

AKILA WORK SONGS

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10-YEAR OLD BRINGS BEDTIME STORIES OF HOPE DURING COVID-19 and the “BLACK LIVES MATTER” NATIONAL PROTESTS.

New Storytime Series, *Dreamland With Aaliyah*, Provides
Comfort and Social Justice Lessons to Children, One Book at a Time.



South Hadley, Massachusetts - - In March 2020, the country was suddenly faced with a shelter-in-place mandate as a way to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over time, the United States emerged as the global epicenter of this devastating disease that was sadly taking the lives of many people at an alarming rate. As schools, universities, and businesses closed, adults and children alike were immediately faced with the challenges of creating a *new normal* for their daily lives. A thoughtful ten-year-old girl in South Hadley, Massachusetts had an idea that would hopefully spread joy to a world that had suddenly become very different.

Aaliyah Hall, the vibrant daughter of **Marcella Runell Hall** and **Dave Hall**, created a bedtime reading series, [*Dreamland with Aaliyah*](#), for children of all ages. Using her personal collection, she launches the series every night on **Facebook Live at 6:30 pm EST**. Her hand-picked books reflect the diverse fabric of American society, spotlighting a variety of cultural expressions, national observances, and walks of life. Aaliyah has honored Pride Month, Ramadan, Earth Day, Harvey Milk, Rosa Parks, and many other important topics on her show. But what started off as a tween’s response to the national public health crisis has emerged as a personal statement that is aligned with the “Black Lives Matter” movement one that many of us can relate to. Click [HERE](#) to watch the stream Aaliyah did after returning home from a protest against the tragic murder

- more -

of George Floyd in Minneapolis. When asked why she started this nightly series, Aaliyah excitedly explained, “The mission of the show is kid-curated bedtime stories designed to inspire hope. I wanted something for people to look forward to every day.”

AMAZING HIGHLIGHTS! *Dreamland with Aaliyah* has...

- Steadily grown in popularity, often times garnering thousands of views.
- Been recommended on multiple educational resource sites for families and teachers.
- Unexpectedly functioned as a fundraising too. Through her own compassionate advocacy, Aaliyah has raised more than \$2K for *No Kid Hungry* in a short two-week period.
- Partnered with a local independent book store in South Hadley.
- Been featured on local news programs, with influencers on Instagram, and on academic blogs. For example, University of California, Irvine Visual Studies graduate student Ella Turene mentioned the show in her blog post [How Artists Are Helping the World Cope With the Pandemic](#).

BOOKS-AT-A-GLANCE

Since March 30, the aspiring performer has read close to 100 books. A few highlights include *My Friend Earth* by Patricia MacLachlan, illustrated by Francesa Sanna; *Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Be Malcolm X* by Ilyasah Shabazz, illustrated by AG Ford; *The Purple Coat* by Amy Hest, illustrated by Amy Schwartz; and *Fancy Nancy & the Saturday Night Sleepover* by Jane O’Connor, illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser. Generally, the format is simple but the outcome is always inspiring for her audiences. Occasionally, Aaliyah welcomes special guests to the program. She’s interviewed local teachers, family members, and emerging youth authors—all positive role models who have positive messages for the attentive audience.

ALL IN THE FAMILY



Dreamland with Aaliyah is a family-run production. **Ava Hall**, Aaliyah’s six-year-old sister, helps her big sister identify books to read and helps her with the set-up of the home-based studio, known as *Sister Sister Studio*. “I like the way she picks out books and she’s very entertaining. I also really like when I’m a guest reader,” Ava shares.

Their encouraging mom adds: “Like many of us, Aaliyah felt pretty disconnected and discouraged back in March when the stay-at-home order started and wanted to use her creative energy to give people something to look forward to. Since March 30th she has gone live every single day

including her birthday and holidays. We are so proud of her compassion, tenacity and thoughtfulness.” Dr. Runell Hall is an author who has long been committed to social justice and is currently the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students at Mount Holyoke. Aaliyah’s dad, Dave Hall, is professionally known as **DJ Trends**. For nearly ten years, he’s been the DJ for *Caribbean Fever* on WBLS 107.5 FM Radio in New York, the top Caribbean radio show around the world. He affirms that “Aaliyah is what it looks like when someone figures out who they are destined to be at 10 years old.”

As we look beyond these unprecedented times toward a brighter tomorrow, *Dreamland with Aaliyah* continues to be a ray of sunshine spreading happiness and love, one book at-a-time. The program, in its pure reflection of hope and thoughtfulness, is a source of inspiration for children and adults alike.

[Watch](#) *Dreamland with Aaliyah* at 6:30 pm EST on Facebook Live.

CONTACT US

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Photos courtesy of the Hall family.