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March: Book One



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Synopsis

Congressman John Lewis (GA-5) is an American icon, one of the key figures of the civil rights movement. His commitment to justice and nonviolence has taken him from an Alabama sharecropper's farm to the halls of Congress, from a segregated schoolroom to the 1963 March on Washington, and from receiving beatings from state troopers to receiving the Medal of Freedom from the first African-American president. Now, to share his remarkable story with new generations, Lewis presents *March*, a graphic novel trilogy, in collaboration with co-writer Andrew Aydin and New York Times best-selling artist Nate Powell (winner of the Eisner Award and LA Times Book Prize finalist for *Swallow Me Whole*). *March* is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis' personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement. Book One spans John Lewis' youth in rural Alabama, his life-changing meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., the birth of the Nashville Student Movement, and their battle to tear down segregation through nonviolent lunch counter sit-ins, building to a stunning climax on the steps of City Hall. Many years ago, John Lewis and other student activists drew inspiration from the 1958 comic book "Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story." Now, his own comics bring those days to life for a new audience, testifying to a movement whose echoes will be heard for generations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up—Beginning with a dream sequence that depicts the police crackdown on the 1965 Selma-Montgomery March, this memoir then cuts to Congressman John Lewis's preparations on the day of President Obama's inauguration. Lewis provides perspective on the occasion, explaining and describing his own religious and desegregationalist origins in Alabama, his early meeting with Dr. King, and his training as a nonviolent protester. The bulk of the narrative centers around the lunch counter sit-ins in 1959 and 1960 and ends on the hopeful note of a public statement by Nashville Mayor West. The narration feels very much like a fascinating firsthand anecdote and, despite a plethora of personal details and unfamiliar names, it never drags. Even with the contemporary perspective, the events never feel like a foregone conclusion, making the stakes significant and the work important. The narration particularly emphasizes the nonviolent aspect of the movement and the labor involved in maintaining that ideal. The artwork is full of lush blacks and liquid brushstrokes and features both small period details and vast, sweeping vistas that evoke both the reality of the setting and the importance of the events. This is superb visual storytelling that establishes a convincing, definitive record of a key eyewitness to significant social change, and that leaves readers demanding the second volume.

—Benjamin Russell, Belmont High School, NH

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Starred Review Congressman Lewis, with Michael D'Orso's assistance, told his story most impressively in *Walking with the Wind* (1998). Fortunately, it's such a good story—a sharecropper's son rises to eminence by prosecuting the cause of his people—that it bears retelling, especially in this graphic novel by Lewis, his aide Aydin, and Powell, one of the finest American comics artists going. After a kicker set on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on March 7, 1965 (the civil rights movement's Bloody Sunday), the story makes January 20, 2009 (President Obama's inauguration) a base of operations as it samples Lewis's past via his reminiscences for two schoolboys and their mother, who've shown up early at his office on that milestone day for African Americans. This first of three volumes of Lewis's story brings him from boyhood on the farm, where he doted over the chickens and dreamed of being a preacher, through high school to college, when he met nonviolent activists who showed him a means of undermining segregation—to begin with, at the department-store lunch counters of Nashville. Powell is at his dazzling best throughout, changing angle-of-regard from panel to panel while lighting each with appropriate drama. The

kineticism of his art rivals that of the most exuberant DC and Marvel adventure comics – and in black-and-white only, yet! Books Two and Three may not surpass Book One, but what a grand work they – all complete. --Ray Olson

I am glad to add this book to my library. I teach art to high school students and cannot wait to share this book when we do graphic novels in class. In addition, we can use this book as we talk about public school funding inequities that are happening right now in our school and all over our country. Students can see that one person can make a difference. Because it is autobiographical and about the civil rights movement, it fits perfectly within the Common Core. The pictures are well done and the story moves. I learned about John Lewis, who as a young man, joined the non-violent movement and made a real difference in changes in our country. I literally could not put it down until it was finished. I look forward to the next books in the series.

"March: Book One", the first book of a trilogy in the graphic novel format, is a tantalizing account of, "The United States Civil Rights Movement", as seen through the eyes of United States Congressman John Lewis. Written by Lewis and his co-writer Andrew Aydin, with illustrations by Nate Powell, this autobiographical memoir delivers to the reader an acute awareness of the unjust trials and tribulations forced upon Black Americans by White Americans during this not so distant era in American history. Currently, it is difficult to fathom what it was like to be a Black American living under the dark hateful and ominous cloud of segregation. Most young Americans of today's generation have little to no knowledge of this oppressive ideology and hierarchy of racial bias that was widely accepted as the norm. Even those Americans familiar with this period sometimes view these acts of injustice as memories that should be forgotten or no longer discussed. This is a faulty misconception in that a more thorough understanding of race relations in this country will never be fully attained unless we as a society actively confront this shameful time period in our history with compassion and respect. "March: Book One", can be used as a vehicle to bring about this understanding. This autobiographical memoir is an emotional visual rendering of historical significance that follows Lewis' life from his very humble farming beginnings, to his college years whereby he fought for basic human rights not given Blacks due to social segregation based on racial discrimination. It also follows his present day life as a U.S. Congressman while preparing for the inauguration of President Barack Obama. It provides the viewer a look into the pivotal role he played in abrogating the atrocities of segregation through measures of non-violent resistance, although he and many others were violently attacked by those intent on keeping things the

same. These events are masterly interwoven to form a very enjoyable reading/viewing experience. Lewis and Aydin's astutely written text transports the reader back to these moments; arduously unjust moments that can only be accurately written by a person who actually lived through them. Powell's mesmerizing illustrations show Lewis and a number of heroic figures as they organized marches, protests, and student sit-ins at, "White Only", restaurants that more often times than not led to their arrests. Powell also masterfully used varying shading techniques and brush strokes that brilliantly rendered a tension filled atmosphere befitting Lewis and Aydin's accompanying text. "March: Book One", by Lewis, Aydin, and Powell is an invaluable lesson for any society interested in achieving deep-rooted social change in the face of discrimination and segregation as based on racial biases. As a lover of American history and avid graphic novel/comic book reader with a small collection of over 3,000 titles, I found this graphic novel a joy to read and study. It is well written and beautifully illustrated. Also, the layout is easy to follow; granting those who have never read a graphic novel or comic book a perfect entry into this medium. I, as a result, emphatically suggest you purchase this award winning graphic novel as a means of learning of the sacrifices made by this legendary living icon (Congressman Lewis) as related to his fight to attain basic civil rights and equality stripped away from Blacks by the United States Government during "The American Civil Rights Movement". Let it be known, I do not view, "March: Book One", as an attempt to demonize the United States Government or those individuals who participated in these now socially unacceptable acts of inhumanity. I instead see it as a historical document of record that reveals the tremendous strides this country has consciously made the past sixty years or so to combat discrimination and segregation as based on racial biases. Although there is still more work to be done, it is clear that things have changed for the better. The fact that the events within the pages of this graphic novel occur less often, give me hope that we as Americans will continue to repentantly grow in this area. This will in return ensure we do not repeat the sins of our past while attempting to usher into existence a United States of America indicative of the writings of our forefathers. My only gripe which is embarrassingly petty on my behalf has to do with the year long wait for the release of "Volume Two" of this trilogy. Most graphic novel/comic book collectors are severely impatient when it comes to obtaining the next issue of an ongoing series, a category I am admittedly a part of. I will be as I am extremely grateful to have been granted the opportunity of owning a copy of this most wonderful piece of literary genius. Respectfully, Jamusu.

As Americans continue to struggle with the issue of race in the year 2016, it is instructive to look

back to the roots of the Civil Rights Movement. New York city has just included this book in its Middle School reading program. The story of John Lewis is an inspiring and sometimes frightening tale. However, it is a constant reminder of how much some people struggled for our modern rights and why we must not surrender them. One person can make a difference. March Book One documents the change that is possible when people like John Lewis take action.

I'm sure there are some people out there who still think of all graphic novels as being for small children. Quite the opposite. "March" demonstrates how incredibly powerful the graphic format can be for conveying mood and emotion. The story comes to life in a way which straightforward words might not have easily achieved. In March we take a first-hand look at the struggles of the Civil Rights era. It is probably hard for some younger readers to realize that the US society was like this only the blink-of-an-eye ago. Bathrooms would be for whites only - someone who was not white would be beaten if they tried to use it. Only whites could sit to eat at lunch counters. College students who saw how unjust this was went through rigorous training to lobby for a change in a *peaceful* manner. They practiced how to stay silent even when abused. How to wait it out. This was an absolute key to everything. Do not give in to the hate. Do not lower oneself to the level of the bigoted attacker. Practice patience and peace. These are lessons we *all* can learn. There are still rampant injustices now. There are still racist bullies out there, clearly. The more we can all band together, stand up, and peacefully but determinedly remain strong, the more we can overcome. The more we can bring about a change. And, as an added note, I adored the sections about him growing up with his chickens. That's what I would have been like - caring for them and burying them in little graves. It adds a human touch that really brings the story to life. Both the Kindle (ebook) and the paperback versions of this are equally stunning. Highly, highly recommended for all ages.

I bought this book, in part, over protest from recent comments made by President Elect Trump. I was surprised at how much this book touched me. I have hope. What's more, it reminded me of the power and love of scripture.

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