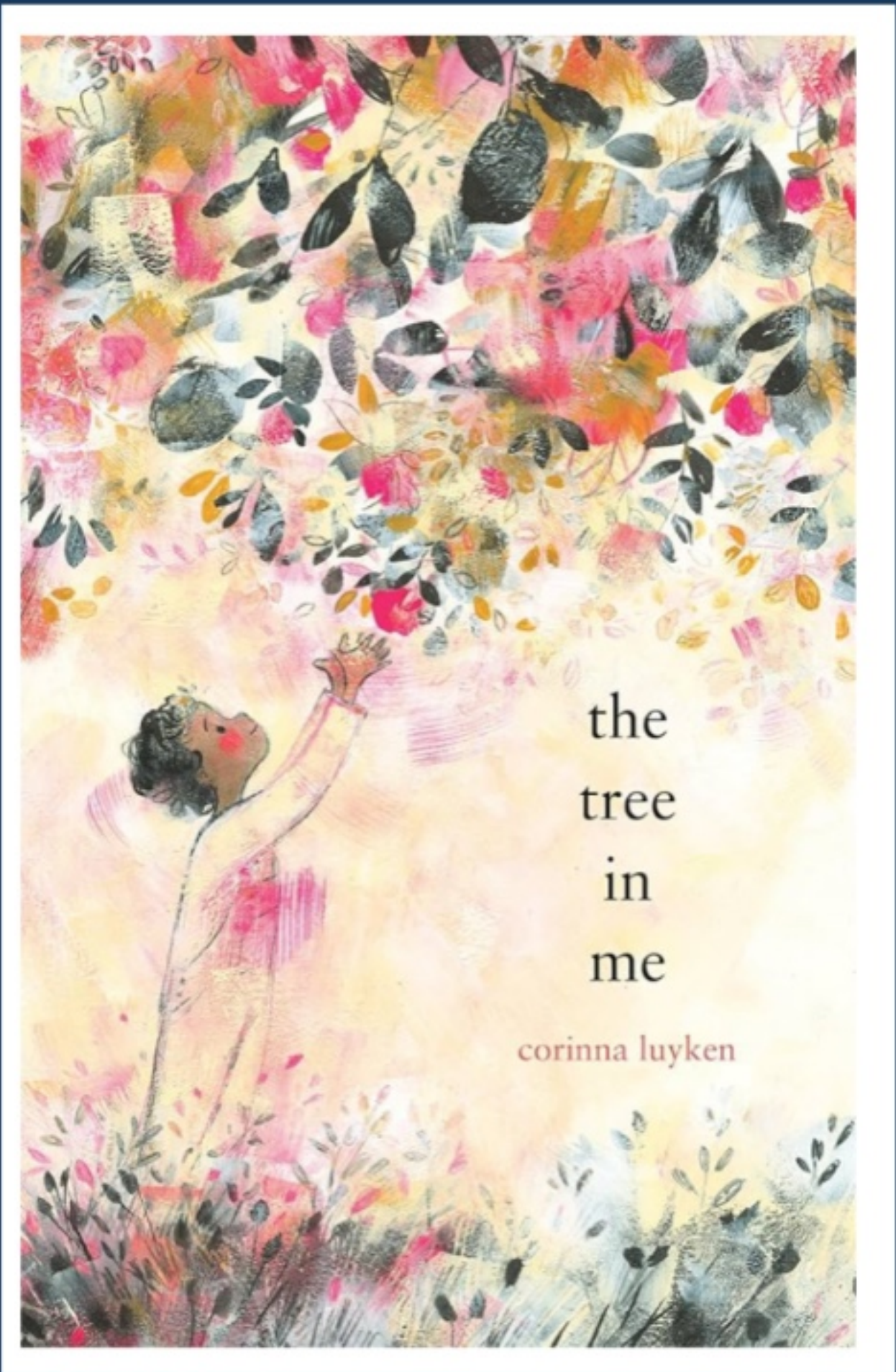
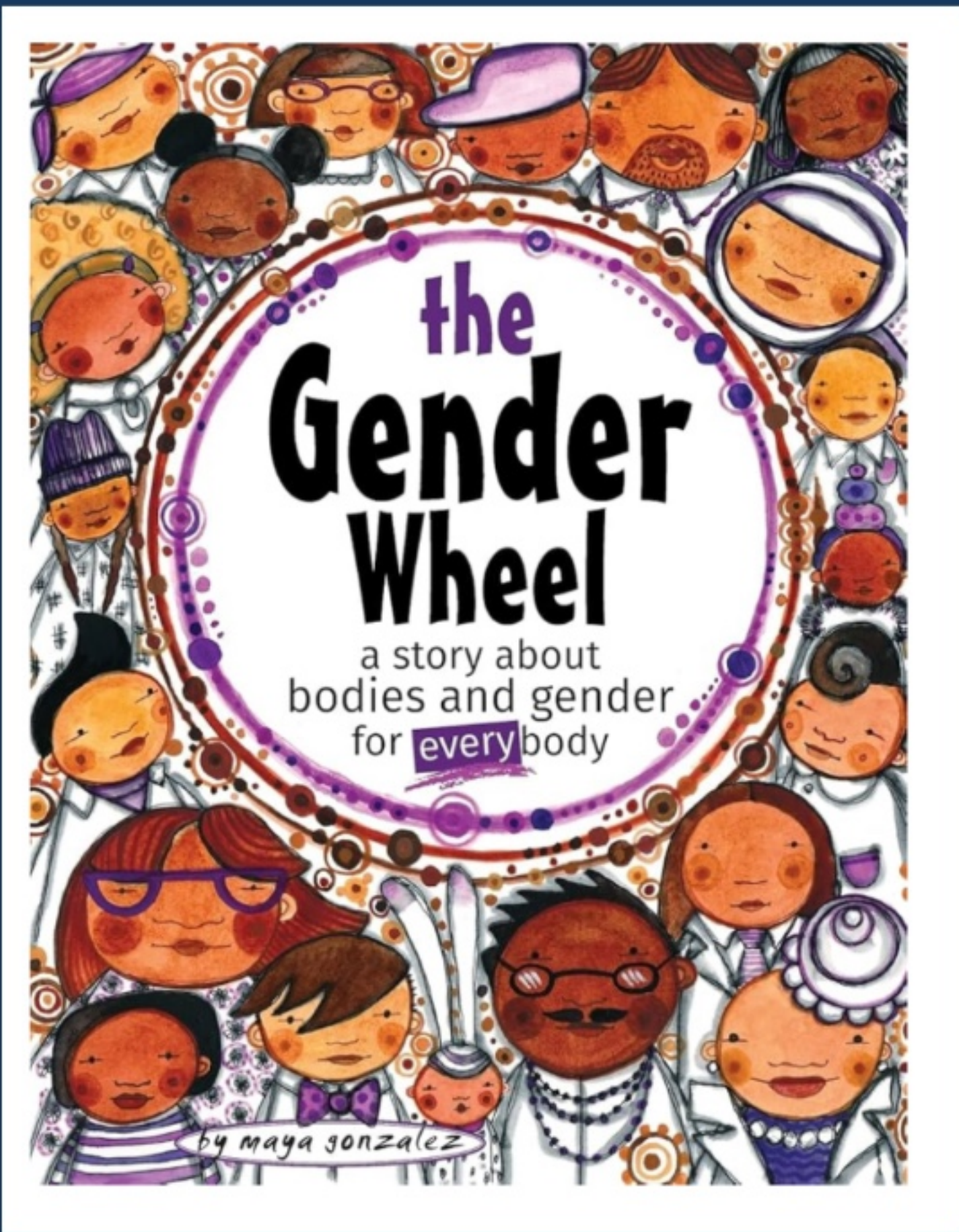
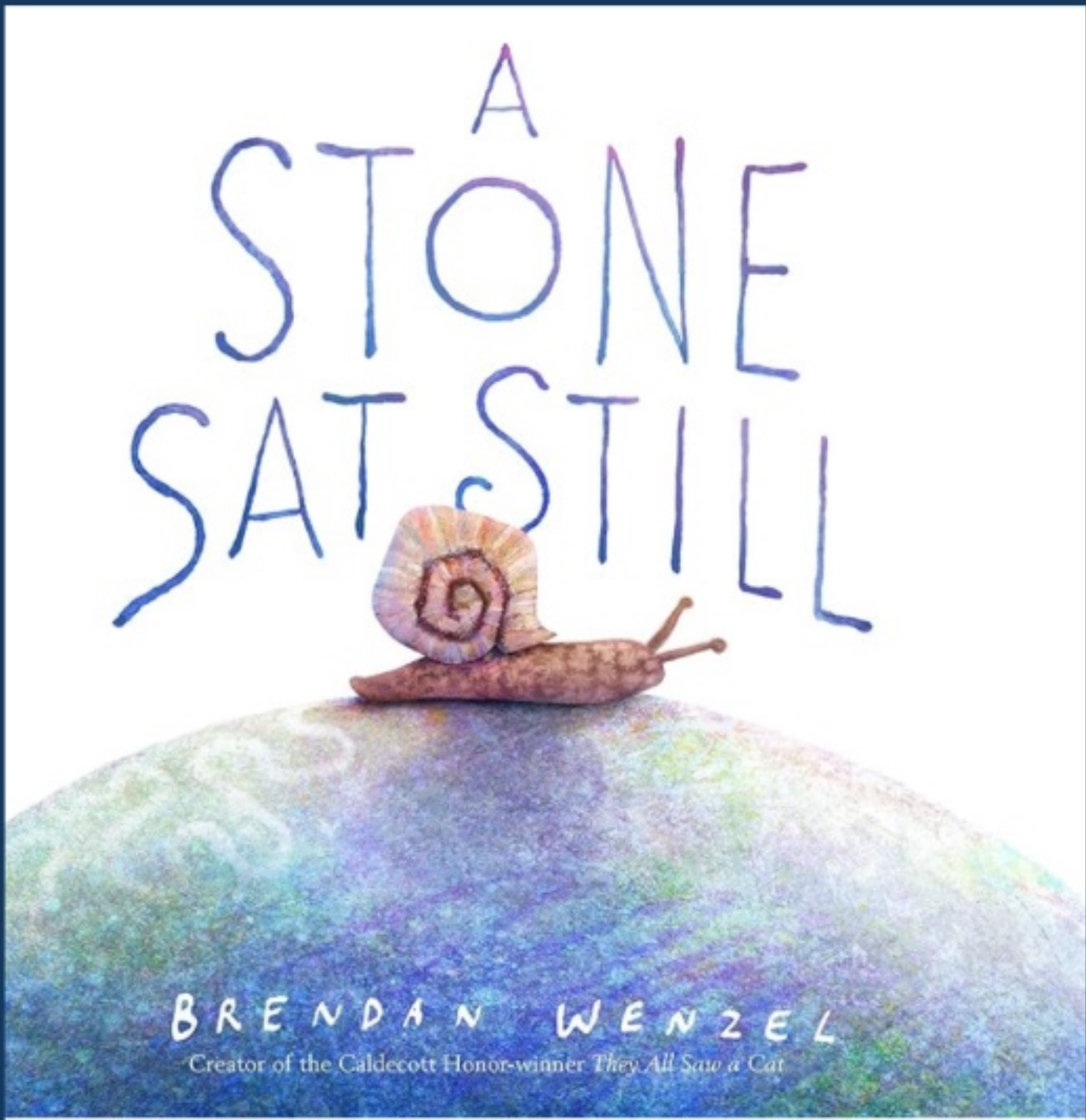
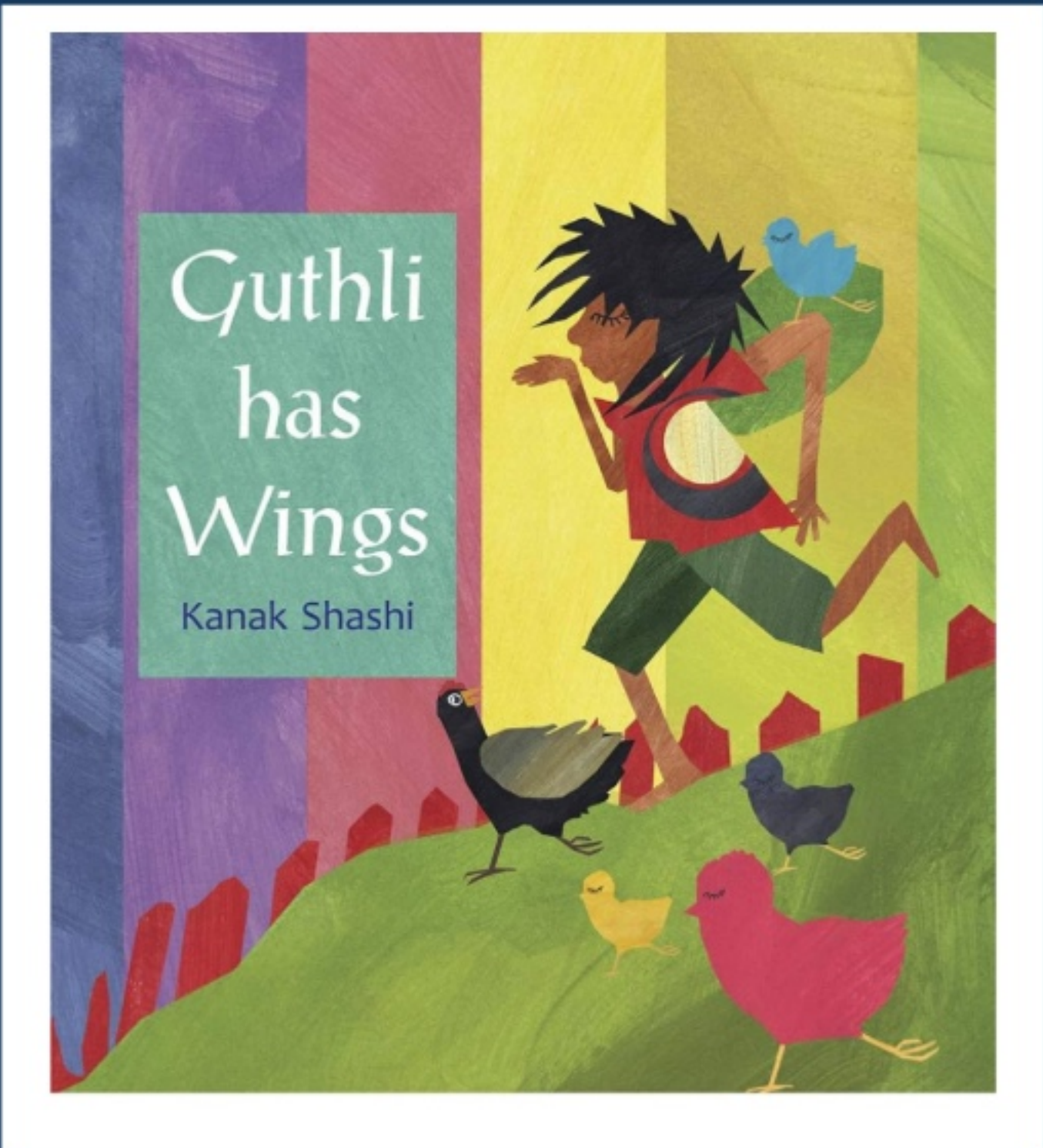
Manasi, Trisha,
Gayathri, Rachana
and Namrata





Our training provides a framework for integrating a queer-affirmative lens into mental health practice. Over the 18-month fellowship, fellows learn to ground their work in queer, anti-caste, neurodiversity, and disability-justice perspectives. This queer-affirmative approach becomes a daily practice—shaping our group work, informing client consultations, and guiding our own interpersonal lives.

Some Books and Readings



Some Books and Readings

