

**Black Girls Tech! Computer
Wiz Erica Austin
Revolutionizes the Way Comics
Are Read with New “Against
the Grain” App**



Chicago – When Erica Austin was a child traveling around the globe with her family, comic books were her refuge; and like most wildly imaginative children, her mind’s eye saw the characters leap from the pages and come alive. Now an adult, Austin, a former IBM employee and computer tech, has created her own comic book series, “Against the Grain,” and the heroine, Leslie, makes her childhood dreams a reality by leaping from the screen and coming alive via brilliant animations. Austin’s innovation, one of the first of its kind, comes in the form of an app she has created from her company Slightly Off Productions. Her “Against the Grain” app, named for her comic series, is destined to revolutionize the way comics and graphic novels are read.

The app bundles the entire “Against the Grain” comic series into an online store and offers readers a totally immersive experience. Boasting a clean, crisp interface, bursting with amazing artwork and incredible two-dimensional and three-dimensional animations, Austin’s comics transcend the standard read. The app also allows users to preview new issues before they buy them and watch animated trailers so they know exactly what they are going to get.



“Against the Grain,” takes you beyond mere words, weaving different stories together into a single, exhilarating narrative. Each of the comic books spring to life after several pages, bursting into brilliant and vibrantly dramatic movie shorts that advance the storyline. The user reads a portion of the tale, then gets to watch their favorite characters run, fight, jump, and crawl across the pages before returning to reading. The experience is totally captivating. The two current issues include nearly 200 illustrated pages and six unique animations.

Leslie, the heroine of “Against the Grain,” is a tomboy with a vivid and wild imagination. An outcast of sorts, she is a free spirit coming to terms with herself, the world around her, and the world in her head. With a target audience of teens to young adults, Leslie’s ongoing saga is captured in two current volumes, available in the app, with many more to come.

“After writing and going to a few comic conventions to conduct research, I realized that I was a bit out of touch with my target audience. Personally, I still like the feel of a good book in my hands but the younger generation wants digital downloads and they want them ‘now.’ So I decided to change my market entry strategy and create an app for my comic that would not only be digital, but more interactive,” explains Austin.



Austin worked for IBM for seven years before launching her own consulting practice and production company. With a Bachelors of Science degree in Computer Science and Applied Mathematics, graphic novels might seem an unlikely career choice. Austin, however, found herself with more free time on her hands after leaving IBM and felt compelled to write. Her first thought was to pen a novel about her childhood, but the images that filled her head needed a bigger, more colorful home. She knew comics were the remedy.

“My childhood was not the norm,” reveals the Chicagoland resident. “I was born in Germany, lived in England and then in Nigeria, traveled Europe, vacationed in Amsterdam, and went to high school in the states. I was a fifth culture kid. I had to mix the German, with the English, with the Nigerian, with the American to form my own culture. I didn’t really fit in anywhere and neither does Leslie in, ‘Against the Grain.’ It

was great growing up around the world, but because of the different accents and customs I picked up along the way, I was constantly made fun of for it. It is my hope that Leslie inspires young girls and boys to realize that it is alright to be different and you are fine just being who you are!"

The "Against the Grain" app is an innovative platform that will change the way comics are viewed and read. Austin, along with her team of dedicated illustrators and animators, are changing the landscape of the comic industry and turning the rules inside out. Every reader has yearned to see the pages come alive and the "Against the Grain" app finally makes that possible!

"Against the Grain" featuring Leslie and her journey is available now only at the Apple app store at <https://itunes.apple.com/app/against-the-grain/id968736696>.

For more information on the "Against the Grain," series and its creators, go to <http://www.slightlyoffproductions.com>.

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