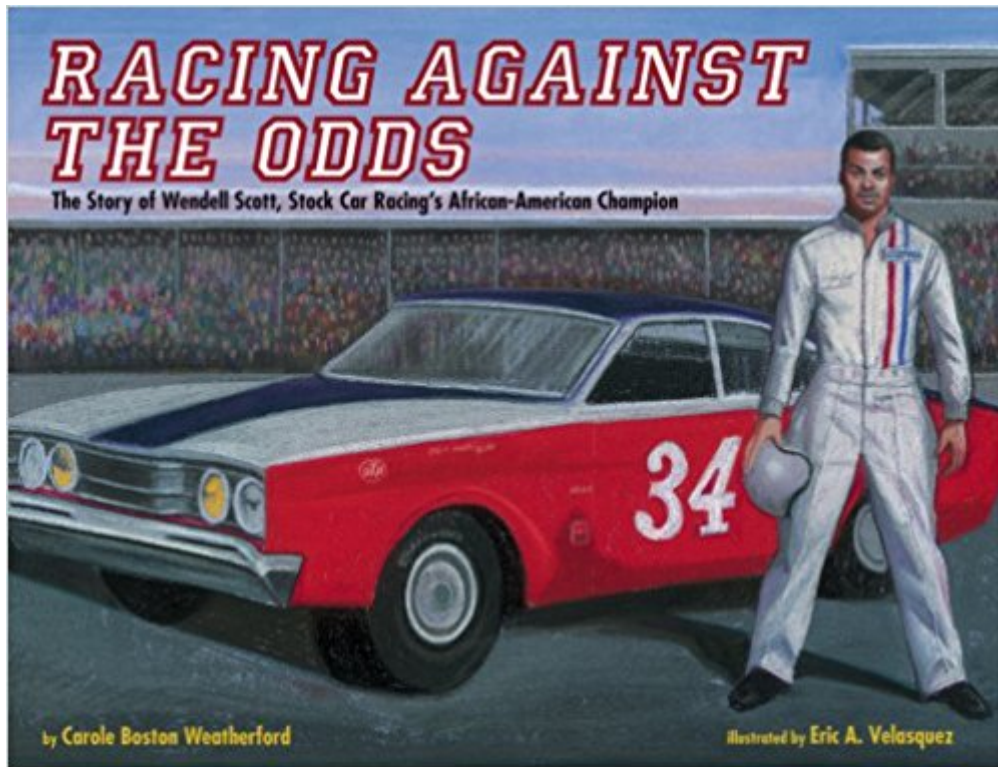


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# Racing Against The Odds: The Story Of Wendell Scott, Stock Car Racing's African-American Champion



## Synopsis

Wendell O. Scott made history as the only black driver to win a race in a NASCAR Grand National (now Spring Cup) division. Born in Danville, Virginia, he scrimped and saved to buy his first car, a Model T, at age fourteen. Although he "loved to turn the wheel of a racecar, work magic on an engine, and then push it faster than it was ever meant to go," he never had the resources or sponsorship to buy a brand-new racecar. Using secondhand Fords that he fixed up in his garage, he competed in five hundred races in NASCAR's top division. Eric Velasquez's illustrations and Carole Boston Weatherford's rhythmic text illuminate the story of a man who worked full-time while racing on the side. A man who married, raised six children, and educated all of them. A man who "didn't just dust the competition, he blazed a trail." A man who raced against all odds. An author's note is also included.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 2nd

## Customer Reviews

This is such an awesome book. It gave me a great appreciation for Wendell Scott, and now I'm going to buy the movie Greased Lightning, and look for other books about him, so that I can learn everything that I can about him. I found myself quoting this book a lot in the couple days after I read it. Wendell Scott only ever had used cars that he bought used and then souped up himself. He made his money as a mechanic, but his passion was racing. He was obsessed about racing from an

early age, and seemed to do everything that he could to race. This is a cool story about a man with a passion who did everything he could to make his dream a reality. It's very inspiring. Pros: +Great illustrations+Tells of a man who worked against the odds to fulfill his dream+Very quotable book+Biographies are usually boring, but this one is awesome!+Very interesting facts about a great man Cons:-Doesn't really get into the racial issues that Wendell Scott must have faced. But this does give the opportunity to make another cool book about Wendell Scott.

Wendell Scott was just one of those kids who was "in a hurry from day one." All the other youngsters were doing stuff boys normally do, but Wendell was behind the wheel of a car driving his mama around to do her errands. Mind you, Wendell wasn't even old enough to get a license, let alone drive, but his mama sat up straight and tall on the passenger side of that car. Speed was his thing and before anyone else could even drive, he bought a car from the junk yard and rebuilt it. The junk man stood there scratching his head, but Wendell was serious. That car was his for fifteen dollars. Cars and speed went together for Wendell and on weekends he was at the stock-car races sitting in the colored only section with a friend. "Would you have the nerve to race?" It was a question that didn't have to be asked again. Wendell began to race his car and got "umpteens speeding tickets" in the process. World War II passed by, a family arrived, and Wendell opened a garage. Moonshine kept him racing and the police knew he was fast. A "racecar driver wanted a black driver" and the police knew just who they needed ... Wendell. Would he finally be able to show everyone just what he could do? This is a fun, entertaining mini-biography of Wendell O. Scott, NASCAR champion. This fascinating story lets the young reader know all about the trials that Wendell had without going into detail. He was the only African-American man to ever "win a race in a NASCAR Grand National (now Sprint Cup) division." Wendell was just a man who was born to race, but many children have never heard of him. The tale is fun as we watch him move through life, never letting go of his passion for driving. The artwork is ever-so-slightly muted, giving us that retro feel. In the back of the book is a slightly more straightforward, detailed look at Wendell's life. This is a fascinating look at one determined man who, in spite of prejudice, lived his life to the fullest realizing his dreams.

"Well, they passed a law in '64/To give those who ain't got, a little more. But it only goes so far/'Cause the law don't change another's mind/When all it sees at the hiring time/Is the line on the color bar. But who knows." -- Bruce Hornsby, 1986 from "The Way it Is" I loved this book despite the grammar and dialect. While reflective of the time and setting, it was a bit of a challenge. As another

reader noted, the dialect could have been balanced with standard grammar for current readers. Even so, I loved the book! While some others on the U.S. boards were critical of the artwork, I thought it was good. I also learned about Wendell Scott (1921 - 1990), a NASCAR racer and, prior to his racing career a mechanic and cab driver. During the hard lean years, he was also involved in rum running, which caused him some difficulty. Scott began his racing career in the early 1950s. However, the ugly head of racist Jim Crow's head reared and Scott was barred from racing. Fortunately that changed when he was given his turn behind the wheel in the NASCAR races. By 1961 he was an established mechanic and racer and in 1964 he won his first race! His racing career ended in 1973. This is a story that needed to be shared. I loved the coooool classic Fords (Better Ideas!) that were included and this important part of driving across a color barrier. Bruce Hornsby & the Range's 1986 classic "The Way It Is" could be the soundtrack of this book.

I didn't know who Wendell Scott was but now I do. In this children's illustrated biography, Wendell Scott is brought to life about his beginning in Danville, Virginia in 1921 where he learned about cars. At fourteen years old, he bought a car with \$15.00. The first car leads to his adventures and driving fast defeating anybody who would cross him. Wendell Scott is the first African American stock car racing champion. For young readers particularly boys, they will enjoy reading about his upbringing and the challenges and obstacles in the way. Wendell Scott proved to be one of the finest stock car racing champions ever despite the prejudices and racism often faced in his life. Wendell Scott was also a father and husband where his family took interest and support in following Wendell Scott's racing career despite the boos. He was a pioneer who inspired the film, "Grease Lightning," based on his life story. He should be remembered as somebody who took chances on the road and in life. This book would make a great addition to the children's library whether in the school or the public library. It's beautiful to look and read at even for adults.

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