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Chicago-area mom and son duo release children's book about self-identity, diversity, individuality and eating healthy

Chicago, IL — Hafsa Naz Mahmood and her 7-year-old son Ayaan Sheikh are launching a children's picture book that encourages everyone around the world to celebrate similarities and differences, all while appreciating each other's beautiful, bold and unique identities.

"Now more than ever it is so critical for the children of our beautiful country and world to be aware of individuality, identities, diversity and equality," said Mahmood, a Marketing & Communications leader for global corporations. "Children have many innocent questions, and we owe them honest, open-minded, impactful answers. Ayaan and I hope this book will encourage peace and open dialogues about these important topics. We hope everyone will join us in our journey of discovering and embracing how amazing we all are—just the way we are."

The book, "Little Birdies Lose their Colors," started out as a bedtime story Mahmood and Sheikh made up together in a series of short stories about little birdies adventures. Sheikh insisted he wanted to check out and read his stories at his library, even after Mahmood told him they're just in their heads. This led to mom and son kicking off the Little Birdie Project. Mahmood was able to leverage her five years of experience as a journalist and 10+ years of experience as a Marketing & Communications leader to bring their vision to life.

"Ayaan has a sparkle and determination in his eyes, like all young children in the world do. They're honest and their universe of wishes is simple and limitless," Mahmood said. "It was my mission to help Ayaan fulfill his desire to have his book at his library as a lesson for him and his brother, Azeem: Nothing is impossible. Reach for the stars. Make your dreams happen. Always."



Mahmood remembers the night she and Sheikh made up the story together. When the birdies went into a white cloud and lost their colors, Sheikh gasped with utmost shock.

“Given Ayaan’s reaction to the birdies losing their bold, beautiful colors, I knew we had to come up with an extraordinarily creative way for the birdies to get their colors back,” Mahmood said.

Ever since Sheikh was a baby and first started to eat solids, he especially enjoyed fruits and vegetables. His love for eating healthy influenced how the birds get their colors back—his favorite part of the book. And his favorite part of the Little Birdie Project was working on the artwork with his mom.

“I had the most fun when we were at the library and home making the artwork,” Sheikh said. “We got to make the fluffy clouds, apple, pear, cucumber and other fruits and vegetables.”

Sheikh has learned from the lessons of the book, and is now more aware of his friends and everyone around him.

“The story is important because it teaches us we can all look different and nice,” Sheikh said. “I hope kids learn that we’re all different colors. We should be happy because we look cool in our different colors.”

The book, “Little Birdies Lose their Colors,” will be available in stores and online this fall. Visit www.little-birides.com to pre-order a copy.

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