



**Advances in Race and  
Ethnicity in Education**

Volume 9

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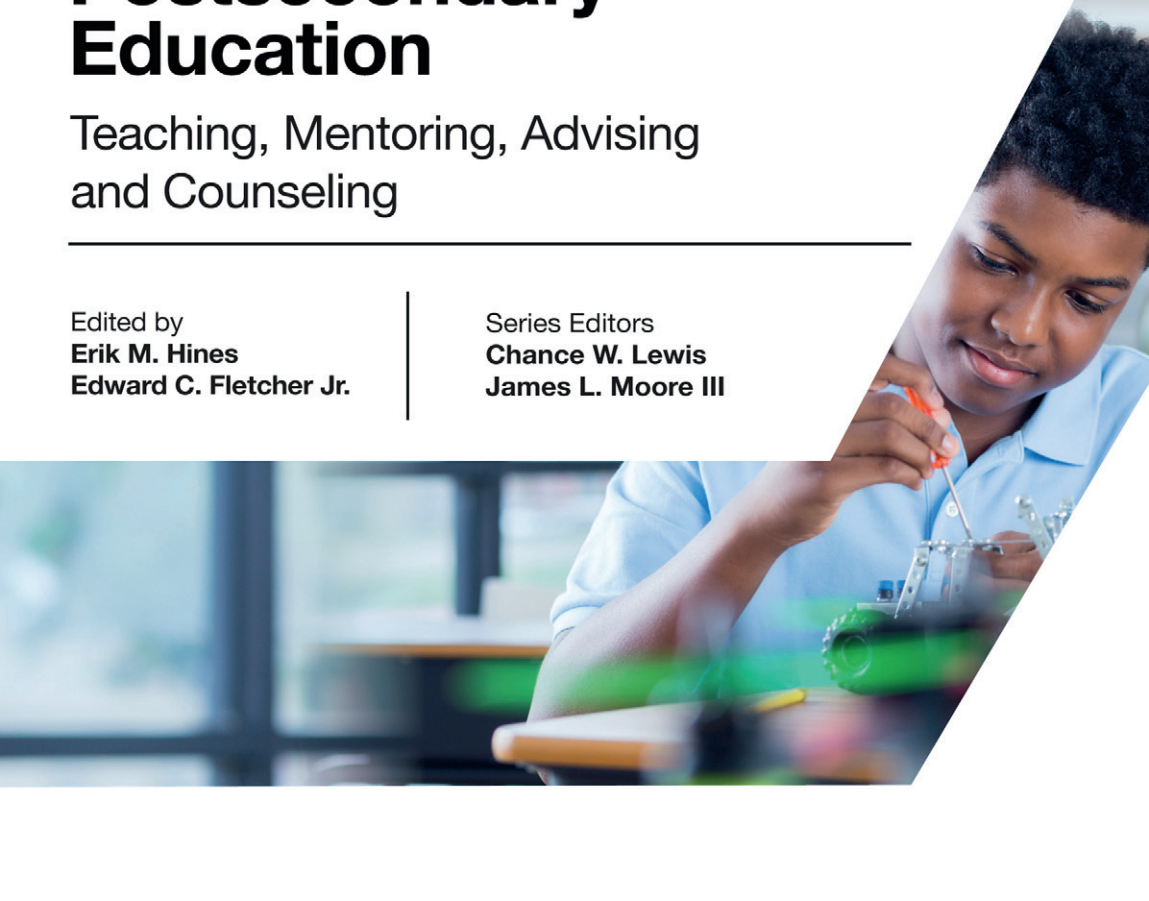
# **Black Males in Secondary and Postsecondary Education**

Teaching, Mentoring, Advising  
and Counseling

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Edited by  
**Erik M. Hines**  
**Edward C. Fletcher Jr.**

Series Editors  
**Chance W. Lewis**  
**James L. Moore III**



**BLACK MALES IN SECONDARY  
AND POSTSECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

# ADVANCES IN RACE AND ETHNICITY IN EDUCATION

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ADVANCES IN RACE AND ETHNICITY IN EDUCATION  
VOLUME 9

**BLACK MALES IN  
SECONDARY AND  
POSTSECONDARY  
EDUCATION: TEACHING,  
MENTORING, ADVISING  
AND COUNSELING**

EDITED BY

**ERIK M. HINES**

*George Mason University, USA*

AND

**EDWARD C. FLETCHER JR.**

*The Ohio State University, USA*



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India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*First, I dedicate this book to my sons, Erik Michael and Harper. I continue to advocate and educate individuals and systems on their behalf to ensure they have an easier path than me. Second, I dedicate this book to every Black man and boy who has questioned whether they are good enough for life and whatever endeavor they choose to pursue. I say to them, you are fearfully and wonderfully made and that you are the envy of the world!*

—Erik M. Hines

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experience and conducts research on leadership preparation. Dr Small's research foci includes exploring the intersections of gender and race in leadership preparation programs, leadership learning for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion on K-12 campuses, and implications of leading for literacy instruction for Black male students.

**Marcus L. Smith**, MS, is a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. His research and teachings focus on the intersection of Black masculinities, sports, and social and academic achievement. More specifically, his current research analyzes how the racial mindsets of college basketball coaches impact the mentoring they provide to Black student-athletes and the holistic development of Black student-athletes. Prior to this role, Smith worked as a high school and college basketball coach where he supported the social, academic, and athletic development of Black male student-athletes.

**Jasmin Spain**, MEd, has two decades of higher education experience, currently serving as the Assistant Vice President of Student Support at Pitt Community College (North Carolina). Jasmin serves as an Equity Coach for the Lumina Foundation associated R.E.A.C.H. Collaborative (Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education). Jasmin is the Founder and Chief Visionary Officer of the consulting agency, The M.A.I.N. Initiative LLC, as well as the Founder and President of the registered nonprofit, U Good Bro, Incorporated. Jasmin is an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and is also a Campaign for Black Male Achievement American Express Leadership Fellow.

**Sam Steen**, PhD, is a Professor, Licensed Professional School Counselor, and Director of the Diversity Research Action Consortium, who specializes in school counseling, group work and cultivating Black students' academic identity development. He was a school counselor for 10 years. Two objectives guide his scholarship: (1) to further develop creative and culturally sustaining school-based counseling interventions that improve student achievement including The Achieving Success Everyday Group Model (ASE Group Model) designed to promote social emotional and academic development for students of color and (2) to explore issues related to the training and preparation of preservice counselors and school counselors.

**Nicholas T. Vick**, EdD, is the current Associate Dean of Communications and Humanities and Director of the Honors Program at Tallahassee Community College. He is a seasoned administrator and instructor dedicated to student success. Nick has received numerous awards for his work in academic support including the North Carolina Tutoring and Learning Association Center of the Year, the Frank L. Christ Outstanding Center recognition from the National College Learning Center Association, and, most recently, the Association of Florida Colleges' Technology Commission Award.

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currently serving Middletown High School in Connecticut as Director of School Counseling. Bobbi-Jo is researching counselors' readiness to offer comprehensive career counseling to Black Boys and postsecondary transitions for Black Boys. She is also an education consultant for the National Center for Women in Information Technology, where she works with Counselors for Computing (C4C) to expand computer science access to women and people of color.

**Ryan Wright, MEd**, is a current doctoral student in Western Michigan's Counseling Psychology program. Prior to pursuing his doctoral degree Ryan obtained his Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of the District of Columbia. As a native of Washington, DC Ryan has served as a community mental health therapist and student support staff in Washington, DC schools prior to pursuing training as a therapist.

## FOREWORD

There are times in history when certain books must be written! *Black Males in Secondary and Postsecondary Education: Teaching, Mentoring, Advising and Counseling* is one of these books! The famous words of W. E. B. DuBois (1903) are still relevant today where he noted, “how does it feel to be a problem?” Given the current state of our nation’s political and educational climate, Black male students in our nation’s educational system have been relegated to a substandard system where they have garnered media attention and a national spotlight not for the positive attributes they bring to the educational setting but for negative stories and headlines that are oftentimes manufactured to get likes and clicks.

I want to be crystal clear. Many Black male students are facing an academic death in our nation’s secondary and postsecondary educational environments. Unfortunately, educators continue to make excuses why it is not their fault that Black male students are not achieving academically. However, they never discuss what is in their power to change when Black males students enter secondary and postsecondary schools in this great nation. As a result, this book is a welcome addition to the education knowledge base as it provides a new and fresh perspective on how to effectively serve Black male students via teaching, mentoring, advising, and counseling.

It is my hope that this book reaches the educators, counselors, and other stakeholders that it needs to reach to make a positive difference for Black male students to achieve academically in the most affluent country in the world. We can no longer, in this age of educational accountability, continue to stand by and watch the achievement levels of this student population be at or near the bottom of every major academic barometer and be comfortable with our work as education professionals. Once the education profession chooses to fully embrace the educational potential of Black male students, we will see transformation happen for Black male students that want to achieve at a high level but are in educational environments that do not develop their full potential.

This book, *Black Males in Secondary and Postsecondary Education: Teaching, Mentoring, Advising and Counseling* is also for Black parents who send their Black males to school expecting something great to happen only to be met with disappointment at the door of the school building or the postsecondary institution. The greatness they expect for their Black males is why many work one, two, or even three jobs to make sure these young Black males have food on the table and a roof over their head just so they can make it to school! Unfortunately, when their Black males matriculate through our nation’s schools, they are met with “educational rhetoric.” This educational rhetoric tells the parents all that is perceived to be wrong with their Black male child(ren) rather than how the

schooling experience will put them in the best position to have a positive impact on their lives.

Finally, this book embraces the voices, hopes, and dreams of scholars who embody the faith that Black students to have a right to a quality education in this country. We thank you for valuable contributions so that one day the education profession can reach its full potential by serving the educational needs of Black male students. I have come to learn that we have to continue to push until this change happens. This is why I commend Dr Hines and Dr Fletcher for this valuable contribution to the education profession. An intentional focus on Black Males in Secondary and Postsecondary Education is exactly what we need at this moment. It is my hope that this book will spark a new movement of Black male academic success!

Chance W. Lewis, PhD  
Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Urban Education  
Director, The Urban Education Collaborative  
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## REFERENCE

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PART I

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY  
SETTINGS

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## CHAPTER 1

# GETTING GRAPHIC: RESISTING ANTI-BLACKNESS VIA THE VISUAL NARRATIVES OF BLACK BOYS

Christian M. Hines and LaNorris D. Alexander

### ABSTRACT

*Comics and graphic novels can disrupt traditional texts by challenging the “worship of the written word” (Torres, 2019), a feature of white supremacy that perpetuates textual hierarchies within educational spaces. Giving all of our students access to contemporary literature that centers Black youth perspectives is not only important in decolonizing literature education but also in presenting a holistic view of Black childhood. They can be used in the classroom as subjects to challenge stereotypical depictions by centering experiences, ideas, and concepts that are often marginalized in traditional curriculum. Within this chapter, we focus on comics and graphic novels as tools to enact students’ multiliteracies and to analyze visual stories depicting BlackBoy adolescence, using the frameworks of BlackBoy Crit Pedagogy (Bryan, 2022), an equity framework that interrogates the interdisciplinary ways that Black boy students’ literacy learning can be formed through the teaching and learning of Blackness, maleness, and the schooling experiences of Black boys. We utilize this framework to analyze the use of diverse comics and graphic novels to facilitate critical conversations of bringing inclusive visual texts into the classroom. We invite practitioners to reimagine curricular ideas and content centered on empowerment and Black boy adolescence and how those ideas are presented to youth through a variety of visual narratives.*

**Keywords:** Comics; Black boys; literature; literacy; classroom; pedagogy

Literature creates avenues for students to question and challenge the societal and cultural infrastructure that exists around them. Students are able to make connections, understand commonalities, and appreciate cultural differences as opposed to engaging in “othering” of cultures and ethnicities that differ from their own. The notion of “othering” can be combatted by counter storytelling and including silenced stories that give voice and agency to a demographic that is typically marginalized and misrepresented. These untold counter stories are being written and told, but they are just rarely amplified.

Literature can be used as a tool that perpetuates colonialism by enacting the teaching of canonical texts that prominently center whiteness and the white gaze. Usually within these texts, Black boys are either nonexistent or only secondary to the white characters and subjected to stereotypes or some form of racial violence. To shift the focus of the centering of Black boys’ perspectives and lived experiences, teachers should steer away from only teaching and reading narratives that perpetuate damaging and oppressive beliefs (Young et al., 2018) and move toward promoting more inclusive books within their classroom that promote equity of voice and liberation of racist ideologies. Providing students with literature that center Black boys and the multilayered ways they exist aids in the work of (re)shaping societal views and fighting against adultification bias – when Black children are seen as more adult than their white counterparts (Morris, 2018). “In children’s books, seeing themselves portrayed visually and textually as realistically human was essential to letting them know that they are valued in the social context in which they are growing up” (Bishop, 2012, p. 9). Giving our students access to diverse texts, specifically texts that center Black boys, challenges them to think critically and holistically about the everyday lives of those around them.

In children’s and young adult literature, the need for representation has become apparent so that adolescents may see themselves and their world reflected on the pages that they are consuming. There has been an outcry for diverse literature in the form of popular hashtags such as (Dávila, 2015) and (Whaley, n.d.). Representation matters in all media forms. Visual images are a commodity; they are bought, sold, valued, and traded. There is a lot to be said of seeing yourself within the confines of your own story, “images have the power to make something more real, more visceral, and more representational,” (Moeller & Becnel, 2018, p. 8). Within a predominantly white publishing industry, it is important that children and young adults see themselves within the pages of the literature they are reading.

Research shows that children of color begin to discover their racial identity and focus on their ethnic development around middle school. Having characters that reflect their diverse cultural and ethnic background can aid in their racial development and challenge stereotypes. However, when considering diverse stories, one must look at who chooses the story, and how those diverse stories being told? “Stereotyping, caricature, and marginalization of people of color, poor and working-class children and families, gender and sexual minorities, immigrants, and other minoritized groups have been persistent problems in children’s literature,” (Thomas, 2019, p. 5). Even though there are diverse books being advertised and celebrated, statistics gathered by the Cooperative Children’s

Book Center (CCBC) states that in 2018, the percentage of books depicting diverse characters were as follows: 50% white, 27% animals/other, 10% African American, 7% Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American, 5% Latinx, and 1% American Indians/First Nations. When considering that there is scarcity in representation, one must also consider who is authoring these diverse stories, the “#OwnVoices movement that calls for more youth literature written by people of color about their experiences” (Moeller & Becnel, 2018). Providing adolescents with not only compelling literature but also literature that authentically represents the world around them helps to create what Rudine Sims Bishop called “sliding glass doors,” where the reader uses their imagination to walk through into an author’s created world. Some of those worlds are visualized on the pages of graphic novels and comics.

## GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMICS IN THE CLASSROOM

Reading is a transactional process where the reader is an active participant within the spatial and sequential time progression of words and visual images (Freire, 1983; Iser, 1972; Rosenblatt, 1978). Graphic novels are becoming more commonly used in the classroom (Sheehan, 2018) and are increasingly the most checked out books in school libraries (Botzakis et al., 2017). Adolescents of all ages enjoy comics and graphic novels because the form combines both visual images and text, and youth can be immersed in an illustrated story within this medium (Yang, 2008). Comics usually refer to serialized issues that are distributed weekly and sometimes monthly. Graphic novels tend to be one cohesive story bound together in a 100 plus page book. Within publishing, serialized comic stories are now being combined in trade paperback form and they also are considered a type of graphic novels (Botzakis et al., 2017; Brenner, 2011). Graphic novels aid in formulating adolescent ideas of what is given prominence in terms of societal standards and influence. It provides navigational guidance to make sense of their everyday lived experiences (Moeller & Becnel, 2018), “The combination of image, text, and story that graphic novels employ makes their influence a visceral and powerful one” (p. 2). What adolescents see on the page leaves an impression on them about the world at large. The stories that are told should be accurate and racially authentic.

When presenting literature in the classroom, teachers can integrate text that evokes engaging in critical literacy. Critical literacy is “focused on the uses of literacy for social justice in marginalized and disenfranchised communities” (Moore & Begoray, 2017, p. 173); educators can promote critical literacy in the classroom using comics and graphic novels to cultivate a space that encourages discussion and promotes socioemotional learning. The reading of these visual texts engages the reader in varied levels of critical analysis, “reading comic books requires an active, though largely subconscious, participation on the part of the reader” (Versaci, 2001, p. 63). Engagement in visual literacy is a sensory experience (Parker, 2021) and an embodied practice (Snowber, 2012); the placement of text to images allot for nonlinear ways to comprehend time, space, and creates

“visual permeance” (Yang, 2008) where control of the information and processes are held completely by the reader (p. 187). Comics and graphic novels captivate the interests of a wide range of diverse learners.

Adolescents in the 21st century interact and learn across multiple visual mediums and platforms (i.e., gaming, social media, streaming services etc.); the incorporation of this visual medium enhances the quality of the reading and comprehension process. Through visual representation, students can interact with text and see not only themselves reflected on the page but other ethnicities they may not be familiar with. “Graphic novels are helping to shape children’s ideas of what is normal, acceptable, and powerful in a society they are just learning to navigate on their own.” Using critical literacy while reading diverse comics and graphic novels allows the reader to question how the character of color is being represented in the story, and is that representation accurate and authentic?

## BLACKBOY CRIT PEDAGOGY

Education when operating at its full capacity should provide opportunities for growth and the nurturing of knowledge for all students. Students should thrive in educational spaces that are framed around equity and access (Minor, 2018). Black and brown communities seek educational justice, however, because educational systems were not designed for marginalized communities to be successful; those systems need to be abolished and reimagined for all students to thrive and be successful. To work toward the establishment of education as a liberatory space for Black and brown students, educators have to be intentional and conscious in their efforts to not homogenize the identities, cultures, and experiences of their students. This transformation is possible by shifting away from harmful and racist practices and creating educational enclaves where students feel safe, supported, and are able to thrive. Abolitionist educator Bettina Love’s (2019) work highlights the ramifications of the “education survival complex” (p. 27) where students are taught harmful practices such as policing of their bodies, exclusionary curricula, standardized testing, etc., that prepares them for learning how to “just get by,” where they are always surviving and living on the cusp of regularly having to find a way through difficult learning and living experiences. It is essential for educators to take up resistance against educational inequities that are harmful to Black and Brown students and create educational spaces where students can thrive and not constantly fight to survive.

Bryan’s (2022) conceptual framework of *BlackBoy Crit Pedagogy* interrogates and provides practical teaching strategies for acknowledging and affirming the educational experiences of Black boys. His research builds off the work of critical race theory (CRT) and how it is utilized in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), Black Male Studies (Curry, 2017), and Black Critical Theory (Dumas & Ross, 2016), otherwise known as BlackCrit. BlackCrit was created under the premise that CRT covered race broadly and did not specifically address the “Black experience” and issues and structures that surround and promote anti-Blackness. BlackCrit explicates a need for theorizing surrounding Blackness

to be specifically named and located alongside CRT. BlackBoy Crit Pedagogy centralizes pedagogical empowerment that is rooted four specific framings:

- (1) Combating *anti-Black misandry*, which is the derision of Black boys/males that permeates social structures, policies, government, institutions, education, etc.
- (2) The centering of the lived experiences and educational practices of Blackness, Black males including teachers and students.
- (3) A healing counter culture pedagogy for Black boys.
- (4) Family and community centered as collaborative partners in education.

Bryan also homes in on the impact educators have on influencing the types of texts that students have access to. He brings attention to what he calls *pedagogical malfeasance* – teaching and learning centered around whiteness as a dominant way of existing while simultaneously othering Black boys (Bryan, 2022, p. 46). He implores that educator(s) must work to dismantle acts of pedagogical malfeasance in schooling spaces. Within his own schooling experience, Bryans' elementary teacher affectionately named "Mr. C" provided books that were diverse in representation and worked toward the dismantling of anti-Blackness by providing varied constructions of Blackness free from white supremacy (Bryan, 2022, p. 5). This form of critical literacy (Freire, 1983) allows students to read the world through the word.

While Bryans work focuses on the early formative years of Black boy education, we believe his research is applicable in varied educational stages. Utilizing this framework in ELA classrooms centers Black literacies and voices in texts, art, media, etc., and provides students a foundation to develop their sociopolitical consciousness and critique the historical and contemporary positioning of Black boys within the structural dynamics of society. We utilize the BlackBoy Crit Pedagogy to interrogate several comics and graphic novels; *Quincredible: Quest to be the Best* by Rodney Barnes, *Miles Morales: The Ultimate Spiderman* by Brian Michael Bendis, *New Kid* and *Class Act* by Jerry Craft, *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander, and *Monster: A graphic novel* by Walter Dean Myers and adapted by Guy A. Sims, that challenge perspectives and biases of Black boys via counter storytelling and visualizations that depict nuanced ways of being for Black boys. We selected these texts as they share important principles and details paramount to inclusive learning as well as social, emotional, and behavioral development.

## EXPLORING BLACK BOYHOOD IN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

### *Quincredible, Vol 1: Quest to Be the Best*

Written by Black screenwriter Rodney Barnes, within this story, the reader is introduced to Quinton West who resides with his family in New Orleans,

Louisiana. Quin's life is forever changed when a meteor shower hits his parish, and he is left with the power of invulnerability. Quin is a loner who spends the majority of his time making electronics and discovering ways to keep his home and his parents safe. Quin is very in tune with the needs of his community and the sociopolitical structures of being Black in his world. Quin is a normal teenager who is trying to find his place in his world; he has a crush on a popular girl, trying his hand at activism and wondering what is the meaning of it all. Through a series of events, Quin discovers what it means to become a hero and protect the ones you love and even the ones you don't care for.

*Quincredible* tackles various social justice and racial issues such as displacement of Black communities' post Hurricane Katrina, police brutality, gang violence, and manipulation of marginalized communities. This text offers the readers ways to analyze visually the depictions of these social justice issues. Reading this text via the framings of BlackBoy Crit Pedagogy showcases to the reader the value of family and community. The main point of contention in this narrative is the increased violence and access to advanced weaponry in Quin's neighborhood. Quin and his team of enhanced humans seek to discover the reasons why they are being targeted and who is infiltrating and supplying the local people with weapons. Quin explains to his team that although it is important that they track down who is distributing the weapons, it is even more important that the locals aren't punished for that crime. He states that the people in the community are already still recovering from a natural disaster and a government that is not aiding and supporting them in the ways that are most needed, their issues are systemic, and the community needs to know that their local heroes support them even when their government does not. It is within these panels that the communal practice of Black culture is evident. As superheroes, Quin and his team want to do more than "police" their neighborhood. They want to give back and create a way forward. It is in this vein they are embracing the framing of family and community as collaborators in educating the community in safe noncriminalistic ways to better the neighborhood.

Quin himself embodies a healing pedagogy for Black boys. He starts out as a loner but ends up with a group of people that support him and want the best for him. His parents are a strong support system for him; they encourage his inventing while still allowing him time to find his place in the world and letting him know his home will always be a safe haven for him. This story can disrupt negative stereotypes of nonsupportive Black homes, while also adding that Black boys too need the space to discover who they are as they navigate their own adolescence. Quin has a deep need to protect his family by wanting to create an alarm system to keep them safe, but that need to protect also manifests when he decides to use his power and his intellect to protect his neighborhood. Quin has obstacles in his way that come in the form of local bullies, police, and villains. Yet his passion for the people, his people, Black people never wanes.

*Quincredible* provides Black boys with a chance to see the development of an everyday hero. Written by a Black man, Quin's narrative shows the authentic multiplicity of Black males and their nuanced journey to identity formation. Within this graphic text, they are given depictions and nuances of Black