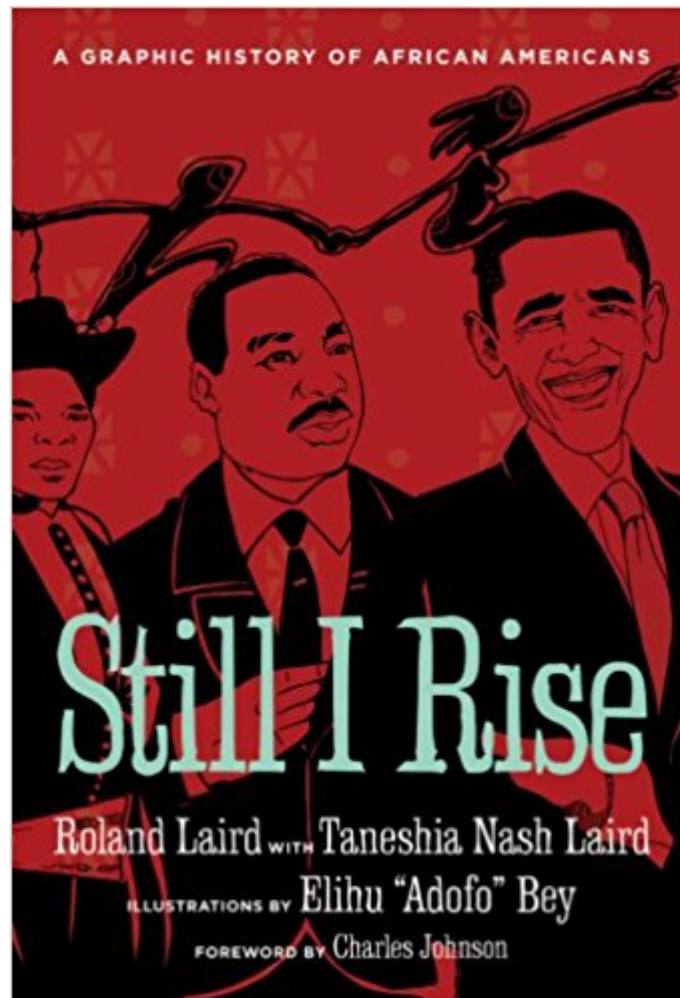




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# Still I Rise: A Graphic History Of African Americans



## Synopsis

Still I Rise is a critically acclaimed work with an impressive scope: the entire history of Black America, told in an accessible graphic-novel form. Updated from its original version<sup>1</sup>; which ended with the Million Man March<sup>2</sup>; it now extends from the early days of colonial slavery right through to Barack Obama<sup>3</sup>'s groundbreaking presidential campaign. Compared by many to Art Spiegelman<sup>4</sup>'s Maus, Still I Rise is a breathtaking achievement that celebrates the collective African-American memory, imagination, and spirit.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

This updated volume recounts the story of African-Americans in the United States from the year 1619 through the election of Barack Obama, and it's a compelling (if dense) chronicle of this incendiary period, from the indentured servitude that morphed into chattel slavery, emancipation, the civil rights movement and beyond. The comprehensive text may be worth a read, but the entire book is marred with amateurish artwork. Artist Bey displays only the most rudimentary of basic visual storytelling techniques; the layouts are haphazard, with the figures' hands and heads often cut off, and the grafittiesque/cartoonish art style is inappropriate for the material. It's disappointing that a historical work with the potential for crossover appeal gets poleaxed by subpar visuals that trivialize the text. Parts of the book bear so little visual gravitas that it comes off as a black man's

struggle coloring book, and that's a shame. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"As a contribution to illustrated history from a black point of view," writes National Book Award-winning author Charles Johnson in the foreword of this book, "Still I Rise is a unique achievement, one that will be valued--like Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* and Larry Gonick's *A Cartoon History of the Universe*--by students, educators, collectors, and general readers for a long time to come." Newly available in an updated edition, the compelling and irreverent graphic history that recounts the entire scope of the African-American experience, now concludes with Barack Obama's groundbreaking 2008 presidential candidacy. *Still I Rise* traces the epic struggles and victories of African-Americans in the face of racist obstacles and unfathomable hardships over the course of four decades. It follows the rise of slavery; the Nat Turner Rebellion; the military contributions of African Americans; the influence of the Memphis Free Speech newspaper written by crusader Ida B. Wells; the Great Depression of 1929; the birth of modern integration; Freedom Summer; the emergence of a new philosophy called Black Power; the Million Man March; and the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. Cultural milestones can also be found in these pages: from the Harlem Renaissance and the publication of *Invisible Man* to heritage festivals and contemporary artists who illuminate the complexity of African-American life. Heroic notables and visionaries are introduced: Frederick Douglass; Sojourner Truth; Madame C. J. Walker; Malcolm X; Martin Luther King Jr.; and many more. Lesser known luminaries are also featured, including Carter G. Woodson, who became the father of Black Studies in 1915 by starting the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, who started a one-woman campaign in 2000 demanding restitution from modern companies that played a direct role in enslaving African Americans. The insightful text is sometimes acerbic, other times perceptively humorous, and always powerfully honest. Authors Roland Laird and Taneshia Nash Laird have supplemented their first-rate scholarship with a healthy dose of attitude. And illustrator Elihu "Adofu" Bey's artwork is both energetic and uncompromising. Taking its title from a Maya Angelou poem, *Still I Rise* is a moving and inspirational account of the rich history of African Americans.

Brilliant, witty, insightful history told in gorgeous graphics. I learned so much about American history thanks to this book. I recommend for EVERYONE of all ages. This should be required reading for all elementary and high school history classes.

The book looks terrific -- no, it's not as visually lovely or as sound on terms of composition and panel lay-out as many other similar works, let alone graphic novels, which is fine. The writing is spare and to the point, and much of what it has to say is valuable and said well. But there is much that is inaccurate here, in terms of the historical record, and I say this as a professor of American history. This does not mean that I am the fount and source of all accurate information on U.S. history, because much of the way history is told, taught, and written has to do with interpretation of data, which speaks to bias; however, when historical facts are purposely left out, or distorted, one can only assume this has to do with the agenda of the authors. I will cite only one example, but it is the one that is most glaring, and it has to do with the treatment of Bacon's Rebellion. The reader is told that the Virginian elites only decided to put down the rebellion because whites began to fight with one another; this is simply not the case. The planter class of Virginia resisted the rebellion from the start because, as an alliance of free whites, indentured servant, and African,s both enslaved and free, it was nothing less than a bid by the so-called "giddy multitude" to overthrow the government and strip the planters of their land, power, and perhaps their lives. Then the authors have the planters reviewing the consequences of the rebellion and stating that their great wealth was based on the labor of African slaves -- at this time, this was patently not the case. The backbone of the laboring class in Virginia until well AFTER the rebellion were English indentured servants, just as they made up the great majority of the rebels that had just been defeated. There was something less than 3,000 slaves in the colony at that time, and tens of thousands of indentured servants, and the main importance of the rebellion is that it brought an end to indentured servitude in Virginia, and it lead to the start of a large-scale effort to make African slaves the main component of the work force on the plantations. There are many other instances of misinterpreted or just plain wrong-headed information throughout the book, alongside many, many accurate portrayals of various historical events and personages. I would not buy this book for a younger reader for just this reason and I find the book doubly frustrating not simply because of the inaccuracies, which are the result of an agenda or lazy research, but also because uninformed readers like those whose reviews are present here alongside mine, accept this portrayal of African-American history as the gospel, so to speak. Unfortunately, they do not know whereof they speak, as it were.

Thank you. This book should be in every home in America. It provides understanding to the plight of the American slave and the wealth they built that propelled this country into a rich nation.

Excellent

This version is even better than the original. It is a powerfully entertaining look at the African American experience that delivers facts in an engaging manner.

This could well be a step toward a "STILL RISE" documentary on this book's development. It very well could be a well-crafted documentary.

STILL I RISE: A Graphic History of African Americans by Roland Laird with Taneshia Nash Laird, is a fabulous history of Africans in America. It starts before slavery and moves toward today's African Americans. It gives both sides of the story about how African Americans became who they are today. A male character tended to show the side that Americans would like to have as a reality and a female character never let him do it without her comments on what really happened. The story of how slavery actually came about in this country was a fascinating one. At first, even the Africans who were here were treated as indentured servants. Later, it was in the best interest of the rich to have people who would never be free, hence the beginning of slavery. This form of slavery did not embrace the white indentured servants, only the black ones. There was a lot of unhappiness on the part of poor whites too, because they felt the Africans were taking jobs they desperately needed. Even so, the masters wanted more and more money. The condition of Blacks in America was built on greed. STILL I RISE connects many pieces of history that simply are not well-known, facts that are not written about in our history books such as Blacks in Maryland almost totally ran the catering business there and Blacks and Indians in Florida were negotiating treaties with the Spanish and the British. They were well on their way to becoming a separate nation in 1816. The book says it is for young adults, but I think it is a book that should be read by everyone, regardless of age or color of skin. It is a true eye-opener about the history of Africans in America. Reviewed by Alice Holman of The RAWSISTAZ(tm) Reviewers

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