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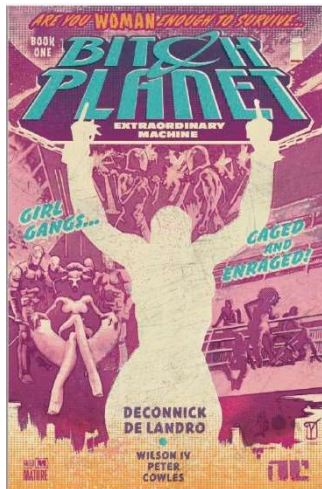
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### **Winners of the First Annual VLA Graphic Novel Diversity Award Announced**

*In 2015, the Virginia Library Association Diversity & Inclusion Forum developed a new endeavor, the VLA Graphic Novel Diversity Award. The GNDA celebrates diversity captured within the pages of graphic novels. Ten publishers submitted 22 titles (published in 2015) in two categories: Adult and Youth. The Forum is proud to announce the winners and honor books selected for the 2015 award.*

*The winners of each title will receive \$500 from the VLA Diversity and Inclusion Forum, and will be recognized at the 25th Annual Scholarship and Awards Banquet at the VLA Annual Conference on October 26 from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$55 if purchased before October 12. [Click here for more information.](#)*

## **Winners: Adult**



***Bitch Planet, Volume 1: Extraordinary Machine, by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro. Published by Image Comics.***

Bitch Planet explores a futuristic world that has swapped the glass ceiling for prison bars. Women found to be non-compliant are sent to live the rest of their lives on a prison colony out in space. Any range of offenses can cause a woman to be labeled as such, from murder, to not obeying their husbands, to just existing in a way that does not conform to society's desires, a category that hits women of color the hardest. Writer Kelly Sue DeConnick intentionally flexes recognizable stereotypes but never reduces her characters to caricatures, and artist Valentine De Landro gives each character strength and individuality. It's a feminist twist on the standard prison exploitation genre, but it especially stands out for having almost all of the major characters being women of color, LGBTQ+, and a variety of all body types and ages.



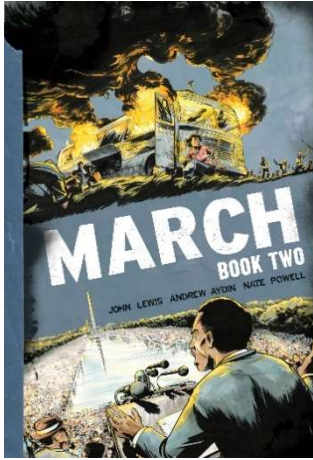
and their two children.

**KELLY SUE DECONNICK** got her start in the comic industry adapting Japanese and Korean comics into English. Five years and more than ten thousand pages of adaptation later, she transitioned to American comics with *30 Days of Night: Eben and Stella*, for Steve Niles and IDW. Work for Image, Boom, Oni, Humanoids, Dark Horse, DC, Vertigo, and Marvel soon followed. Today, DeConnick is best known for surprise hits like Carol Danvers' rebranding as Captain Marvel and the Eisner-nominated mythological western, *PRETTY DEADLY*; the latter was co-created with artist Emma Ríos. DeConnick's most recent venture, the sci-fi kidney-punch called *BITCH PLANET*, co-created with Valentine De Landro, launched to rave reviews in December 2014. DeConnick lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband, Matt Fraction,



**VALENTINE DE LANDRO** is a Canadian comic book artist, illustrator, and designer, working professionally since 2005. His credits include titles from Marvel, DC Comics, IDW, Valiant, and Dark Horse. He's known for *Marvel Knights: 4* and *X-Factor*. He is the co-creator of *BITCH PLANET* with Kelly Sue DeConnick.

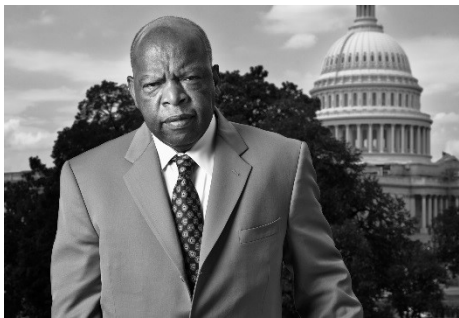
# Winners: Youth



***March, Book 2* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell.  
Published by Top Shelf Productions.**

*March* goes far beyond the dry recounting of textbook history by taking the reader along on the freedom rides, lunch counter sit-ins, and demonstrations of the Civil Rights Movement. Lewis and Aydin skillfully weave a narrative that takes the reader on a journey from the streets of Tennessee and Alabama in the 1960s to Washington, DC in 2009, linking two pivotal events: the famous “I Have a Dream” speech of Dr. Martin Luther King and the inaugural speech of President Barak Obama. Powell’s powerful artwork brings to life the most painful and hopeful moments of our nation’s history in bold

black and white panels and dynamic facial expression. This powerful and personal recounting of the Civil Rights Movement opens a doorway to the past and invites young readers to experience people and events that fundamentally transformed a nation. It gets the history right while reminding the reader of the truly human experience of choice and fear that every great movement in history must face.



**JOHN LEWIS** in the U.S. Representative for Georgia’s 5<sup>th</sup> District and an American icon known for his role in 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.

Photo Credit: Eric Etheridge



**ANDREW AYDIN**, an Atlanta native, currently serves as Digital Director & Policy Advisor to Congressman John Lewis in Washington, D.C. previously, he served as communications director and press secretary during Rep. Lewis' 2008 and 2010 reelection campaigns, as District Aide to Rep. John Larson (D-CT), and as Special Assistant to Connecticut Lt. Governor Kevin Sullivan. Andrew is a graduate of the Lovett School in Atlanta, Trinity College in Hartford, and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Photo Credit: Bob Adelman



**NATE POWELL** is a New York Times best-selling comic book artist/writer born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1978. He began self-publishing at age 14, and graduated from the School of Visual Arts in 2000. His work includes the critically acclaimed *Any Empire*, *Swallow Me Whole* (winner of the Eisner Award and Ignatz Award, finalist for the LA Times Book Prize), *The Year of the Beasts*, *The Silence of Our Friends*, and *Sounds of Your Name*. In addition to March, Powell is also currently drawing the graphic novel adaptation of Rick Riordan's #1 international bestseller *Heroes of Olympus: The Lost Hero*, while writing and drawing his own forthcoming graphic novel *Cover* and assembling the short story collection *You Don't Say*. Photo Credit: Rett Peek

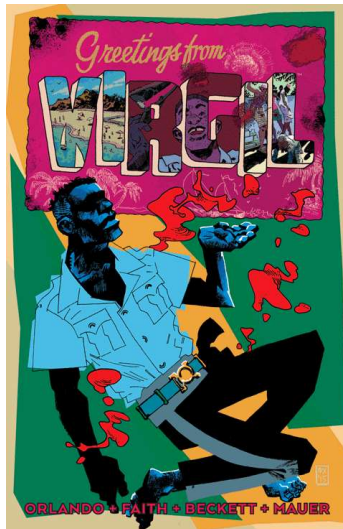
# Honor Books: Adult



***The Infinite Loop* by Pierrick Colinet and Elsa Charretier. Published by IDW Publishing.**

*The Infinite Loop* is a fun melding of science fiction, romance, LGBTQ+ advocacy fiction, and civil rights history lesson. Pierrick Colinet and Elsa Charretier take the reader on a journey through time and space with plenty of references to science fiction fandoms sprinkled throughout for the reader to enjoy. Teddy's job is eliminating anomalies in the space-time continuum. When Teddy discovers the latest anomaly, Ano, she can't help falling in love with her. This simple plot is the basis for a time-hopping interdimensional science fiction romance with a clear message of acceptance. The novel explicitly draws attention to the intersectional nature of civil rights work and leaves the reader hopeful and energized about the future of LGBTQ+ people in society.

The artwork perfectly complements the fun and vibrant feel of the story. It is fluid and flowing and will leave the reader feeling more like they are watching a video than flipping pages in a book.

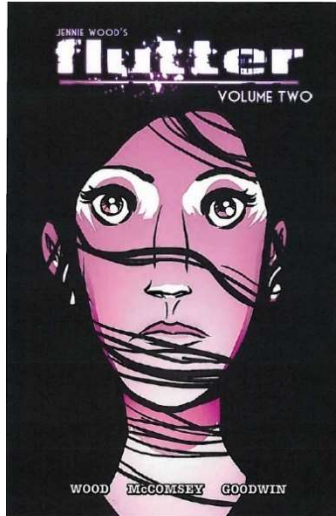


***Virgil* by Steve Orlando and JD Faith. Published by Image Comics**

*Virgil* stood out among its peers because it put a new spin on the revenge/exploitation genre and its anti-hero archetype, as it centers on a gay lead - a rarity in the genre. Its titular character spent years hiding his sexuality from many of the people closest to him, because as a cop Virgil is all too aware of how inhospitable Jamaica can be to the LGBT community. However when his lover Ervan is ripped from his side, Virgil has to fight to get him back. The artwork and coloring by JD Faith and Chris Beckett does an excellent job of matching the frenetic pace of Steve Orlando's story, which readers will feverishly devour from beginning to end.



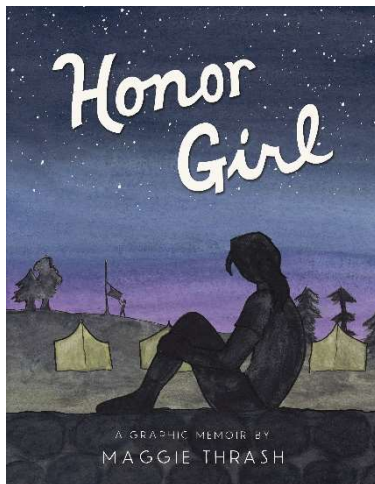
# Honor Books: Youth



***Flutter, Volume Two: Don't Let Me Die Nervous* by Jennie Wood, Jeff McComsey and Chris Goodwin. Published by 215 Ink.**

Jennie Wood's *Flutter Vol. 2: Don't Let Me Die Nervous* is a stand-out book in every sense. It's a spy thriller as well as a coming of age (and coming-out) story, taking the best of both genres and creating a modern book which speaks to a generation's struggle to define themselves. Lily's shape-shifting, gender-bending powers may not be universally relatable, but her struggle always feels grounded as she deals with the judgment and fear of those who stand out from the mainstream just by being themselves. The darkly beautiful artwork of Jeff McComsky and Chris Goodwin works in harmony with Wood's sharp dialogue, and together they leave even the most

skeptical reader wondering -- where will Lily's journey from small town fugitive to big city hero take us next?

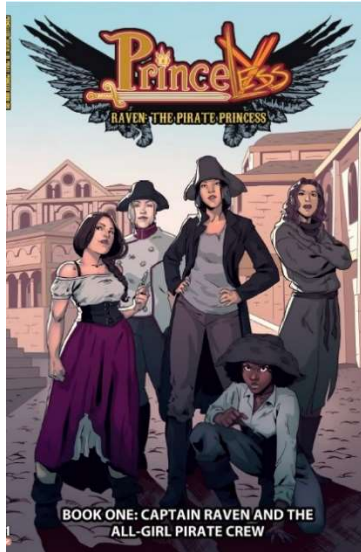


***Honor Girl* by Maggie Thrush. Published by Candlewick Press.**

*Honor Girl* is a heartwarming and bittersweet coming-of-age story that primarily takes place at Camp Bellflower, a very traditional, all-girls summer camp in Appalachia. Drawing on real events, Thrash pulls the reader into an endless, lazy summer where nothing really happens and yet everything does. For 15-year-old Maggie, this is a summer of self-doubt, self-expression, and self-discovery as she comes to terms with her own sexuality and falls hard for Erin, an older, enigmatic female counselor.

Maggie is awkward, insecure, and utterly charming. Hers is the kind of story that will resonate with many readers – not just

LGBT youth – but anyone who has ever felt like their "otherness" separates them from their peers.



***Princeless: Raven the Pirate Princess, Book One: Captain Raven and the All-Girl Pirate Crew* by Jeremy Whitley, Rosy Higgins and Ted Brandt. Published by Action Lab Entertainment**

*Raven the Pirate Princess* is a spin-off of the Eisner Award nominated series *Princeless*—a series that flips the tired damsel-in-distress trope on its head and along the way flipping many other tropes as well. Freed from captivity, Raven Xingtao is ready to set out on her quest for revenge against her brothers who imprisoned her and took her inheritance and birthright. She first needs a crew but is faced with sexism and scorn from the men she attempts to recruit. Undeterred, Raven puts together a racially-diverse, all-female crew whose gender, personalities, or physical characteristics have set them apart or made them outcasts. Ted

Brandt's and Rosy Higgins' art is gorgeous and less cartoony than other books in the series. Exhilarating action, snappy dialogue, humor, and characters, *Raven the Pirate Princess* will resonate with readers of any age, gender, or background.

Congratulations again to all the winners and to all those who submitted works for the great and wonderful material that made the judges' task much more difficult. The 2016 VLA Graphic Novel Diversity Award is now open for submissions. We have updated our guidelines, please check out our page at <http://www.vla.org/vla-graphic-novel-diversity-award-2016>. For additional information about the 2015 awards, you can email the 2015 chair at [diversityawardchairodd@gmail.com](mailto:diversityawardchairodd@gmail.com). For information pertaining to the 2016 award, email [diversityawardchaireven@gmail.com](mailto:diversityawardchaireven@gmail.com).

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