

BRIANA'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Creator: Sahar Simmons



Dear Ms. Oprah,

It gives me great pleasure and respect to welcome you to **“Briana’s Neighborhood,”** a children’s book series! I am so excited and blessed to have an opportunity to express my words and thoughts to you.

“To whom much is given, much is expected.”

I learned a long time ago what these words mean. I am blessed with a healthy loving family who encouraged creativity and expression, and allowed me to go after my dreams even if I stumbled along the way. They don’t really expect anything from me except to pass along the life lessons that I was taught. At the end of the day we can only be as good as the examples we set and legacies we leave behind. **“Briana’s Neighborhood”** is my legacy.

“Briana” is the eight year-old “mini me”. She allows me to express my inner child that refuses to disappear and always has a lot to say. There is an inquisitive child that lives within each of us, but for me I decided to



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bring Briana to life. Through Briana I can trace back to many years of childhood experiences. I was the “why” child. “Why this mommy?” “But why?” “I don’t understand why?” My mom had all the patience in the world to entertain and nurture the budding little girl that was never really satisfied with a “no”. More importantly, I wanted to understand the world and people around me. I was so full of energy, spunk, curiosity and so much personality, it seems almost inevitable that I would create and bring to life my inner child.

My mom is the most amazing woman to me because she accepted my inquisitive nature and nurtured everything about me, even when I did not “get me”. The reality is that many young girls lack the role models and positive figures at the very early stages of their development. This sad reality sparked my passion to educate and empower young girls. I decided to use my life experiences to create a character that would be relatable to childhood situations and challenges. Most importantly, I wanted to create a book series to bring excitement back into reading. This is something that I feel has strongly been lost due to ever-growing technology and gadgets.

Peer pressure and peer acceptance has plagued us all in our childhood. I often remember those times of crying and trying to understand why I wasn’t accepted or not cool enough. A lot of times these very circumstances can completely remove the focus of what is so important today... **EDUCATION, SELF-EMPOWERMENT and LOVING YOURSELF**. We can all be cool, confident and smart! My goal is to help girls recognize their individual beauty and use their God-given talents and intelligence for success. Briana’s mission is to give all kids hope and vision. Her motto, “Dare to Dream,” is really knowing who you are and believing that nothing is too far out of reach regardless of the circumstances.

Each story is narrated through the eyes of Briana and her experiences on a daily basis. Briana is born and raised in Brooklyn, NY under the guidance of her mother and grandmother. In story book form, real life messages are breathed into the feisty but very intelligent Briana. Her messages deal with everyday life that any child from any neighborhood deals with. Briana is far from perfect but what person is? She makes mistakes but she learns along the way as her family helps guide her.

Ms. Oprah, I admire your passion for education, self-empowerment and self-improvement. I have listened to you speak and have watched you cry and become filled with so much love for your strong beliefs. Witnessing the birth of your Leadership Academy for Girls and allowing them the opportunity to light their own fires regardless of their circumstances is an amazing, powerful and selfless act. I know what a challenge it can be to find unique ways to empower young women. I would love to provide your students or maybe their younger sisters and members of their community with copies of my books. Just because they haven’t made it into the academy yet doesn’t mean we shouldn’t provide them with tools and materials to aide them in their growth.

Another one of your programs that truly impressed me is the Legends Weekend. I think it is truly amazing how you brought



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such influential people together to celebrate their accomplishments. It made me want to do something similar for young girls and to encourage them to strive for greatness. The event will be called the **"Bri & Tea"** and is designed to celebrate the young women of Atlanta for both their mental and physical appearance. This is the first official "urban tea party." Girls will experience a day of pampering as they talk about the importance of literacy and education. They will be able to engage and interact with other young girls who have the same passion and love for reading and literacy. This event will be held annually and will become a national tour.

Your passion inspired me to use my own resources to bring **Briana's Neighborhood** to life. I can only teach and give back what I have been exposed to and have learned. I am excited about education, reading and writing. I am child-like all over again when I walk into a classroom, library or auditorium and bring life to my stories. When I see the impact that I have on our young audience and future leaders, I know that I have found my calling. It's truly mesmerizing to live in this time of greatness.

My calling has also led me to an on-going book series, products and the birth of **Briana's Neighborhood "Dare to Dream" Foundation**. It is an extension of my book series that will allow me to help educate through words, thoughts, inspirational workshops, and mentoring programs. I want to continue to reach, teach and share Briana across the world through inspirational and motivational experiences.

Thank you so much for allowing women like me to shine.
I really hope that you enjoy Briana!

Best,

Sahar Simmons
Dare to Dream!!!



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