



### ***From the Author***

In 2006, one of my Maya kindergarten art students never smiled, never spoke, and never looked you in the eye. His name was Tomas. It is common for immigrant children to remain in “the silent phase” for weeks or even months, but Tomas rarely spoke from kindergarten through grade 4. He was like a tiny fragile bird. I tried everything to reach him, but nothing worked.

After my Nicaraguan colleague shared that she felt ashamed of her heritage, I started teaching my students about the art of their cultures. After presenting the art of Tecún Umán to Tomas’s class, he got up from his seat, walked over, looked me in the eye, and said “thank you.” It was the art of his own culture that spoke to his heart.

After presenting Ulrick Jean-Pierre’s paintings of the Haitian revolution, my Haitian students raced to the book bin to find *Independence*. They were mesmerized by Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who led their ancestors from slavery to freedom.

Thanks to the esteemed scholars who helped me breathe life into these books. Thanks to the talented artists who graciously shared their work. Thanks to the School District of Palm Beach County that believed in our mission from the beginning. Thanks to Follett Library Resources for distributing my books to libraries. Most of all, thanks to my beloved students who continue to inspire me.

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