



March: Book Two

John Lewis , Andrew Aydin , Nate Powell (Illustrator)

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The #1 New York Times bestselling series continues! Congressman John Lewis, an American icon and one of the key figures of the civil rights movement, continues his award-winning graphic novel trilogy with co-writer Andrew Aydin and artist Nate Powell, inspired by a 1950s comic book that helped prepare his own generation to join the struggle. Now, March brings the lessons of history to vivid life for a new generation, urgently relevant for today's world.

After the success of the Nashville sit-in campaign, John Lewis is more committed than ever to changing the world through nonviolence - but as he and his fellow Freedom Riders board a bus into the vicious heart of the deep south, they will be tested like never before.

Faced with beatings, police brutality, imprisonment, arson, and even murder, the young activists of the movement struggle with internal conflicts as well. But their courage will attract the notice of powerful allies, from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy... and once Lewis is elected chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, this 23-year-old will be thrust into the national spotlight, becoming one of the "Big Six" leaders of the civil rights movement and a central figure in the landmark 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

March: Book Two Details

Date : Published January 20th 2015 by Top Shelf Productions (first published January 13th 2015)

ISBN : 9781603094009

Author : John Lewis , Andrew Aydin , Nate Powell (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Nonfiction, History, Autobiography, Memoir, Comics, Biography



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From Reader Review March: Book Two for online ebook

Lata says

Sad, painful, horrifying.

Donovan says

The year was 1961, and the American South was racist as fuck. At movie theaters, they were turned away or beaten. In cafeterias, subjected to water buckets, hoses, darkness, and poisonous fumigation. In buses and terminals, sometimes beaten or burned to death. In the streets, full blown riots, sometimes to the death. All at the approval of white police and government.

It breaks my heart to read about the history of American hatred and the dehumanization of African-Americans. More than a half century later and this sense of racial superiority is still alive and strong in this country. How quickly we forget. How ignorant we continue to be.

What I admire about John Lewis and his fellow activists is their perseverance. I mean, damn, the system itself is corrupt and designed to subjugate anyone who isn't white and/or rich. It was illegal for whites to forcibly remove blacks from the buses but they did it anyway. Because they could. Because that's how it always was and always should have been. Until these brave civil rights activists stood up and spoke up for themselves, took beatings, and died for their cause. Talk about idealism and liberty. Talk about freedom.

Trina (Between Chapters) says

This series should be required reading in school. Please read this.

Monica says

I remain impressed. This is a spectacular set of graphic novels and the John Lewis story is worth knowing and understanding. He is a national treasure.

5 Stars

Read the dead tree version.

Sam Quixote says

Congressman John Lewis continues his autobiography in March: Book Two which picks up in November 1960 as a 20 year-old Lewis' involvement in the growing student movement deepens.

The main focus in the second book is the Freedom Rides. *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960) outlawed segregation and racial discrimination on buses and in bus terminals so the idea behind the Freedom Riders was to test the decision by sending small groups of integrated students (black and white) on buses in the south. The results were horrifying.

The sheer bigotry the Freedom Riders encountered was shocking and makes this a very tough read as it doesn't gloss over their experiences. Black and white students were beaten in the streets by groups of white thugs and, because the protestors were nonviolent, it was always a massacre. Protesters were beaten bloody, sometimes crippled, and sometimes killed. The police didn't help and in some cases joined in.

Buses were literally firebombed and it wasn't long before drivers refused to drive any buses carrying the Freedom Riders. In one instance as the Freedom Riders waited overnight for a bus, the KKK surrounded the terminal, outside the police barricade – the way that panel was drawn with these costumed racists felt like it was ripped from the pages of a Marvel or DC comic! Except the Freedom Riders and the Klan were real life heroes and villains.

More than being an autobiography, Lewis and his co-writer Andrew Aydin spend a lot of time establishing the context of the era. The racism displayed by the public officials of this time was breath-taking. Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett announced "The good lord was the original segregationist" while Alabama Governor George Wallace firmly stated "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!"

We see the various forms of non-violent protests Lewis and his friends engaged in – sit-ins at lunch counters, buying movie tickets, handing over mattresses while in prison (Mississippi State Pen) – and its always disproportionate violent response. Just mentioning some of those forms of civil disobedience boggles the mind – how utterly benign and yet how radical it was back then!

The sense of excitement, juxtaposed with the palpable fear of real danger, can be felt in the pages as Lewis and his friends barrel from one location to another. Change is in the air, change is coming, and a revolution is stirring – you sense it in the narrative as its drama is expertly built up.

The book is very informative (there's so much more I haven't even touched on that's included) but it also manages to be a gripping read as these young men and women were constantly putting themselves in harm's way for the sake of progress – it seems like there's a violent confrontation every few pages. The book also includes scenes with major historical figures as Civil Rights organisations like the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) met with John and Robert Kennedy and, of course, Dr Martin Luther King. This volume closes out on August 28, 1963, the day the March on Washington DC took place, where Lewis gave his speech (the full, unedited version of which is appended at the end), and Dr King entered history with his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech.

The way that Lewis/Aydin structure some sequences of the book is brilliant. Scenes from Barack Obama's inauguration day, January 20, 2009, are interspersed throughout to highlight the results of the Civil Rights Movement. During the brutal Montgomery riots, Freedom Riders were beaten by a mob made up of men, women and children, which then cuts to Obama's inauguration where Aretha Franklin's singing My Country

Tis of Thee, the words floating across these appalling scenes from half a century ago. It's a devastating effect.

Full credit to artist Nate Powell for rendering the whole book in a masterful black, white and grey. The book is gorgeous, the pages are bursting with detail and vibrancy, and the use of light and shadow is perfect.

March: Book Two is a powerful and moving addition to John Lewis' autobiographical series and a grand tribute to the Civil Rights Movement. It's a valuable piece of history too especially as Lewis is the last surviving speaker from that day in Washington and this is a first-hand account of those days past. An inspiring memoir of a remarkable time and even more remarkable people, March: Book Two is comics at its finest.

David Schaafsma says

This is the second volume of three by Lewis, a significant civil rights leader and member of congress and drawn by Nate Powell, that sort of ramps up the energy and action and emotion and gets us to significant events in civil rights history, told quickly but deftly and with energy and without sugarcoating about what happened. This one focuses on the Freedom Rides, Lewis's incarceration in Mississippi's Parchman Prison, and 1963's March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. It ends with the Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing and the death of four little girls, memorialized in Spike Lee's Four Little Girls and many other texts.

For a liberal of a certain age who lived through these times, it is familiar territory, so I was not enthusiastic about reading it. I generally think history and biography are not best served by sketchy graphic narratives. They tend to gloss over the details. And this is, yes, pretty much true of this series, but you get some of the right details, it's not boring, and I think you get in this one what is at the heart of the matter. And you see the tensions in the movement, King and Lewis, the staunch pacifists, vs. Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X. It's sort of breathtaking (and horrifying) what happened just half a century ago, and you get a feel for it in this impressive book/trilogy. Lewis was made to tone down his March on Washington speech in 1963, which he no longer regrets, but an appendix includes the text of his original speech, which is interesting and useful.

I write this within a week of the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Selma March, with Sen Lewis as leader then and now. so everyone has seen the photos of the Obamas and Lewis and others who were there fifty years ago crossing that bridge, so it's timely that the second volume comes out now and it's well worth the read. Powell's art sort of captures the energy and horror of the time. Of course it is a kind of introduction for young people, maybe, who knew nothing of this, who can see some of it now thanks to Powell, and for adults, it's a quick reminder to all that happened then. I'd also recommend longer and deeper versions, such as the documentary film series, Eyes on the Prize and Taylor Branch's Parting the Waters, among so many others, but those two sources are among the best. Still much to be done in this country on race relations. Still massive poverty and crime and brutality and inequality.

Sesana says

Every bit as good as the first volume. This volume includes the Freedom Rides and the March on Washington, which makes parts honestly terrifying to read, even this long after the actual events.

Diane says

Wow, book two in the *March* series was even more powerful than book one. The *March* graphic novels are based on Congressman John Lewis' memories of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. This second volume focuses on the Freedom Riders in 1961, and also on the March on Washington in August 1963. That was the day when Dr. Martin Luther King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Of all the people who spoke that day, only Lewis is still alive.

I was so inspired after reading this book that I watched the PBS documentary "Freedom Riders." It is truly amazing what nonviolent protests have been able to accomplish. I highly recommend the *March* graphic novels for anyone interested in the Civil Rights Movement.

P.S. The box set of the *March* trilogy is just beautiful, and I think it will make a great Christmas present. It's a gift that educates and inspires!

Favorite Quote

"It's difficult to understand the position of oppressed people. Ours is a way OUT -- creative, moral and nonviolent. It is NOT tied to black supremacy or communism, but to the plight of the oppressed. It can save the soul of America."

-- Martin Luther King, talking to Attorney General Robert Kennedy

Madalyn (Novel Ink) says

These graphic novels are just brilliant. I mean, what a perfect medium for John Lewis's story. I am endlessly proud to call this man my representative in Congress.

Bill Kerwin says

This second volume in the graphic biography of civil rights stalwart John Lewis begins with the Freedom Riders and Parchman Farm and ends with the March on Washington and the fatal bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church. Just as in the first volume, the stark black-and-white illustrations complement the somber and often disturbing events, but now, as the atmosphere becomes darker and more intense, the illustrations become more cinematic, more ominous.

In addition to the powerful portrayal of the dramatic events, I like the way the narrative includes realistic details of compromise and weakness: MLK's refusal to join the Freedom Riders by saying he wishes to choose his own "Golgotha" and then being mocked as "De Lawd," Stokely Carmichael's dangerous intransigence, the March on Washington's reluctance to accept the services of accomplished organizer Bayard Rustin because he was openly gay, and Lewis himself frustrated by demands that he alter his speech until he is persuaded by his idol A. Phillip Randolph. And as before, we see all the great turmoil and petty trials of the past framed by the story of Barack Obama's first inauguration.

This is both a great graphic narrative and an accessible and accurate history of a crucial period in American history, a time filled with bravery and heroes.

You should buy it and read it. Come to think of it, buy all three volumes, and give them to a young person you love.

leynes says

I said everything I wanted to say in regards to the story as a whole and the art style in my review of **March: Book One**, so let's jump straight ahead to the things that **March: Book Two** taught me:

- 1) Due to his work with SNCC and other Civil Rights organizations John Lewis grew estranged from his family. He still saw his family over the summer, but Nashville and the growing Nashville student movement became his home.
- 2) The non-violent sit-ins were met with more and more aggressive responses. Once Lewis and his friends were locked in a restaurant with a fumigator used only for killing pests. He couldn't believe that the owners left them there to die. At last, the fire department rescued them.
- 3) In February 1961 they started to protest at local movie theaters with stand-ins. When they were refused, they would simply get back in line and wait their turn to ask for a movie ticket again, and thus slowing down theatres lines tremendously. John and his friends were arrested during such a protest, and thus he spent his 21st birthday (February 21, 1961) in jail.
- 4) Then the **Freedom Rides** began. The Freedom Rides were journeys by Civil Rights activists on interstate buses to segregated southern states to test the United States Supreme Court decision (Boydton v. Virginia, 1960) which ruled that segregation was unconstitutional for passengers engaged in interstate travel. The first Freedom ride from Washington D.C to New Orleans was organized by CORE in May, 1961. The riders actually thought that they might die on these trips and so all of them signed a will beforehand. <3
- 5) John's bus never made it to Birmingham. They were bombed. All his friends died. Only due to luck and circumstance, was John not present when this act of terror hit. He left the riders earlier because he had to get to a job interview in Philadelphia. Oh my.
- 6) It was later revealed that Eugene Connor, Birmingham's Chief of Police, **promised the Ku Klux Klan fifteen minutes with the bus before he'd make any arrests**. That is just so motherfucking sickening to read.
- 7) The attorney general and other politicians wanted the Freedom Rides to stop due to the violent response of white supremacist and moderates. However the Nashville Student Movement wanted to go on, and they had MLK's full support. However there was tension between MLK and the students because Dr King didn't wanna partake in any Freedom Ride himself.
- 8) During the early 1960s SNCC went through a rough patch because there was a lot of tension within the committee. Whilst people like John Lewis stood firm in their belief in non-violence, other important activists of the day, such as Jim Lawson, grew tired of it and preached that blacks should be able to defend themselves when harassed. The fact that John Lewis had been arrested and beaten and jailed so many times

held a lot of weight with his SNCC colleagues, and thus Jim Lawson was shunned and John was elected to SNCC's Executive Coordinating Committee.

9) While Dr. King was in Jail, Jim Bevel, who had left SNCC and joined SCLC, set out to organize and train Birmingham's children. Bevel went into black schools and churches to teach hundreds of teenagers the techniques of nonviolence. <3 And thus on May 2, 1963 nearly a thousand of Birmingham's black children marched that day. <3 Almost all of them were arrested. It was an embarrassment to the city.

10) In June 1963 a representative of SNCC was invited to the White House to join other leaders, discussing President Kennedy's proposed Civil Rights Bill as well as his concerns about the announcement of a March on Washington. The Kennedy Bill did **not** guarantee the right of all African-Americans to vote. Only if you had a 6th grade education, you should be considered literate and able to vote. How fucking crazy! SNCC's position was that the only qualification for being to vote should be that of age and residence. Damn straight! And thus Kennedy's proposal got rejected.

11) One person deliberately not invited that day to attend the meeting with the president was Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam. John Lewis says he respected Malcolm, however he felt that he was never a part of the movement, **because violence, no matter how justified, was not something he could accept.** Malcolm X did attend the March on Washington saying that he may not fully support it, but because *where black folks be, is where he belongs.*

12) The Civil Rights leaders who were present at the meeting – A. Philip Randolph, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Jim Farmer of CORE, Whitney Young of the Urban League and John Lewis of SNCC – would be forever linked, known collectively as the **Big Six.** <3

13) The March on Washington was organized by A. Philip Randolph. John Lewis says of him that he could have been president if he had been born at another time. Out of all the people who spoke at the March, John Lewis is the only who is still around. <3

14) After the meeting Attorney General Robert Kennedy took John aside and told him that the young people of SNCC have educated and changed him. He now understands their struggle and will do what he can to help them along. This gave John hope, because it affirmed his belief that people are willing to learn, grow and change.

Carol says

". . . mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors."

Barbara (The Bibliophage) says

This is a history lesson, a heartbreak, and a primer on resistance. The drawings are starkly black and white, which is both symbolic and deeply affecting. I'm forever grateful to John Lewis and his team of creators for

filling in the missing lessons in my education's curriculum. Shame on schools if they don't teach these kids about events, like mine didn't.

Trish says

Book 2 in the *March* series about the life and work of civil rights activist John Lewis is absolutely propulsive in telling the story of racial prejudice in the southern United States in the early 1960s. As with Book 1, the early frames describe a cold day in January 2009 when all of Washington, D.C. and many more gathered in front of the Capitol Building for the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

The joyous scenes in 2009 are interleaved with the contrasting history some 50-odd years earlier when black people were protesting the right to sit at the same lunch counter with whites. John Lewis was involved in these nonviolent “actions” at that time which entailed silent continued resistance to refusals to serve, waiting until nightfall or arrest, whichever came first, only to be replaced by others once the first protesters were taken to jail. It was nonviolent on the protester side, but not on the side of those who disliked the protests. Not just the eating locations, but movie theaters, swimming pools, buses were all segregated and targeted for protests.

The actual start of the Freedom Rider action, testing the *Boynton v. Virginia* Supreme Court ruling which outlawed segregation and discrimination on buses and in bus terminals, is a fascinating one which the authors tell in great detail. The continued pressure of constant resistance across the southern states provoked violent push-back, but the peaceful protests were surprisingly effective. As the movement grew bigger, it had to accommodate many more points of view and opinions, and in some cases was encouraged to lose its pacifist methods. This section of the civil rights movement led by John Lewis at least held to its position through the early 1960s, though more radical voices were warming up in the wings.

Part 2 of the three-part series draws to a close with the hugely-successful March on Washington in August 1963, but the book's final frames show an explosion at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama in September that same year, less than one month later. Violence now came unprovoked and the pressure to resist in kind was building. All the time protesters asked for national guidance and support, without definitive response or intervention by national leadership.

These books are terrific material for teens on up, reminding us of the difficulties faced in the struggle for racial equality not so very long ago. The authors have won all kinds of prizes, awards, and praise for this series, deservedly. Highly recommended.

Char says

Just like with *The Complete Maus*, (a graphic novel about the Holocaust), I learned a lot about the civil rights movement that I do not remember learning in school.

I knew about the Freedom Rides and the Lunch Counter Sit-ins, but I didn't know about children getting hit with fire hoses or the repeated beatings and jailings of the peaceful protesters.

Starting and ending with the swearing in of President Obama, I can't imagine what that must feel like to John

Lewis. Starting life not being able to eat in certain restaurants and having to ride at the back of the bus, and getting all the way to a black president in one lifetime. It's an amazing accomplishment and John Lewis was a huge part of it.

I wasn't all that crazy about the art in this volume, hence the 4 star rating. I will continue on to the next, (and last), volume.

Eve says

"In those moments, Dr. King made plain all of our hopes, our aspirations...everything we sought through the beatings and the blood, through the triumphs and the failures, everything we dared to imagine about a NEW America, a BETTER America..."

Tatiana says

Oh, I see, *this* is the great America *he* keeps talking about.

Teresa says

Last month I visited Birmingham, Alabama: the park where children marched in a peaceful demonstration against segregation, where they were arrested, sprayed by firehoses and threatened with police batons and attack-dogs; the church that was bombed, killing four little girls; the fairly new Civil Rights Institute that memorializes these events (also covered in this volume) and more. I am in awe of what these people did and how they achieved their goals. I don't think I could be that strong.

A tremendous amount of events taking place over a short period of time are covered in these pages and are well told, the only confusing thing for me being to keep straight the names of those in the different organizations who were in charge of the movement. Even so, I would've finished this sooner, but the other night I had to put it aside for a while and read something else. The treatment of the non-violent Freedom Riders, including murder and brutality both before and after they were imprisoned, coupled with the news of the day (that is, the imprisonment of innocent children) became overwhelming. The other overwhelming fact is that we are still dealing with these issues that were the focus of a march on Washington, D.C., portrayed in this volume, when John Lewis, at 23, gave a defining speech and Martin Luther King, Jr., gave a speech for the ages.

Julie says

Book Two of *March* gets grisly.

The nonviolent beginnings of the Nashville "sit-ins" depicted in *March, Book One*, have now attracted

national attention and opposition, and violence is erupting all over the South.

The Freedom Riders board buses in the South in the 1960s, to fight for the right to be recognized as *human*, but what is *human* anyway, if a *human* can turn a fire hose on children at a nonviolent protest and then set a pack of killer police dogs on them?

As far as I'm concerned, there's behavior toward humans that happened in the U.S. during this struggle for civil rights that makes me want to crawl into a cave and scrawl on the walls with my own fingernails. Still, all people crave the innate desire to be validated and recognized as worthy, as *human*, and all people should be, even if being *human* still has a long way to go.

This graphic novel is *graphic* at times, and so is our *human* behavior.

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*
--Maya Angelou

Meredith says

I'm learning so much about the Civil Rights Movement from these graphic novels! I knew the name "Freedom Riders," though to read what they really went through was heartbreaking, but so important. And having some more background on the March on Washington was really interesting, too. Dr. MLK's speech still runs true today, but we've still got a long ways to go.
