

VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD



ADULT SELECTIONS

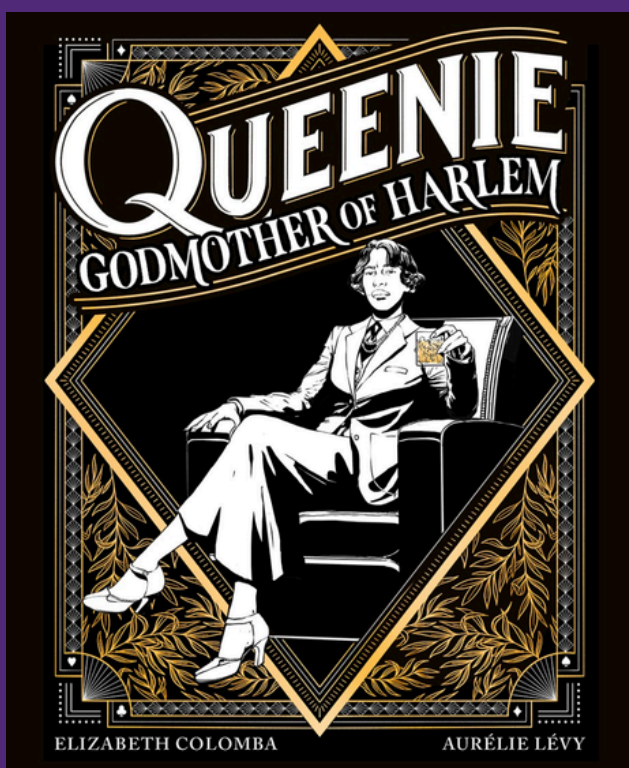
2023 WINNER, HONORS,  
AND OVERFLOW



# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD 2023 ADULT WINNER

The Virginia Library Association Graphic Novel Diversity Award (GNDA) celebrates diversity captured within the pages of graphic novels.

In 2023, our eighth year offering the award, 47 publishers submitted 162 titles in two categories- Adult and Youth. The Committee is proud to announce the winners and honor books selected for the 2023 Award.



## ADULT WINNER

**QUEENIE: GODMOTHER OF  
HARLEM**  
BY ELIZABETH COLOMBA AND  
AURELIE LEVY

**ABRAMS**

**ISBN: 978-1419757747**

**Themes:** Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality

Queenie: Godmother of Harlem tells the story of Stephanie St. Clair, a black woman from Martinique, who sought fortune through racketeering and bootlegging. Despite facing adversity in the early 20th century United States, St. Clair became the Queen of Harlem by supporting and giving back to the black community in New York City. Part gritty true crime drama and part endearing rags-to-riches tale, Queenie: Godmother of Harlem uses a stunning black and white noir art style to depict the little known story of a famous- some may say infamous- New York legend. It isn't often that black success stories are told- especially not about mobsters- but readers will be captivated by this fascinating piece of black history.



# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD ABOUT THE CREATORS



## **Elizabeth Colomba**

From Martinique descent, born and raised in France, Elizabeth Colomba is a representational artist living in New York City. Her previous years as a storyboard artist for Hollywood came in handy to transition from figurative painting to imagining a graphic novel with a cinematic quality. Specialized in postcolonial art, dedicated to reinstalling and liberating the Black body from traditionally restrictive storylines, Colomba analyzes the construction of identity and tangled interrelationship between past and present in our collective identity today. Her works have been exhibited in institutions such as The Met and LACMA and are part of the permanent collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Park Avenue Armory, Yale University, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and JP Morgan.



## **Aurelie Levy**

Aurelie Levy is a screenwriter, novelist, and documentary filmmaker. Born and raised in France, she pursued her higher education in Japan at the prestigious ICU in Tokyo where she studied history. She then extended her film and history studies at UCLA where she met Elizabeth Colomba. She then went on to write and direct six feature-length documentaries. For the past 20 years she has traveled around the globe unveiling relevant stories and addressing current issues. Among the subjects she has tackled are celebrity culture, international adoption, and men in the #MeToo era. Levy writes screenplays and TV series for French and US productions and hosts a podcast on writing with the largest literary media company in France. Other books by the author include the novel *And the Oscar Goes To* (2012) and *The 21st Man* (2021).

# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD ADULT HONORS



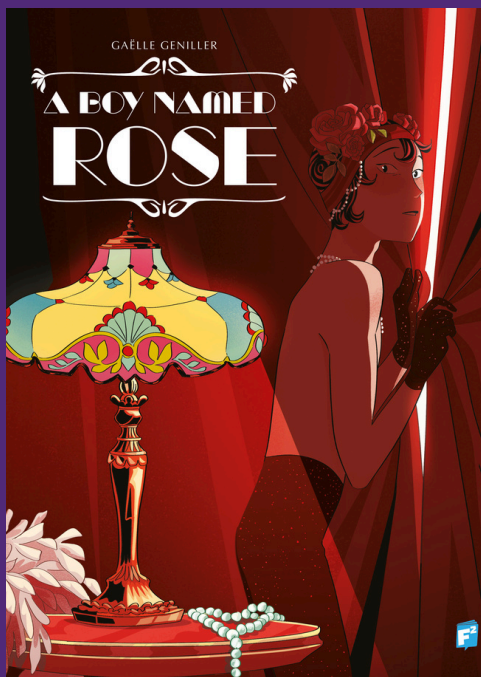
## **OKINAWA**

by **Susumu Higa**

Fantagraphics, ISBN: 978-1683961185

Theme: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality

Okinawa is a series of short stories addressing the realities of the people of Okinawa. Paying special attention to culturally relevant details, Higa uses quickly-realized characters and precise linework to create a series of visually engaging self-contained stories. *Sword of Sand*, originally completed in 1997, focuses on the Battle of Okinawa and World War II. Culturally distinct, the people of Okinawa were forced to participate in Japan's imperial war, leading to a loss of life and the destruction of artifacts. *Mabui*, completed in 2010, examines modern Okinawa and the aftereffects of the war, from the continued and extensive presence of American military bases to the difficult task of revitalizing the economy without losing the island's identity. These stories and their visual presentation create an engaging work that presents North American readers with a complex view of a culture not frequently examined in other media.



## **A BOY NAMED ROSE**

by **Gaelle Geniller**

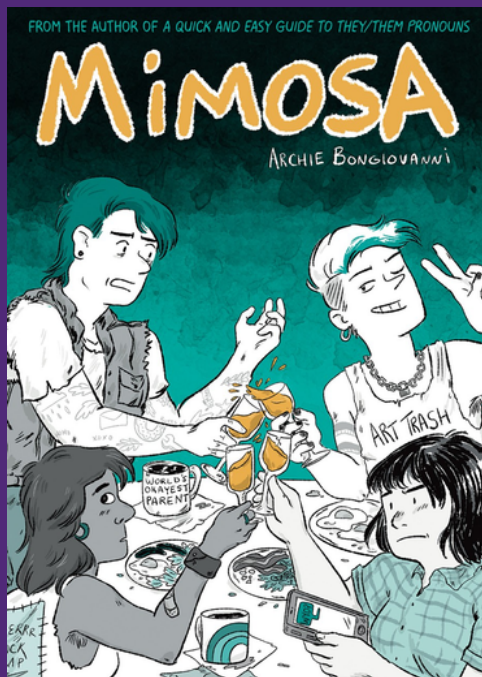
FairSquare Comics, ISBN: 979-8985927863

Theme: LGBTQ+, Feminism

*A Boy Named Rose* is a joyful work about Rose and the other residents and performers of Le Jardin, a cabaret in Paris in the 1920s. Rose is a gender non-conforming young man pursuing his first relationship with Aimé, the son of an aristocratic family. The story also focuses on the women of Le Jardin as they operate a successful business in an era when it was uncommon for women to do so. The beautifully rendered art—featuring cell-shaded color, distinct character design, and interesting panel compositions that borrow from cinematography—combines with the storyline to create a phenomenal work.



# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD ADULT HONORS



## **MIMOSA**

by **Archie Bongiovanni**

ABRAMS, ISBN: 978-1419752438

Theme: LGBTQ+

Mimosa opens with longtime friends Chris, Elise, Jo, and Alex having their regular Sunday brunch (sipping mimosas, of course) and lamenting their lives as thirty-somethings in the queer scene. They decide to plan a party “for queers over 30,” which leads to tension. Jo, performing as Mxtress Josephine, can’t go on stage when her students from Queerrr Rock Camp show up. Elise makes the questionable decision to go home with her boss, while roommate Chris is struggling to make a connection after a messy divorce, and Alex is seemingly oblivious to it all. Texts go unanswered, commitments are forgotten, and friends reveal truths that are hard to grapple with. It’s a story of relatable characters messing up, finding themselves, making amends, and living their lives. Using shades of black and white with turquoise accents, Bongiovanni captures the joy, pain, and mundanity of adult life through dynamic artwork that complements the tone of the story.



## **LISTEN, BEAUTIFUL MÁRCIA**

by **Marcello Quintanilha**

Fantagraphics, ISBN: 978-1683967774

Theme: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality

Brazilian favelas are generally associated with poverty and crime, but they are also home to millions of people and filled with vibrant life. Author and artist Marcello Quintanilha takes the reader into one such neighborhood to meet Márcia, using bright colors, rough brushstrokes, loose linework, and borderless panels to convey a lively community filled with energy. Márcia is a nursing assistant at a local hospital who also works part-time as an in-home caretaker for a woman suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. She shares an apartment with her boyfriend Aluísio and her adult daughter Jaqueline. It’s an emotional read, with Jaqueline becoming involved in illegal activities that lead to trouble at home. At the heart of the story is love, as Márcia does what she can to keep her family safe. The oversized format of this graphic novel pulls the reader into the page and into Márcia’s life.

# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION GRAPHIC NOVEL DIVERSITY AWARD ADULT OVERFLOW



## **WHERE I'M COMING FROM** by Barbara Brandon-Croft

**Drawn & Quarterly, ISBN: 978-1770465688**

**Themes: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality, Feminism**

In this selection of comic strips from Barbara Brandon-Croft, *Where I'm Coming From* depicts the thoughts, struggles, and opinions of nine distinct black female voices. Brandon-Croft tackles topics ranging from issues like friendship to conversations of racism and identity. Regardless of topic or period, Brandon-Croft is able to instill distinct individuality and humor in her characters, and readers will see parallels and themes that still resonate today. This anthology also includes write-ups regarding the comic's place in culture, with copies of the original syndication pitches and insights from Brandon-Croft. A thoughtful anthology depicting life, themes, and events that remain relevant.

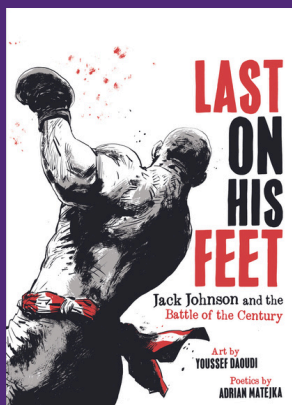


## **ROAMING** by Jillian Tamaki & Mariko Tamaki

**Drawn & Quarterly, ISBN: 978-1770464339**

**Theme: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality, LGBTQ+**

*Roaming* presents the story of two longtime friends, Dani and Zoe, spending a long weekend in New York City in 2009. Accompanying them on the trip is Dani's schoolmate Fiona. While exploring New York the young women reflect upon the excursion and their first year in college, filtering the experiences through their lives—Dani and Zoe comment on being two of the few Asians in their Canadian suburbs and Fiona hints that she comes from poor economic standing. In this short span, Zoe and Fiona begin a brief romance that amplifies Dani's fear that she and Zoe are drifting apart. Through a carefully chosen color palette and panel layouts that convey the excitement of new experiences with an easy intimacy, this is an exceptional work that examines queer relationships and the concerns of young women through the frame of female friendship.



## **LAST ON HIS FEET** by Adrian Matejka, art by Youssef Daoudi

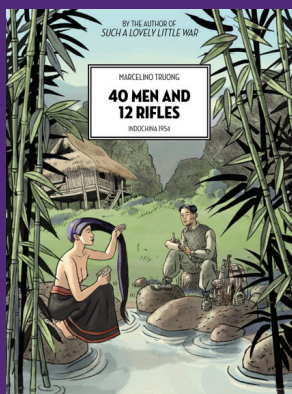
**W. W. Norton & Company, ISBN: 978-1631495588**

**Themes: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality**

*Last On His Feet* vividly recounts the life and times of Jack Johnson, the first black World Heavyweight Boxing Champion. Youssef Daoudi and Adrian Matejka don't hesitate to show Johnson's flaws, such as gambling and womanizing, yet the work ultimately portrays him as a larger-than-life figure who forced his way through the restrictions of the Jim Crow Era to achieve worldwide fame. Centered around "The Fight of the Century," a match with the then-retired James Jeffries, the story also details the various ways Johnson overcame the norms of the time. A well-crafted look at a prolific, if largely forgotten, sports icon.



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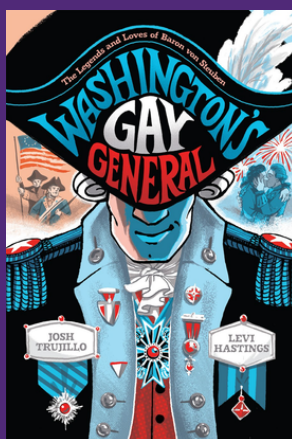
## **40 MEN AND 12 RIFLES: INDONESIA 1954** by Marcelino Truong

Translated by David Homel

Arsenal Pulp Press, ISBN: 978-1551529233

**Theme: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality**

Marcelino Truong's *40 Men and 12 Rifles* paints a vivid picture of the closing stages of the First Indochina War. Told from the viewpoint of artist Trần Văn Minh, the work highlights the disparity between classes in what is now Vietnam. Trần Văn Minh is brought into service under Hồ Chí Minh's forces, eventually becoming a worker under the propaganda wing. Throughout the work Truong masterfully shows the consequences of the conflicts with the French on everyday people. *40 Men and 12 Rifles* shines at highlighting the depth of the struggle with colonial rule, from the immense toll it took on the combatants to the elevated status of those who benefited from foreign influence.



## **WASHINGTON'S GAY GENERAL: THE LEGENDS AND LOVES OF BARON VON STEUBEN** by Josh Trujillo, art by Levi Hastings

ABRAMS, ISBN: 978-1419743726

**Themes: LGBTQ+**

*Washington's Gay General* is a biography of Baron von Steuben, a gay man whose personal life intersected with his military career and societal status in the budding United States of America. Readers will enjoy this historical narrative of the American Revolution and the early years of our country, delving into the life of an important but lesser known figure—flaws, failures, vices, and all. A thoughtful work with an appealing minimalist art style, the book does not shy away from the atrocities committed during the colonial age or the complexities of von Steuben's life. More than just a historical narrative or biography, *Washington's Gay General* shines a light on an important figure of early United States queer history.



## **SÍ, SE PUEDE: THE LATINO HEROES WHO CHANGED THE UNITED STATES** by Julio Anta, art by Yasmín Flores Montañez

Ten Speed Press/Penguin Random House, ISBN: 978-1984860910

**Theme: Color/Race/Ethnicity/Nationality, LGBTQ+**

Told through the narrative lens of a museum tour highlighting important Hispanic and Hispanic-American heroes, *Sí, Se Puede* uses bright colors to depict the diversity and beauty of Hispanic culture and history. Teenage and adult readers will learn about notable figures, the Latino diaspora, and the intersectionality of gender, race, social class, and more in the featured subjects. Covering a wide range of people including Roberto Clemente, Lin Manuel Miranda, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, this work details how their accomplishments have impacted and transformed the history and culture of the United States and serves as a compelling educational primer on Hispanic heritage.