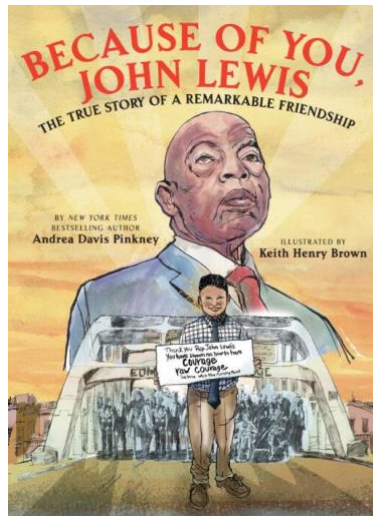


## First Opinion: Heroes Meet

Andrea Pinkney. *Because Of You, John Lewis; The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship*. Scholastic Press, 2022.



Jorge Pérez De Jesús

“When Tybre first discovers his hero, John Robert Lewis, friend of Martin Luther King, Jr., it lights his dream on fire. He wants to know the man who stands for peace and love and truth.”

Andrea Davis Pinkney

In today’s 24 hour news cycle it is hard to imagine that children are not exposed to today’s polarized political climate. Andrea Davis Pinkney’s book titled “Because of you, John Lewis. The true story of a remarkable friendship,” is a children’s illustrated biographical book

about the late great Congressman John Lewis and his friendship with Tyber Faw. It speaks of the courage demonstrated by John Lewis during the tumultuous fight for civil rights. It is beautifully illustrated by Keith Henry Brown, who was awarded the coveted 2023 CBC Children's Favorite Award List for his illustrations of the book. It shows young readers that they too can have an impact in today's world if they are studious, driven, and courageous.

Through poetic prose, Davis Pinkney recounts the real-life story of ten-year-old Tybre meeting his hero, Congressman John Lewis. His interest in Civil Rights and history led to his family's support in fulfilling Tyber's dream of meeting the late civil rights leader and politician. The book's audience are children but the lessons of perseverance and courage are universal and can be applied to all.

As the reader, I recognize the powerful use of the poetic voice mixed with narration to masterfully deliver the story of a young boy's desire to meet his hero. The author incorporates free verse throughout, offering the biographical account a poetic tone not commonly found in the genre. An example of this unique style: *I want to meet John Lewis.*

*I want to shake his hand.*

*I want to tell that congressman*

*Exactly who I am.*

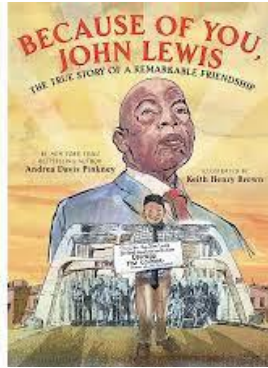
*Me. Tybre.*

Additionally, the author also weaves a parallel story of how the young John Lewis met his hero.

As a Literacy & Language doctoral student I appreciate how Davis Pinkney describes that Tyber is an avid reader and that this translates into his desire to learn and to become a civil rights activist himself. He is not only enamored with history and civil rights but motivated to

follow in his hero's footsteps. He and the author have appeared together to discuss the book and Tyber's current civil rights involvement.

The images drawn by the illustrator, Keith Henry Brown, are so detailed and vivid that one can view this work as a picture book. By using a soft water paint style Henry Brown paints portraits of the characters, selected scenes, and historical views of the story's background.



The images can also make the book come alive to children who are not yet readers since they can follow the storyline by viewing and learning from the fascinating illustrations.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this book. It serves as both a factual and inspirational tale of a former civil rights activist inspiring a new leader, making it a valuable addition to any diverse picture book collection.

### **About the Author**

**Jorge Pérez De Jesús** is a doctoral student at Purdue University and is pursuing a degree in Literacy and Language Education. His research interests lie developing literacy in underrepresented communities. This academic year he was awarded assistantships in the College of Agriculture, College of Education, and the Honors College. In addition he held a summer fellowship in Brazil working with students from Purdue University, Spellman College, University of Virginia, and Borough of Manhattan Community College.