CHASING ME TO MY GRAVE tells the remarkable life story of African American artist Winfred Rembert (b. 1945). As a boy, he fled a Georgia cotton plantation and is embraced by a small-town black community on the eve of the Civil Rights Movement. His encounters with political violence, his escape from jail, and his near lynching are harrowing. The next seven years on a chain gang challenge his sanity. Yet in this story of second chances, Winfred is unexpectedly released and marries Patsy, a girl he met as a prisoner. Patsy believes in Winfred’s talent and urges him to develop his gift and vision as an artist. Using leather tooling skills he learned in prison, Winfred starts painting scenes from his youth.

Those early paintings represent the beginning of Winfred’s journey through his own past. His artistic vision calls forth intimate scenes and colorful characters from Cuthbert that play constantly in his mind, and eventually he opens up about his experiences of racial and police violence, and the brutalities of incarceration. Shepherded by Patsy’s love, he struggles to manage ongoing trauma, his self-doubt as an artist, and his deeply conflicted feelings about his birth mother, as he continues to bear witness to the indignities suffered by countless others, and to pay tribute to the indelible community of his youth. Winfred’s unforgettable voice, illustrated by the brilliance of his paintings—woven in full color throughout the book—summons readers to confront painful realities at the heart of American history and society.
Almost Me is based on two years of interviews and conversations with Erin I. Kelly, Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University. The story is told in Rembert’s voice and words. It includes a diverse cast of unique characters Rembert encounters during his life.

