



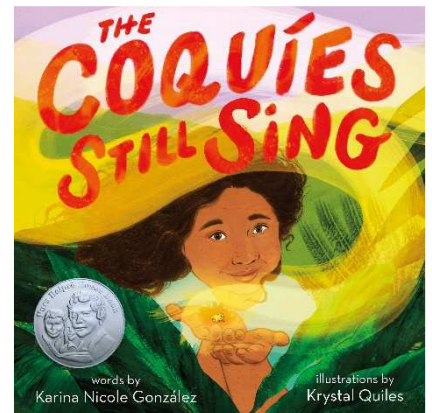
# Pura Belpré Youth Illustrator Honor Acceptance Speech



**Krystal Quiles** received a 2023 (Pura) Belpré Youth Illustrator Honor for *The Coquíes Still Sing* (Roaring Brook Press/Macmillan Children's Publishing). She delivered her acceptance remarks at the Pura Belpré Award Celebración held Sunday, June 25, 2023, during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago.

My heart is filled with gratitude.

When I was approached with the manuscript of *The Coquíes Still Sing*, it was pitched to me as a hopeful picture book about the tangible and emotional effects of a hurricane in Puerto Rico. I stopped in my tracks to find a quiet corner to sit down with this story, and after reading Karina's words, I immediately felt that it had to be shared and that I would do everything in my illustrative power to show readers all the emotions I felt when reading this story.



Growing up in New York in a Puerto Rican family, I was told tales of the coquí frogs and their song. "Small yet mighty," my father would say, much like the island of Puerto Rico itself, and for this reason the coquí is so much more than a tiny tree frog. They are a symbol of resilience. So later, when visiting Puerto Rico, I would look forward to hearing their song, and it's true as Karina writes, softly at first and then louder and louder, a familiar song fills the air. These pages transport me back while also painting a Puerto Rico I haven't experienced, one that is silent, ravaged by Hurricane Maria.

If picture books are for sharing between people of all ages, to bring upon awareness, spread empathy and core values, then stories like this are important. Not just for those who directly suffer from a natural disaster, but for communities of people in this world that care for each other and the environment they

inhabit. I'm so proud to have illustrated a story that shows readers it's possible to tell challenging stories in a way that doesn't cultivate fear. Rather shows a way to cope and work together towards a mindful future in this place we all call home.

To have this recognition alongside the author Karina Nicole González, whom I'm proud to call my dear friend, is an indescribable honor. It was a gift to be a part of a team of women without whom this book wouldn't have this recognition. Thank you to our team at Roaring Brook Press. To Connie Hsu, Luisa Beguiristain, Mercedes Padro, and my agent, Charlotte Sheedy. Thank you to the American Library Association and to the Pura Belpré committee.

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