

# Dr. Ymasumac Marañón Davis



**H**ave you ever moved to a new place and felt overwhelmed by all the changes? Ymasumac Marañón Davis moved from Vermont, U.S., to a small village in Mexico when she was eight, and it felt like a different world! Her parents were divorced, and she lived with her mom and sister. At first, she felt lost and cried every day. Yma (pronounced Ee-mah) didn't speak Spanish or understand the customs of her new home. Learning Spanish helped a lot. It also connected Yma with her dad's Indigenous Bolivian family when she visited them. Through language and poetry, she expressed her feelings and connected the different parts of her multicultural background.

Yma's love of words led to a college degree in English Literature and writing for a hip-hop magazine. After starting a family, she became a bilingual education teacher. Later, she earned a master's degree in psychology and helped families with communication and technology. Her journey then led to her doctorate in Education for Social Justice. She now trains teachers in Southern California and is an online instructor for the Wilmette Institute. Yma and her husband, Tod, live in an intergenerational home with several family members.

**Q: What's one of your favorite childhood memories?**

**A:** Before we moved to Mexico, we spent a lot of summers with my mother's family . . . my grandfather was in Maine . . . He'd have his woodworking shed, and my sister and I played in there, building stuff, which was always fun.

**Q: What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid?**

**A:** When we moved from New England to Mexico. I was eight years old. We moved to a very small village . . . I didn't know Spanish [then], so I just felt very overwhelmed and confused.\* I remember crying every day. Just feeling very lost and unsure . . .



**Left:** At about age 6, Yma (right) and her sister, Jessica, visited their dad's family in Bolivia.



**Right:** Around age 8, Yma dug for clams in Maine, U.S., while visiting her mom's family.

**Q: As a youth, why was writing poetry important to you?**

**A:** Poetry tugged more at those places that were emotional, raw. I felt more connected to my soul . . . I was working out being of these two very distinct cultures . . . [It] helped me make sense of them . . .

**Q: Who or what inspired you to pursue a career in education?**

**A:** My mother suggested it . . . I loved working as a journalist, but I was almost never home, [and] that wasn't good for my kids . . . I thought, I'll try [teaching] for a year. And I loved the kids and the families.

Questions and  
Answers with an  
Inspirational Bahá'í



Four generations gather at Yma's home in California. Yma and her husband, Tod (second from right) are with her mom (seated), daughters, sons, and grandchildren.

**Q: Please explain your field, education for social justice.**

A: There is a certain power that comes with learning . . . How and what you teach, who's teaching, where, and why—all of that matters . . . [In my field, we ask], how does this space uphold the nobility of these students, so they can be empowered? [They need] to participate in society on an equal basis with everyone else.

**Q: How can kids keep a healthy balance with phones and technology?**

A: They have to know they have an inner reality [that] requires care and attention and nurturing . . . It's why I say prayers every day, listen to beautiful music, sing songs, these kind of things . . . Adults need to help manage the technology . . . Forces [like materialism] are too strong to ask youth and children to do it by themselves.



Yma (far right) honored parents who took her seven-week Family Empowerment Workshop.

**Q: What are your tips for kids who want to build courage?**

A: Learn to release fear. I have an eight-year-old granddaughter, and whenever she's really overwhelmed, I hold her hands and [say], let's just take a deep breath. This is just fear, and that's okay . . . The other thing that I do is . . . just get down as close as you can to the Earth. Because the Earth has an energy force that is very stable, and [it's] good for us when we're afraid, right? Because it grounds us . . . From that calm, beautiful place, then we can take our next steps . . . We solve emotions through our body . . . Sometimes that means hugging a pillow and breathing . . . then the problem solving can come in . . .

**Q: If you had one wish for *Brilliant Star's* readers, what would it be?**

A: To have a process, a way you can come back to your nobility again and again . . . Life bumps us out of our nobility or makes us think, "Oh, I'm a bad person. I didn't do the right thing," or "Everyone else can get it. I can't. Something's wrong with me." My hope is . . . when life does that . . . you can come back to who you are, your nobility . . . That could be through prayers, dreams, writing. For me, it was *all* those things . . . Remember the truth of who you are. . . . Have a space where you can cry it out, release it, and then be like, "I'm actually doing pretty good. I am a pretty kind person."