



# SCHOOL OF THE FREE MIND

Expanding the Mind | Reclaiming the Creative

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## **If you want to change the world, create a children's book!**

### **Calling all queers, people of color, and allies our children desperately need your stories and art**

**The Heart of It: Creating Children's Books that Matter** is an online course for aspiring and emerging children's book writers and illustrators who want to create powerful books for kids while simultaneously coming more fully into their own power as storyteller and artist. **Maya Christina Gonzalez** combines her passions as educator and activist along with her 20 years of experience in creating award-winning multicultural children's books to craft a course that is a journey of self as much as a practical guide to creating children's books. The six week course offers writing exercises, hands-on art projects, in-depth book reviews, community interviews, Q&A webinars with special guests, and more all designed to offer a holistic approach to creating children's books and provide opportunities for students to hone their craft, strengthen the power of their own voice and unique way of expressing through art and word, and be in community with other like-minded children's book makers. In addition at the end of the six weeks students are invited to put what they've learned to practical use through creating one full spread of text and art to be included in *The Heart of It Anthology*, a picture book that incorporates student's work, with an introduction written and illustrated by Maya and published by the independent press she cofounded. The first edition, *Whaleheart*, from the April 2014 course is due out Spring 2015.

**The Heart of It eCourse** is a class Maya long dreamed of offering out of a desire to support communities to change the still dismal statistics in relation to diversity in children's books. As a queer Chicana children's book author and artist, Maya knows the effects of living in an unequal society and how it can leave many of us feeling as if we don't get to have a voice especially a voice in children's books. "This class is not just about learning technical skills," Maya explains, "it's also about how to transform limiting beliefs and ideas that we have inside of ourselves and in the world that hold us back from getting these kinds of stories out." Maya focuses a great deal on work by and about people of color, the LGBTQI community and communities still misrepresented and under represented in the current children's publishing industry. She also highlights the work of authors and illustrators pioneering alternative routes into publishing, including self-publishing, creating their own presses, crowdsourcing funds as well as reclaiming traditional routes. The Spring 2015 community interviews and book reviews will focus on LGBTQI+ children's literature and will be in addition to the African American materials from the Fall 2014 course and the core class materials. Maya believes that something very powerful happens when we see others in our community tell stories and create images that reflect who we are and our experience in the world. "This course is about finding our voice, allowing our hearts to speak, and knowing that our books belong in the hands of children," Maya affirms.





## What Students have to say:

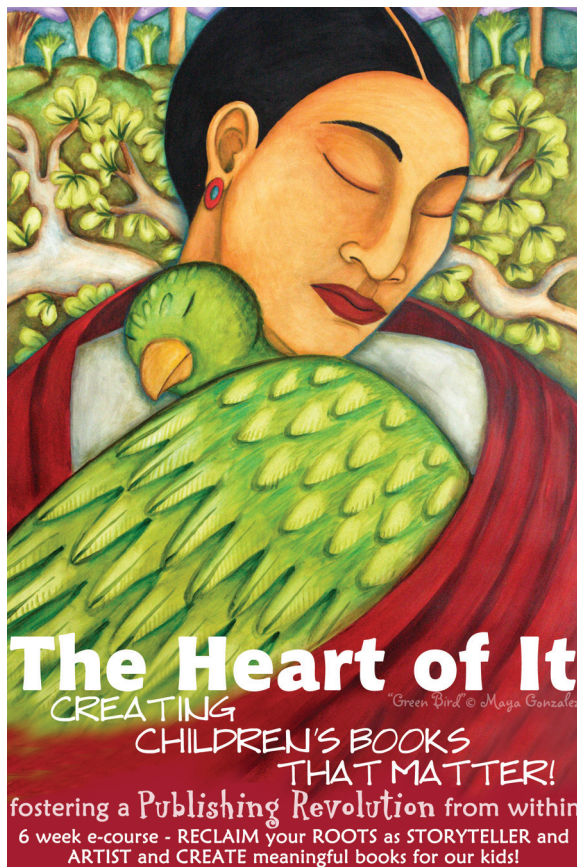
*"What really sets this class apart, is the attention paid to one's own voice and expression"*

*"Learned so much and felt much less isolated in navigating this journey"*

*"Felt my own wisdom and deeper knowing about my story being called forth"*

*"Changed how I make art and my commitment to getting my children's book(s) out into the world!"*

*"Maya has a special gift for guiding students to an inner place from which we could both write and illustrate"*



## Course Details:

**The Heart of It: Creating Children's Books that Matter with Maya Christina Gonzalez**

6 week eCourse, April 13 - May 24

(with additional 3 months access through Aug 24)

Scholarships and Payment Plans available!

More info or to register:

[www.schoolofthefreemind.com/kidsbooks](http://www.schoolofthefreemind.com/kidsbooks)

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