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## Section: D21

# Book Review

The March trilogy is a graphic novel which mainly illustrates the Civil Rights Movement. The series is written by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, and it shows how civil rights movements process at the time. The U.S. congressman John Lewis told his story by recalling his own experience back to 1951 when he was a kid living on a farm, and the theme of this trilogy is the motivations behind the civil rights movement, in other words, why African Americans need the civil right movement even risk their life which may include prejudice, pursuit of equal opportunity, racial injustice, hatred, etc.

The first story started with a group of African Americans marching across a bridge. The scene was intense but no background introduction or how it went on later, then the scene jumps to 2009 in Washington D.C. where a Congressman about to attend the inauguration of President. The congressman is our protagonist, John Lewis, and his childhood nickname is Bob. Two boys and their mom came into his office and started to question him about the chicken statues in his office. Bob started to recall his childhood on a farm in Alabama with his family. He treated chickens as his friends because he used to give them a preach, and become a preacher was his dream. Bob would bury the chicken after they died, and he even tried to baptize them. His uncle noticed that John Lewis' talent and drove him to the north to visit his relatives, although he enjoyed the trip and stayed two months then safely returned to his family, he was worried about their safety during the journey. Bob gradually realized how important education was in that fall, and that was the first time he heard of Martin Luther King on the radio. He delivered his first sermon at age sixteen, and the newspaper reported it. Bob met an injustice treatment when he tried to transfer from Nashville to Troy State, and Dr. King wants to offer support if he decided to sue the school, but his family wasn't willing to go through it because the rise they may face. In the book, "At first they wanted to be supportive. But they were afraid. Not just for themselves, but for those around us, our friends and neighbors. They said they didn't want anything to do with filing a suit against the state of Alabama. Noting. Not one thing. I was heartbroken, but it was their decision." (March Book One, 72) From that point, John realized that the importance of equal opportunity and they should fight the society for Africa American's right. They started a group called F.O.R. (Fellowship of Reconciliation) began training students in the ways of pacifism to stage sit-ins at restaurants. This pacifism was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian lawyer who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence. John joined these nonviolent protests, although it often results in harassed, beaten, and hauled off to jail. After serval successful activities, they were taken to the Nashville jail. Even the government lowered their bail to five dollars to let them out quickly, but John and protesters refused to pay. The protesters went to the court after their release, but the judge found them guilty and announced their punishment with fifty dollar or thirty days of jail. After several days in jail, the government released them again. After that, they started a march to mayor's office because someone was trying to attack their lawyer by using a bomb. Finally, they met Mr. West and insist to be allowed to eat at the lunch counters, then they got what they want. The cellphone in the last page demonstrates the unknown upcoming event people will facing, although it probably the bad news, they will face it and solve it no matter what it takes.

The second book opens in the same way that the first one does, John flashes back to his nonviolent protests against unfair treatment of the African Americans during the '60s when he is attending the inauguration of the president. Their sit-in meets more violent in restaurants such as physical contact and verbal abuse, they got locked up and having a fumigator which almost killed them once. They tried the nonviolent protest at the movie theater, not only the white people in line speak rudely to them, but also the police show up and force them out of the ticket line. After the policeman attacked their protester, John led a protest to the violence in front of the movie theater then they were arrested. He refused to bail even he was going to give a senior sermon the next day, and he spends his 21 birthdays in jail. In 1961 John's friend showed him an ad in The Student Voice which looking for people to test the supreme court decision that outlawed segregation and racial discrimination on buses. He arrived at the Fellowship House and reviewed local and state laws, then they sent letters to President Kennedy and other people to explain their plan. After having a nice dinner, they set off in two groups on bus rides, and as always, they decided to accept any arrest or violence but refuse to pay fines. The police officer ignored the white people to beat John and other protesters at the station. When they arrived home with swallowed face, John received a telegram inviting him to Philadelphia for an interview for a volunteer program in India which similar to the peace corps. He decided to go but planned to rejoin the Freedom Riders, however, his group never made it to Birmingham. They were firebombed and attacked shortly, and the Chief of police said that most police officers had a day off because it was Mother's Day. But the truth was, the chief of police promised the KKK fifteen minutes before he sends police to the scene. They decided to continue the ride despite the threat of death because the movement will over if they give up. Diane Nash called Jim Farmer after he told her she might be massacred, she replied: "We realize that, but we can't let them stop us with violence. if we do, the movement is dead."(March Book Two, 50) They continued the ride, but the police emptied the bus except for the Freedom Riders and arrested them. Later they were dropped off at the Tennessee border in the middle of the night, fortunately, they found a homeowner who let them hide, then Leo drove his car to pick them up. In Montgomery, the Freedom Riders suffered a violent attack which almost killed them, eventually, Alabama's Public Safety Director showed up and dispersed the crowd. They went to the church where Dr. King was coming to speak, and marshals arrived to keep the mob away from the church. Around 4:30 in the morning, they were finally left there. The police arrested the Riders in Jackson and put them in jail; they had to live in there for a couple of days. Finally, they found not guilty and freed them. John Lewis enrolled at Fisk University, and Dr. King was taken to jail later. In May they start children protest, and the police can't arrest all of them, so they turned hoses on and sent dogs. Along with more people joined the movement, John was elected. After he moved into Atlanta, he wanted to discuss the situation with President Kennedy, and Dr. King also joined. On August 28, 1963, Dr. King gave his famous speech, and John was the sixth speaker that day, after the speech, John shook hands with the President which was the last time he saw him alive. A few weeks later, a church is firebombed during a youth rally, showing that racial prejudice is continuing.

The third book continues the story ended in book two, which a bomb hits the Birmingham church, and killed several children. The terrible event didn't conjure up the mercy of people but revoke more horrible attack, one policeman shot a teenager black boy and claimed it was an accident. Those events let Dr. King realized the African Americans needed to continue to fight for their rights in many aspects. After the terrible events, John and his friends plan to march to the capital for African American's right to vote. They tried to register people to vote because, in Dallas, there is only 2 percent of African Americans were registered. In order to stop the African Americans to quit vote, they were asked to count the number of jelly beans in a jar before voting. The government was forcing them to quit. The government put John in jail because they start to protest in front of the courthouse. After the Freedom Day event, they realized that African Americans would hold their elections with their candidates to show how they were being excluded. President Johnson took over after President Kennedy's death, and he announced that he would support the civil rights, which seemed encouraging. John and his friends plan to proceed with the Mississippi Freedom Project after the boycotting and decided to train more leaders in 1964. On April 26, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was officially created, it tries to get some African Americans elected into office. A lot of African American students in Ohio come to the Freedom School, and volunteers come to the Mississippi to help register black people to vote. On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act was approved, also banned discrimination in public places. After the Democratic National Convention, the African Americans were upset that President Johnson had turned on them when he didn't need to win the South to win the presidency, the SNCC also falling apart. On December 4, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and met President Johnson to discuss a Voting Rights Act, but the president let him down, so, Dr. King planned a march in Selma but they end up in jail. Finally, in March 1965, they organized a march across the bridge which is the opening scene in the March Book One. Although they were attacked during the march, after Bloody Sunday, they began their march on the capital, and in 1965 Voting Rights Act was signed into law.

To be honest, I feel more comfortable to go through a graphic novel compared to a pure text, and the trilogy vividly showed me that how was the Civil Rights Movement proceed during that time. Although I was uncomfortable when I saw some disrespectful word in those books, I would recommend others to have a look in order to better understand the history at the time. The trilogy is a little bit intense, especially the third book due to its heavy text and almost three hundred pages, but I think it's more interesting than I thought.