

# Swan Dreams: Ballerina urges kids to follow dreams with all your heart

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.27.19

Word Count **323**

Level **380L**



Aesha Ash poses in costume in Rochester, New York. Photo by: Thaler Photography

Aesha Ash is an African-American ballet dancer. Ballet is a kind of dance. Growing up, she was different than the kids at her school. She felt like she did not belong. Aesha learned how to be strong. She became proud of who she was.

As a child, Aesha loved to dance. She did ballet. She did tap. She did jazz. Her school said she could only study one kind of dance. Her mother told her that there were only a few black ballet dancers. Aesha made up her mind. She would show everyone that she could become a ballerina.

## **Joins New York City Ballet At Age 18**

She was 18 years old when her dream came true. She joined the New York City Ballet. It is a famous dance company. Aesha did well there. She got to dance in many lead roles. Only some of the best dancers get lead roles.

Then she moved to Europe. Aesha was a lead dancer with a company. Later, she returned to work in the United States.

### **Starts Swan Dreams Project In 2011**

In 2011, Aesha started the Swan Dreams Project. It is a program for kids. The program teaches kids. It tells them about dancing and the arts.

Aesha said that life can be hard. People will tell you "no." Still, you need to be firm and love what you are doing. "Know that nothing will take your dreams from you," she said. "Give it your all, and you will reach your goal."

### **Honored For Dance, Work With Kids**

In 2016, Aesha was honored. She was given an award. The award praised her. It said she broke boundaries by being one of the first African-American ballet dancers. It also honored her for the Swan Dreams Project.

What does Aesha treasure most? She loves making her family proud. All of her hard work paid off. "When you have a dream, believe it with all of your heart."