2008

Graphic Imagery: Jewish American Comic Book Creators' Depictions of Class, Race, and Patriotism

Nicholas Yanes
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

GRAPHIC IMAGERY:
JEWISH AMERICAN COMIC BOOK CREATORS’ DEPICTIONS OF CLASS, RACE,
AND PATRIOTISM

By
NICHOLAS YANES

A Thesis submitted to the
Program in American & Florida Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2008
The members of the Committee approve the Thesis of Nicholas Yanes defended on March 31, 2008.

Dr. John Fenstermaker  
Professor Directing Thesis

____________________________

Dr. Barry Faulk  
Committee Member

____________________________

Dr. Ned Stuckey-French  
Committee Member

____________________________

Approved:

Dr. John Fenstermaker, Chair, Program in American & Florida Studies

____________________________

Joseph Travis, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

____________________________

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
Dedicated to all those involved in the Program in American & Florida Studies.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Dr. John Fenstermaker, Dr. Stuckey-French, Dr. Faulk, Dr. Porterfield, Soon-to-be-Dr. Peggy Wright-Cleveland, and the entire American Studies Program, I could not have accomplished so much without their guidance.
- My family and friends.
- The Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ....................................................................................................................... vii

Introduction: Birth of the Comic Book Industry..................................................... 1

Thesis
  FDR in Disguise - President by Day, New Deal Warrior by Night:
  The Great Depression, World War II, and Comic Books......................... 9

REFERENCES .............................................................................................. 63

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ................................................................. 70
ABSTRACT

Comic books printed during the 1930s and 40s contained stories and characters that supported the New Deal and America’s entry into World War II. Though comic books are typically seen solely as reflections of the decades; the comic books, in actuality, were propaganda for political stances. Moreover, these were the political stances of the Jewish Americans who built the comic book industry. While much of corporate America was terrified by FDR’s New Deal policies, comic books supported the President. When war loomed on the horizon, comic book writers and artists sent patriotic superheroes to war long before the country became mobilized. Finally, the political dialogue taking place in comic books resonated with the American public because they were created in a time when patriotism was synonymous with sacrifice.
“Comics” are defined by Scott McCloud as “…juxtaposed pictorial images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.”¹ In justifying this definition, McCloud shows how sequential art, the basis of the comic book, is millennia old. Tracing the appearance of illustrated narratives from hieroglyphs on a three-thousand year-old Egyptian tomb to a pre-Columbian “picture manuscript” in Mexico to the Bayeux Tapestry, a “…230 foot long [French] tapestry detail[ing] the Norman conquest of England…,”² McCloud shows history is littered with pictorially told tales. However, McCloud’s global perspective fails to emphasize the importance of graphic literature’s development in the United States, thereby neglecting the cultural factors and artistic influences leading to the birth of comic books: primarily, the American Comic Book is a 20th century art form deriving significantly from comic strips and pulp magazines³ and it has achieved lasting popularity owing to the Great Depression.

The comic strip has been claimed as an American creation. However, its artistic styling is actually indebted to Rodolphe Töpffer – a Swiss academic of German heritage - who “…in the mid-1800’s, employed cartooning and panel borders, and featured the first interdependent combination of words and pictures seen in Europe.”⁴ Creating a form greater than the sum of its parts, Töpffer’s original pieces contained “…carefully crafted French prose captions offer[ing]…mock-staid, mock-pompous, mock bureaucratic-romantic commentary…:”⁵ establishing the medium’s tradition of satirizing and lampooning contemporary culture. Töpffer’s art style grew in popularity around Europe. Although imitation is often a sincere form of flattery, French and British publishers - such as Aubert and the Fleet Street firm of Tilt and Bogue - copied Töpffer’s work outright and sold it as their own.⁶ Comics developed by artists

² Ibid, 10 - 14.
⁴ Scott McCloud, 17.
such as Wihelm Busch appeared in mid-to-late 19th century venues like Fliegende Bletter, and became so popular that they “…were imitated and plagiarized all over Europe and in the United States.”

Comic art’s popularity continued to grow in Europe, but lagged in the United States, which was still recovering from the Civil War. Though artists such as Thomas Nast and Bernhard Gillam are working in America through much of the 19th century, their work has a limited readership. However, as shown in A History of the Comic Strip, “…this situation…change[s] rapidly with the appearance and popularization of humor magazines at the beginning of the 1880’s, notably Puck (1877), Judge (1881), and Life (1883).” Owing to the resulting competition between artists and publishers the comic art developed in these magazines established the essential comic strip elements – “…narrative by sequence of pictures, continuing characters from one sequence to the next, the inclusion of the dialogue within the picture.”

The main competition fueling America’s comic strip evolution is the rivalry between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. Both newspaper moguls realized “…the tremendous sales factor represented by…illustrated Sunday…” comics and both continuously attempted to surpass the other. Pulitzer, owning the New York World, was one of the first to produce color pages. Hearst, running the Morning Journal after buying it from Pulitzer’s brother, lured talented artists away from his competitors. This intense competition led to the development of ongoing titles such as Rudolph Dirks’ The Katzenjammer Kids, James Swinnerton’s The Little Tiger, and Richard Outcault’s Down Hogan’s Alley - eventually becoming The Yellow Kid. All these strips, along with the majority of the comics printed at the time, featured dark comedy, with characters ranging from evil to mischievously sweet.

The 1890s witnessed Franklin Morris Howarth developing comic strips beyond satire. Comics published in Puck, Life, and Judge tended to be “…one- or two-line gags straight out of vaudeville…, [with] these panels work[ing] familiar narrative genres in which the joke lay in the novel solution to a stock situation.” While other artists did create multipaneled works, Howarth was the “…the leading American proponent of multipaneled comic stories…” in which

---

7 David Kunzle, 3.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
narratives captured “…human feelings and emotions such as pain and anxiety…” unfolding before the reader in individual stories sharing the same cast of characters.\(^\text{12}\)

A pioneer for the art form, Howarth used large sweat drops to emphasize a soon to be beheaded Oriental prisoner’s emotional state.\(^\text{13}\) In “The Revenge of the Persecuted Baker,” Howarth illustrates “…two boys in pain, depicted through contorted facial features, hands clenched to stomachs, and exaggerated…tears pouring down their faces.” Comic strips developing into series (with regular characters) is crucial. Continuity in comic art and recurring characters “…offered readers the sensation of intimacy…” and “…set in motion a process leading to the distinct form of graphic narratives that eventually become comic strips…” and comic books.\(^\text{14}\)

Newspapers and magazines featuring comic panels and strips had a large market. Estimates of 1889 northeastern states show an 87 to 89.5 literacy rate throughout the local born population. Further, with “…89% of northern artisans and 76% of northern framers and laborers were literate in the period between 1830 and 1895…”\(^\text{15}\) allowing for cultural historians to argue that “…close to 90 percent of the urban working class was literate and made significant expenditures for newspapers.”\(^\text{16}\) With the growing middle class possessing its own economic hierarchy, publishers appealed to these sub-classes; Judge made “…a periodical which…[gentlemen could] read [to] the family…;” Life “…appealed to a more well-to-do clientele…;” Puck “…took the…workingman[‘s side] against big business but warned against extremism.” However, truly successful publications attracted customers by featuring comics dealing with issues belonging to the hyphenated American. Based in New York City, magazine and newspaper corporations lived in a highly diverse and ethnic landscape. Mimicking Vaudeville’s appeal, these corporations published comic strips playing out ethnic traditions in uniquely American situations.\(^\text{17}\)

In the late 1800s comic art did more than relate to different American populations; it amplified and influenced public opinion, a fact that haunted James G. Blaine. Secretary of State for President James Garfield, Blaine was hoping to become president in 1884. However, on

\(^{\text{12}}\) Ibid, 22-23.

\(^{\text{13}}\) Ibid. The fact that the story focuses on an Oriental depicted with large sweat drops suggest Howarth’s artwork as an early example of Manga, a Japanese comic style that uses exaggerated features, such as large sweat drops.

\(^{\text{14}}\) Ibid, 22-24

\(^{\text{15}}\) Ibid, 173

\(^{\text{16}}\) Ibid, 13

\(^{\text{17}}\) Ibid, 20
October 30th, 1884 New York World featured Walt McDougall’s “Royal Feast of Belshazzar Blaine” as the front page. The comic presented “a bloated James G. Blaine…[dining] with the wealthy of the city while the hungry poor are excluded from the sumptuous repast….” Bernhard Gillam portrayed Blaine in Puck “as a man bearing the tattoos of his corruption….” Both comics playing a role in Blaine’s presidential defeat, solidifying a place for comics in American culture.

Comics in newspapers and magazines proved to be so popular that they became a prominent selling feature. This proved to affect the early 1900s’ “Circulation Wars,” also known as the “News Wars.” When William Randolph Hearst decided “…to go up against the monopolistic American News Agency…,” he not only “…cut deals directly with the bigger criminal mobs to carve out lucrative territories across America’s larger cities…,” he bought his competitors’ comic artists.

The comic strips of the late 1800s and early 1900s had three lasting effects on the comic art medium in America. One, the early comic art’s comical nature caused society to label all strips “comic” strips - a name that would remain fastened to the art form. Two, due to Howarth, comic art moved beyond one panel/one line jokes into a multiple panel medium. Three, continuing Töpffer’s and Howarth’s interests in mocking larger society, comics regularly commenting on and reflecting American society became standardized. Bradford Wright notes, “…syndicated strips like The Yellow Kid, Katzenjammer Kids, and Mutt and Jeff satirized…foibles of domestic life, social relations, and ethnicity….” (Particularly, creators, such as Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, would develop characters and stories encompassing the American immigrant experience, war, class, and racial.)

Comic Book’s visual style derives unequivocally from the newspaper strips of the late 1800s and early 1900s. This is clearly seen in the first comic book, Dell Publishing’s The Funnies (at the time viewed as a comic magazine), which only featured comic strips (not multi-paged stories) and puzzles. Published in 1929, Dell canceled The Funnies after thirty-six issues failed to meet acceptable sales numbers. When the comic book format was experimented with again in 1933 by Harry Wildenberg and Max Gaines, the product would feature reprinted comic

---

18 Ibid, 13.
19 Bradford W. Wright, 2.
strips and be produced by Eastern Color as an advertisement for Proctor and Gamble.\textsuperscript{20} Although comics in magazine format would allow the art form to evolve eventually into its current form, the comic book’s development into a literary form stems from the pulp magazines.\textsuperscript{21}

Comic books are not bound to a specific genre, yet their popularity is tied to adventurous tales of heroics and fantastical abilities, and these are the tales that appear in 20s and 30s pulp stories. However, these narratives moving from pulp magazines to comic books are not a matter of comic book creators’ plagiarizing surrounding literature. It is the continuation of long standing literary themes and further adapting racist ideals – in the form of Social Darwinism and Eugenics - appearing in the early 20th century.

The longest standing American archetype that comic books continue is unquestionably the superhero. Playing off Joseph Campbell’s “Classical Monomyth,” John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett state that the super (or even the action/adventure) hero tale is the “American Monomyth,” and details its formulaic narrative format:

A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisiacal condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity.\textsuperscript{22}

American Literature’s first probable “superhero-ish” character is the Gray Champion, the main character in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “The Gray Champion.” First published in 1835 and later reprinted as the first story in Hawthorne’s collection \textit{Twice-Told Tales}, it is set in a small New England town that, after years of tranquility, is suffering from the oppressive regime of King James II. The citizens’ opposition to the King’s total authority causes the King to order his colonial soldiers and officials to cement his authority at any cost, even using mercenary soldiers to “…deluge the street with blood….”\textsuperscript{23} Yet, just as the citizens are to be exterminated appears an elderly man emitting venerability and authority. His hair long and gray, a staff in one hand and sword by his side, he is able to stop the marching soldiers in their tracks.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}, 3.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid}, 2.
Stunned by the actions of the Gray man, the King’s colonial representative, Sir Edmund Andros, threatens him. The man with gray hair rallies the people against the King’s men, promising that Andros will be in jail by the next day’s end. With the populace safe once again, the gray stranger vanishes; some saying that he walked to the woods, others claiming to see him evanesce into the air. Yet, all knowing “whenever the descendants of Puritans are to…[face] darkness, and adversity, and peril”\textsuperscript{24} the Gray Champion appears.

Inspired by a legend dating to the 1670s, “The Gray Champion” encompasses several aspects of the superhero mythology that continually appear in American heroic narratives. This narrative structure (seen in Hawthorne’s tale and defined by John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett) appears in the Western genre, \textit{The Virginian}, the stories of Zorro, the Lone Ranger, and in the adventure strips and comic books in the 1920s to 1930s. Primary examples of heroic figures defying conventional legal systems to uphold the spirit of the law and “American ideals” – in other words, acts of civil disobedience - are seen in pulp heroes like the Shadow and Tarzan.\textsuperscript{25}

Just as important as the American Monomyth, racist ideology shapes American popular culture and narratives throughout the nation’s history. Dating to Colonial America’s Indian captivity narratives, non-whites are seen as dangers to the country for a considerable portion of its history. The late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century presented a historically unique perspective on xenophobic traditions. Perverting Darwin’s theory of evolution, prominent members of academia, politics, and business began advocating the concept of eugenics, which was seen as a means “…to cleanse society not only of its born criminals but of the “moral imbeciles” who proliferated among the lower classes: inebriates, tramps, mental defectives, prostitutes, and the unemployed.”\textsuperscript{26} More than just an American ideology, nations across the globe engaged in discussions of Social Darwinism and racial hygiene. The early 1900’s saw the Race Hygiene Society’s founding in Berlin; the Eugenics Education Society [holding] the First International Congress of Eugenics in London\textsuperscript{27} in 1912. Present at this event was College of Surgeons’ president, Winston Churchill, Alexander Graham Bell, Anglican Bishops, David Starr Jordan, the vice-chancellor of the University of London, First Lord of the Admiralty, Stanford

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 17 & 18.
\textsuperscript{26} Elizabeth Ewen & Stuart Ewen, \textit{Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality} (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006), 260.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 276.
University’s chancellor and Harvard’s president Emeritus, Charles Elliott. The next Congress would be held at the American Museum of Natural History in 1921.²⁸

Keeping eugenics in the public eye sociologists published books and articles, such as The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity – which argues that heritage is responsible for deficient and degenerate characteristics in human beings. Solidifying the theory as a tool to enforce long held racist beliefs eugenics advocates spoke of the inherent superiority in Nordic peoples. Eugenics’ followers sought to influence the American public by hosting events at national and local fairs. Dr. Kellogg, founder of the cereal company and a member of the Race Betterment Foundation, “…called for the establishment of contests, which would offer prizes for the “finest families…” and called for the creation of a ‘Eugenics Registry Office…to establish a race of human thoroughbreds.’”²⁹ Kellogg’s suggestions led to the creation of “Race Betterment Week” and “Fitter Family Contests” – which became standard at state and local fairs nationwide in the 1920s. Eugenics was ingrained into the American consciousness for the first half of the 1900s and was even taught as a science in schools and college from 1914 to 1948. As Ewen and Ewen cite:

By 1928, eugenics was a topic in 376 separate college courses, which enrolled approximately 20,000 students. A content analysis of high school science texts published between 1914 and 1948 indicates that a majority presented eugenics as a legitimate science. These texts embraced Galton’s concept of differential birth rates between the biological ‘fit’ and ‘unfit,’ training high school students that immigration restriction, segregation, and sterilization were worthy policies to maintain in American culture.³⁰ Eugenics would create an interest in health contributing to the popularity of Charles Atlas’ and influence several comic strip, pulp magazine, and science fiction writers.

The story of Tarzan is a simple one: a white baby abandoned in the middle of a jungle manages to become lord over the landscape, its animals, and its Africans. The source of this story’s racist subtext stems from the fact that Tarzan’s creator, Edgar Rice Burroughs, “believed

---

²⁸ Ibid, 276-277.
²⁹ Ibid, 313.
³⁰ Ibid, 317.
in the innate virtue of the “Anglo-Saxon race” [and] the virtue of physical fitness.”  
A key example of eugenics influence is seen Philip Wylie’s Gladiator. Appearing on bookshelves in 1930, Wylie uses eugenics as a plot device that creates the story’s protagonist, Hugo Danner. Danner, the result of his father’s experiments, considers himself a “man of iron,” is able to jump over houses, run faster than trains and is practically bulletproof. Possessing strength far beyond that of normal men, Danner wanders the world until he is struck dead by a lighting bolt.

Looking back on the early 1900s it is clear that eugenics is an attempt to scientifically justify racist beliefs long established in America. However, its “scientific” justification influenced the generation that would develop the comic book narrative structure. Perceived white superiority caused Africans to be depicted as primates and Asians as sinister sub-humans. Readers of Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Tarzan and Philip Wylie’s Gladiator, and interested in the eugenics’ inspired fitness advertisements of Charles Atlas, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster - the creators of Superman - reinforced, if not instilled, deeply racists characteristics in comic books. Dozens of other superheroes appear after Superman, each white. When the nation entered into war, the racist aspects of the superheroes’ birth would amalgamate with the patriotic zeal sweeping the United States. The white superiority inherent in characters such as Superman and Captain America became the nationalistic superiority within their World War II propaganda.

---

32 Ibid, 78 – 81.
We do not have to become heroes overnight….Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appears, discovering that we have the strength to stare it down….The thing always to remember…you must do the thing you think you cannot do.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

A true understanding of the American people during WWII can develop only from following the culture from the depths of the Great Depression into combat against the Axis. It is common to see the Great Depression and WWII as two distinct eras, yet comic books of the late 30s and 40s suggest that issues of race, class, and patriotism surfacing in the thirties created a thirst for a better future, leading to the New Deal and the country’s unified front in World War II. Additionally, comic books uniquely supported New Deal policies and pushed the US to enter World War II because of the Jewish Americans who created the American Comic Book industry not only had personal stakes in the success of the New Deal and a US victory in the war, but understood that pride in their country – patriotism – had to be synonymous with sacrifice.

Prior to the Great Depression, “Jews…[found that] the quickest route to fame was along the edges of mass entertainment,” one of the most popular being magazine publishing. However, the Great Depression would impede this path to wealth. As John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett detail in The Myth of the American Superhero, the September 26, 1929 stock market crash and related financial breakdown “resulted in 80 percent shareholder losses; among banks, 11,000 of 25,000 had become insolvent; manufacturing had declined [by half], resulting in unemployment for 25 to 30 percent of U.S. workers.” By the end of 1930, 26,355 businesses had failed, the gross national product had decreased by 12.6 percent from 1929, and industries - such as steel and automobile manufacturing - experienced production decrease of 38 percent. For a period these numbers were only seen as evidence that the economy was going

through the low end of a natural cycle. Acting upon this incorrect interpretation of the stock market crash, many business and political leaders - including President Hoover - advocated voluntarism: the view that “labor should shun government assistance and depend only on its own resources to wring concessions from employers….”³⁷ In short, big business was capable of fixing the economy without the assistance of large government. Voluntarism was strongly championed as the solution to the Depression until Europe’s economy began to show significant signs of collapse. Realizing by December of 1930 “that the major forces of the depression now lie outside the United States,” Hoover believed that “the primary cause of the Great Depression was [World War I].”³⁸

The unsuccessful attempt to end the country’s economic situation, and the belief that these problems were conceived overseas would impact the culture. The utter failure of voluntarism to end or lessen the Great Depression’s effects on the country inflamed the public’s distrust of corporate America. Failure of the banking system only increased the repugnance of big business. As President Hoover explained, “Our banking system was the weakest link in our whole economic system…the element most sensitive to fear…the worst part of the dismal tragedy with which I had to deal.” Hoover’s dismal outlook was only reinforced when “Carter Glass, father of the Federal Reserve System launched in 1913, denounced [banks] as no more than ‘pawn shops,’ often run by ‘little corner grocery-men calling themselves bankers – and all they know is how to shave a note.’”³⁹

Compounding the public’s distrust of Big Business was Wall-Street’s attitude towards debt cancelation. After World War I Germany was responsible for paying reparations to the British and the French. The British and the French would use this money to pay back money borrowed during the war. Unable to stabilize its own economy, Germany made its payments by taking out loans from the United States. This “financial merry-go-round…”⁴⁰ failed. With European countries falling into their own economic depression, foreign leaders asked the United States to lessen war debts. This idea would encounter severe opposition. Americans undergoing their own financial hardship were quick to strike down any measure that eased international debts. In Freedom From Fear, David Kennedy argues that:

³⁷ Ibid, 25.
³⁸ Ibid, 70-71.
⁴⁰ Ibid, 73.
tightfisted republican administrations of the 1920s…refused to admit any connection between German reparations and the debts owed by the allied governments to the U.S. Treasury. All efforts to scale back those intergovernmental debts were widely regarded in the United States as ploys to shift the burden of the war’s cost from Europeans to Americans.41

More important than the opinion of leaders was the public’s perception. Though a majority of the country was against lowering war debts as well, this attitude stemmed from domestic not international concerns. As David Kennedy states:

Americans were in no mood to consider absorbing a great share of the war’s cost. Popular feeling on this issue was…aroused by the attitude of Wall Street, which favored war-debt cancellation…because forgiving the governmental loans would render its own private loans more secure. On Main Street, especially in the post-Crash atmosphere, this kind of thinking, so obviously willing to sacrifice taxpayers’ dollars to the cause of securing the bankers’, was anathema.42

The economy’s failure reverberated throughout the country. Though many survived and prospered during the Depression, the majority of Americans would endure hardships, and learn to distrust big business and foreigners. The public’s misgivings would appear in early comic books as many creators witnessed the Depression’s worst. Moreover, the Depression combined with the anti-Semitism permeating America and the growing comic book industry’s need for workers, created an environment that led to Jewish-Americans having a large impact on comic books. As Arie Kaplan, author of Masters of the Comic Book Universe Revealed!, writes in “A Brief History of Jews in Comic Books:”

by the mid-1930s publishers were already starting to exhaust the backlog of daily and Sunday strips that could be reprinted. The easiest way to fill the demand for new comic book features was for publishers to tap writers and artists who couldn’t get work any where else, either because they were too young, too inexperienced, or Jewish—in most cases, all three.43

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
These writers and artists included Will Eisner, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Joe Simon, among others as well.

Depression poverty affected millions - creating a generation that hungered for work. This powerful work ethic and impoverishment deeply influenced comic book creators in the 1930s. One example is Stanley Lieber, whose life would shape the comic book industry. The child of Romanian Jews who immigrated to the US for a better life, Lieber saw his father lose his job at the beginning of the Depression. Lieber’s father desperately tried to provide for his family only to continue to fail. Though only a child, “Stan couldn’t help but note how sad his father looked while sitting at a table,…looking for a job that…just wasn’t going to come.” 44 Stanley’s father continuously looked for work and “once the phone service had been cut off, Jack Lieber would head out on foot with an optimistic smile…only to return hours later looking hopeless and dejected.” Worst yet was the effect finances had on Stanley. His parents’ arguing over money constituted Lieber’s earliest memories. 45 Desiring to help with his family’s finances, Stan Lee worked as much as he could. In an interview with David Anthony Kraft, Stan Lee states “I used to lecture in classes in order to make some extra money. In those days, they had students who sold subscriptions to the New York Times to other students, and they were allowed to go into a class, during a break, and make their speech to the other students.” Additionally, Lee got a job writing celebrity obituaries, publicity for the National Tuberculosis Hospital, and delivering lunches to the Rockefeller Center. 46

These experiences taught Lieber and others in his generation the value of money and hard work. As Ronin Ro states in Tales to Astonish, “the sight of his father wrestling with secret sorrows instilled in Stan indefatigable drive to succeed. A superhuman work ethic and the unshakable belief that a man must always have work to do: He’s got to stay busy. He’s got to become indispensable at his job.” 47 At seventeen, Stanley would get a job through relatives and begin working at Timely Comics, the predecessor of Marvel Comics. While Stan Lee would go on to reinvent the superhero genre in the 1960s, the influence he had on comic books in the 30s and 40s is overshadowed by the tremendous impact Jack Kirby had on comic books.

---

46 Jeff McLaughlin, ed. Stan Lee: Conversations (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 55.
47 Ronin Ro, 17.
Originally named Jacob Kurtzberg, Jack Kirby was born on August 18, 1917. Although many Jews found themselves “lifted out by prosperity of the Teens and Twenties,” the Kurtzbergs “remained stranded…on a shrinking Jewish island surrounded by increasing numbers of poor Sicilians, their community just as poor but less vital and less optimistic than it been a generation before.”

To earn money Kirby would walk to “where the Daily News, the Journal, and various Hearst Newspapers had their offices, and run errands for reporters.” When asked about this period later in his life, Kirby said:

We weren’t that affluent. We had to drive, we had to fight, we had to claw, we had to kick the other guy in the eye. There was no time even to think. To go to college was unheard of around my way. If a guy wanted to go to college they would ask, “What does your father own? Stock in General motors?” So all my generation could do was work. You worked, you connived and you fought….I never had a childhood, I never ever had a young manhood. I never had time for it.

The Depression also exposed people to unprecedented levels of violence. As Jack Kirby states: “Each street had its own gang of kids, and we’d fight all the time….We’d cross over the roofs and bombard the Norfolk Street gang with bottles and rocks and mix it up with them.”

Others in the developing comic book industry were affected by the Great Depression. Martin Goodman, who “had always dreamed of publishing since his childhood,” found himself in the depression traveling “around the country, bumming in hobo camps, cooking over campfires.” William Moulton Marston – creator of Wonder Woman - was “a Harvard-trained psychologist with a law degree and a PhD,” but the Depression withered away the funds of many institutions:

and as [1930s] economic depression deepened, Marston’s opportunities as an educator began to dry up….“I don’t know what happened about the various teaching positions,” said his son Byrne, “but I do remember when I was really

48 Gerard Jones, 195-196.
49 Ronin Ro, 1.
51 Gerard Jones, 196.
52 Ronin Ro, 7.
small we were living up in Massachusetts with my grandmother because there just wasn’t any money. He wasn’t making any income. This was 1934-1935.\textsuperscript{54} The two creators whose views of the Great Depression would most significantly affect the comic book industry are Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

Born in 1914, Shuster and Siegel would meet one another in 1931 as students in Cleveland’s Glenville High School.\textsuperscript{55} Enduring the hardships of painfully insecure adolescence allowed Siegel and Shuster to forge a partnership that would turn a fledgling industry into an economic power. The Shuster family history was one of constant movement. Joe Shuster’s grandparents were “born in Russia, his father in Holland,…himself in Toronto.”\textsuperscript{56} His family seemed to be always reacting to the world around them. Leaving an area when economic opportunities seem limited, moving to where the nearest economic upswing was taking place, the Shusters seemed to always be following dreams of wealth, hoping to succeed by moving to a place with good fortunes. Finally, Joe’s father moved the family once more to Cleveland – hoping to earn employment in the booming garment industry of the early 1920s.\textsuperscript{57}

Joe Shuster loved Toronto. In an interview years later, Shuster would say that “Toronto is a much more beautiful city than Cleveland ever was,”\textsuperscript{58} an opinion formed in his youthful mind as a newsboy standing on street corners surrounded by Toronto’s metropolitan layout. Perhaps it was this love for Toronto – which Shuster would reminisce about till his dying day – or maybe Shuster had developed friendships outside of his family that supported, defined and strengthened him. Either way, leaving Toronto for Cleveland was hard on him. Shuster felt out of place in Depression era Cleveland, and while “his younger siblings…adjusted to their new world fairly quickly,”\textsuperscript{59} Joe found difficulties.

Further compounding Joe’s unhappiness about Cleveland was his father’s (Julius) lack of success. As Gerard Jones writes, “[Julius] dreamed of opening his own tailor shop, but he made do instead as a piece worker and presser.”\textsuperscript{60} Julius’ inability did more then keep Joe selling newspapers on street corner, it impeded Joe from following his one true passion – drawing.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Gerard Jones, 67.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Henry Mietkiewicz, “Great Krypton Superman was The Star’s ace reporter” \textit{The Toronto Star}, April 26, 1992, A10.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Gerard Jones, 67.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Remembered by Joe’s younger sister, “the problem...was that paper was a luxury in a household where money was always tight.” To get the needed material to depict his dreams Joe’s mother would try to retrieve pieces of paper from the butcher. When that was not possible, Joe would draw on paper scraps found in the trash. In an interview Shuster stated, “I would go from store to store in Toronto and pick up whatever they threw out….One day, I was lucky enough to find a bunch of wall paper rolls that were unused….The backs were blank…so it was a goldmine for me....”\(^6^1\) When the Shuster household lost heat, drawing would allow Joe to cope. Even if frigid winters forced him to wear gloves, he continued drawing.\(^6^2\)

Burdened with shyness and the Depression’s poverty, Shuster surprisingly enjoyed participating in school activities. At Glenville High Joe Shuster “joined the Tumbling Club, designed scenery for school plays, and served as president of the Art Club.”\(^6^3\) More importantly, Shuster joined the school’s newspaper, *The Torch*. Though much of Joe Shuster’s art work would never be published, at the paper he would meet lifelong friend Jerry Siegel.

For Mitchell (Michel) Siegel the start of the 1900s could have been viewed as the start of a Siegel Dynasty. Living and working as a sign painter in Cleveland, Ohio, Siegel was able to capitalize on the growing market. Immigrating to America first, Siegel’s hope was to raise enough money to bring his wife, Sarah, and two small children from Lithuania. Siegel succeeded in not only bringing over his wife and two children, but additionally brought over “other members of his family and Sarah’s five younger siblings....”\(^6^4\)

Mitchell Siegel switched to the garment industry and opened a haberdashery. Though the this career change did not allow him to pursue his artistic passion, Mitchell earned enough to buy “his family a three-story wood frame house with a deep backyard....”\(^6^5\) Further, the extra income allowed Mitchell and Sarah to expand their family from two to six children, Jerome (Jerry) Siegel being the sixth. The Siegel family was in many ways the American Dream made flesh: an immigrant who through hard work managed to start a business, buy a nice house, and to raise his children in a manner where they could replicate and improve upon their parents’ success. Adding to the expectation that the Siegel family could grow into significance was the educational opportunity available to all the Siegel children at Glenville High School. The

\(^{6^1}\) Henry Mietkiewicz.
\(^{6^2}\) Les Daniels, 11.
\(^{6^3}\) Gerard Jones, 71.
\(^{6^4}\) *Ibid*, 23.
Cleveland school system was grossly unprepared for the number of students it would have to absorb due to immigration and population growth. Yet, as Gerard Jones states, “Jewish kids thrived, their schools soon outstripping all others in the city in academic honors. When Cleveland…became one of the first cities in the United States to institute intelligence tests, Glenville High School scored at the top.”

Jerry’s older siblings succeeded fairly well in life, his brothers getting stable, good paying jobs and his sisters marrying men with strong careers in front of them. However, Jerry was not quite like this. Though Jerry was never seen as lacking intellectual potential, he was a student who spent more time in school day dreaming than paying attention to the course’s material. Due to this Jerry was eventually held back a grade, bringing him shame that only compounded his inherent shyness and insecurities. His parents remained supportive. Being the youngest Jerry was a stereotypical “momma’s boy,” and his love for drawing was not only encouraged, but made him his father’s favorite. It was clear that Jerry would never have the talent to become an artist who could live off his work, but coming from a financially successful and supportive family it remained possible for him to go “to college or art school and…then into publishing or advertising.” However, the potentially successful future of Jerry’s youth would become as tangible as the fantasy worlds he escaped into following the murder of his father.

The Depression had colored the landscape and as the youngest in his family, Jerry was thoroughly shielded. Then while closing his shop one night, Mitchell Siegel was robbed and shot twice. Mitchell’s murder would never be solved. The Depression made every person who had gone long without food, shelter, or heat was a potential suspect. The consequences of Mitchell’s murder were far worse than Jerry simply getting “an after school job as a delivery boy [who] brought in four dollars a week to help keep his family afloat.” The murder of Jerry Siegel’s father was probably the first time in his life that his parents’ protection failed. Reality had penetrated the fort which had always kept Jerry safe and Jerry saw the real world for what it was – terrifying.

If Jerry Siegel would have grown up to be a leader, his father’s death would have strengthened his character and would have been the moment a great individual was forged. Jerry

67 Ibid, 28.
68 Ibid, 38.
69 Les Daniels, 11.
Siegel, however, is not known for leadership in a time of duress. Jerry did not confront the depression era culture surrounding his life. He escaped into the world of science fiction. Jerry redefined himself as a writer, possibly giving up on drawing because of its emotional connection to his father. Isolating himself further from his peers, Jerry took as his sole interest in high school “The Torch, the school’s weekly newspaper.” The school newspaper was never a place where one could achieve greatness, but it allowed Jerry the opportunity to practice writing. It allowed him a semblance of confidence and he befriended someone as interested in science fiction as he was, Joe Shuster.

Many other 1930s comic book creators never experienced the worst of the Great Depression. They lived semi-charmed lives, protected through circumstance from the full impact of the era’s economy yet, like all Americans, they were still exposed to the suffering surrounding them. As popular opinion began to blame the Depression on World War I and big business, the entire nation began to desire change. This desire would manifest in the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal politics. Though the comic books published during this time did not accurately mirror the complexity of FDR’s politics, the popular conception of FDR’s New Deal is seen.

The earliest hint of New Deal politics appearing in comic books is seen in “The Reign of the Superman.” Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, and printed in 1933, the story focuses on Bill Dunn, a man homeless due to the depression. Found in a breadline by a scientist, the man allows himself to be exposed to a mysterious element. After the experiment Dunn develops psychic powers, becoming the Superman. Learning he can control the thoughts of others, the superman uses his powers to gain a fortune by manipulating the stock market, gambling or simply forcing others to give him money. His ambition grows to global conquest and he uses his “powers to disrupt a peace conference, reasoning that war and chaos will pave the way for his conquest of the planet.” Before Dunn can complete his plan, his powers mysteriously fade away - leaving the world safe and Dunn a forgettable individual.

Published in Science Fiction #3 in January, 1933 – a year after FDR’s first election – “The Reign of the Superman” does little to capture the New Deal, but significantly depicts the feelings of the Great Depression. Though Bill Dunn’s actions disrupt an international peace

70 Gerard Jones, 63.
71 Les Daniels, 14.
conference, it is clear that Siegel and Shuster are aware of how sensitive and unstable the world seems to be during the Depression. Furthermore, in “The Reign of the Superman” emerges the cynicism present at the start of the 30s. A hard and cold time period, those who suffered the most learned to survive by looking out for their own well-being, a characteristic seen in Dunn. The story is a glimpse into the Great Depression’s hopelessness, a time that if a person did gain the power to change the world he/she would be motivated by greed instead of altruism. This story, with only a small number of copies printed, allowing Siegel and Shuster to later re-imagine their Superman. The story is an indicator of how they felt about the world.

This bleak world view would change towards the end of the 30’s. With Roosevelt gaining reelection and the New Deal being implemented on a national level, the mood of the country had changed. Though much of the country was still suffering from the Depression, a sense of hope permeated the nation. Getting the world’s economy going again was no longer seen as impossible but a challenge between those who cared about the American People and those who felt threatened by the New Deal. Roosevelt was the President the people had needed, “lashing out at businessmen as “economic royalists” who were using their economic power to block equality of opportunity for the ordinary citizen in the same way the English Tories had sought to control the lives of the colonists.”

As Roosevelt said:

> [the forces] of organized money are unanimous in their hatred of me…and I welcome their hatred. I should like to have it said of my first administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match….I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master.

The average American loved Roosevelt’s business views. Though born in a privileged family, Roosevelt championed the lives and well-being of the common person and oppressed individual who, without money, had gone so long without a voice. In 1938, audiences saw this essence appear in a man who “turn[ed] his titanic strength into channels that would benefit mankind, and so was created Superman! Champion of the oppressed. The physical marvel who had sworn to devote his existence to helping those in need!”

---

72 Doris Kearns Goodwin, 54.
73 Ibid, 54.
The New Deal’s policies appealed to the populace because of its David-like essence against the Goliath of Big Business. Further, the notion of a man fighting against all odds for the common person resonated not only with the American public, but with the early comic book creators. Referring to Superman as the “Champion of the oppressed” was not merely a marketing gimmick to lure adults and children, but an important aspect in the character’s early stories. In his first appearance, Superman is not fighting against an alien horde or a mad scientist, but is racing against the clock to have a governor pardon an innocent from execution.  

Immediately following his premiere appearance, Superman saves a wife from a physically abusive husband, informing the man that he’s “not fighting a woman, now!”

Throughout the Depression, people in need of money were willing to subject themselves to any condition if it provided money. As a result, many found themselves working for meager pay in unsafe conditions. In turn, Superman became more than a hero for victimized women. Superman protected and fought for the common man, the Great Depression’s victims. As Superman fought for the well-being of American workers and against the villainy of political and corporate corruption he became a champion for the New Deal.

An early example is “The Blakely Mine Disaster.” In this story Superman comes to the rescue of several miners after an accident releases poison gas and causes a cave in. Clark Kent later interviews one of the miners he rescued as Superman. The miner, now crippled for life, informs Kent that the mine owner knew the mine was unsafe: “months ago we know mine is unsafe—but when we tell boss’s foremen they say: ‘no-like job, Stanislaw? Quit!’” With employment scarce in the 30s the miner knew that finding another job would be difficult and as he says, “we no-quit—got wife, kids, bills! So back we go to mine an long hours an little pay…an maybe to die!” When interviewed by Kent, the boss states that although “the company will be generous enough to pay a…portion of his hospital bills and may…offer…him a $50 retirement bonus,” there will be no long term pension arranged for the miner who, as the boss says, should “thank his own carelessness for his plight!” – a statement signifying the owner’s attempt to shift blame to the victim. The boss’ indifference shifts to cruelty when pressed about working conditions, arguing “there are no safety hazards in my mine. But if there were, what of it? I’m a business man not a humanitarian!” Later Superman/Clark Kent, disguised as a miner,
goes to the boss’ mansion where he is hosting a party for wealthy individuals. After insulting both his rich guest and Superman disguised as a miner, the boss moves the party to one of his mines. Once there, Superman destroys one of the support beams, trapping the mine owner and his friends. Realizing that he has only 24 hours worth of air and that the safety equipment is broken, the boss comes to understand the error of his ways: “You can announce that henceforth my mine will be the safest in the country, and my workers the best treated. My experience in the mine brought their problems closer to my understanding.”

The fear of large businesses victimizing workers and others less powerful appears again in “Superman vs. The Cab Protective League.” In this tale a racketeer forces taxi companies to join his Cab Protective League. If they refuse, the cab drivers are attacked by League members. The racketeer’s activities are brought to an end when, in an attempt to kill Superman, a saw breaks apart and kills the racketeer with shrapnel. Though “The Cab Protective League” is not as straightforward as “The Blakely Mine Disaster,” it still encapsulates New Deal idealism. Both stories deal with powerful and corrupt authoritative business figures, and both stories display the villainy of those who care nothing for the common worker.

When looking at stories starring Superman, no tale better encompasses New Deal politics than “Superman in the Slums.” This comic begins with a young male standing before a judge in court. The judge views the boy, who is unapologetic that he robbed and assaulted another person, as a hardened criminal. The boy’s mother attempts to gain empathy from the judge by saying:

Of course he talks tough—What’s more he is tough, your Honor—but he’s only like all the other boys in our neighborhood...hard, resentful, underprivileged. He’s my only son, sir he might have been a good boy except for his environment— he still might be—if you’ll be merciful!

However, the judge is not persuaded and sentences the boy to two years in a boys’ reformatory. Sitting in the audience is Clark Kent. After the judge makes his decision, Kent overhears the

---

79 This story did not originally appear with a name, but was titled in later reprints for the readers’ convenience. The Superman: Chronicles Vol. 1 (New York: DC Comics, 2006), 2.
boy’s friends talk about getting even. The friends go to see a man named Gimpy, a man who encouraged the boys to steal in order to buy the stolen goods from them for cheap and sell the stolen items at a higher price. More importantly, the boys are angry towards Gimpy because he claimed that he promised to help the boys out if they were ever arrested. Gimpy appears to be apologetic that one of the boys is now sentenced to a reformatory. Claiming he wants to redeem himself, Gimpy gives the boys addresses to homes that can easily be broken into. Yet, when the boys leave Gimpy’s office, he calls the police to inform them of the potential burglaries. At this moment Superman grabs Gimpy, breaks his phone, throws him into a wall, and drops Gimpy into what appears to be a barrel of tar. Superman then travels across the city at top speed to stop the boys from committing burglary, rescuing one who was already arrested. In awe of Superman’s power, the boys agree to change their ways, stating: “If bein’ clean an’ honest is yer code then it’s gonna be ours, too.” At this point Superman realizes that “it’s not entirely [their] fault that [they are] delinquent[s]—it’s these slums—your poor living conditions—if there was only someway I could remedy it--!” Superman then sees a newspaper headline stating: “Cyclone Hits Florida, Cities Laid Waste! Government Rushes Aid, Will Erect Modern Housing Projects.” Inspired, Superman tells the boys to evacuate the slums. Superman then goes about destroying the poor living conditions. Though the National Guard is called in to stop him, they are unsuccessful. “Superman in the Slums” ends with the Government “erecting huge apartment-projects…and in time the slums are replaced by splendid housing conditions” and the Police Chief saying to Clark Kent, “You can tell your readers that we’ll spare no effort to apprehend Superman—but off the record…I think he did a splendid thing and I’d like to shake his hand!”

“Superman in the Slums” captures the mood of the Great Depression and the New Deal. Gimpy connects with the belief that the Depression’s suffering was caused by individuals and groups acting on greed. The Great Depression also gives rise to individuals not seeing their criminal responsibility as their own doing, but as a response to the failures of society. This is clearly seen in the mother begging the judge to show mercy on her son, claiming that the son is not at fault for becoming a criminal, but a victim of the environment he was raised in. The notion of Superman being the only one able to solve the boys’ living condition unfortunately illustrates the belief that an average person could never change the system. Finally, this story exemplifies the New Deal’s appeal: the Government is responsible for fixing citizens’ problems.

81 Ibid, 98-110.
The story’s climax does not occur because Superman encounters normal citizens rebuilding their community. The culmination is that the government will step in and rebuild a broken neighborhood.

The New Deal dealt with more than getting the country out of the Depression. It protected the average citizens through regulations and laws. As a result several comic book characters reflected the New Deal’s premise that government’s big business regulations were a good thing. In his text Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America, Bradford Wright brings to light a few of these characters. In “The Tycoon’s Legacy,” Green Lantern organizes “a low-cost law clinic for the poor” to help victims sue a large corporation due to its illegal activities. Summarizing the story’s end, Wright states, “in the end, the corporate criminals are brought to justice and convicted, and the Green Lantern takes satisfaction in another victory for the public welfare over corporate self-interest.”

Green Lantern again champions New Deal policies when he appears in All-American Comics’ 1941 issue “The Slave Racket.” In this tale, Green Lantern comes to the aid of a man subject to slave labor on a Caribbean island, along with other men suffering from unemployment. A synopsis provided by Wright states, “the worker appeals to the legal authorities and the corporate-owned press, but they refuse to believe that “one of the most successful businessmen in the country” could have committed such crimes.” Worse yet, an individual who could expose the crooked businessman is too afraid of being sued for libel. Fully understanding the situation, Green Lantern’s decision to bring the corporate criminals to justice invokes the image of a super-powered Franklin Roosevelt.

Infused with New Deal politics, many comic book characters who became focused on helping the common man appear in All Star Comics’ “The First meeting of the Justice Society of America.” This issue presents several second-tier characters gathering to form a group. Interestingly though, their first story does not show them encountering a common foe, but sitting around a dinner table discussing their own separate adventures. The first one to entertain the group is the Flash who introduces his story by saying, “My story has to do with a sunken treasure

---

83 Ibid.
and how I helped a poor man escape a crowd of swashbuckling cutthroats!”

Though this story appears generically heroic, it stands in contrast to the other superheroes’ tales in one important way – the Flash is not rescuing a damsel in distress or a stopping a thief, he is specifically helping the poor.

The best comic book representation of the New Deal’s impact on mass culture is Quality Comics’ issue “Smashing the Enemies of Free Speech.” Written by Will Eisner the story could easily pass as propaganda due to its strong approval for government regulation. As Bradford Wright abridges:

This tale, featuring the…American superhero called Uncle Sam, opens with a U.S. senator introducing a bill to “protect the American public from unscrupulous manufacturers.” The senator characterizes the progressive law as one that “would force food makers to use only tested materials and print truthful advertising about their products.” Uncle Sam applauds the bill because “a lot of candy factories use cheap unhealthy ingredients so they can earn bigger profits,” and the praises activist government as “the real frontier of America…it is where the real meaning of freedom and democracy is tested.” A corrupt candy manufacturer illustrates the point by kidnapping the senator, trying to kill the consumer protection bill, and working to censor a newspaper expose’ of his company’s abuses.…

The vast majority of the nation’s population saw themselves as either victims or soon to be victims of the Great Depression. Possessing distain for big business and inactive government, FDR’s New Deal unified the American people in an unprecedented manner. As FDR became a champion to the masses, the champions of comics emulated FDR’s politics. However, a conflict would soon emerge. War was looming on the horizon, and those who celebrated the New Deal condemned America’s militarization, while those who opposed the New Deal encouraged military intervention. As Doris Kearns Goodwin writes: “the president’s enemies on domestic issues were his friends in foreign policy, and vice versa. Most conservative[s]…supported the president’s moves to aid the Allies, while many liberals and…progressives, fearing…war would


bring an end to social reform,…[were] isolationists.”\textsuperscript{86} This is further explained by William L. O’Neill in \textit{A Democracy at War}:

While Americans had a common culture, they were politically divided. At home [the] New Deal was…the central issue. Democrats, white ethnics and blacks, especially, credited [Roosevelt and] the New Deal with put[ting] the country back on its feet. Republicans, the more affluent in particular, hated Roosevelt and the New Deal, which they confounded with socialism.\textsuperscript{87}

This political divide is also the line “drawn between internationalists (called “interventionists” after the war in Europe broke out), who believed that the United States should support European democracy, and isolationists, who were against becoming involved in Europe regardless of circumstances.”\textsuperscript{88} Significant examples of this political view are Henry Stimson – FDR’s Secretary of War – and Colonel Frank Know – FDR’s Navy Secretary – both of whom were “conservative on domestic issues,”\textsuperscript{89} opposing the New Deal, yet, both “were ardent interventionists, willing to take their stand against isolationist tendencies…..”\textsuperscript{90}

The tension between New Deal pacifists and Anti-New Deal interventionists was exacerbated by increased munitions production. Though the country was not officially at war yet, the United States was already strengthening domestic defenses and shipping weapons to allies. Many business men felt that “if you are going to war in a capitalist country…you have to let business make money out of the process or business won’t work,”\textsuperscript{91} signifying industry’s desire to shed itself of New Deal regulations. With a growing sense of anxiety overcoming the country in regards to Europe’s expanding conflict; it would seem that Americans would chose security over labor rights. However, this would not be the case. As Keith E. Eiler states in \textit{Mobilizing America}, “labor was in no mood to sacrifice its hard-won privileges and status on the altar of national defense.”\textsuperscript{92}

FDR managed to preserve as much of the New Deal as possible, while performing the herculean task of preparing the U.S. Military. The isolationism that had swept across America

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Goodwin, 43-44.
\item \textsuperscript{87} William L. O’Neill, \textit{A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II} (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}, 9-10.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Goodwin, 71.
\item \textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Keith E. Eiler, \textit{Mobilizing America: Robert P. Patterson and the War Effort, 1940-1945} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 154.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
after World War I lead to the military being extremely downsized. As Doris Kearns Goodwin states, by “1940, the U.S. Army stood only eighteenth in the world, trailing not only Germany, France, Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, and China but also Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. With the fall of Holland, the United States would rise to seventeenth!” The military’s greatest concern was its size. While Germany’s compulsory military training allowed it to have an army 6.8 million soldiers – 10 percent of its population. The United States had a standing military of only 504,000. Additionally, because of country’s reaction towards World War I, both the government and the private sector allowed weapon production to atrophy. So while Germany could move over a hundred fully equipped divisions to the western front on one day, the US could only muster five fully equipped divisions.\(^93\) However the weakest aspect of the armed forces in the late 1930s was the soldiers. During a military demonstration in August of 1940, a military observer reported that five of the six divisions were undertrained and overweight; stating

They haven’t got the bodies soldiers must have….They haven’t got the psychology of the soldier….just because mechanized divisions race into battle with soldiers jammed into trucks, it doesn’t mean that the soldiers are any good if they get out of the trucks with fat under their belts, short-winded and with legs that won’t stand up for a hard march.\(^94\)

The key remedy to the military’s problems was to get men into the service who would not leave. In short, if the government wanted to prepare the military for war, it would have to initiate a draft.

Any draft prior to December 7\(^{th}\), 1941 would be “the first peacetime draft in American history……”\(^95\) As a result, the notion of a draft met with strong opposition. As Keith Eiler writes, there were those who feared “that freedom could be lost as easily by surrender at home as through conquest from abroad…and charge[d] that the administration was ‘adopting Hitler’s methods to oppose Hitler’……”\(^96\) Standing in opposition to the conscription were “isolationists, pacifists, liberals, gold-star mothers, educators, and youth groups.” Due to the large amount of opposition to the draft and that elections were nearing, many believed that Roosevelt would avoid commenting on the draft. However, “Mr. Roosevelt the president took precedence over

\(^{93}\) Goodwin, 23.
\(^{94}\) Ibid, 143.
\(^{95}\) Ibid, 139
\(^{96}\) Keith E. Eiler, 69.
Mr. Roosevelt the candidate,” and in the summer of 1940 he “unequivocally endorsed selective service and urged adoption of the legislation as ‘essential to national defense.’” More importantly, Roosevelt knew that this decision could cost him the election, but he sensed that the country was realizing that foreign threats were real and needed to mobilize for the upcoming war.97

A large group of Americans believing in both the New Deal and intervention would emerge by 1941.98 Prior to this, the population which supported FDR’s New Deal and the war effort was the economically impoverished Jews. Jewish-Americans championed FDR and the New Deal. They not only benefitted from the New Deal’s economic initiatives, but from Roosevelt placing many Jews into high-ranking positions99. As FDR moved from New Deal politics to war politics, Jewish-Americans continued to support the President. Anti-Semitism had a powerful presence in the United States, yet, many Jews saw themselves as both Jewish and American; willing to fight for both heritage and nation. As a result, Jews were not only willing to support America’s entry into WWII, they were prepared to see combat. As Ronald Takaki states in Double Victory, “550,000 Jewish Americans…fought against…Nazism by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, proportionately more than Americans as a whole.”100

A significant example of a Jewish-American fighting in WWII is Corporal Harold Katz. While serving in Germany, Katz wrote to his mother to explain why he had to fight against the Nazis. One reason was that Katz “had certain ideals within [his] own mind, for which [he] had often argued verbally”101 and he could not live in safety as other American men risked their lives for his freedoms and beliefs. The other reason he gave to his mother was that as a Jew he had a moral obligation to fight against Hitler; stating that he had to fight “because if Hitler won, my family…would certainly suffer more than the families of other soldiers who died in the fight.”102 Though not every Jewish-American agreed with Katz’s perspective, Katz does represent a large portion of Jewish-Americans who were willing to sacrifice their lives for a greater cause. Some, Jewish parents who immigrated to the US and worked hard to give their children a better life were at first horrified that their sons were turning away from careers in medicine to enlist, and

97 Goodwin, 139-140.  
98 O’Neill, 10.  
99 Jones, 128.  
101 Ibid, 185.  
102 Ibid.
that their daughters were joining the Women’s Army Corps. However, Jewish parents eventually realized that their children were demonstrating their loyalty to both their heritage and to America.  

One of the greatest examples Jewish-Americans desiring to fight is Fred C. Patheiger. Born in Germany during 1919, Patheiger was sent live in America in 1938 when it was reported to the Nazi authorities that his family was Jewish. He tried to bring the rest of his family to the states, but was continuously blocked by the German government. Patheiger decided to enlist in the military but was rejected because he could have potential being an ‘enemy alien.’ Patheiger wrote a letter to F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover, explaining why he wanted to fight. Hoover responded back and encouraged him to reapply. Attaching Hoover’s letter to his application, Patheiger successfully enlisted in the military and became an intelligence officer and interrogator.

Additionally, Jewish-Americans also enlisted for reasons echoing Eleanor Roosevelt’s concept that a genuine national defense included expanding and maintaining progressive ideals, primarily fighting against domestic racism. An example of this is seen in Murray Shapiro, who in 1943 traded his studies at U.C.L.A for the U.S. Army. Stationed at Camp Roberts, Shapiro – a former member of the U.C.L.A. Committee to Defend American-Mexican – continuously informed his family about the camp’s segregated nature and encouraged his family to fight on behalf of minorities.

Many Europeans and even Americans found Hitler’s philosophy appealing; his beliefs caused a similar if not greater number of people to rally against him. Overall, many Americans saw entry into the war as inventible. As a result, much of the country’s popular culture began to discuss the war’s upcoming arrival. As Dr. Michael J. Vassallo’s states in his introduction for Timely Comics’ U.S.A. Comics collection: “U.S.A. Comics! Could a title be any more patriotic? Well, I suppose Captain America would place a tie, but the effect was the same, that being a country nervously watching the gathering dark war clouds while still on the sidelines in early 1941.” However, Vassallo generalizes a connection between comic books and American culture. Comic Books in the late 1930s and early 1940s did not just reflect the U.S.’

---

104 Ibid, 183.
105 Goodwin, 202.
anxiety about WWII, the text contained propaganda in clear support for America’s entry into combat. The reason why comic books – a Jewish dominated industry - contained these messages is Jewish Americans were the first to see the danger that Hitler represented. With the majority of the comic book creators being Jewish, writers and artists had a medium to continue promoting FDR’s New Deal politics and champion the move towards war.

Placing patriotic propaganda into the comic books was not simply the result of publishers responding to consumer demands. Though, as Gerard Jones writes, “the war was good for the business of comics,” so much so that “by the end of 1942, over 30 percent of the printed matter mailed to military bases was comic books,” a sheer economic reductionist argument is undermined by two critical facts. First, comic book creators who placed anti-Nazi sentiment into their work risked death. As Ronin Ro states in Tales to Astonish:

[There were people] upset with Captain America…Among them was homegrown Nazi group the German American Bund, a New York-based group that supported and dressed like Hitler. The German American Bund objected to Simon and Kirby depicting their Fuhrer and their own group as punching bags….They inundated Timely’s mostly Jewish staff with hate mail and telephoned death threats.

Second, unlike contemporary creative individuals and celebrities, comic book creators not only supported the war effort, they were in the military. Stan Lee enlisted in the Army with hopes of becoming a war hero; Will Eisner, though he initially resisted the draft, came to think that being drafted “felt like Uncle Sam offered a chance to find out what the real world was about. And like other Americans, he was imbued with a sense of patriotism. America was at war. ‘The horrible, despicable Nazis were slaughtering Jews—[his] people—and [he] was given the opportunity to kill some of them for what they were doing to the Jews.’”; Chuck Mazoujian, one of Eisner’s assistants; creator of Namor, the Sub-Mariner, Bill Everett; Bernie Klein,

---

107 Jones, 213.
108 Ro, 21.
111 Ibid, 70.
whose life was taken by German soldiers during 1944 in Italy; and most notably, Jack Kirby, who assisted in the liberation of a concentration camp.

Additionally, based on the same economic reductionist thinking previously mentioned, comic books did not invoke patriotism as a means to nullify criticism. Prior to World War II a few individuals charged comic books as dangers to society. According to Bradford Wright, these accusations were countered when “World War II gave publishers a valuable opportunity to improve their public image.” To support this, Wright points out that “leading companies like DC Comics and Fawcett Publications now made an appeal to parents…. [and] in the summer of 1941 DC announced the formation of an Editorial Advisory Board” to help DC make all their comic books “met ‘wholesome’ moral standards.” Wright furthers this claim by stating that “publishers also sought to boost their image by linking their products to patriotism and the war effort. [An examples of this being] Superman urging readers to give to the American Red Cross.” However this is not the case. Though comic books did receive some criticism, it was not enough to truly threaten the industry. As Wright himself writes, “DC’s Editorial Advisory Board did not exactly spark an industry wide trend. Initially only its chief rival, Fawcett Publications, followed suit…” and eventually both boards would evanescence.

Moreover, as Amy Kiste Nyberg writes in Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code, “comic book reading failed to capture public attention and generate public outrage until after the war…[because] it was not until the postwar period that comic book reading became linked to the rising concerns about juvenile delinquency.” In short, comic book companies did not use WWII as a means to escape criticism. Nor did they engineer characters to be more patriotic to shield themselves from attack. As Stan Lee says in The History Channel documentary “Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked”: “We were fighting Hitler, before our Government….” Finally, if comic book companies’ only motivation to produce patriotic content was to avoid criticism, than they clearly failed when one considers that – as mentioned above – many creators became subject to death threats.

---

114 Ro, 37.
115 Wright, 33-34.
118 Ro, 21.
Roosevelt’s Jewish supporters in the comic book industry helped motivate the country for a war it was not ready to fight in. One of the first comic books to feature pro-war language is *Blue Bolt*. First published in 1940 and owned by Curtis Publications, the story focuses on “Fred Parrish, a Harvard gridiron champion, who is struck by lightning twice in a single day! Parrish is then kidnapped by a scientist only to be transformed into a superhero charged with electrical powers!” Though the story was set “in a futuristic subterranean civilization” Blue Bolt still speaks negatively of the Axis. Using a tele-screen Blue Bolt is hoping to establish contact with the surface world. The tele-screen shows images of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Further, Blue Bolt witnesses Axis airplanes machine gunning refugees.\(^{119}\)

World War II was also the background in which the Shield was created. Appearing in January 1940 *Pep Comics* #1, the Shield is considered “the comic book industry's first patriotic hero who battled the villainous Axis powers.”\(^{120}\) The first page of the Shield’s first appearance states that after his father:

> was killed in the famous Black Tom Explosion set off by foreign spies during the World War, he…swore to devote his life to shielding the U.S. Government and its people from any harm….With [all his powers] he shields the U.S. Government from all enemies. The four white stars on [his uniform] signify to what he has devoted his life - truth, justice, patriotism and courage….\(^{121}\)

In this same issue the Shield breaks up a Stokian spy ring (presumably from the fictional country of Stokia) and finds evidence that will save the country from going to war. However, in the process of doing so, the Shield turns his back to the ring-leader who promptly blows up the hotel that they are in. Both the ring-leader and the Shield survive the explosion, leading to chase in which the Shield brings the spy to justice.\(^{122}\)

Explained several months after his first appearance, the Shield’s origin is typical among superhero origins. Scientist and U.S. Army Intelligence Officer, Tom Higgins is working on a formula to create a superhuman. Just as Tom Higgins creates the formula, he leaves on assignment before he can test it. On his way from an ammunition barge, Tom Higgins is

---

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
kidnapped by foreign agents. The kidnappers reveal that they are planning to blow up the ammunition barge and they want the secret formula. Higgins refuses. He then fights off his captors and escapes, so that he can prevent the explosion. However, just as he gets to the barge, it explodes, causing the Black Tom Explosion. Higgins is left fatally injured. As he lay dying, Higgins is watched over by his son, Joe Higgins, and his best friend, J. Hoover. With his dying breath, Tom tells Joe “anatomy formula S.H.I.E.L.D”\(^{123}\) – S.H.I.E.L.D. being an acronym to deciphering the secret formula.

Tom dies with the public believing him the responsible for the explosion. Determined to clear his father’s name and make him proud, Joe is inspired to go to college to become a chemist – to figure out S.H.I.E.L.D. Joe commits himself to academics and excels in chemistry. Eventually Joe succeeds where his father failed. After rubbing “the chemical on the parts of [his] anatomy the formula calls for...[he must] lie perfectly still for 12 hours and let the fluoroscopic rays force the chemical into the organs of [his] body.” While trying out his new abilities the Shield over hears J.E. Hoover state: “for years I’ve worked to clear Tom Higgins’ name from that Black Tom scandal. I’m convinced that Hans Fritz was the espionage agent responsible for that explosion.” Working with Hoover, the Shield sets up a trap for Fritz who wants the secret “formula for the fatherland.” After a chase, the Shield captures Fritz, scares a confession out of him and turns him over to the police. After this, Joe reports back to Hoover’s office where he agrees to work for the F.B.I., becoming “a byword for Americanism and a constant source of terror for those gangster forces ever conspiring against society.”\(^{124}\) In short, the creation of Shield by exposure to a foreign substance is nothing new; however, the aspect of the story which comments on the upcoming war is the use of foreign infiltrators as villains. By the late 1930s, fear of Nazi agents permeating America had become common place. Based on rumors stemming from Germany’s invasion of Norway and Holland, many Americans feared that “thousands of Nazi agents, camouflaged as lecturers, refugees, newspapermen, and diplomatic attaches, [would] infiltrate the country in the months before an invasion”\(^{125}\) and that


\(^{124}\) Ibid., 70-78.

\(^{125}\) Goodwin, 103.
“fifth columnists [would] figure prominently in the German’s successful parachute landings… and then providing the sky troops with… police uniforms when they landed.”\textsuperscript{126}

As the drums of war began to beat louder, more patriotically themed characters were published. After the Shield, came Uncle Sam. First appearing in Quality Comics’ July 1940 National Comics #1, Uncle Sam was a mystical being connected to a fallen soldier of the American Revolution, and who now appears whenever his country needs help. The character is best described by the following lines from the November 1940 story titled, “The True Story of Uncle Sam:”\textsuperscript{127}

Wherever Americans struggle, their Uncle Sam joins them…. Uncle Sam led our boys to victory in the Great War! When people struck for better [working] conditions, he was there too! He was their champion against the forces of oppression! And now he decides to come to life again, as civil rights of Americans are threatened… by evil forces guided by distant powers, prying from within…. Our country is nearing a crisis and it needs a champion to steer it clear of its internal and external foes!\textsuperscript{128}

Additionally, already established characters were revamped to become avatars of patriotism. One significant example of this is Tex Thomson. Sharing his first appearance with Superman,\textsuperscript{129} Tex Thomson is originally portrayed as a Texan cowboy. However, by 1941 support for war had grown so much that Tex Thomson gave up his western clothing, began wearing red, white, and blue, and called himself Mister America.\textsuperscript{130} A more significant example of this is seen in Timely Comics’ Namor. As Paul Buhle writes in From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: “In 1940… Americans still leaned toward isolationism and Franklin Roosevelt reassured American mothers that he wouldn’t be sending American boys into a foreign war as the Sub-Mariner leaped off the cover of his first issue tossing a U-boat out of the water.”\textsuperscript{131} First appearing in 1939, Namor accidentally kills two humans – believing them to be robots when in their deep sea diving suits. However, his mother, an Atlantean, informs him that it is acceptable to kill humans. After years of unprovoked attacks by humans on his homeland, Namor is

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Wright, 301.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 42.
\textsuperscript{129} Bernard Baily (w), “Tex Thomson,” Action Comics #1 (June 1938).
\textsuperscript{130} Action Comics #33 (February 1941).
informed that it is his duty to battle humans. The issues ends with the statement, “Namor, the
Avenging Son, faces the surface men of the world, in what promises to be mortal combat!” In
short, Namor was not only the protagonist of his tales, but his motivations were so sympathetic
he is often seen as a hero or at least as an anti-hero. This allowed Timely to produce a story were
he and another hero, the Human Torch, fight each other. However, by March of 1941 (the same
month Captain America was first published) war was so clearly on the horizon that publishers
turned Namor into a champion of America against the Nazi threat. This is shown by Namor
 teaming up with the Human Torch so that they could fight for the United States against a secret
Nazi invasion. Namor’s actions become so pro-American, that, in person, the President of the
United States says:

Namor, as President of the United States, I thank you for all you have done for us!
There is no award high enough to honor you as you deserve – but you have the
everlasting love of every American!

Even Superman made a political statement. Written and drawn by his Jewish creators,
Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, “How Superman Would End the War” first appeared in the
February 27th, 1940, issue of Look Magazine. This short story features Superman invading
Germany, abducting Hitler, then flying to Russia to abduct Stalin, and finally bringing them
before the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, so that they may stand trial for their
actions. Written while Germany and Russia were still allies, this story ends with Adolf Hitler
and Josef Stalin being found “guilty of modern history’s greatest crime – unprovoked aggression
against defenseless countries.” In addition to this was a story “in which Superman demolished
part of the German West Wall with France.”

According to the German Propaganda Archive at Calvin College, news of these stories
and Superman’s Jewish origins eventually made its way to the Third Reich. Upon discovering

132 Bill Everett, “The Sub-Mariner,” Marvel Comics #1 (October 1939). Rpt. Marvel Masterworks: The Sub-
133 Carl Burgos & Bill Everett, “The Human Torch and Sub-Mariner Fighting Side by Side,” Marvel Mystery
137 “Jerry Siegel Attacks!,” Das Schwarze Korps, April 25, 1940, p. 8, translated by Randall Bytwerk, “The SS and
this, the Nazi minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, publicly attacked Superman and America for having such a character. As stated in the 1940 April 25th issue of Das Schwarze Korps:

Jerry Siegel, an intellectually and physically circumcised chap who has his headquarters in New York, is the inventor of a colorful figure with an impressive appearance, a powerful body, and a red swim suit who enjoys the ability to fly through the ether. The inventive Israelite named this pleasant guy with an overdeveloped body and underdeveloped mind "Superman." He advertised widely Superman's sense of justice, well-suited for imitation by the American youth. As you can see, there is nothing the Sadducees won't do for money!\(^{138}\)

The article goes on to detail the adventures of Superman, pointing out factual inaccuracies as proof that Siegel lacks intelligence and is polluting the minds of American youth:

Well, we really ought to ignore these fantasies of Jerry Israel Siegel, but there is a catch. The daring deeds of Superman are those of a Colorado beetle. He works in the dark, in incomprehensible ways. He cries "Strength! Courage! Justice!" to the noble yearnings of American children. Instead of using the chance to encourage really useful virtues, he sows hate, suspicion, evil, laziness, and criminality in their young hearts. Jerry Siegellack stinks. Woe to the American youth, who must live in such a poisoned atmosphere and don't even notice the poison they swallow daily.\(^{139}\)

Goebbels most likely made this speech in an attempt to attack the integrity of comic book creators and their use of the medium as propaganda. His criticisms, however, only reinforced the influence that comic books would have during the war.

The greatest example of patriotism infused into comic books is Captain America. Unusually making his first appearance in his very own comic book, Captain America’s first introduction to the world was of him punching Adolf Hitler in the face. Published in March 1941 – months before the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor - Captain America not only

\(^{138}\) Ibid.
\(^{139}\) Ibid.
“anticipated the United States entry into the war….” but “grew to be the very personification of our nation’s values during” World War II.

Captain America’s significance is more than the colors he wears, but how he was first introduced to the American public. The story begins with fifth columnists blowing up munitions factories. Worse yet, by using forged papers, they are members of the US military. Military officials are then shown telling President Roosevelt that foreign agents are “so firmly entrenched in our ranks that [one] hesitate[s] to give a confidential report to even [the] most trusted aide.” Roosevelt informs the General that J. Arthur Grover “head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” is overseeing a project that will combat this growing threat. Grover takes the military general to a shop in a shabby tenement district, which functions as a cover for a top secret laboratory.

Once in the laboratory, the officials watch a Professor Reinstein – a name that intentionally alludes to the well-known and liked Jewish Albert Einstein - inject a young man with a strange chemical. Immediately after the injection the young man begins to glow as Reinstein states:

Observe this young man closely…today he volunteered for army service, and was refused because of his unfit condition! His chance to serve his country seemed gone!...Little does he realize that the serum coursing through his blood is rapidly building his body and brain tissues, until his stature and intelligence increase to an amazing degree!

As the weak young man completely transforms in front of the military officials, Reinstein states:

Behold! The Crowing achievement of all my years of hard Work! The first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs!...We shall call you Captain America, son! Because, like you—America shall gain the strength and the will to safeguard our shores!

Unfortunately, one of the military officials watching Captain America’s birth is a Nazi spy and shoots Dr. Reinstein. The spy then shoots the vial containing the serum and shoots a member of

---

141 Ibid.
143 Ibid, 6.
144 Ibid.
the military before he is stopped by Captain America. The issue then shows news captions of Captain America stopping spies and preventing disasters. The final panels of the issue show Private Steve Rogers changing into his Captain America costume and being discovered by the military’s camp boy mascot, Bucky Barnes.145

At first glance it is difficult to see why Captain America was so important. After all, similar to the Shield - which debuted a full year prior to Captain America – both characters gained their powers after being exposed to secret formulas, both were attacked by foreign agents, the original creators of both chemicals were killed by spies, and both men, upon gaining powers, found themselves working for the government. The similarities between the characters - especially Captain America’s shield and the imprint on the Shield’s chest - were a source of controversy between MLJ Comics – now known as Archie Comics -and Timely Comics. So much so, that Timely Comics owner Martin Goodman feared being sued by MLJ Comics. To resolve the tension Captain America’s triangular shield was replaced with a round one.146

The reason why Captain America is so important to comic books during World War II, while the Shield is not, is seen in their first introduction to the public - the covers of their first issues. The Shield, wearing a red, white and blue costume, is seen fighting robots against a generic yellow background. Though this image evokes the spirit of a patriotic fighting American, his opponents fail to resonate with the real world. In regards to Captain America’s first cover inundates the reader with not only patriotic, pro-war imagery, but with imagery clearly showing that Hitler and his Nazis are America’s enemies. The central image is Captain America punching Hitler in the face, all the while being shot at by three Nazis. In addition to seeing five Nazi swastikas, the reader sees a map of the United States with a paper underneath it reading “sabotage plans for U.S.A.,” and the background shows a television screen with a person blowing up an American munitions factory.147 The message is clear; America needs to prepare for war. Not because the country might have to get involved, but because the nation is being actively targeted by the enemy; an enemy who is not a vague threat from abroad, but the Nazi regime and its allies. As Joe Simon, one of Captain America’s Jewish creators, states in The Comic Book Makers: “Captain America was the first major comic book hero to take a political

145 Ibid, 6-9.
146 Simon and Simon, 52.
147 Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, Cover.
stand. Other heroes were in the business of fighting crime, but the war in Europe was of far greater significance.”

It is also difficult to see how Captain America could resonate with war time patriotism more than Superman; especially when one considers the previously mentioned story “How Superman Would End the War.” The reason for this is that Captain America is a shade closer to reality than Superman. Though a debate over the realistic and imaginary characteristics of two fictional characters seems unnecessary, it has a legitimate place in comic book narratives. In regards to World War II, Superman was simply too powerful to engage the enemy on a regular basis. This created a major problem for Superman creators and editors: how can one place Superman in the environment of war, while still respecting the struggle of the common soldier? Artists, writers, and editors eventually realized that Superman had to remain a noncombatant. As Gerard Jones states:

They’d made such a superhuman being of him that the Axis armies couldn’t have stood plausibly against him even for the length of a story, so the Man of Tomorrow decided that the war should be won by ‘the greatest of all heroes, the American fighting man,’ and contented himself with USO shows to boost morale and occasional forays against superscientists in the German camp. Mainly, Siegel and Shuster made Superman an escape from real-life conflict and tilted his adventures more and more toward humor.

To accomplish keeping Superman/Clark Kent from being in the military Siegel and Shuster wrote a story explaining why Clark Kent is unable to enlist. In an untitled newspaper strip running from February 16th to the 19th in 1942, Clark Kent is inspired to enlist in the military due to the Pearl Harbor attack. As Siegel writes, “Patriotic Americans jam the entrances to recruiting offices. Standing in line before an army recruiting office in metropolis is Clark Kent, eager to strike back at the enemies of decency and democracy.” All is going well during his physical examination until the eye exam. In his state of excitement, Clark Kent unintentionally uses his x-ray vision and reads aloud an eye chart from another room instead of the chart he was suppose to read. The doctor performing the physical deems Kent’s eyesight too poor for the military and rejects him. Distraught that he is unable to enlist, Superman realizes “that the United States

148 Simon & Simon, 44.
149 Jones, 218.
Army, Navy and Marines are capable of smashing their foes without the aid of Superman…” and that he could protect America domestically by fighting “the saboteurs and fifth columnists who will undoubtedly attempt to wreck our production of vital war materials!” The next time Superman interacts significantly with the military appears in the story “America’s Secret Weapon.” Participating in military war games, Superman realizes that his presence is irrelevant because “America’s secret weapon [is the] the courage of the common soldier!”

In short, Superman’s powers made it impossible for writers to respectfully place him in battle; however this was not the case for Captain America. Although Steve Rogers was scientifically enhanced, he was no stronger than peak human strength; he was no faster than human top running/reaction speed. Captain America’s abilities assured readers that he could win any fight against a reasonable number of people, but he could not defeat an entire nation by himself. This difference in abilities allowed Captain America to maintain a realism that Superman could never possess. As Jack Kirby once said “That’s why my book sold. Captain America was real. When Captain America got into a fight with a dozen guys, he could lick those guys, and anybody who read the book can see how he did it.” The end result is that while Superman could appear in and on propaganda - such as small store signs stating “Your purchase of war stamps and bonds will help Stamp Out the Japanazis!” – Captain America was propaganda. Captain America was the American Flag personified and images of him attacking Nazis was not a sign that Americans needed to support the war, but that the country needed to be in the war.

Another difference between the two characters explaining why Captain America became the comic book avatar of patriotism was their creation. Though Superman’s origin has been seen as a metaphor for the American immigrant or a modern re-telling, his creation is the result of two young men desperate to make money. Contrasted with this birth, is that, to borrow from Wright, “Captain America’s origins were consciously political,” as Joe Simon once said, “the

---

153 Les Daniels, 70.
154 Wright, 36.
opponents to the war were all quite well organized. We wanted to have our say too.”\textsuperscript{155} Kirby also expressed a similar sentiment when he stated “we weren’t at war yet, but everybody knew it was coming….That’s why Captain America was born. America needed a superpatriot.”\textsuperscript{156} After Captain America’s first appearance, companies realized that it was both profitable, and somewhat accepted and expected to have a patriotic hero. Thus, as Jim Steranko once wrote:

after Captain America…came a platoon of red, white, and blue spangled superheroes: American Avenger, American Crusader, American Eagle, Commando Yank, Fighting Yank..., Yank and Doodle, Yankee Boy, Yankee Eagle, Yankee Doodle Jones, the Liberator, the Sentinel, the Scarlet Sentry, Flagman…, Captain Flag, Captain Freedom, Captain Courageous, Captain glory, Captain Red Cross, Captain Valiant, Captain Victory.\textsuperscript{157}

Additionally, Timely/Marvel – Captain America’s publisher – created “such Cap clones as The Patriot, The Defender, Major Liberty, American Avenger”\textsuperscript{158} and further continuing this list is that two companies, Quality and Timely, created a character called Miss America. These characters did little to take away from Captain America’s popularity. His first appearance branded himself into the American consciousness. More than just a new archetype, Captain America’s success – as well as his pastiches - came from continually invoking FDR’s pro-war politics, which were supported by Jewish and non-Jewish Americans, no matter how war time policies differed from those of the Depression’s.

One of the most decisive differences between Depression and WWII policies and comics is the portrayal of business. As mentioned earlier, stories like Superman’s “The Blakely Mine Disaster” and Green Lantern’s “The Tycoon’s Legacy” reflected the Depression belief that big business would exploit the common man if left unchecked. However, as America prepared for World War II, FDR and pro-war supporters realized that big business would be needed to produce the materials needed for war.

American Industry was justifiably concerned that New Deal politics would impede, if not outright prevent production from taking place. Roosevelt was aware of this, and though he would never negate the spirit of New Deal policies, he did relax their enforcement. As Martin

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 65-66.
\textsuperscript{158} Roy Thomas, 5.
\end{flushleft}
Walker writes in *America Reborn*, “Union rules and traditional contracts were suspended to bring women workers into the plants, to suspend free collective bargaining for wage controls, and to operate continuous shifts.”

The full impact of Roosevelt’s decision to not inject an overbearing prescience in to businesses is best expressed by Larry Scheikart and Michael Allen in *A Patriot’s History of the United States*:

> Once American businesses saw that FDR would not undercut them with government policies, they responded with mind-boggling speed. Uncle Sam came up with the money by borrowing both from current citizens and from generations unborn; then it provided the buildings…; then it got out of the way, authorizing the titans of business to make good arms and fast ships. Newport News, Litton Ingalls, and other shipbuilders could put a completed aircraft carrier in the water fifteen months from keel laying (compared to nearly ten years in 1999); and a tank rolled off the assembly line in less than five hours, fabricated from scratch.

In short, with America preparing for war, business men were no longer the county’s villains, but critical to the defense of America and freedom abroad.

The legacy of isolationism caused by WWI was too powerful to ever be fully erased. Anti-war sentiment was so ingrained into American thinking that in Superman’s first appearance he faces villains that are not super-powered monsters, but a legislature and a lobbyist attempting to pass a bill that will embroil the United States with Europe. Although less than two years later, FDR announced his support for a draft, and was reelected, isolationism caused many Americans to stand against the selective service. The most effective way comic books – now supporting the war effort - countered this mindset was to have heroes, such as Superman and Captain America, willfully enlist in the military. This theme also appears at the end of a Namor story. After helping the Navy destroy a secret Nazi base, “Namor is cited for his valiant service to the United States!” and says that he is “always glad to give Uncle Sam a helping hand.”

---

162 Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, 6; Siegel, Shuster & Burnley, 158-159.
hand!” At the very end of the story is a panel stating: “Because Sub-Mariner is on a “Citizen of the Sea” – he cannot join the U.S. Navy, as he’d like to!” The message here is clear - if a person wants to help protect the United States, if they want to be a patriotic hero, they will enlist in the military. Enlistment promotion is also present in Wonder Woman’s first appearance in *All Star Comics* #8 (December 1941 – January 1942). In her debut Wonder Woman, Princess Diana of the Amazons, comes to America and takes the identity of Lt. Diana Prince, a hospital nurse. This not only allowed her to be closer to the man she loved, but it allowed her to help America win the war, being that the United States is “the last citadel of democracy, and of equal rights for women.” Wonder Woman eventually left nursing and positioned herself closer to the war effort by becoming a secretary for Army Intelligence in *Sensation Comics* #3 (March 1942). This pro-enlistment message not only encouraged patriotism with in the millions of young and older children reading comic books, but it allowed the medium to resonate with nationalistic adults; especially, as Paul Buhle writes in *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood*, the “hundreds of thousands of GIs who regarded comics as basic literature.”

As the nation accepted conscription as a necessity of the war and linked it with patriotism, the comic book industry not only promoted enlistment, but attempted to profit from patriotic themed fan clubs. The first significant comic book fan club would be the “Supermen of America.” One way of becoming a member was to send 10 cents and five application coupons from Superman – The Super Bubble Gum wrappers to DC Comics’ headquarters. Once a member, a child would receive a certificate reminding them that they are now pledged “to do everything possible to increase his or her STRENGTH and COURAGE, to aid the cause of JUSTICE,….and to adhere to all the principles of good citizenship.” Though the fan club promoted positive behavior, it existed mainly as a means of selling Superman related merchandise.

A fan club that also contained patriotic aspects was Captain America’s “Sentinels of Liberty.” Appearing in Captain America’s debut is an advertisement for the Sentinels, asking readers to “join Captain America in his war against the spies and enemies in our midst who

---

164 Ibid.
166 Ibid, 34.
167 Paul Buhle, 90.
threaten our very independence.” The Sentinels of Liberty proved to be so popular that they appeared in Captain America’s stories. First appearing in Captain America and Killers of the Bund,” the Sentinels are a group of kids who unanimously voted “to act as secret agents for Captain America.” Most is most amazing about this group of children is that though four out six are white males, one is a white female and one is an African-America male named Whitewash Jones and depicted in a zoot suit.

A similar advertisement appears a few months later in Captain America #6 (September 1941). This ad asks readers to “enlist now in Captain America’s Great young army of spy-fighters, and help free our country of its traitors!” The bottom of the page is a panel claiming that “every red-blooded young American boy and girl will be proud to be a member of this club!” Next this panel is coupon for readers to send in with a dime informing them if they join Captain America’s Sentinels of Liberty it is because they want to help “fight spies and traitors to the U.S.A.” A similar page appears a few months later at the end of issue #9. Published in December 1941, but most likely fully created in the months prior, this contains similar language to the ads before. In this though, Captain America personally thanks the Sentinels of Liberty for helping to rid the U.S.A. “of the traitors who wish to destroy it.”

Another Captain America ad for the Sentinels of Liberty that is of importance is one invoking James Montgomery Flagg’s “I Want You,” Uncle Sam recruitment poster. This ad features Captain America pointing towards the reader next to a large statement reading, “Captain America Wants You.”

However, the merchandising of patriotism quickly changes in the shadow of the Pearl Harbor attack. In issue #10, for sale in January 1942, there are no promotions for the Sentinels of Liberty, but there is a striking piece of propaganda new to the Captain America series. At the end of the issue’s first story, Captain America is telling a crowd that when the enemies come to

172 Ibid.
173 Ibid.
the United States, Americans will be ready to fight them. Inserted into the scene is a sign stating
“Buy a U.S. Defense Bond.” The significance of this sign is startling, in the wake of Pearl
Harbor, claiming to be patriotic would not be enough to win the war. In order for the United
States to victoriously engage the enemy, every one would have to sacrifice more than expected.
Furthermore the positive inclusion of an African-American, though still offensive in
presentation, projects what Bradford Wright describes as a “desirable national fantasy,” the
presentation of “American society as a great melting pot free of racial, ethnic, and class
conflict.” Moreover, Whitewash Jones enforces the message that all Americans, regardless of
race, would have to be willing to fight if the country was to win.

After the United States officially enters the war, the advertisements and their tie-ins
within the comic books change dramatically. The advertisements that first appear in books like
Captain America contain a sense of innocuous commercial hesitation in which creators want to
push for war but want to refrain from offending isolationists or pacifists. With only a minor
increase in jingoistic language, this continues throughout the war effort with stories, featuring
less patriotic theme characters such as Namor and the Human Torch, ending with panels that ask
readers to “Hoist the Navy Battle Flag,” to “Wrap a noose around the Axis. Buy more war
stamps and bonds,” and to “Be a Man of Action on the Home Front. Buy more war bonds and
stamps.”

A more striking image though is seen in *U.S.A. Comics* #4 (May 1942). Most likely
printed on the back of the front cover, meaning it would most likely be one of the first things
seen by the reader, is a full page ad promptly stating at the top to “Remember Pearl Harbor!” In
the center of the page is a panel displaying a man holding a gun next to the words “For Defense –
Buy United States Savings Bonds and Stamps.” However, the most poignant sign that the
American people were expected to greatly sacrifice for the war effort appears in *All-Winners

---

177 Bradford W. Wright, 35.
178 Ibid.
180 Harry Fisk & Edd Ashe, “Invasion by Ice,” All-Winners Comics #8 (Spring 1943), 12. Rpt. Marvel
181 Carl Pfeuffer, “Sub-Mariner Changes the Face of the Earth,” All-Winners Comics #8 (Spring 1943), 12. Rpt. Marvel
Marvel Entertainment, Inc., 2007), 204.
Comics #5. In this issue is a full page “special message to the boys and girls of America from Henry Morgenthau, Jr. – Secretary of the Treasury!” Addressed to the “boys and girls of America” the secretary of the treasury writes:

Here’s a way for every one of you to help your country. Every time you buy a Savings Stamp you are helping Uncle Sam to pay for a part of a gun, plan or ship which you fathers, brothers or uncles are using for the defense of our country. If every one of you forty million boys and girls would buy at least one ten-cent Savings Stamp every week, you would be lending you Uncle Sam two hundred million dollars every year. Think of all the guns, planes and ships he could buy with that! Remember, you can help to “Keep ‘em Flying” by buying a Defense Stamp every week.183

The full page message is bottomed with a panel stating “For victory buy United States Savings Bonds and Stamps” next to a note informing the reader that the page “is donated by the publishers of this magazine in the interest of national defense and victory!”184 The presence of this request in comic books clearly shows how the medium is adapting to war time, though continuing the nationalistic communal thinking of the New Deal. An important aspect of this note from Secretary Morgenthau is his use of “Keep ‘em Flying,” which was Wonder Woman’s battle cry.185 Secretary Morgenthau’s plea to support the war appearing in comic books is significant because Morgenthau was a Jew186 using a Jewish medium to motivate the country to support a war that would help save the lives of European Jews.

The necessity of sacrifice in the lead up to and during World War II extends past advertisements and deeply influences several stories. An example of this is seen in a story featuring the American Crusader in the December 1941 issue of Thrilling Comics. In this story “an ignorant old man…vows that America must never again wage any war” after losing his son in World War I. The old man “insists that it is ‘far better that we submit to the dictators!’” and “helps Nazi agents sabotage U.S. Army bases until the American Crusader apprehends him.” While losing a loved in combat is tragic, it is a necessary evil that all Americans must risk for the good of the nation. This theme appears again in the Joe Simon and Jack Kirby story “The House

183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
186 Ronald Takaki, 207.
Where Time Stood Still” in *Star Spangled Comics*. This story focuses on two old men who refuse to buy war bonds from the Newsboy Legion. Telling boys that “‘We locked ourselves up to keep from being annoyed by one war and certainly don’t intend to bothered by this one!’ They ‘absolutely disapprove of war…both in principle and practice!…[and] refuse to even discuss it!’” As Wright summarizes:

The Kids see this antiwar stance as selfish and unreasonable, and they report the hermits to the police. Although the officer deplores the old men’s attitude, he refuses to arrest them because it is a free country, after all, and citizens have the right to be wrong. Later, German agents, taking advantage of the ‘country where individualism is permitted,’ infiltrate the neighborhood and break into the old men’s house. This brings the war ‘home’ to the hermits, and, once rescued,…enthusiastically endorse the war effort….

Another story which displays how all Americans were needed to make sacrifices is seen in November 1943’s *Star Spangled Comics* story “The Little Rebel.” In this tale a wealthy girl refuses to participate in the war effort. The story ends with German agents killing her father and as Wright states, “she understands too late that Americans of all ages and classes have a stake in the war effort.”

The willingness to sacrifice was paramount, and comic books reflected and reinforced the common American’s attitude towards helping the war effort. As Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen write in *A Patriot’s History of the United States*:

Important equipment like the jeep came from civilian-submitted designs, not government bureaucracy. Farmers pushed their productivity up 30 percent, and average citizens added 8 million more tons of food to the effort through backyard ‘victory’ gardens. Scrap drives became outlets for patriotic frenzy, and a thirteen-year-old in Maywood, Illinois, collected more than 100 tons of paper from 1942 to 1943. Some 40 percent of the nation’s retirees returned to the workplace.

Incredibly, after all that and surveys showed that the majority of Americans were willing to train one day a week for national security, pay higher taxes, and use less gasoline; yet, many

---

187 Bradford Wright, 44.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid, 45.
190 Larry Scheikart & Michael Allen, 602.
Americans felt that “they had not made any ‘real sacrifice’ for the war,” and many felt “that the government had not gone ‘far enough’ in asking people to make sacrifices for the war.”

This mind frame clearly appears in comic books when characters like Wonder Woman:

give down to earth advice to kids on the home front urging them to collect old paper and scrap metal which could be recycled into war materials for soldiers overseas other patriotic heroes also promoted collecting scrap and buying war bonds and some even made financial sacrifices to do so.

Jim Steranko adds to this by stating “Captain America requested kids not to spend a dime for the membership card and the tin badge, but to spend the dime for war bonds. Every dime you spend may be the dime that puts a bullet in the last Jap in the war.”

However, within in the narratives themselves, a significant way that comic books showed support for moving the nation passed New Deal isolationism and towards the war effort is the inclusion of real world people and places. One of the earliest examples of this is the inclusion of the Black Tom Explosion in the Shield. The inclusion of this terrorist act allowed the Shield to invoke the patriotism of WWI and the villainy of Germany. A more significant example though is the Hawaiian islands being saved from enemy attacks in both the Shield and Captain America stories. The Shield’s story with Pearl Harbor is detailed in the May 1940 issue of Pep Comics. The first story of this issue features the Shield going to Hawaii to prevent a Mosconian attack on bridges and an attempt to kill thousands by causing a volcanic eruption. Though never explicitly stated, the Mosconians are stand-ins for Germans and Russians - the Russian aspect seen in the similarity between “Mosconian” and “Moscow.” While this takes place after Russia has become an Ally, it reflects that Americans never fully trusted the country. Additionally, the invocation of a German essence is seen in how the Mosconians speak, all with a strong ‘v’ accent. In the end, the Shield successfully saves Pearl Harbor from destruction and destroys Mosconian spy ring in the harbor. The next important appearance of a Hawaiian island is the Captain America story “The Gruesome Secret of the Dragon of Death!” This story begins with

---

191 Ibid.
192 Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked.
193 Ibid.
what is believed to be a sea dragon swallowing navy vessels. It is revealed that the sea dragon is actually a large submarine belonging to an Asian nation. The soldiers on board the sea dragon submarine are under orders to attack the fictional “Kunoa Island” in order wipe out America’s pacific fleet.

Both these stories were printed long before the attack on Pearl Harbor; however, these stories are not evidence that Jewish comic creators possess precognitive abilities. These stories signify that comic book creators and the average American knew that Hawaii Naval bases were central to the American Pacific fleet and that attacking them would be disastrous for the United States. Oddly though, few believed that the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor. As documented in Steve Vogel’s book The Pentagon, John McCloy – a Presidential advisor and involved in the construction of the Pentagon – was privileged enough to read intelligence reports, and like many suspected that Japan was planning an attack. As Vogel writes, McCloy thought the “Japanese would attack Singapore or somewhere else in the Far East.” McCloy believed this so much that when told that the Japanese were attacking Pearl Harbor, he said, “Don’t kid me, they’re not attacking Pearl Harbor….They wouldn’t dare attack Pearl Harbor.”

Another non-fictional entity to appear in comic books to promote the war effort was General MacArthur. Appearing in the Captain America story in All-Winners Comics #8, General MacArthur is the subject of a plot by Prince Kuhomi - the son of the Japanese General Kuhomi, who MacArthur defeated at Bataan. The General had been a key figure in the public’s perception of the military since he appeared on the Life magazine’s December 8, 1941 cover next to the statement, “If war should come he leads the army that would fight Japan.” The inclusion of MacArthur indicates his importance as a military leader and the veneration that the public gave him. Moreover, by bringing MacArthur into the realm of superheroes, this Captain America tale displays the importance of the General’s accomplishments as well as those by the troops in the Pacific theater. General MacArthur’s appearance in a comic book shows how

---

197 John Keegan, Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 190.
comic book creators where actively placing pro-war propaganda in their stories; additionally, it brings to light the deeply racist characteristics of comic books in the 1930s and 40s.

Though Jewish writers found comic books to be an outlet for their foresight and passionate stances on the New Deal and the war, there were cultural insensitivities that they not only neglected to attack, but promoted. Comic book historians often paint the New Deal and World War II as an unprecedentedly progressive time period for the medium. After all, Jewish comic book creators supported the controversial New Deal and the war effort. As a result, the creators are often forgiven for racist depictions by comic book historians and fans. As stated in an introduction for a collection Captain America’s first five issues:

While enjoying the artistry, power and excitement of the tales that follow, please keep in mind that these stories were created at a time when racial and ethnic stereotypes in the entertainment media were both more common and much cruder than they are today. Furthermore, Captain America [as well as other characters were] created to fight the Axis powers, and the enemy was portrayed as broadly and unflatteringly as possible. As time passed, Simon and Kirby, along with the rest of us, increasingly abandoned these types of characterizations.  

However, considering the persecution that Jews have experienced, especially in the early 1900s, this reasoning fails to completely add up. The history American Judaism is the history of persecution. Prior to coming to the United States “Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and first decades of the new century had left behind communities already in turmoil and crisis…” After escaping the 1903 Kishinev pogroms and similar riots throughout Russian and eastern Europe, Jews in American had dealt with the anti-Semitism of powerful influential leaders like Henry Ford and Father Coughlin. In short, Jewish Americans understood the sting of persecution and discrimination. Yet, their work fails to capture the open mindedness associated with a lifetime of discrimination.

The reason is simple; Jewish American comic book creators - while not organized – shared similar political ideals. The poverty of the Great Depression motivated them to support the New Deal. News of Jewish persecution taking place in Europe at the hands of the Nazi

202 Paul Buhle, 24.
203 Danny Fingeroth, Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero (New York: Continuum, 2007), 34.
regime forced Jews to encourage the United States to enter the war. As people burdened with the Depression and a need for America to fight in the European war, Jewish comic book creators used their industry to advance their political interest. More importantly, Jewish comic book creators realized that success, both financial and political, depended on appealing not to like minded Jews, but to those in power – White Anglo Saxon Protestants. However, more than just making their heroes and heroines white, comic book creators played to the xenophobic attitudes prevalent in the United States in the 1930s and 40s. Furthermore, these racist depictions reflected the venomous and patronizing hatred towards non-whites, while Germans where presented in a more open minded manner.

It should come as no surprise that African-Americans have been negatively presented in early twentieth century comic art. Starting in 1898, comic strip readers were exposed to the ‘Casey’s Corner Gang.’ Though this strip presents an African-American, the New Bully, as the leader of a white gang “the New Bully had nothing to do with progressive social engineering. Rather this character reproduced a vision of African Americans as the possessors of brute strength and behavior. The New Bully dominated the Casey’s Corner Gang through muscle, not intellect.” Another popular African American to appear in comic art is seen in 1900’s “Pore Lil Mose.” These stories usually continued preexisting racial stereotypes. An example being “the episode of January 6, 1901, the artist had Mose daydream of being a millionaire. Mose’s vision of the high life includes his entire family clad in the style of Zip Coon, and a family coat of arms composed of a straight razor, a set of dice, and a slice of watermelon.” As Ian Gordon writes, Mose and the New Bully fit “the notion that most African Americans lived in some version of an Arcadian paradise and wanted for nothing not only fit the racist notions of the post-Reconstruction era but also treated blacks as simple and childlike in their needs and aspirations.” Furthermore, even with aggressive characters like the New Bully by treating African Americans as overgrown children, given to the impetuousness of childhood, white Americans created ‘a form of perception’ that regarded all African Americans as comic performers. By the mid-nineteenth century such an outlook held the status of common sense.”

---

In short, African Americans in comics were presented as either a dimwitted comedic figure or a dimwitted violent figure.

Jewish Americans, especially those in the comic book industry in the 1940s, knew of the negative stereotypes associated with themselves and African Americans. Yet, comic books promoted these images. Though many fans would argue that these images were acceptable for the time period because no one knew better, this logic seems to counter the progress African Americans were making in the 1940s. For instance, A Philip Randolph - a prominent African American civil rights leader - promised a one hundred thousand African American march on Washington if an executive order banning discrimination across the nation was not passed. Amazingly, President Roosevelt, the First Lady, and the mayor of New York City, Mayor LaGuardia believed Randolph. Randolph’s bluff lead to Roosevelt signing “Executive Order 8802 on June 25[, 1941]. The order called upon both employers and labor unions ‘to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin.”’ This was one of the many victories won by African Americans in the 40s; yet, barely translated into comic books.205

The three main images of blacks to appear in comic books are Ebony White, Whitewash Jones, and characters in Jungle Comics. Jungle Comics are, as Bradford Wright defines, “usually set in Africa…. these jungle adventures centered on a hero—either male or female, but always white—who championed Western interests and sensibilities in savage lands plagued by internal chaos and external threats.”206 Further, the comic books present a reality where the Anglo hero understood the ways of the savage land better than the native people. Their intervention was needed because the childlike nonwhite peoples—whether well-meaning or malicious—inevitably proved woefully incapable of self-government. Left to themselves, they fell prey to manipulation and domination by false prophets, evil chieftains, and hostile foreign agents.207

Additionally, as these stories continued to fill the newsstands as WWII approached, Jungle comics began portray native Africans as potential supporters of the Nazism and could only be

---

205 Goodwin, 251-252.
206 Wright, 36.
207 Ibid.
saved by white western intervention. The average depiction of Africans in comics hovered above portraying Africans as hairless apes. However, tiny signs of African American equality were seen in the characters Whitewash Jones and Ebony White.

Captain America was such a commercial success that his sidekick, Bucky, lead his own team in their own comic book series called *Young Allies*. In an advertisement for the series, Bucky says “With spies and 5th columnists threatening the U.S…we sentinels of liberty have decided to do our bit and fight them for ourselves! So take warning, traitors, it’s gonna be a fight to the finish—and the young allies are out to see that it’s your finish.” While this team only has one other super powered character, Toro - the Human Torch’s sidekick, the rest being regular kids, a unique aspect of this group is the inclusion of the African American Whitewash Jones. The advertisement for *Young Allies* describes Whitewash as a boy “who can make a harmonica talk and watermelons disappear.” Many academics solely look at the offensive nature of Whitewash’s description, such as Paul Buhle in his book *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood* when he writes “Whitewash Jones was a watermelon-eating stereotype,” but fails to realize anything positive about Jones’ portrayal. However, it should be noted that all of the regular boys in the Young Allies portrayed in an offensive manner. For instance, Tubby Tinkle - the obviously overweight member of the group – is described as someone “who would much rather eat than fight Criminals!”

Another significant African American character to encompass offensive stereotypes and progress towards equality is Ebony White. A sidekick for the hero, Spirit, Ebony “was drawn in the somewhat exaggerated cartoon-like manner commonly used to depict blacks in comics and movies during the early 20th century.” Though offensively drawn “Ebony evolved into a smart, strong character who solved crimes and held his own as an intricate part of the strip’s success.” Additionally, “in 1946, Ebony was sent to college and 18 years later…return[ed] as an adult, working for Central City’s government.”

While African Americans had some positive portrayals in comic books, Asians – especially Japanese – would be presented as demonic sub-humans. Asians had never genuinely

---

208 Ibid, 37–41.
210 Paul Buhle, 186.
been portrayed positively in comic books. If an Asian appeared and was not the villain, the Asian was usually incompetent. A significant example being the first issue of *Detective Comics* which, as Bradford Wright states, announced “itself loudly on the newsstands with a sinister Oriental face leering from the cover.”\(^{213}\) This inherent xenophobia combined with the real world savagery of the Japanese military – the most significant example being the Rape of Nanking. As Michael Bess writes in *Choices Under Fire*:

> On December 13, 1937, Japanese forces occupied Nanking. Evidently, the Japanese army leaders decided that they stood a good chance of terrifying the Chinese into surrender….So their troops went after the civilian population. At least twenty thousand Chinese noncombatant men were…massacred. They were used as living targets for bayonet practice by Japanese soldiers; they were machine-gunned; they were buried alive; they were doused with gasoline and burned to death….The same…done to…Chinese soldiers who had surrendered or been captured….Inside the city, Japanese troops were gang-raping every Chinese woman they could get their hands on. Over and over, at least twenty thousand women, day after day: pregnant mothers, old women, young girls….The orgy of sadistic violence went on for six weeks…and the government in Tokyo did nothing to stop it.\(^{214}\)

This display of inhumane behavior dominated American perceptions of Japanese. FDR was so horrified by the massacre that “in 1938 [he called] for a voluntary boycott among American arms manufacturers of any further sales to the Japanese.”\(^{215}\) Due to this atrocity, American attitudes towards Japanese could only become further acrimonious after December 7\(^{\text{th}}\), 1941.

An early story depicting Asians as monsters is a story in the April 1941 issue of *Captain America*, “Captain America and the Ageless Orientals Who Wouldn’t Die.” While the war is not touched upon in this story, it is significant in that the villains are giant Orientals from Tibet’s mountains. The story’s end reveals that the Orientals serve a bank executive who uses them to rob other banks. Further, Captain America learns that the Orientals only follow his orders because he knows how to kill them. Yet, even though Captain America knows that they have

\(^{213}\) Bradford Wright, 5.  
\(^{215}\) Ibid, 51.
been coerced into committing crimes, the story ends with him killing the bank executive and the Orientals; displaying an inherent disregard for Asian life. Additionally, though the bank executive is ultimately responsible for the villainous actions of the story, he is depicted as a normal adult male. While white-American villains are presented as well dressed, normal looking humans - the Orientals, however, are tall, hairless (except for eyebrows), skeletally skinny with oversized heads, and, even though they are indigenous to a snowy mountain top, wear nothing more than loin clothes. The depiction of the Orientals is an early indicator as to how comic books would present Asians; humanoid, but not quite human.

Asians next appear in the already mentioned story “The Gruesome Secret of the Dragon of Death!” – in which an Asian military power attacks the US Hawaiian Naval base. Though the Orientals in the previous stories can be perceived as victims, the “Asiatic” soldiers are unquestionably villains. Additionally, while their nationality is never stated it is clear Simon and Kirby want these Asians soldiers to Japanese being that their actions evoke the Rape of Nanking. These actions being the abduction of a Naval Commander who is then tortured for hours and, after refusing to disclose a password, the abduction of his daughter and the threat to torture her. This story’s portrayal of Asians continues the standard seen in the previous story with many of the men being oversized brutes in loin clothes and with queue ponytails. Additionally, the “Asiatic” commander, as well as other minor crew men, is in westernized military uniforms. While the change in wardrobe removes the commander from being considered an unsophisticated brute, it cast him in a deeply sinister light. A brute is usually depicted acting on instinct or blind emotions; the well dressed Asian, however, was a villain that carefully plotted how to kill innocents.

However the most offensive and common depiction of Asians to appear in comic books appears in the Captain America story “Meet the Fang.” This narrative begins with “an agent of an Asiatic aggressor nation” striking a deal with the villainous Fang. Though the nation of the agent is never stated, the reader can infer that he is suppose to be Japanese because he wants

---

Fang to keep Chinese emissaries from acquiring a loan from the United States.\textsuperscript{219} Fang’s henchmen kill one of the emissaries and abduct the remaining emissary and Bucky. As like most Captain America stories, it ends with Captain America saving Bucky, the emissary, and defeating the villainous Fang. What is significant about this story is that it presents Asians as fang-toothed and clawed monsters. Another Captain America story to feature a fang-toothed Japanese man is “The Mock Mikado Strikes!” In this story, the second son of the Japanese Emperor invades America by crossing the US/Mexican border with his army.\textsuperscript{220} Not only does this enforce the depiction of Japanese as subhuman, it also taps into the belief that Japanese on American soil are a threat.

The racist depictions of the Japanese only increased after they attacked Pearl Harbor. American comic book writers not only “coined epithets like ‘ratzi’ and ‘Japanazi,’”\textsuperscript{221} but stories went from simply defeating Asians to specially killing Japanese. One story that particular exemplifies this is “The Vampire Strikes!” Printed in the summer of 1942, this Captain America story begins with Steve Rogers reading a news story about the Japanese dropping “disease germs on China!,”\textsuperscript{222} leading to thousands of Chinese perishing. The story then cuts to the creator of the “disease germs,” a buck-toothed Japanese scientist, just as he explains to his superior that he developed a serum that transforms him into a vampire; this serum allowing him to be buck-toothed and fang-toothed. After Captain America defeats the Japanese monster the story moves to Japanese leaders receiving a letter that causes them to shout out “I shall commit Hari-Kari!”\textsuperscript{223} at once!\textsuperscript{224} The final panel features the letter which reads:

\begin{quote}
Dear Saps,

Your vampire…has been taken care of! This is just to let you know that 130,000,000 Americans are beginning to march toward Tokyo! We’ll be seeing you soon! Our slogan for Japs: Keep ‘em dying!

Captain American and Bucky\textsuperscript{225}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ritual Suicide
\item \textsuperscript{224} “The Vampire Strikes!,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
It is also important to note that the slogan “Keep ‘em dying,” is strikingly similar to a sign “at fleet headquarters in the South Pacific that urged ‘KILL JAPS, KILL JAPS, KILL MORE JAPS!'”\(^\text{226}\) As Samuel Eliot Morison states in his official history of naval operations around Guadalcanal in 1942 through 1943:

> This [sign] may shock you, reader: but it is exactly how we felt. We were fighting in no civilized knightly war….We were back in the primitive days of fighting Indians on the American frontier; no holds barred and no quarter. The Japs wanted it that way, thought they could thus terrify an “effete democracy”; and that is what they got…\(^\text{227}\)

Comic book characters also appeared on racially motivated propaganda outside the comic book narrative as well. Superman, for instance, appeared on small store signs to help sell war stamps and bonds. The signs saying, “your purchase of war stamps and bonds will help stamp out the Japanazis!”\(^\text{228}\) A similar slogan would appear on the cover of a 1942 issue of Superman. In addition to a message encourage readers to by bonds and stamps to “do the job on the Japanazis!”\(^\text{229}\)

The actions of the Japanese were monstrous and they were subsequently portrayed in that manner in comic books. However, comic book depictions of Asians lacked an aspect which Germans had; this being that some Japanese could be patriotic. There are some rare examples of Japanese Americans being depicted as patriotic, such as Captain Marvel Adventures \#8 “which portrays Japanese Americans working against the United States because the Japanese government has threatened to harm their families back…home…,”\(^\text{230}\) but these are extremely uncommon accuracies in 1940s comic books. Presenting Japanese as potentially patriotic did not resonate with the reductionist racist attitudes present at the time. For instance, “despite the fact that not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity was committed by an American citizen of Japanese ancestry or by a resident Japanese alien on the west coast,”

\(^{226}\) Richard Slotkin, 325.  
\(^{227}\) Ibid.  
\(^{228}\) Les Daniels, Superman: The Complete History, 70.  
\(^{229}\) Fred Ray (a), Superman \#18 (September-October 1942). Rpt. Superman: Cover to Cover (New York: DC Comics, 2006), 92.  
\(^{230}\) Bradford Wright, 302.
over a hundred-thousand “Japanese, most of them citizens by birth, were incarcerated without
due process of law.”

Though German “submarines had been destroying American shipping, and had even
landed agents, some of whom had been apprehended” on US soil, German Americans fared
much better in the United States during WWII than Japanese Americans. There are several
reasons for this. As Ronald Takaki states:

By 1940, there were 5 million German Americans, including 1,237,000
immigrants. They represented considerable voting power and were important
economically as businessmen and workers in the northeast and Midwest.
Assimilated into mainstream society, Germans were regarded as Americans,
especially since they included individuals with like…Dwight D. Eisenhower.
But more important this, Germans were white.

Jewish American comic book creators encountered a creative barrier; though the country
was going to war with Germany, people accepted that they were not going to war against all
Germans or people of German descent. As a result, comic books developed distinctive German
archetypes that encouraged the war with Germany without vilifying the potentially US patriotic
Germans.

One character is the German American who is deeply loyal to the United States. An
eample of this is seen in the “Captain America and Killers of the Bund.” In this story, fifth
columnists ask a German American to join their bund. The German American refuses, stating:

I am of German descent, yes!—But I’m also a good American citizen! I’ll have
nothing to do with an organization that aims to destroy the country that protects
me and mine from creeds like yours!!
The fifth columnists so brutally attack the German American that they place him in the hospital.
Furthermore, once Captain America finds out about this attack he finds the bund’s headquarters
and defeats them with the assistance of the Sentinels of Liberty. After the columnists are
defeated, Captain America states “I guess they won’t beat up any more loyal German American

---

231 Ronald Takaki, 137.
232 Ibid, 134.
233 Ibid, 132.
234 Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, “Captain America and Killers of the Bund.” Captain America #5 Vol. 1 (July 1941),
A statement in sharp contrast to the previously mentioned quote, “Our slogan for Japs: Keep ‘em dying!” Additionally, even non-American Germans were sometimes presented in a positive light. For instance, the Destroyer, the first character Stan Lee created, “sometimes encountered freedom-loving Germans who quietly resisted the Nazis.” The Destroyer not only befriends a young German woman named Florence Von Ward, but when she is captured by German authorities, he rescues her from a concentration camp. A similar theme is repeated in another story where the Destroyer saves an anti-Nazi German artist from being executed in a prison camp.

Though German Americans could be depicted in a favorable manner, comic books used Nazis as villains. This appears in a Captain America story from 1941, “Captain America and the Unholy Legion.” In this story, fifth columnists - with Nazi Swastikas branded/tattooed onto their chest - kill “prominent national figures.” All Star Comics #4 features the Flash, carrying out orders from the F.B.I., shutting down a pro-Nazi group somewhere in Michigan or Wisconsin. Interestingly, Flash breaks into the group’s headquarters and the leader claims that the Flash is violating his right to privacy. The Flash responds to this by stating, “That’s just like you rats! Yelling about your ‘rights’ under a constitution you’re trying to overthrow! It’s only in a free country like America that there is any privacy!”

Fifth Columnists and other Nazi villains were usually portrayed as simply being ugly or having a generic villainous look. An example of this stereotype appears in a Captain Terror story from 1942. In this tale, Captain Terror, a Captain America pastiche, encounters a Nazi in a green business suit with a monocle and a scar on his hairless head. However, though Nazis were reduced to simplistic caricatures, Jewish Americans knew that they could only go so far in

---

235 Ibid, 224.
236 Bradford Wright, 48.
how they depicted pro-Nazi Germans. Though Jewish comic book creators wanted to, as Daniel Fingeroth states, “universalize the Nazi threat” 242 they never dehumanized Nazis or Hitler.

Hitler’s iconic face and mustache was used as the model for many fifth columnists. Two noticeable examples are a 1941 Flash story from *All-Star* #4 243 and in a story featuring Mr. Liberty. In this story, Mr. Liberty is led by the spirits of Paul Revere and other Revolutionary War soldiers to a fifth columnists base where the leader is clearly drawn to look like Hitler. 244 Paradoxically though, comic books avoided the Third Reich’s anti-Semitic practices. As Will Eisner said in the documentary *Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked*:

> Certainly it was an opportunity to talk about the holocaust which everybody knew was beginning to happen, but no one in comics would attempt because it I think essentially you felt that your audience wouldn’t be interested in that, they wouldn’t understand it. 245

Though the term “Concentration Camp” did appear in some comic books, 246 and many stories featured a rooms where Nazi’s tortured innocent people, they were never more than dungeon room clichés. Unable to truly vilify Nazi Germans, nor discuss the Holocaust, comic book creators present Hitler as pathetically humorous. As Joe Simon states:

> Hitler was a marvelous foil: a ranting maniac. It was difficult to place him in the standard story line of the cunning, reasoning villains who foxed the heroes throughout the entire story before being ultimately defeated at the very end. No matter how hard we tried to make him a threatening force, Adolf invariably wound up as a buffoon—a clown. 247

Though Simon claims that “this infuriated a lot of Nazi sympathizers,” 248 the magnitude of their anger would be exponentially greater if Hitler was depicted as an inhuman monster.

---

242 Daniel Fingeroth, 60.
245 *Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked*.
247 Joe Simon & Jim Simon, 44.
248 *Ibid*. 

58
Hitler being portrayed as a comedic foil is seen early on in the story, “How Superman Would End the War.” In this story Superman flies to Germany to abduct Hitler and bring him before the League of Nations to face judgment for his invasion of other countries. When Superman goes to see Hitler, the Dictator boldly orders his guards to “Kill the Swine! Don’t let him touch me!” However, once Superman grabs Hitler, the führer effeminately exclaims “Put me down! You’re hurting me!,” as he struggles against Superman’s strength.249

Another example is seen in the intro to the Captain America story “Trapped in the Nazi Stronghold.” The first panel of this story features Captain America and Bucky physically assaulting Hitler. However, instead of this assault being a punch or some other traditional combat move, it is of Captain America pushing Hitler backwards so that he trips over Buck, who is kneeling behind the dictator, and falls into a waste bin.250 However, the most significant example of Hitler depicted in a comedic, yet villainous, fashion is a Destroyer story from spring 1943. In this story the reader is told that the Devil is not only the reason behind Hitler coming to power, but is also deeply disappointed with Hitler due to his failures on the Russian front. The Devil sends a woman, Madame Satan, to assist Hitler. Oddly, though the story clearly shows Hitler in league with pure evil, his presence and actions in the story inspire laughter instead of fear. For instance, the beginning of the story shows Hitler sitting at his desk combing his hair. When Madame Satan visits him, his expressions become humorously exaggerated and sweat flies off his head. Feeling disrespected by Hitler’s attitude, Madame Satan grabs his ear and pulls him by it while explaining to him what will be done. After showing him a magic gas that will turn human beings into stone, unless a heat source is present to thaw them, Hitler is shown in a silly manner exclaiming his happiness. At one point in the story Hitler is able to use the magic gas on the Destroyer, yet, knowing that it has turned the hero into a statue, Hitler punches and hurts his hand in a manner clearly reminiscent of vaudeville comedies. The incident is so humorous that even Madame Satan laughs at his foolishness. The story ends with the Destroyer freeing himself of the gas’ effect, taking it and attempting to use it on Hitler.251 While Hitler does get away in the end, it is after he cowardly and comically runs away from the Destroyer, who

threatened to use the gas on the dictator, screaming “No…no..not dot.anything but dot!” Followed by, “Eek! No! No!”

Towards the end of the war, the public’s hatred for Hitler became so intense that comic book creators could finally vilify Hitler. Though rare, a story depicting Hitler as a genuine threat is seen in *All Star Comics*’ “This is Our Enemy.” This spring 1944 issue, taking place months before D-Day, depicts Hitler as horsemen of the apocalypse on the cover. The story, as Bradford Wright summarizes “treats readers to a brief and distorted lesson in German history. Germany is called ‘a degenerate nation whose people throughout the centuries have always been willing to follow their military leaders into endless, bloody warfare!’” The story goes on trace “a direct line of German militarism, imperialism, and aggression…, explain[ing] that the German people deserved a large measure of blame for their shameful legacy because they had ‘fallen in so willingly with the plans of their leaders.’”

Though vilifying Hitler finally appeared in comic books, it was not because comic book creators were capitalizing on American affection towards Germany’s Jewish victims. Anti-Semitism still permeated the country. In December of 1942 the Nazi minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels wrote in his diary, “The question of Jewish persecution in Europe is being given top news priority by the Americans….At bottom, however, I believe…the Americans are happy that we are exterminating the Jewish riff raff.” Knowledge of Hitler’s “Final Solution” – the extermination of the Jewish people – had made its way out of Germany and by August 28, 1942, members of the World Jewish Congress knew of the Holocaust. The Holocaust finally became public knowledge in December, 1942, after a series of events and work stoppages by Jewish Americans caused major news outlets reported on the story. However, Roosevelt only continued his “rescue-through-victory strategy” – which argued that the best way to save European Jews was to stop Hitler. Modern historians know that Roosevelt knew that Jewish specific rescue missions would not impede the war effort; especially when one considers that “when other humanitarian needs were at issue, when refugees in Yugoslavia and Greece were in desperate straits, transportation somehow materialized, the war effort was bent, and the rescue was achieved.” Unfortunately, Roosevelt and his Jewish advisor Sam Rosenman felt that if the

---

252 Ibid, 251.
253 Bradford Wright, 48.
254 Doris Kearns Goodwin, 397.
255 Ronald Takaki, 200-03.
government engaged in rescue missions specifically aimed at saving Jews “American anti-Semitism would increase”\textsuperscript{256} and undermine the war effort. An attitude that would continue until 1944, when Roosevelt – fearing a scandal – finally:

signed an executive order establishing the War Refuge Board, a government agency that would be responsible for ‘the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for a) the rescue, transportation and maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and b) the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims’\textsuperscript{257}

Anti-Semitism would only begin to evanesce once Americans discovered the true horrors of the Holocaust. As a result, Jewish comic book creators never had the opportunity to use their medium as a means to directly rally support for European Jews.

In the years during the Great Depression, the New Deal and World War II contained shades of grey; however, these ambiguities were restricted to a thin line in a largely black and white world. Jewish American comic book creators were philosophically united under FDR’s presidency because of the Depression, and not only agreed with the New Deal but with his desire to enter the country into World War II as well. Consequently, the comic books created during the 30s encouraged Americans to support the progressive and controversial aspects of the New Deal. Moreover, comic books in the early 40s motivated America’s entry into the war effort. Patriotic themed stories and characters reinforced the need for America to join the Allies. Comic book creators supported the New Deal because they knew the pain of poverty and wanted relief. And they supported the war because they had heard rumors of Germany’s treatment of European Jews, foreseeing a glimpse of the horrors their Jewish brethren would endure, and because they believed that the war would arrive on US soil if America did not interfere soon. However, as Americans they felt that these actions would improve the country and help create a future superior to their present. They used an artistic medium that they largely created to tell the country that in order to win the war Americans had to make financial sacrifices; Americans had to be willing to give up years of their lives, and many times, their lives to the war. Nevertheless, mistakes occurred. In their zealouslyness to be patriotic and to use their medium as a political soapbox, all Japanese were unfairly seen as evil while monstrosities of the Third Reich were

\textsuperscript{256} Doris Kearns Goodwin, 455.
\textsuperscript{257} Ronald Takaki, 207-08.
never fully depicted. Magnificently though, Jewish American comic book creators – the cultural outsiders working in a despised industry - captured and propagandized for the spirit of the war effort: patriotism being defined by sacrifice.
REFERENCES


All-Winners Comics #2. Fall 1942. Rpt. Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners

All-Winners Comics #5. Summer 1942. Rpt. Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners


June 1938.

2006.

Knopf. 2006.

Branch, Jeffrey C. The Inside Scoop. “Part One: Birth of an Icon (1941-1949).”
<http://www.archiecomics.com/acpaco_offices/inside_scoop/inside_scoop_1.html> 26


Burgos, Carl, and Bill Everett. “The Human Torch and Sub-Mariner Fighting Side by Side.”
New York: Marvel Comics. 1997

Cameron, Don (w), and Sam Citron (a). “America’s Secret Weapon.” Superman #23. July-

Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked. DVD. A&E Television Networks/The History Channel;


Couperie, Pierre, and Maurice C. Horn, Proto Destefanis, Edouard Francois, Claude Moliterni,
1968.


BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicholas Yanes was born June 27th, 1982 in Miami, FL. – planet Earth. He was raised in Hialeah, FL. (also on planet Earth) and attended Twin Lakes Elementary. At this school he was diagnosed with a learning disability, but with special education classes and outside tutoring was mainstreamed in the fifth grade. He then went onto Palm Springs Middle and then Coral Reef Senior High. Unhappy with the traditional high school environment he transferred to School for Advanced Studies - a dual-enrollment high school program located on Miami-Dade College’s Kendall Campus.

After graduating from high school he went to the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University. The Honors College was a recently developed program and Yanes was part of the school’s second class. The College was unique in that in required its student to write a thesis in order to graduate. Graduating with a concentration in American Studies, Yanes’ thesis was “X-Men as a Reflection of Civil Rights.”

Yanes then took a year off. During this time he traveled to Paris, New York, and Seattle. In addition to writing, Yanes decided to apply to grad school and applied to the American and Florida Studies Program at Florida State University. In this program Yanes designed and taught the junior level course, “American Comic Book History.” His Masters’ thesis examined the use of comic books as political propaganda by Jewish Americans. Yanes success has continued to his future PhD studies. He has been accepted to five universities: University of Hawaii, Michigan State University, Bowling Green State University, University of Iowa, and University at Buffalo. Furthermore, he has been offered full Fellowships to Iowa and Buffalo. Finally, in addition to turning his thesis into a publishable article, Yanes plans to begin working on two books.