



***I Am Alfonso Jones* by Tony Medina, illustrated by Stacey Robinson & John Jennings, foreword by Bryan Stevenson**

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ISBN: 9781620142639 (Paperback)

*Age Range: 12 & up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 9 & up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

In the first graphic novel for young readers to focus on police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement, as in *Hamlet*, the dead shall speak—and the living yield even more surprises.

Alfonso Jones can't wait to play the role of Hamlet in his school's hip-hop rendition of the classic Shakespearean play. He also wants to let his best friend, Danetta, know how he really feels about her. But as he is buying his first suit, an off-duty police officer mistakes a clothes hanger for a gun, and he shoots Alfonso.

When Alfonso wakes up in the afterlife, he's on a ghost train guided by well-known victims of police shootings, who teach him what he needs to know about this subterranean spiritual world. Meanwhile, Alfonso's family and friends struggle with their grief and seek justice for Alfonso in the streets. As they confront their new realities, both Alfonso and those he loves realize the work that lies ahead in the fight for justice.

Foreword by Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, and author of *Just Mercy*.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "Illuminating and realistic. The outrage and grief are palpable, and the black-and-white illustrations enforce the gut-punching pull of each character's journey. And as Alfonso meets the historical figures who preceded him, readers will understand the systemic racism that underlies these violent cases. A brutally honest and bleak but necessary selection for all graphic novel collections." —[School Library Journal](#), **starred review**

"We are so fortunate that Tony Medina and his generation have taken on their shoulders the classic responsibilities of telling stories that embrace the hearts and souls of not only the individuals but the neighborhoods. A comic book is no longer something to laugh with but something to learn from. *I Am Alfonso Jones* is incredibly enlightening." —**Nikki Giovanni**

"In the aftermath of his senseless murder at the hands of a policeman, Alfonso's story powerfully illustrates the value inherent in every human life and the tragedy of loss suffered by all who are impacted. With echoes of Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*, by the book's conclusion, you too will be saying, *I Am Alfonso Jones*." —**LeVar Burton, actor, director, author, and reading activist**

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“Medina, Robinson, and Jennings do for us what the ghosts do for Alfonso in their story. They help us to see. They help us to remember. They help us to understand. A must read.” —**Gene Luen Yan, award-winning author of *American Born Chinese***

“Brimming with history and spirituality, *I Am Alfonso Jones* is a refreshing and necessary exploration into police brutality. With both word and art, Medina and Jennings have breathed new life into this longstanding movement.” —**Ibi Zoboi, award-winning author of *American Street***

“I can’t say enough how important, beautiful, heartbreaking, and tremendous a book this is. Read it. Gift it to a young person in your life. Shout it from the rooftops. *I Am Alfonso Jones* is a crucial part of the conversation and it demands to be heard.” —**Daniel José Older, award-winning author of *Shadowshaper***

“[Medina] preserves a thoughtful perspective and a sense of balanced humanity through Alfonso’s loving family and his school cohort, and he staves off suffocating solemnity with a lyrical turn of phrase and insightful allusions to literary ghosts. The illustrators evoke honest emotion but allow figures to burst with an animated energy that offsets the high verbosity.” —[Booklist](#)

“Powerful, heart-rending. . . There are no pat solutions here, and readers are left to wonder if Alfonso will ever leave the ghost train.” —[Kirkus Review](#)

“Enlivened by high-voltage sequential artwork from Robinson and Jennings, Medina takes on a host of difficult questions. . . At the story’s heart is Alfonso’s mother’s plea: if the officer’s school had taught him more about the world, she mourns, he might have seen Alfonso ‘as a teenager... as an American, as a human.’” —[Publishers Weekly](#)

“Provides young readers with a narrative that not only addresses the complexity and history of police brutality but also discusses climate change, gun control, the criminalization of Black males, the Black Lives Matter movement, youth activism, Afro Latinidad, and so much more. . . Tony Medina’s use of New York slang will empower urban youth to see themselves as intellectuals capable of having academic conversations using their own dialect to discuss literature.” —[Social Justice Books](#)

“What a phenomenal graphic novel. . . This look at the prison industrial complex, the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality, and the various systems of violence and oppression that have always existed in this country is devastating and important.” —[Teen Librarian Toolbox](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- YALSA’s Top Ten Great Graphic Novels for Teens (American Library Association)
- New York Public Library Best Books for Kids & Teens
- In the Margins Book Awards Top Ten Titles of the Year
- *Forbes* Best Graphic Novels
- Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) Choices
- Skipping Stones Honor Book (*Skipping Stones Magazine*)
- Black-Eyed Susan Book Award Graphic Novel Nominee, Grades 6-9 (Maryland Association of School Librarians)

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MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Teacher's Guide](#)
- [I Am Alfonso Jones Foreword & Author's Note](#)
- [Book Trailer](#)
- [American Library Association Webinar: Comics as a Powerful Lens for Social Justice](#)
- [San Francisco Public Library In-Conversation with I Am Alfonso Jones creative team](#)
- [The Children's Book Podcast Interview with Tony Medina](#)
- [NCTE Language Arts: Alfonso Jones Matters by Tony Medina](#)
- [Howard Magazine: Casualty of the Culture War by Tony Medina](#)
- [Forbes: 'I Am Alfonso Jones' Brings Powerful BLM Message To Young Adult Graphic Fiction](#)
- [Daily Kos: Why is a graphic novel for teens that Nikki Giovanni calls "incredibly enlightening" banned?](#)

AUTHOR STATEMENT

“What I wish *I Am Alfonso Jones* achieves is not solely to open up dialogues about issues of race and class and police brutality, among other topics the graphic novel addresses, but to also inspire and instigate activism in the form of fighting for better, more humane and responsible policing. I also want to put human faces and universal narratives to the lives of those destroyed by police violence and overaggression due to stereotypes, racism, anger, paranoia, and fear. . . How one could be yanked from one's life at a moment's notice, and how the bullets that destroy a young boy's brown flesh could do such irreparable damage to a family, a community, an entire nation. That we hear from Alfonso in the afterlife of such ruin is a miracle of fiction. That Alfonso's death—though heartbreakingly senseless—is not in vain, but a symbol of resistance to police brutality and racism—is a miracle of faith.” —**Tony Medina**

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.