

Robert Battle's new book tells journey from Liberty City to Alvin Ailey

By: Neki Mohan

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Born in Jacksonville, Robert Battle moved to Miami's Liberty City as a young boy to live with relatives. His young mother unable to care for him. Raised by his loving relatives, Battle grew up surrounded by the arts and church.

A strong, tall young man, he found himself yearning to dance -- a calling Battle said became even more passionate when he went on a field trip as a teen to see the Alvin Ailey Dance Company perform.

"When that curtain went up and we saw the company dance the Alvin Ailey masterpiece Revelations, my heart opened up and here I am the artistic director," Battle told Local 10 News' Neki Mohan.

Battle credits his dance teachers at Miami Northwestern High School and New World School for the Arts for encouraging him to work hard and dream big. He auditioned for The Julliard School for the Arts in New York and received a full scholarship.

Battle said being a 6-foot tall young man who danced ballet wasn't always easy, but to him it was his calling. He said he hopes his books encourages others to follow their dreams despite obstacles.

"I tell the story of when I was at Miami Northwestern, that I was picked on because I was a male who dances, called every name in the book, threatened to be beat up after school," Battle said.

At Julliard, Battle excelled and soon began his career in choreography. In 2011, he was selected to be the artistic director of Alvin Ailey, only the third in its history.

He said he hopes his books inspires young people to dream big and work hard.

Those who would like to connect with Battle can find him at the following locations while he is in town.

Saturday and Sunday: As part of the community engagement activities leading up to the company's Arsht engagement, the Ailey Experience workshop is being offered for the first time in Miami at Young Contemporary Dance Theatre in Liberty City, where those in attendance can learn some hip hop moves from one of Ailey's dancers.

- Feb. 15 at 7 p.m.: Special student performance offered to include Revelations, free of charge, to local public school students at the Arsht Center.

- Feb. 17: Battle will host a master class at Northwestern Sr. High in Liberty City.

- Feb. 18 at 11:15 a.m.: Press event and awakening master class with Battle, where there will be dance students from New World School of the Arts at the Arsht Center's Peacock Foundation Studio. There will be interview and photo opportunities with Battle and students.

- Battle returns to the Books & Books in the Adrienne Arsht Center on Monday to sign his book at 7 p.m.

- The Alvin Ailey Dance theater begins its engagement on Feb. 18, also at the Arsht Center.

Watch Video Here:

<http://www.local10.com/entertainment/robert-battles-new-book-tells-journey-from-liberty-city-to-alvin-ailey>