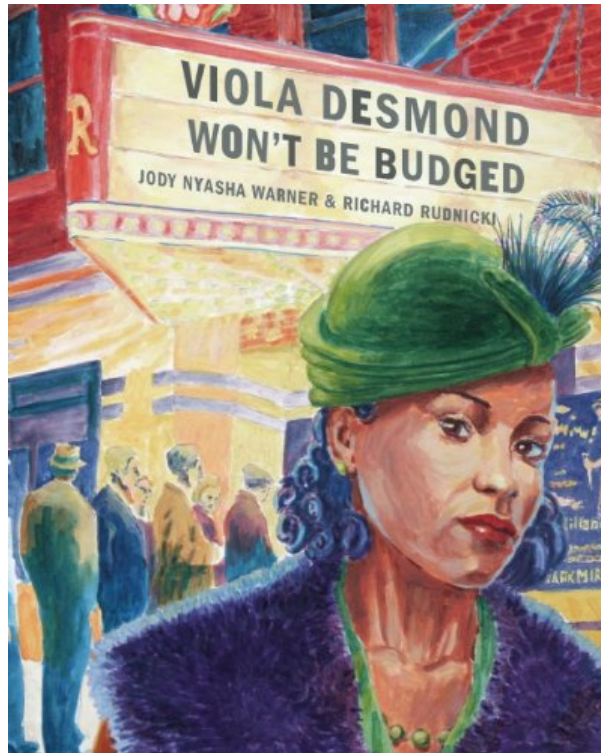
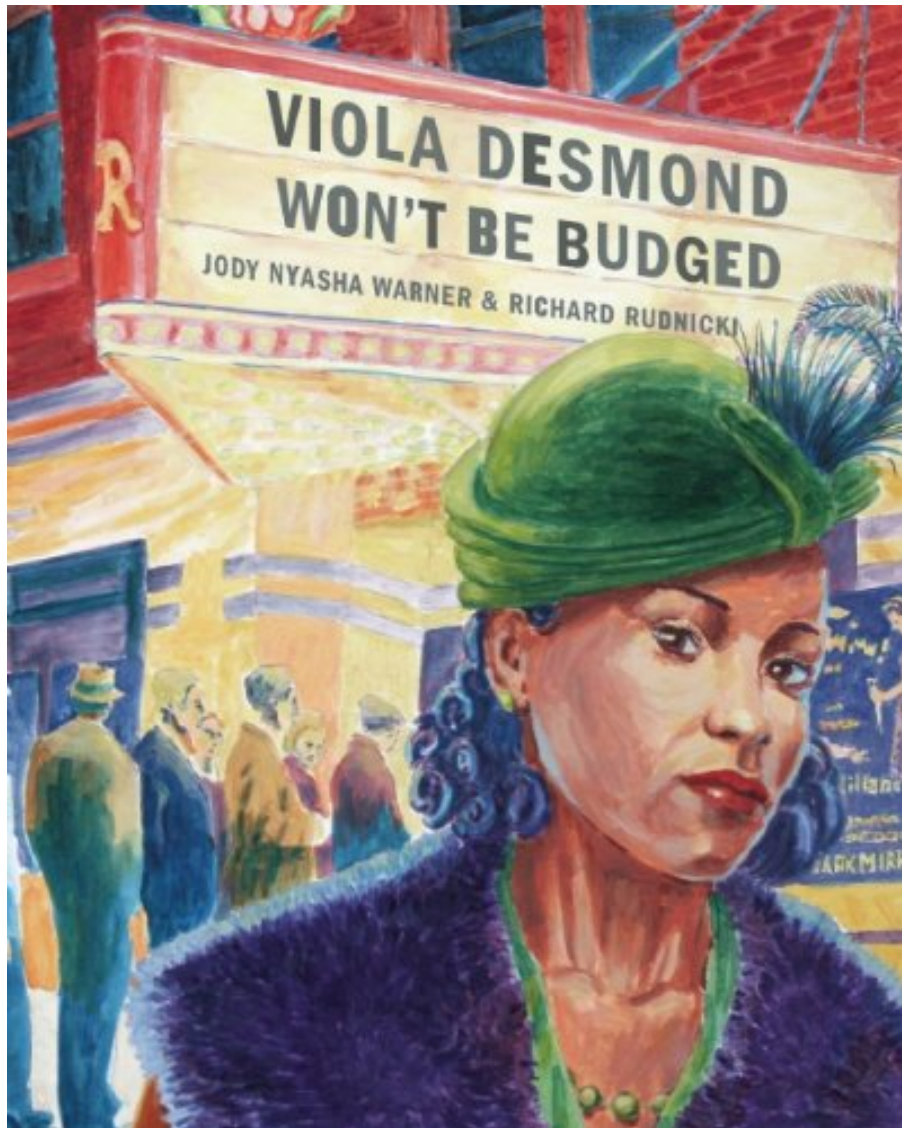


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From School Library Journal

Gr 1-4—Readers accustomed to stories of enslaved African Americans trying to reach Canada and freedom may be surprised to learn that slavery was legal there until 1834. Although the laws were not as restrictive as those in parts of the United States, many African-Canadians faced discrimination well into the 20th century. In 1946, Desmond was a successful businesswoman. On her way from Halifax to a meeting in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, her car broke down. Since the repairs would take several hours, she decided to go to a movie while she waited. She purchased a ticket and took a seat on the main floor of the theater. An usher told her she had to move to the balcony. When Desmond refused, she was forcibly removed by the police and spent the night in jail. While segregation was not technically legal, it was enforced by custom. Although the story is serious, the picture-book format and rhythmic text that mimics oral speech patterns will be inviting to a wide range of readers. The acrylic paintings portray Desmond as well dressed and professional, and the bold colors reflect her strength of will. Varying perspectives heighten the emotional intensity, as do the excellent layout and design. This unique offering will be of particular value when studying women's or black history.—Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA. (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From Booklist

In 1946 Viola Desmond went to see a movie. Just as she was getting settled, she was told by the usher that main-floor seating wasn't covered by her ticket, and she'd have to move to the balcony with the other blacks. But she, like a prominent female bus rider, refused to give up her seat and was jailed. This incident is notable for its location: Nova Scotia. Viola Desmond was the Canadian Rosa Parks. Warner's picture book is worthwhile for its subject matter alone—civil rights struggles outside the U.S. barely register in American school curriculums—and although our neighbors to the north are often depicted as the final welcoming stop on the Underground Railroad, Canada's own history of discrimination often goes unmentioned. Rudnicki's vivid, dramatic art intensifies the danger that Desmond's stubborn determination brought her, and it lends itself well to the warm recounting of the unnamed narrator. Pair this with Nikki Giovanni's *Rosa* (2005) or Andrea Davis Pinkney's *Sit In* (2010) for a more rounded discussion of North American civil rights. -- Courtney Jones

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In 1946, Viola Desmond bought a movie ticket at the Roseland Theatre in Nova Scotia. After settling into a main floor seat, an usher came by and told her to move, because her ticket was only good for the balcony. She offered to pay the difference in price but was refused: "You people have to sit in the upstairs section." Viola refused to move. She was hauled off to jail, but her actions gave strength and inspiration to Canada's black community. Vibrant illustrations and oral-style prose tell Viola's story with sympathy and historical accuracy.

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excellent picture book biography of a Canadian civil rights pioneer

By M. Tanenbaum

This is an excellent new picture book biography about Canadian Civil Rights pioneer Viola Desmond. Like her better-known counterpart Rosa Parks, Viola refused to give up her seat--but in this case in a segregated movie theatre in 1946 Nova Scotia, rather than a city bus in 1955 Montgomery.

The story is told in a folksy, oral-history tradition, with the narrator speaking directly to the audience, drawing us into this compelling story of racism and courage. Viola, owner of a beauty salon, is forced to stop in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia when her car breaks down. To pass the time, she decides to stop at the local movie theatre. She finds the perfect seat, down in front, and before she can settle in to enjoy the movie, an usher tells her she has to go to the balcony. When she refuses, "They took Viola to jail. Can you believe it?" After being fined \$20 (a lot of money back then) for "refusing to pay the proper ticket price," she was released. The judge wouldn't listen when she said she was happy to pay for a downstairs ticket.

Viola and black community groups decided not to put up with this segregationist treatment, and appealed her case. Although the appeal was unsuccessful, the author points out that Viola's fight galvanized the fight against segregation in Canada, which was outlawed in the late 1950's.

Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged! is the first book of Jody Nyasha Warner, a writer, editor, and former librarian who is particularly interested in African Canadian history. The strikingly colorful acrylic illustrations by Canadian illustrator Richard Rudnicki add significantly to the story; on the publisher's webpage, you can click inside to see a number of two-page spreads from the book. I particularly liked the artist's use of hot colors such as orange, red, and yellow, which lend an almost expressionistic color palette, enhancing the emotion of the story.

The book includes an afterword which provides a brief, but fascinating, glimpse of African Canadian history, placing Viola's story in some context and also providing some biographical material on this Canadian civil rights leader. The author also provides a few suggestions for additional reading on African Canadian history.

This book would be a terrific addition to school library collections, and would be an excellent choice to read during African-American history month, giving students some insights into similar struggles that went on among our neighbors to the North.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Rutgers University Project on Economics and Children

By Yana V. Rodgers

Viola Desmond, an African Canadian woman who owned a successful beauty parlor in Nova Scotia, lived during a period of institutionalized segregation in Canada. One day when Viola decided she wanted to watch a film at the beautiful Roseland Theatre, she decided to occupy a seat with a better view on the ground floor,

which was designated for whites. Even though Viola offered to pay the extra amount for a ground floor seat, she was still arrested for refusing to sit in the balcony section for blacks. Viola spent a night in jail, her case went all the way to Nova Scotia's Supreme Court, and she became known as Canada's first civil rights activist.

This carefully-researched book provides young learners with an informative look at racial segregation in Canada and a pivotal event in the civil rights movement. Interestingly, the book's 2010 publication coincided with a formal apology from Nova Scotia's government and a pardon of the charge against her, the first posthumous free pardon ever granted in Canada. Parents and teachers seeking new resources to teach about discrimination and social justice can use this book to add both an international dimension and a gender perspective to the lesson.

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