



## A Sweet Smell of Roses

By Angela Johnson

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There's a sweet, sweet smell in the air as two young girls sneak out of their house, down the street, and across town to where men and women are gathered, ready to march for freedom and justice. Inspired by countless children and young adults who took a stand, two Coretta Scott King honorees offer a heart-lifting glimpse of children's roles in the civil rights movement.

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## A Sweet Smell of Roses By Angela Johnson Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 3—This quiet, gentle story pays tribute to the many unnamed children who participated in the African-American struggle for civil rights. It opens: "After a night of soft rain there is a sweet smell of roses as my sister, Minnie, and I slip past Mama's door and out of the house down Charlotte Street." They head toward the curb market where folks, mostly adults, are gathering to listen to and march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Large, powerful charcoal images dominate the pages with particular attention paid to facial expressions. The artist shows the strength and resolve of the marchers in the face of "people who scream, shout, and say, 'You are not right. Equality can't be yours.'" Once the speeches are over, the sisters race home and are met at the door by their worried mother, "And as we tell her about the march, the curtains flow apart, and there is a sweet smell of roses all through our house." The only color that appears in this book is the deep red of the ribbon around the neck of Minnie's teddy bear, the U.S. flag, and the roses. Without going into much detail, this book nonetheless drives home the fact that children were involved in the movement and makes the experience more real for those just learning about this chapter of American history.—*Mary N. Oluonye, Shaker Heights Public Library, OH*

From [Booklist](#)

K-Gr. 2. History and politics get personal for young readers in this dramatic, large-size picture book about an African American child and her younger sister who steal out of the house to join the Civil Rights marchers and listen to Dr. King speak. The child's clear, first-person narrative draws on the language of the struggle ("we look farther down the road"), and Velasquez' realistic charcoal pictures, in black and white with an occasional touch of red, evoke the news footage of the time. The protestors confront the glowering police, and there are children among the racists who yell, "You are not right. Equality can't be yours." But this book is not only about segregation; it's also about the crowds of people "walking our way toward freedom," the thrilling portrait of Dr. King, and the two brave kids who cross the line. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

"The pervasive smell of roses is an effective metaphor for the scent of freedom in the air, and Johnson's poetic text is powerful."

-- *Horn Book*

"This book is not only about segregation; it's also about the crowds of people 'walking our way toward freedom,' the thrilling portrait of Dr. King, and the two brave kids who cross the line." -- *Booklist*

"Powerful and moving."

-- *Kirkus Reviews*

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