

YBR: young black reader's newsletter

July-August 2020 Issue 24

Dear Black Child: A Letter to Our Readers

With the current situation in the world, we felt the need as a team to speak directly to the individuals this newsletter represents: Black children. Black children are losing their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins to unnecessary violence. Black children themselves are losing their lives. Black children have been taught to be careful and cautious around the very people who are in place to protect them. They are taught not to place their hands in their pockets or in their purse in a store to avoid being targeted. They are conditioned from a very young age to feel inferior by the society they live in. Black children are taught to be afraid, and after the death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others, we know exactly how they feel. We know that for black children this is scary time. While some may not be directly affected, they are hearing it being talked about. They are seeing the news and protests happening right outside their doors. We hope that the black children reading our letters find comfort and inspiration. Black children are embedded in our hearts, because once upon a time, we were black children.

Love,
The YBR Team

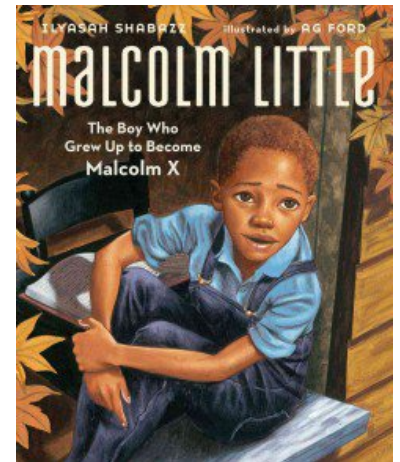
Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X by Ilyasah Shabazz; illustrated by AG Ford

Dear Black Child,

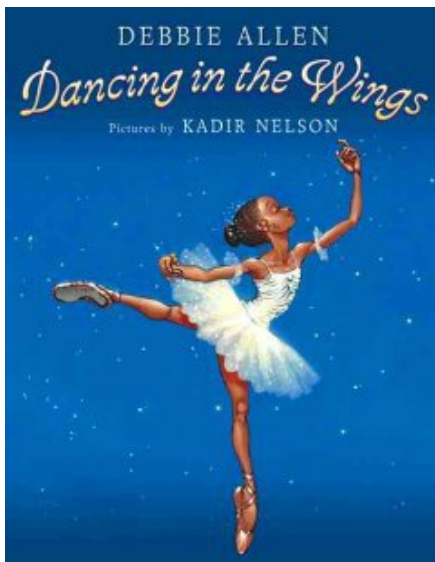
An African proverb says "in order to know where you're going you have to know where you've been". Unfortunately, we have been here before. African-Americans have worked tirelessly over the past four hundred years fighting for freedom, justice, and equity. From the Abolitionist movement of the 19th century to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 20th century, here we are in the 21st century fighting for justice in the Black Lives Matter movement.

In dark times, I always look to the wisdom of the ancestors. Especially our dear brother Malcolm X. A recent book, *Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up To Become Malcolm X* by his daughter Ilyasah Shabazz, reminds me that despite humble beginnings, your life is what you make it. Like Malcolm X, we can all transform our lives. We can always take our pain and turn it into our passion. Being productive with what we're passionate about helps us all achieve peace in the world--and make no mistake black people have always made the world a better place. There's strength in our skin and splendor in our hearts so shine your light for everyone to see. The world could really use it right now.

James



Dancing in the Wings by Debbie Allen; pictures by Kadir Nelson



Dear Black Child,

I am thinking of you. I hear you. I see you. I feel you. I am here for you. Always. I know how you are feeling right now. I know that words can be hard to find to express the way you are feeling. Find an outlet to be able to express yourself. Whether it be through art, writing, singing, or dancing. Find it. I loved dancing, that was my way of expressing how I was feeling. My mother bought me *Dancing in the Wings* by Debbie Allen when I was 10 years old. Reading this book about the main character, Sassy, changed the way I saw myself. It struck a fire in me and gave me the confidence to continue to do what I loved: dance. This book gave me courage to keep going not only in dance, but in life. Black child, you will face many obstacles in life. Let this book give you the confidence it gave me to rock the stage of life no matter who's watching. The wings of the stage are only the beginning. There is much more stage floor to go.

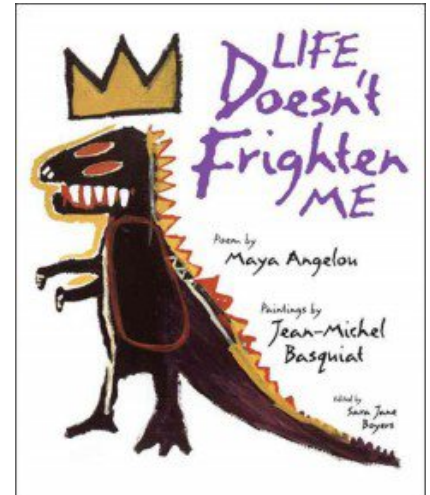
Jazmine

Life Doesn't Frighten Me
by Maya Angelou; pictures by Jean-Michel Basquiat

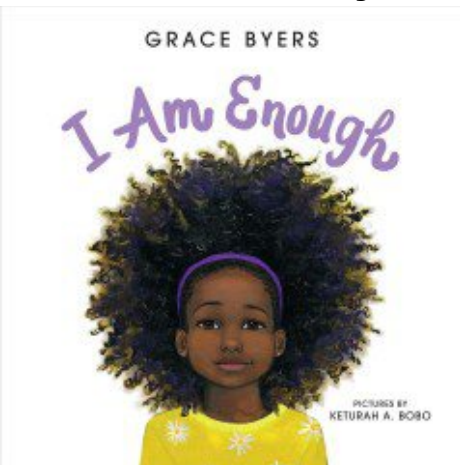
Dear Black Child,

We are only half-way through the year and it's already been so tough. A lot has been happening in the world with illness, death, and injustice--breaking news story after breaking news story. It can be hard not to be scared; it seems there's so much to fear. *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, by Maya Angelou, reminds me to have faith and persevere through hard times. It's okay to be afraid sometimes. It's okay to be scared. But the support and love of family, friends, and community are your magic charms. With them, you will find comfort, peace, and reassurance. And it is because of them you are capable of accomplishing any and everything. I hope this book inspires you, Black child. You can beat the odds. Your life matters. Your dreams matter. Your voice matters. You matter.

Justina



I Am Enough
by Grace Byers; pictures by Keturah A. Bobo



Dear Black Child,

Your world is growing by the minute. Ask questions when you see things you don't understand. You may feel helpless and small. But I know that you are not. You are ENOUGH to make a difference, ENOUGH to stand strong, ENOUGH to change someone's mind, and ENOUGH to make us ALL PROUD!

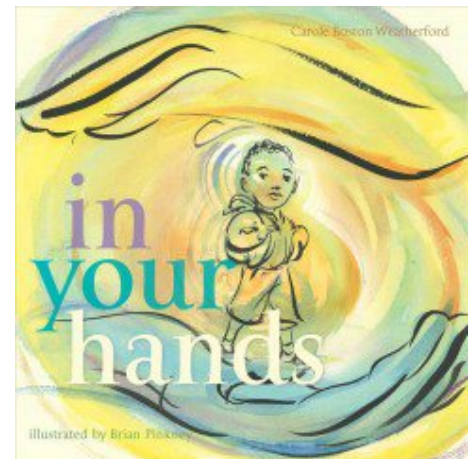
Rotina

In Your Hands
by Carole Boston Weatherford; illustrated by Brian Pinkey

Dear Black Child,

As the world attempts to find its way in a land full of uncertainty right now, I hope that you can find peace, love, courage, and comfort in the hands of those who you hold close to your heart. I know I am naturally comforted by the hugs and prayers of my mother and I am reminded of that when I read the book *In Your Hands* by Carole Boston Weatherford. When we are small, we are held by the hand as we learn to walk and when we first start school. Then, as we get older, there is less hand holding and we are held in hearts. Prayers of safety, confidence, and to be seen as boats to be steered rather than "figures to be feared". This author simply lets us know that we are always loved and in someone's heart and thoughts by reminding YOU, dear child, that it is added to the chorus: Black Lives Matter, your life matters.

Shannon



Created by: Justina Smith, Monique Christian-Long, Shannon Adams, James Glenn, Jazmine Coates, and Rotina Jones