

Where's My Story?

Seventh-grader Marley Dias wasn't happy with her school's reading list—so she turned to social media to take action.

By CHRISANNE GRISE

Marley Dias was fed up.

Her teacher had just assigned yet *another* book that didn't feature any black girls like her. Now, over a plate of pancakes at a local diner, she was complaining to her mom that having so little in common with the characters made it difficult to learn from their stories.

To that, her mom simply replied: "What are you going to do about it?"

Accepting the challenge, Marley decided to collect 1,000 books featuring black girls and donate them to schools. She started the project by posting a picture of herself reading Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* online, using the hashtag #1000blackgirlbooks. "I knew that social media was the best way to reach people all over the world," she says.

Once the word spread about Marley's **altruistic endeavor**, the donations began pouring in. So far, she has collected more than 7,000 books and has distributed them to schools in the United States, Jamaica, and Haiti—with no plans of stopping any time soon.

These days, Marley is proud of herself for helping kids find great literature about **diverse** characters, and she's also excited to be a role model for other teens who feel strongly about *any* issue. "I want girls and boys to understand that if you feel like something is wrong, you can create change by using your voice," she says. "If you are passionate about something, anything can happen. Your dreams can come true."

To donate to #1000blackgirlbooks or to see the titles Marley has collected, visit grassrootscommunityfoundation.org.

The Facts That Matter: Book Diversity

Out of children's books released in 2015:

8%

had a black main character

3%

were about Asian-Americans

2%

featured Latinos

1%

starred Native Americans

SOURCE: COOPERATIVE CHILDREN'S BOOK CENTER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



"I love reading because it takes me to other worlds," Marley says.

Marley's Must-Reads

We asked Marley for some of her favorite books starring people of color. Here are three of her top picks!

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz

Ryan During the Great Depression, Esperanza and her mom have to flee to a camp for Mexican farmworkers.

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline

Woodson This story, written in poetry, shows you what it was like to grow up as an African-American during the 1960s and '70s.

Public School Superhero by James

Patterson In his mind, Kenny is Stainlezz Steel, defender of the weak! With comic-style art, this book takes a humorous look at middle school in an urban setting.