

Evanston, IL — Author and illustrator Eric C. M. Basir releases a graphic novel project that is also a historical fiction masterpiece. *Badin and the Secret of the Saami* is a 116-page epic saga, set in 18th-century Sweden. This fast paced graphic novel involves a mystery, featuring Swedish (and African born) Prince Badin and the indigenous Saami community in an exciting adventure to save the future of humanity.

Exploration and settlement of Germanic tribes and Europeans resulted in conquests of regions across the globe. Discoverers invaded, began to stake their claim on these land masses and appropriate untapped natural resources. Meanwhile, these lands were already inhabited. Populations that have historically occupied these territories were often ignored, pushed aside, stripped of their rights, and omitted from history.

From the Saami peoples of Sápmi (modern-day Sweden), to Aborigines of Australia, to Native American nations and the indigenous populations of Canada, throughout history and from continent to continent, their plight has been echoed. Colonization ushered in not only the demise of indigenous populations, but in the most extreme cases, elimination. These are the voices and stories of people who have been silenced throughout history.

Badin, an African slave adopted as a child by Queen Lovisa Ulrika, has mystified historians and writers for hundreds of years. Once adopted, Badin was embraced by the Swedish royals and regarded as a trusted family member. He was fluent in several languages, became a member of several, exclusive secret societies—including the Freemasons (only possible for those of the noble class), and was a volunteer in the Swedish Army. He was also affluent, owning multiple properties and financially supporting his wife and her family. Badin's role in government was envoy to the Queen, and he may have also held a law degree, yet he is often slandered by historians and relegated to either an imp or an inferior sexual deviant.

Basir was inspired to research Badin from a visit to Sweden as a guest on a Swedish reality television show. His experience in Sweden, though, was not without its drawbacks. Of mixed Swedish and African ancestry (and also of the Muslim faith), he was subjected to bigotry from certain cast-mates. He'd encountered many non-white Swedes who suffered persecution because of their skin color. He also saw how regularly racist cartoons and negative stereotypes permeated mainstream newspapers, and was appalled learning the history of Sweden's indigenous—the Saami people. As a black person living among privileged whites (but never accepted as an equal), Basir connected with Sweden's historical figure Badin, the Swedish Queen's adopted African son.

“Black Lives Matter is a movement now, but the degradation and character assassination of black males has been happening for centuries,” says Basir.

Just as the United States has its bitter legacy in the African slave trade, Sweden has a bitter legacy in genocide of the indigenous (Saami) people, one that spans well over 500 years. Nevertheless, many will complete the Swedish educational system without ever learning anything about the country's violent treatment of Saami people. “This needs to stop, and I wanted to be a part of the change. I wanted to share an updated version of Badin's history with Americans and Swedes of all skin colors. I also wanted to increase awareness about the Saami

people. They've existed thousands of years before Sweden became a kingdom, yet they are a forgotten people just like Badin,"

Basir led a successful Kickstarter campaign to fund a professional English translation of Badin's only known diary from French and Swedish into English. Upon completion, content from Badin's translated diary became the blueprint for *Badin in the Secret of the Saami* and several other prequel works. Uniquely illustrated, the works are historical fiction, featuring the Swedish Queen's adopted African son, Badin, as he leads his siblings on a quest to save the future of humanity. In addition to Badin, characters include Queen Lovisa Ulrika (the historical adoptive mother), Crown Prince Gustav III (based on the historical adoptive brother), Princess Sofia Albertina (the historical adoptive sister), Gaaktu (a fictional South Saami elder) and Anna Olsdotter (based on the historical 18th century Swedish ancestor of Eric Basir).

"It is difficult, I would even say almost impossible to have a positive self image if you don't have heroes who look like you. All of the stories are fiction. However, many of the characters, locations, and events are based on actual people and events occurring throughout Sweden's history. African and indigenous populations should be revered for their ancient lineage and contributions," Basir.

He adds, "Many comic book artists are people who are trying to break into the comic book industry. I am an artist that was inspired to tell a story. I also want the indigenous, black children, Asian children, children of all colors and those who may also be immigrants or may have been adopted, to have their own, modern-day epic hero. I want them to see themselves in history in fun and interesting ways. I want to empower as many as possible with the exciting history of a clever, black orphan boy who uses his critical thinking, skills, and problem-solving abilities to help others, and save the world. So *Badin and the Secret of the Saami*, ultimately is about the spirit of redemption and atonement.

Book Details:

Badin and the Secret of the Saami

By Eric Curtis Muhammad Basir

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For more details about the book, visit www.badinsecret.com

About the Author

Eric Curtis Muhammad Basir is owner of Photo Grafix and Black Rhino Illustration. He also works part time as a custodian for a local nature center. He lives in the United States with his wife and children. An online trivia game, *The Stallo War*, based on the entire *Badin* project is also in development, due to be released the same day, May 1st, 2017.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For press inquiries, including promotional photos, interviews, and requests for review copies, please call (847) 673-7043 or send requests via email to ebasir@badinsecret.com. *Badin and the Secret of the Saami* is published by Photo Grafix (ISBN: 978-1-3657-1526-7). Retailers can order by contacting the sales department at (847) 673-7043. Download a free PDF of *Badin's Diary: An English Translation* by visiting <http://bit.ly/1NCd3Dw>.

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