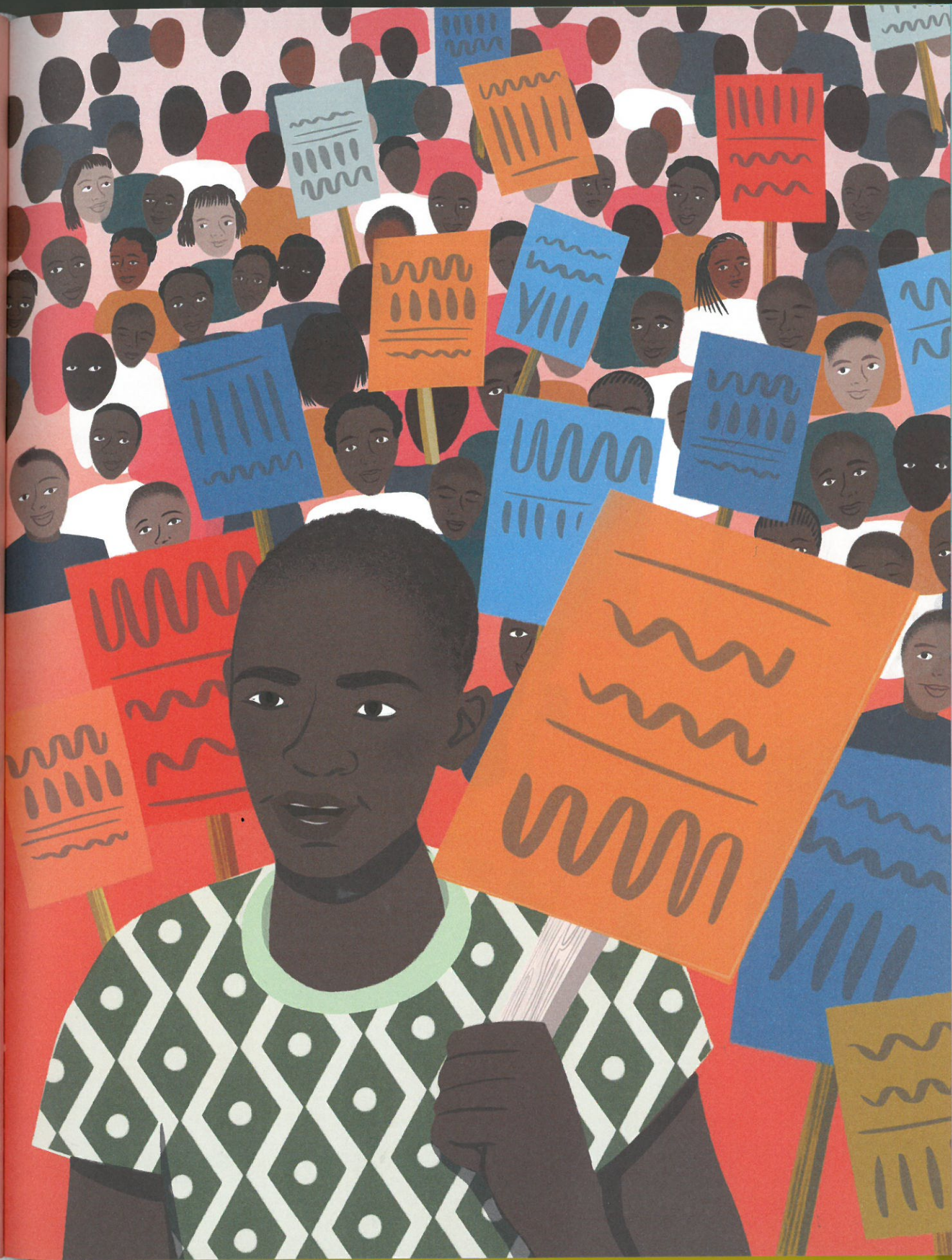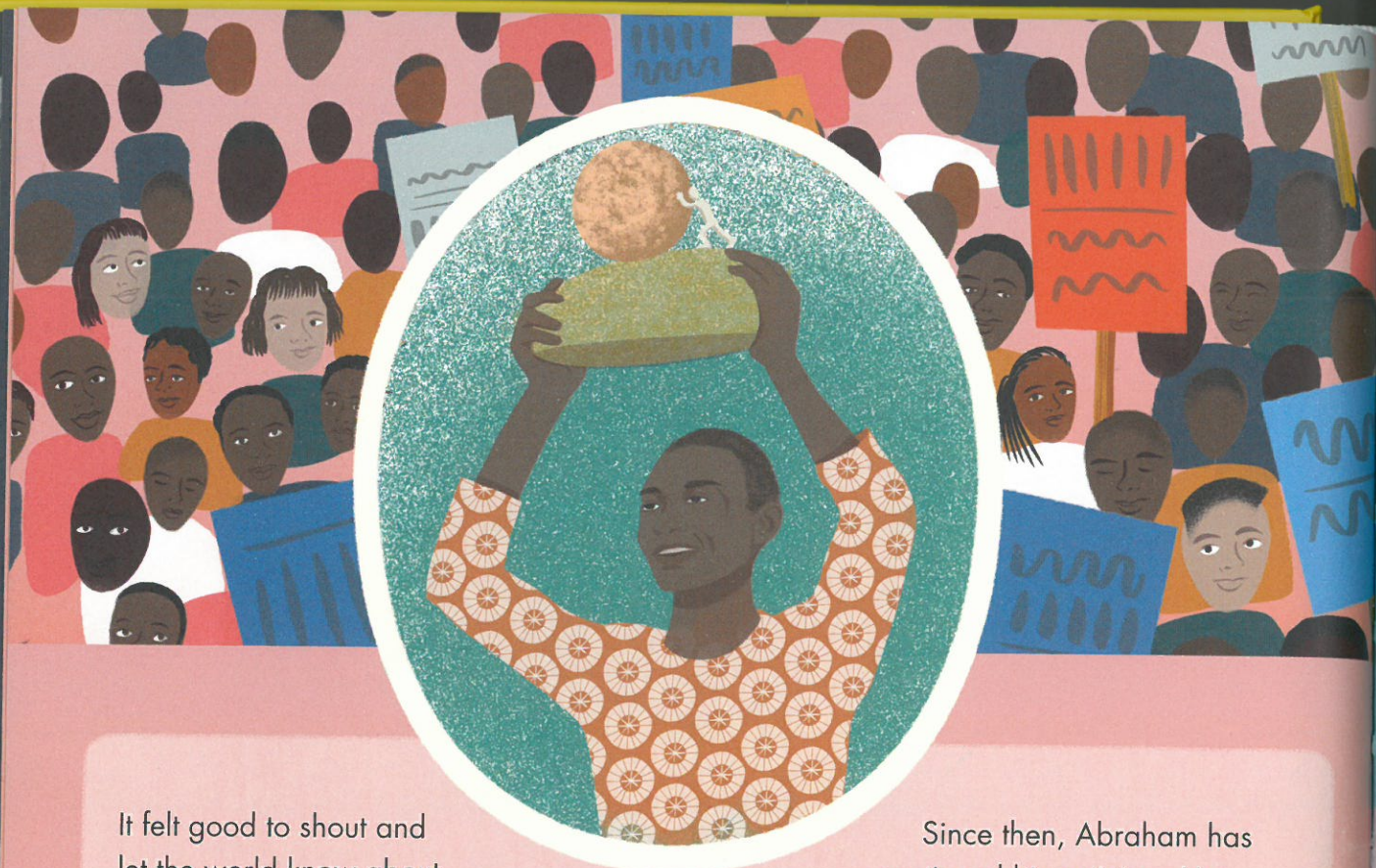# THE SELFLESS STRUGGLE OF
ABRAHAM KEITA

LIBERIA

Life had always been tough for Abraham. He and his family lived in West Point, one of the biggest slums in Liberia, West Africa. There was little food, no running water or electricity and it was hard to make a living. Abraham's dad worked as a driver and managed to keep the family going. That morning, he had left for work as usual. Later, the family received shocking news. His car had been attacked and he had been killed.

Abraham was five years old on the day that his father died. His family were devastated. They thought the world had turned against them and they lost all hope for the future. Abraham's mother was left to look after him and his siblings without any money. Life became so hard and a matter of just trying to survive each day.

By the time Abraham was nine years old, he had seen and heard many terrible things. Violent acts occurred every day in Liberia. One of the poorest countries in the world, Liberia was also in the midst of a war. The violence was not just happening to adults. Some children were being forced to fight as soldiers in the conflict. Others had lost their parents and were living on the dangerous, crime-ridden streets.

When Abraham heard that a 13-year-old girl in his neighbourhood had been killed, he knew he had to do something. *She could have been my sister,* he thought. Abraham joined a march to protest about violence against children. He was angry. Why should children have to suffer at the hands of adults?

It felt good to shout and let the world know about his anger and sense of injustice. After taking part in the peaceful protest, and making an impression on his peers, Abraham was invited to join the Liberian Children's Parliament, where his passion for advocacy was nurtured.

Abraham didn't stop there. He carried on going to marches and speaking about violence against children. In September 2011, he organized a big protest and got 200 children to take part. Together they demanded that the government of Liberia pass a new law to protect and respect the rights of children. The lawmakers listened and, in 2012, Liberia became one of the first African countries to have a children's rights law. It was an amazing achievement, especially for a 14-year-old.

Since then, Abraham has continued his activism. He has been called a 'changemaker' – a person who changes the world for the better. He has spoken in different countries, led demonstrations and campaigned for an end to violence against children in the world. At 17, he was incredibly proud to be awarded the 2015 International Children's Peace Prize, one of the top awards for young peace activists.

Abraham believes that, however difficult one's childhood, it is possible to change your life and to help others. He is an incredible young man who stands up and speaks for children everywhere. He wants everyone to remember that children are human beings too, and their rights need to be respected.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Every child should expect some basic things from life. However, many children around the world do not have all these things. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child says that all children are entitled to:

EDUCATION

HEALTH

LIFE AND SURVIVAL

THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE, VIOLENCE AND NEGLECT

BE A CHANGEMAKER

Any action, however small, is a start. If you believe in what you are doing, you can dream big. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Do you have an idea that could make your school, your community or even the world a better place? Share it and let others know.

- Why not volunteer at school or a local kids' club? You can help the younger kids to read, play sports, learn about the environment — or do whatever you love or are passionate about.

- Why not try fundraising? There are lots of fun and creative ways to raise money. For example, you could run a race where you are sponsored by friends and family for a cause you want to support. Or you could have a bake sale.