



VOLUME 1

STARFIRE

JUSTIN OGLEBY &
ALESSANDRA IMPERIO
PITCH PACKET

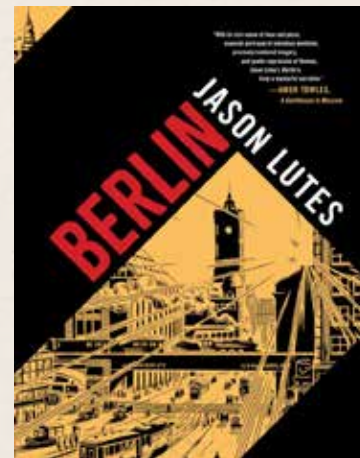
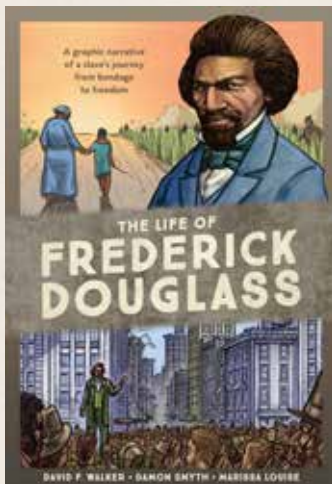
LOGLINE

When Charles Robinson moves to the Kansas frontier to build a free state, a stolen election hands power to pro-slavery forces who make even speaking of abolition punishable by death. The violence that follows will force him to decide how far he's willing to go for a cause he can't legally defend.

PROJECT DETAILS

FREE STATE is a standalone historical graphic novel of approximately 120 pages, with a completed and professionally edited script. The story is self-contained but also serves as the first in a three-part work following the characters to the Pottawatomie Massacre, when the Civil War becomes inevitable.

I am working with artist Alessandra Imperio to bring the novel to life. FREE STATE is a well researched true story that focuses on themes of civil rights, justice and truth becoming the first casualties in a conflict. This thematically rich historical thriller that is structured around a unique storytelling device. Real newspaper excerpts from the period are woven throughout the narrative, letting the historical record speak in its own voice, and forcing the reader to navigate the real life propaganda war.

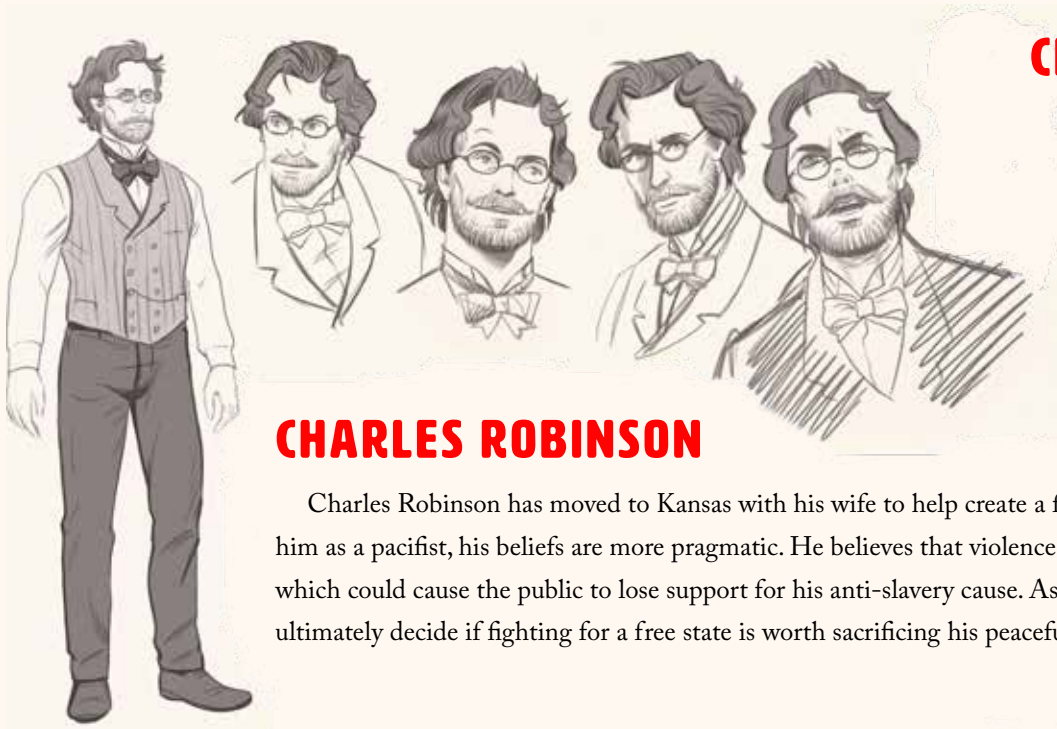


COMP TITLES

FREE STATE blends the political intrigue and resistance of ANDOR with the brutal realism of the American frontier. In the spirit of BERLIN by Jason Lutes, it uses a multi-perspective narrative to chart the slow, inevitable collapse of a society. FREE STATE is for readers of MARCH by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, as it chronicles the limits of peaceful resistance.

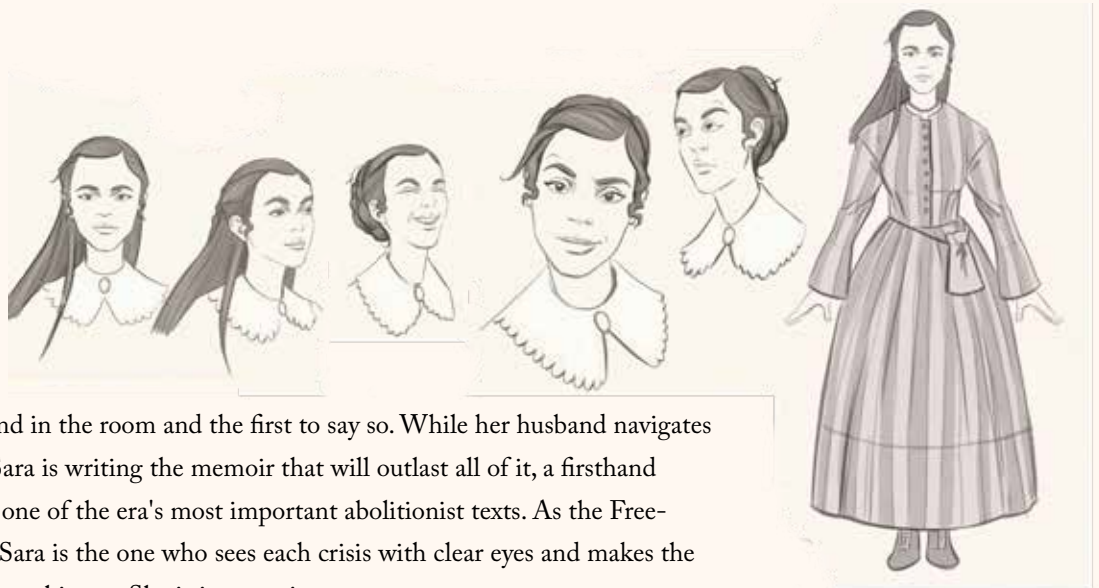
This is a completed script and has been professionally edited by Patrick Barb, formerly of Ten Speed Graphic, who has worked with David F. Walker on THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS and Johnathan Hennessey on ALEXANDER HAMILTON: THE GRAPHIC HISTORY OF AN AMERICAN FOUNDING FATHER.

CHARACTER SECTION



CHARLES ROBINSON

Charles Robinson has moved to Kansas with his wife to help create a free state. While others might view him as a pacifist, his beliefs are more pragmatic. He believes that violence will only lead to more violence, which could cause the public to lose support for his anti-slavery cause. As his beliefs are tested, he must ultimately decide if fighting for a free state is worth sacrificing his peaceful principles.



SARA ROBINSON

Sara Robinson is the sharpest mind in the room and the first to say so. While her husband navigates the politics of building a free state, Sara is writing the memoir that will outlast all of it, a firsthand account of tyranny that will become one of the era's most important abolitionist texts. As the Free-state cause fractures under pressure, Sara is the one who sees each crisis with clear eyes and makes the hardest calls. She is not just a witness to history. She is its conscience.



SAMUEL JONES

Samuel Jones is ambitious and prideful. He is a devoted husband, father, and lawman with a rigid adherence to his own sense of order. If he plays by his society's rules and does everything right, he will eventually be rewarded. He will have to decide what kind of lawman he wants to be. Is the law an ideal to strive towards, or a non-negotiable tool to enforce power, and what are the personal consequences of making that decision?



STORY SUMMARY

In the aftermath of a stolen election, the new government begins passing draconian laws to punish the opposition. The government, elected under the haze of fraud and intimidation, imposes measures to protect and enrich themselves, while silencing voices of dissent with threats of brutality. Merely speaking of discontent could land one in chains. Against this backdrop, the stirrings of rebellion begin to take shape as the people long for liberty.

This is Kansas. The year is 1855.

Charles Robinson has settled in the territory

with hopes of creating a state free of slavery, but as a stolen legislature begins passing its unjust laws, Charles finds himself committing felonies punishable by death for simply arguing that all people deserve to be free.

When a slave girl drowns, it sets off a cycle of escalating violence that forces people to take a stand for their beliefs. Now Charles must navigate a clash of opposing ideologies and lead the abolitionists while trying to build a parallel government of resistance.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

My career began at The Emporia Gazette, founded by William Allen White, which instilled in me a deep sense of how the stories we tell become the history we remember. Years later, when my daughter brought home a homework assignment on Kansas history during the pre-Civil War period, it sparked an interest in a story should have never been forgotten. What started as a simple question – “*Was John Brown a hero or terrorist?*” – turned into a deep dive through history books, and eventually primary sources about people like Jim Lane, Charles Robinson, and his wife, Sara.

FREE STATE tells the story of how a civil war starts, not with armies or secession, but with the gradual break down of law and order and people feeling left out of the democratic process. It explores how neighbors with differing political beliefs begin to see each other as an enemy. It is about what happens when peaceful resistance fails and if the cost of violence is worth the cause of liberty. This forgotten part of American history is more relevant now than ever as it mirrors our current societal tensions.

A graphic novel is the perfect medium to make this complex and underrepresented time period accessible, especially for students. Most history teachers already use graphic novels to teach difficult subjects, and through an informal online poll, I found many teachers were excited by the idea of a pre-Civil War graphic novel featuring John Brown. The lead up to the Civil War is a pivotal time period that is sorely underrepresented and I believe this is a story whose time has come to be told.



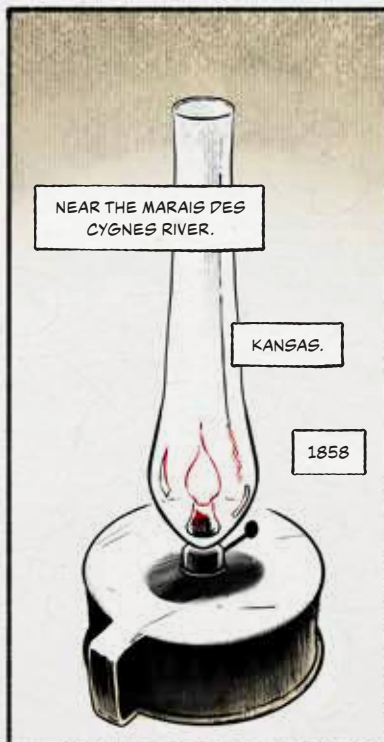
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Justin Ogleby is a lifelong resident of Kansas with a love of stories, art, and film. After earning a BFA in graphic design, he discovered that storytelling is the foundation of all effective communication. He is currently using those skills marketing healthcare services for under-served communities. In his free time, he writes, creates, and helps promote his flyover community.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

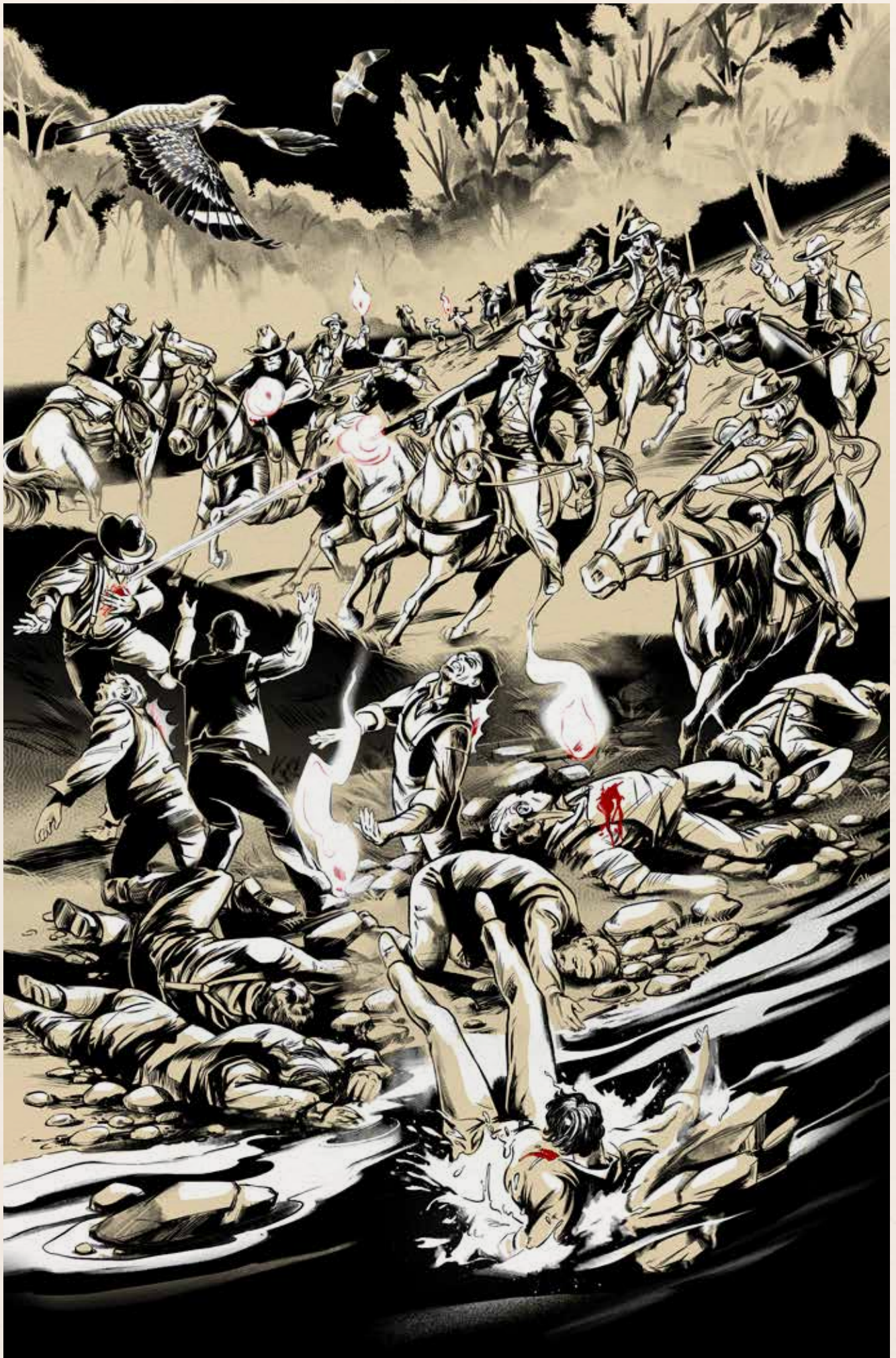
Italian artist Alessandra Imperio holds a degree in Illustration and Animation from IED Milan. She has experience in illustration, storyboarding, and comics. Prior to her work on FREE STATE, she illustrated the graphic novel KHOR'S LAND, published by Caliber Press in the United States, and also released in Italy and Poland. She also penciled THE REPUBLIC, a graphic novel published in the United States through a crowdfunding campaign.





















BE VIGILANT.

The friends of Kansas in the east, and particularly in New England, must be active in their movement to forward pioneers, if they expect to secure this territory to freedom. Missourians are doing their utmost to secure the preponderance of slavery sentiments, and are locating by hundreds around Fort Leavenworth, in view of the proximity of that place, to the capital.

THE KANSAS STRUGGLE.

Kansas will probably be the first field of bloody struggle with the slave power. In this country Freedom or Slavery is to predominate. Both cannot live upon an equality, and he who cries Peace, Peace, is only waiting for stronger manacles to be placed upon his own limbs and the limbs of his children. The freemen in Kansas will not permit the slave power to exter-

THE NEBRASKA BILL
PASSED—ANOTHER TRIUMPH
OF THE SLAVE POWER.

The deed is done—the Slave Power is again victorious. On Monday, the U. S. House of Representatives took up the Nebraska Bill, when, after several ineffectual attempts to defeat or delay it on the part of its opponents, Mr. Richardson, of Illinois, moved his substitute for the Bill, (being the same as the Senate Bill, with the exception of Mr. Clayton's amendment,) and moved the previous question. Great excitement followed, but the substitute was adopted—yeas 115, nays 96. The Bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading—yeas 117, nays 99. It was then read a third time, and at 11 o'clock at night was passed by the following vote—yeas 113, nays 100. And so, against the strongest popular remonstrances—against an unprecedented demonstration of religious sentiment—

THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

Two hundred and thirty-four years ago yesterday, a little band of pilgrims stepped upon a rock at Plymouth. They had fled, a band of brave and noble-hearted men, of fair and not less noble-hearted women, from the land of their birth, from the tyranny of political oppression, and the relentless hand of religious persecution. They came to the wilds of the new world to seek and secure liberty of thought and the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. They came in the depth of winter, when the hills and the valleys were clad in snow, the wind howled mournfully through the leafless trees, and all was drear and desolate. They came to brave the dangers of the wilderness, to find themselves helpless and alone, at the mercy of savage beasts and yet more savage men, that they might worship their God in peace. Helpless

SYNOPSIS

In 1854, the Kansas Nebraska Act overturned the Missouri Compromise, erasing the line that divided the north and south into free and slave states for a generation.

Charles and Sara Robinson are a Boston doctor and his brilliant writer wife who come to Kansas to build the town of Lawrence as a beacon of freedom. Sara is writing a memoir that will eventually become one of the most important abolitionist texts of the era.

They immediately comes into conflict with pro-slavery settlers who have claimed the same land as them.

Samuel Jones has come to Kansas to seek riches and raise his station in life. He helps build the town of Lecompton, and falls into service of the town's namesake, Judge Le-compte, and Senator David Rice Atchison.

Unhappy with the northerners settling in Kansas, Atchison devises a plan to steal the

election of the territory's legislature. Samuel Jones helps him win the fraudulent election, and is rewarded by being appointed sheriff.

Meanwhile, a slave girl who is tired of being abused by her owner, drowns herself in the Missouri River rather than remain in bondage.

This unassuming death begins a chain of events that will eventually lead to the emancipation of every slave.

As abolitionists protest the death, they are brutally beaten and nearly lynched by townspeople who are enforcing the territory's draconian laws criminalizing free speech.

As the stolen legislature cracks down on Free State settlers by passing laws designed to punish and intimidate opponents of slavery, Charles and Sara have an audacious idea to preserve the liberty of Kansans. Charles is going to start a rival government and attempt to get Kansas admitted as a free state under their own constitution.

CONTACT

JUSTIN OGLEBY

email: justinogleby@gmail.com

ph: 620-481-7143

PLEASE REACH OUT TO REQUEST THE COMPLETE SCRIPT

