

Engagement With *Skin Colored Books: Interviews with Women of Color in Ballet*  
for younger dance students

While *Skin Colored Books: Interviews with Women of Color in Ballet* is not a children's book, it does contain stories that can be shared with younger dancers. Below are four stories to engage upper elementary or middle school children with *Skin Colored Books: Interviews with Women of Color in Ballet*. Please feel free to share and discuss stories to inspire thought, movement, created shapes, class discussions, and limitless possibilities for all.

Caridad Martinez

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- The story of Caridad Martinez being the first Afro-Cuban ballet dancer admitted to the National Ballet School of Cuba. In this shared lived experience, Caridad describes the excitement of auditioning for the national ballet school and being called back for a second and third audition. Then to be faced with the ballet school's receptionist, who in today's world might be called a "hater". Her mother, stepped forward as a fierce advocate of Caridad. Caridad went on to secure her position at the ballet school and rise up in despite of racism and haters (story on pages 77-78, image page 91). Can you image the body language of Caridad mother's as she told the ballet school secretary that Caridad would be the first? Can you embody three shapes that explore and expand on this idea?

Lauren Anderson

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- The lived experience of Lauren Anderson overcoming personal implicit bias to be "Alice" in *Alice in Wonderland*. The interesting thing about this story, is that in 1978, no one told Lauren she could not be Alice, racial barriers were communicated to her through cultural messages like never seeing Black dancers in leading roles. As a child, Lauren developed limiting beliefs of what she could do in the vacuum of no role models. Ben Stevenson, Lauren's Academy Director cast her as Alice, and this action opened all possibilities of what Lauren could accomplish. Do you hold any limiting beliefs about what you can be, or what you can do? Are you in a position to interrupt another person's limiting beliefs (story page 44-45, image page 51)?

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Crystal Michelle Perkins

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- Crystal Michelle Perkin's shared a special story that is demonstrative of what it means to be an ally. She explained several of the cultural leaps she and her family needed to make to figure out how to train to become a ballet dancer. She described having other dance students ask questions about why her family was cheering for her and not watching quietly during performances. Crystal explained that her family had never seen a member of their family perform ballet before and they were very proud of her. But the continuous explaining of her family and culture was an added pressure and weight. Some of the other ballet students around her, her friends, took initiative and began to respond to these questions so that Crystal did not have to. These classmates took the pressure off Crystal, so she could focus on her dancing (story 98-99). Can you think of a time you stepped forward to support someone about a difference they or their family held?

Lourdes Lopez

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- Lourdes Lopez started her dancing journey with weak legs and needing to wear braces as a child (story 55, image 58). She overcame this physical challenge to rise to a Principal Ballerina with New York City Ballet and today is Artistic Director of Miami City Ballet. What physical or other challenge have you had to overcome to accomplish your goals? Can you embody a position that expresses the accomplishment of overcoming an obstacle?