

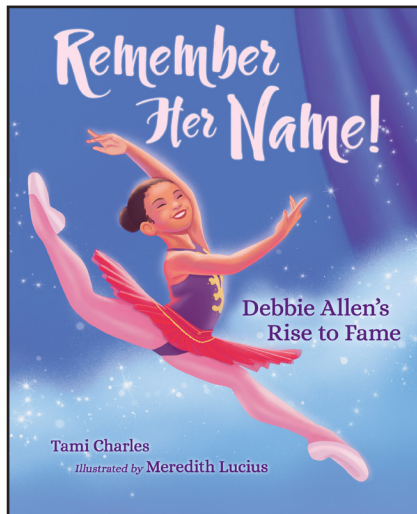
# Remember Her Name!

Debbie Allen's Rise to Fame

## ACTIVITY KIT

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**"Uplifting and glowing."**

—Kirkus Reviews

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by Tami Charles

illustrated by Meredith Lucius

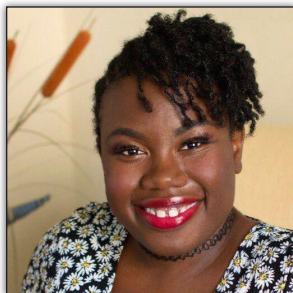
### About the Book

Young Debbie Allen had big ballet dreams, but she was blocked from the local dance school in the 1950s Jim Crow American South. In order to allow Debbie to pursue her dream, Debbie's mother moved with her to Mexico where Debbie studied at the Ballet Nacional de México. When they returned to Texas, Debbie was admitted to the Houston Ballet Foundation as the company's first Black dancer, and her legendary career began.



### About the Author

Tami Charles is the *New York Times* best-selling author of *All Because You Matter* and numerous books for children and young adults. Her middle-grade debut, *Like Vanessa*, earned Top-10 spots on the Indies Introduce and Spring Kids' Next lists and was a Junior Library Guild selection. She wrote a YA novel-in-verse, *Muted*, and a follow-up to *All Because You Matter* called *We Are Here*. When Tami isn't writing, she can be found presenting at schools both stateside and abroad.



### About the Illustrator

Born in Haiti and raised in sunny Florida, Meredith Lucius pulls inspiration from the vibrant cultural aspects both lands offer. Meredith's passions primarily focus on encouraging equity through inclusive book illustration and character design. Meredith lives in Kansas City.

## Discussion Questions

Use these conversation starters to get kids thinking and learning.

### Pre-reading

1. Based on the cover and title, what do you think *Remember Her Name* is about?
2. What kinds of dances do you know? What kind of dance do you think the girl on the cover of this book is doing? What do you know about ballet?
3. Are you familiar with Debbie Allen? What is she famous for?

### Post-reading

1. Revisit the predictions you made before reading. What predictions (if any) were correct? Did *Remember Her Name* surprise you?
2. When and where does this book begin? What was life like in Texas in the 1950s? What else was happening in the US and the world during this time?
3. Debbie dreams of becoming a dancer. Do you have a dream? What would you need to learn and accomplish to make your dream come true?
4. Debbie's mother believes in her dream. Do you have somebody who believes in you and helps you pursue your goals?
5. Why does Debbie's family move to Mexico City? Have you ever had to move somewhere else? What was that experience like? How did moving to Mexico City change Debbie's daily life?
6. Why did Debbie's family move back to the US? Have you ever returned to a place after spending a long time away? Did that place change while you were gone or stay the same?
7. This book is titled *Remember Her Name*. Where else in the book does this phrase appear? What does it mean to remember someone's name? Why does Debbie want to be remembered? What do you want to be remembered for?
8. Read "Debbie Allen's Achievements" in the back of the book. What do the awards and honors listed here recognize? What does it mean to be an artist-in-residence or a cultural ambassador?
9. This book contains many words for ballet dance moves. Do you recognize any of these words? Where can you find definitions for words you don't recognize?

## Twin Timelines

Use this collaborative classroom activity to explore the concept of a timeline and contextualize historical events during Debbie Allen's lifetime.

### Materials

- A long sheet of roll paper
- Markers

### Procedure

1. **Connect to the text.** As a class, look at the timeline in the back of the book. What events are shown on the top of this timeline? What events are shown on the bottom? What are some other places that students have seen timelines? What can you learn by making a timeline? Why is it important to understand the events of Debbie Allen's life in the context of the Civil Rights Movement?
2. **Review the procedure.** Unroll the long sheet of roll paper and tell students that you will work together to create a timeline about the Civil Rights Movement. Begin the timeline at 1950 and end it at the present day. Ask students to calculate how many years this timeline spans. Do they know someone today who was alive in the year 1950?
3. **Fill out the timeline.** Call on students in turn to read entries from the Civil Rights Movement portion of the timeline aloud and ask the class where on the timeline they think each entry should go. Use a dot on the timeline and a vertical indicator line to connect the name and short description of each event.
4. **Reflection.** Lay the timeline out on the floor and walk along it as a class, stopping at each event. Are students familiar with any of these events? Which of these events, if any, happened during their lifetime? What, if anything, can you see about the Civil Rights Movement when it's laid out in a timeline that you couldn't see in a book? As you proceed along the timeline, refer to the timeline in the book and call out events in Debbie's life. Consider how old Debbie Allen was during each event in the Civil Rights Movement. What might she have known about these events at the time? How did these events possibly affect her life?
5. **Optional extension.** The Civil Rights Movement timeline in the book ends with President Obama signing the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. Are there events students can think of that happened between 2015 and present day that should be included in a timeline of the Civil Rights Movement?

## Word Search

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

É	L	O	P	T	C	O	N	S	R
T	U	R	I	D	E	B	B	I	E
A	D	L	R	S	G	R	B	K	M
O	A	E	O	A	T	F	A	M	E
I	N	M	U	M	P	T	L	D	M
N	C	J	E	T	É	E	L	H	B
S	E	P	T	E	R	N	E	W	E
H	D	S	T	H	Y	D	T	É	R
A	L	L	E	N	S	U	L	C	F
R	T	M	J	X	I	F	A	N	M

DEBBIE  
ALLEN  
BALLET

TENDU  
PIROUETTE  
JETÉ

DANCE  
FAME  
REMEMBER

# Civil Rights Artists

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Research three artists who were kids during the Civil Rights Movement and use the map below to organize your findings. An example is filled out with Debbie Allen's information.

**Artist**

Debbie Allen  
(1950–present)

**Art Form(s)**

dance, theater,  
film

**Major Achievements**

3 Emmy Awards, 5 NAACP Image Awards,  
1 Golden Globe Award, 2 Tony Award nominations,  
Hollywood Walk of Fame star, honorary  
Oscar Award, US Cultural Ambassador of Dance

**Artist**

**Art Form(s)**

**Major Achievements**

**Artist**

**Art Form(s)**

**Major Achievements**

**Artist**

**Art Form(s)**

**Major Achievements**

## Dance Vocabulary

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustrate these dance vocabulary cards, cut them out,  
and write the definitions on the other side!

GRAND JETÉ

TENDU

PIROUETTE

PLIÉ

ARABESQUE

ASSEMBLÉ

## Further Reading

Enrich the reading experience and extend learning by pairing *Remember Her Name* with these other resources!

### Civil Rights Era

- Avery, Jaha Nailah, and Steffi Walthall. *I Heard: An American Journey*. Charlesbridge, 2024.
- Bolling, Valerie, and TeMika Grooms. *A Flea for Justice: Marian Wright Edelman Stands Up for Change*. Charlesbridge, 2025.
- Brière-Haquet, Alice, and Bruno Liance. *Nina: Jazz Legend and Civil-Rights Activist Nina Simone*. Charlesbridge, 2017.
- Evans, Shane. *We March*. Henry Holt, 2016.
- Giovanni, Nikki, and Bryan Collier. *Rosa*. Henry Holt, 2007.
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole, Renée Watson, and Nikkolos Smith. *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*. Kokila, 2021.
- Rippon, Jo. *Rise Up! The Art of Protest*. Charlesbridge, 2020.
- Shelton, Paula Young, and Raul Colón. *Child of the Civil Rights Movement*. Dragonfly Books, 2013.
- Waters, Michael, and Nicole Tadgell. *Liberty's Civil Rights Road Trip*. Flyaway Books, 2021.

### Black Artists

- Abdurraqib, Hanif. *Sing, Aretha, Sing! Aretha Franklin, "Respect," and the Civil Rights Movement*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021.
- Celenza, Anna Harwell, and Don Tate. *Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite*. Charlesbridge, 2018.

- Hill, Laban Carrick. *When the Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Hip Hop*. Roaring Brook Press, 2013.
- Loney, Andrea J., and Keith Mallett. *Take a Picture of Me, James VanDerZee!* Lee & Low, 2017.
- Montague, Liz. *Jackie Ormes Draws the Future: The Remarkable Life of a Pioneering Cartoonist*. Penguin Random House, 2023.
- Shapiro, J. H., and Vanessa Newton. *Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art*. Charlesbridge, 2015.
- Step toe, Javaka. *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*. Little, Brown, 2016.
- Whitehead, Kathy, and Shane Evans. *Art from Her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter*. Putnam, 2008.

### Ballet

- Allen, Debbie, and Kadir Nelson. *Dancing in the Wings*. Puffin, 2003.
- Copeland, Misty, and Christopher Myers. *Firebird*. Putnam, 2014.
- Day, Christine. *She Persisted: Maria Tallchief*. Philomel Books, 2021.
- Meadows, Michelle, and Ebony Glenn. *Brave Ballerina: The Story of Janet Collins*. Henry Holt, 2019.
- Nelson, Marilyn, and Susan Kuklin. *Beautiful Ballerina*. Scholastic, 2009.
- Thundercloud, Ria, and Kalila J. Fuller. *Finding My Dance*. Penguin, 2022.