

*CBS Mornings*

06/07/23

8:00:45 a.m. [TEASE]

9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Author Ibram X. Kendi]

TONY DOKOUPIL: Author, Ibram X. Kendi has also had his work challenged for the way he talks about racism, why he has now turned his award-winning book into a graphic novel.

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8:10:44 a.m. [TEASE]

14 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Ibram X. Kendy's New Book]

DOKOUPIL: And coming up in just a moment, another author whose books have been challenged in schools, Ibram X. Kendi. He's going to share his new graphic novel — sorry graphic book that uses humor to explore our country's difficult racial history. Unfortunately, it is not fiction.

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8:25:08 a.m. [TEASE]

5 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Author Ibram X. Kendi]

KING: We only have five seconds so here we are. What's your name?

IBRAM X KENDI: Ibram X. Kendi.

KING: Yes, he is. Best-selling — [CUTS OFF]

(....)

8:36:00 a.m.

6 minutes

NATE BURLESON: All right, switching gears now. *New York Times* best-selling author, Ibram X. Kendi has turned one of his groundbreaking books about racism into a graphic novel. His 2016 book *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* won the National Book Award. But the book and its adaptations have been challenged in several school districts over claims it tackles divisive topics and employs selective storytelling. Now

Kendi and illustrator Joel Christian Gill are releasing *Stamped From the Beginning: A Graphic History of Racist Ideas in America*. It uses five historic figures including Thomas Jefferson and Angela Davis, as tour guides to show how America's past influences its present. Ibram X. Kendi, also a CBS News contributor joins us right now. How are you doing? Good morning.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ibram X. Kendi Live; Bestselling Author on New Graphic History, Racism Fight & Banned Books]

KENDI: Good. Good morning.

BURLESON: So it's been seven years since you first released *Stamped From the Beginning*. Why did you feel like it was time now to release a graphic novel?

KENDI: Well, I just believe in the power of graphic novels, the ability of comics to tell complex stories even in a humorous fashion. And I'm just constantly thinking about ways to reach everyday people, young people and older people with this history of racist ideas.

BURLESON: Yes, the illustrations are beautiful and they do capture your words so beautifully. You also add in humor, and some will say, well, these are some heavy topics. How could you tell jokes when covering stuff like this?

KING: But Nate, that's what I liked about it, though. I mean, I was talking to him in the greenroom about this when they were talking about Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation on Page 134. You see the people running and they go "We out?" Not we're leaving, not let's go. But we talk about the proclamation. It's like "we out" and you can see them really taking off.

BURLESON: We all enjoy the humor.

KING: Yes. I did.

DOKOUPIL: I love it.

KING: I like it, too. I thought that was a nice touch.

BURLESON: But why did you find that important to kind of connect those two things -- humor and history?

KENDI: Well, you mentioned the heaviness of it. Those are the times in which we need humor, to receive it, to understand it, to get through it. And I think Joel and I thought that was critically important, and it is a tradition, particularly within Black comedy to talk about racism, particularly its ridiculousness. And I think that tradition continues in this book.

DOKOUPIL: You know, one of the conversations animating politics today is the question of racism in America. The topic of this book, ideas that go back to the founding and even before and Republicans on the campaign trail will say America is not a racist country. This book would

say otherwise. What's your response to that political conversation?

KENDI: Well, I don't actually think it should be up for debate. We live in a country where there's widespread racial disparities. Black people are more likely to be impoverished, incarcerated, killed by police dying of heart disease and cancer and that is not because there's something wrong with Black people. That's because of our policies and practices, which collectively, are racism.

DOKOUPIL: There's a line in the book here about racial equality sold as a slow but steady progression forward, which it sounds like you would say it's not. I think people on the right would say, but we should also acknowledge, should we not, all of the racial progress and improvements legally and otherwise.

KENDI: So what we try to do in this book is show both, so there has indeed been racial progress, but there's also been what I call in my work the progression of racism. So, like voter suppression policies today are much more sophisticated than they were a century ago. Just as you have elected officials of color who weren't in particular positions a century ago. Both is happening at the same time.

BURLESON: Right.

KING: No, you write that people with racist ideas were never simply products of their time, which I think is really on point, especially when we look at what is happening in the world today. How should we view figures like the Founding Fathers?

KENDI: Well, the Founding Fathers were -- some of them were expressing racist ideas, but there were people challenging them in their time like Phillis Wheatley.

KING: Yes, you were talking about Thomas Jefferson a lot in this book.

KENDI: Yes, Phillis Wheatley was challenging them. Benjamin Banneker was challenging them. Even a Rhode Island pastor with the name of Samuel Hopkins was challenging them and so over the course of history, we've had both racist ideas and anti-racist ideas, and unfortunately, people choose to continue to express ideas of racial hierarchy.

KING: It's interesting you'd be here on the same day that Amanda was just here in our last half hour where her book has been restricted in some areas, and some people say your books are not age appropriate for children today, how do you respond?

KENDI: I just think it's not true. I think that we create books like others do, that are going to be able to reach children, that children are going to be able to understand, in which they're going to see themselves and unfortunately, particularly Black authors, authors of color, LGBTQ authors, our books are being banned as somehow not age appropriate. So, I mean, what does that say? You know, I think that's one of the things that Amanda talked about. And I could also say that what's really difficult for me as a parent is that books are being banned, but not guns.

DOKOUPIL: Yes. But you know, I think one of the questions people have is, what's the role of school? Is it to educate? Yes. But is it also to create a citizen, a patriot of a country who has a stake in that country, believes in it, and people on the right will say, well, this doesn't make people love America, this is the opposite of that.

KENDI: Well, if you read *Stamped From the Beginning*, you'll see figures like Angela Davis and a whole host of other figures who are challenging critically this nation's laws and policies and figures to transform it, to make it better.

BURLESON: Right.

KENDI: To ensure that we all can live in a multi-racial democracy where we are all equally valued and treated equitably.

BURLESON: No doubt. We appreciate you. Thank you so much for stopping by. Ibram X. Kennedy, *Stamped From the Beginning: A Graphic History of Racist Ideas in America* is on sale now.