



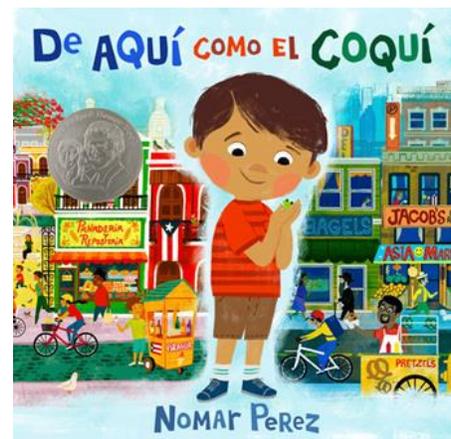
# Pura Belpré Youth Illustrator Honor & Children's Author Honor Acceptance Speech



**Nomar Perez** received a 2022 (Pura) Belpré Illustrator Honor and a (Pura) Belpré Children's Author Honor for *De aquí como el coquí* (Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers, a division of Penguin Random House). He delivered his acceptance remarks at the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 26, 2022, during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

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Thank you to the American Library Association for this incredible honor, to the Pura Belpré committee, to Penguin Random House, Dial Books, my amazing editor, Nancy Mercado, art director, Mina Chung, and my agents Lori Nowicki and Claire Easton at Painted Words. I also want to thank my wife, Farah Perez, who took on the task of translating the book into Spanish and for her endless support and encouragement. Thank you to my wonderful children, Nathanael, Jacob, and Aliah, for their love and support. Thanks to my parents, Ramon and Maria, whose decision to move to the USA helped shape this story.



Writing and illustrating this book has been a dream come true. I never thought I would find myself writing this familiar story about what so many Puerto Ricans go through every year. *De aquí como el coquí* encapsulates this familiar story, one of beginnings and hope.

At the age of ten my family and I moved from Puerto Rico to the United States. I was nervous about what to expect. Would it go well? How was I going to learn the language? Would I make friends there? I was a very shy kid, which made moving to a new place even scarier. As I began to pack up my life in

Puerto Rico, I feared I would lose my identity, my language, and my culture. All those wonderful memories I cherished growing up would soon be gone. But that was not the case. I learned, like Miguel in the story, that I can be a unique representation of my culture wherever I go. I began to see hope reveal itself through the many Puerto Ricans I met that had made a similar journey. I could find my favorite Puerto Rican treats just around the corner from the apartment complex my family moved to in the US. We could celebrate our Puerto Rican traditions and events once again with family and friends. I made new friends, experienced new cultures, new foods, and new traditions, too.

This story has resonated with many Puerto Ricans that share similar experiences. I hope that it continues to encourage children to celebrate their culture and to be proud of their heritage and who they are, no matter where life takes them.

Thank you.

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