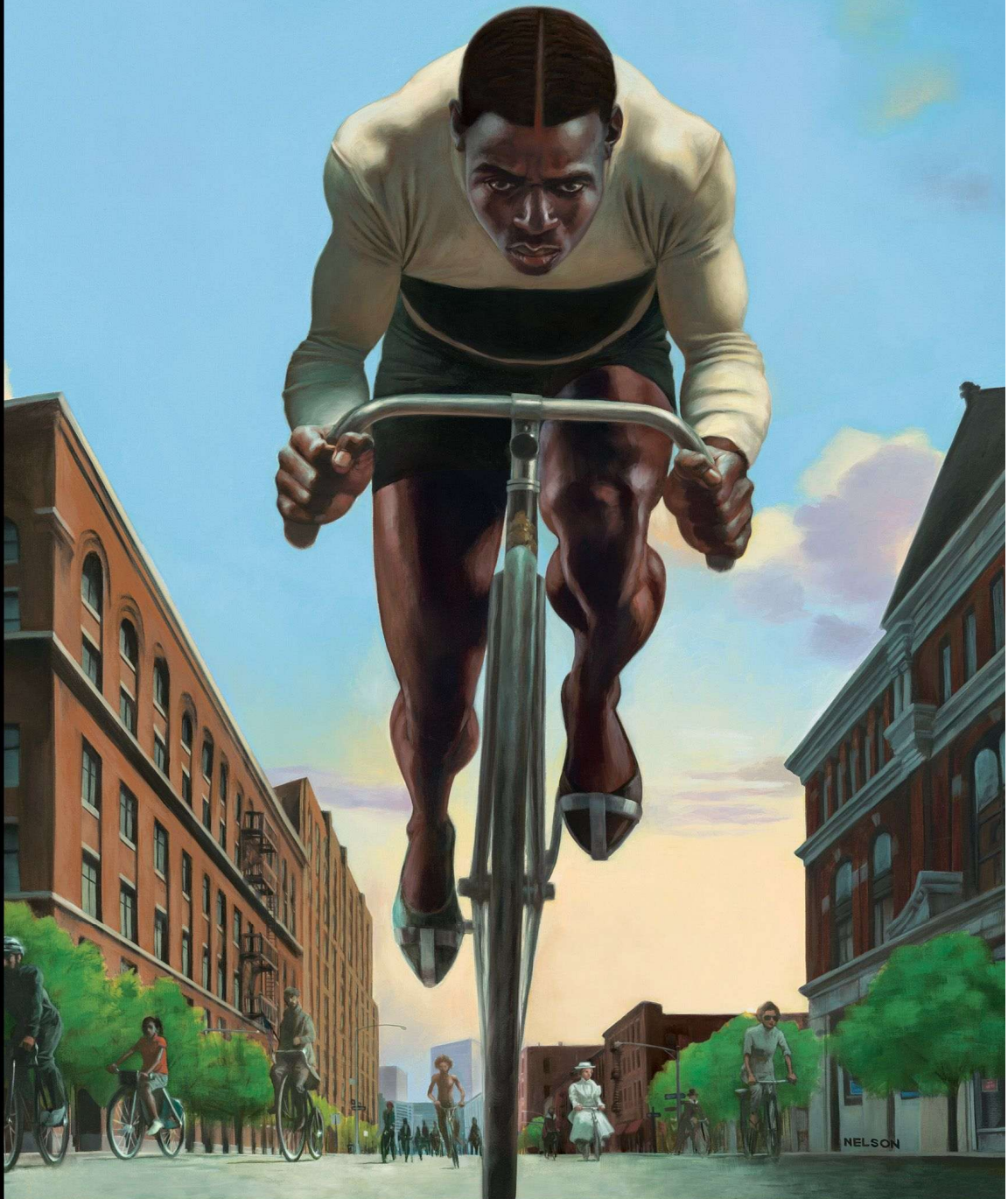


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COVER STORY

KADIR NELSON'S “MAJOR TAYLOR, A CHAMPION WHO LED THE WAY”

A celebration of the “world’s fastest man.”

By Françoise Mouly

Art by Kadir Nelson

May 26, 2025

For the cover of the June 2, 2025, issue, the artist Kadir Nelson features Marshall W. (Major) Taylor leading a parade of bicyclists from eras past and present. “I wanted to pay tribute to the most celebrated cyclist in the nineteenth century—the first African American superstar of any sport—and to the epic six-day indoor cycling event in 1896 at Madison Square Garden’s velodrome, where Taylor competed,” Nelson said. Though Taylor was admired during his era for being the “world’s fastest man,” he also encountered a lot of racism and aggression throughout his career; he was once knocked off his bike and choked to unconsciousness by a white racer. In December, 2023, a bill to award Taylor the Congressional Gold Medal was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives.