

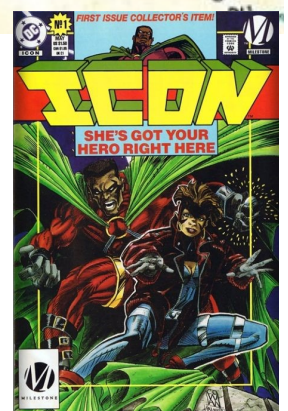
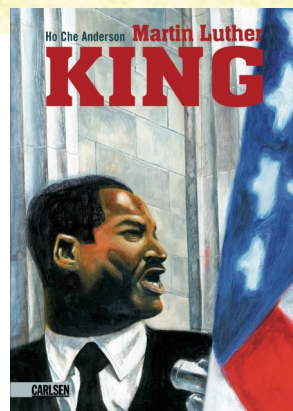
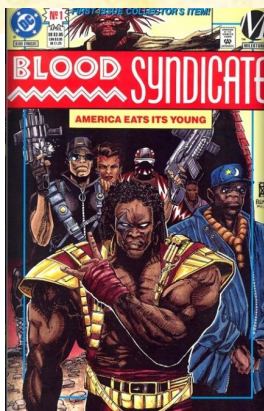
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Black History

African- Americans in Comics

GREEN LANTERN ROCKET
AMANDA WALLER
HARDWARE AQUALAD ICON BLACK MANTA
BUMBLEBEE THE SIGNAL
MISTER TERRIFIC LUCIUS FOX
SUPERMAN OF EARTH 23 **STATIC**
BRONZE TIGER ICON DOCTOR MID-NITE
VIXEN WISE SON BLACK LIGHTNING
LIGHTNING **GUARDIAN** TYROC BATWING
JAKEEM THUNDER
STATIC VIXEN STEEL THUNDER
THE SIGNAL
CYBORG BUMBLEBEE
GREEN LANTERN





Black writers, artists and characters have been part of comics books since the beginning but like much black history has been kept a secret.

Torchy Brown by Jackie Ormes was first published in 1937 in The Pittsburgh Courier, a black owned newspaper.

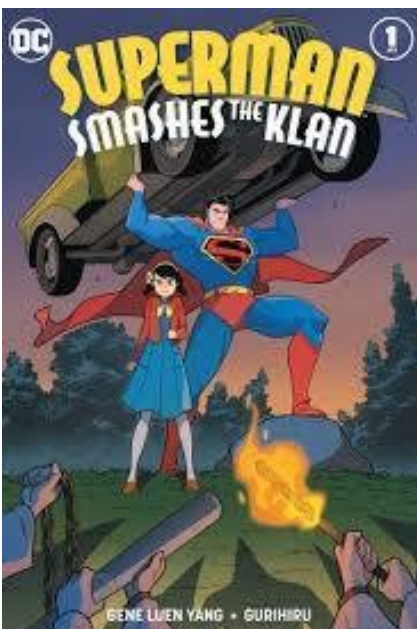
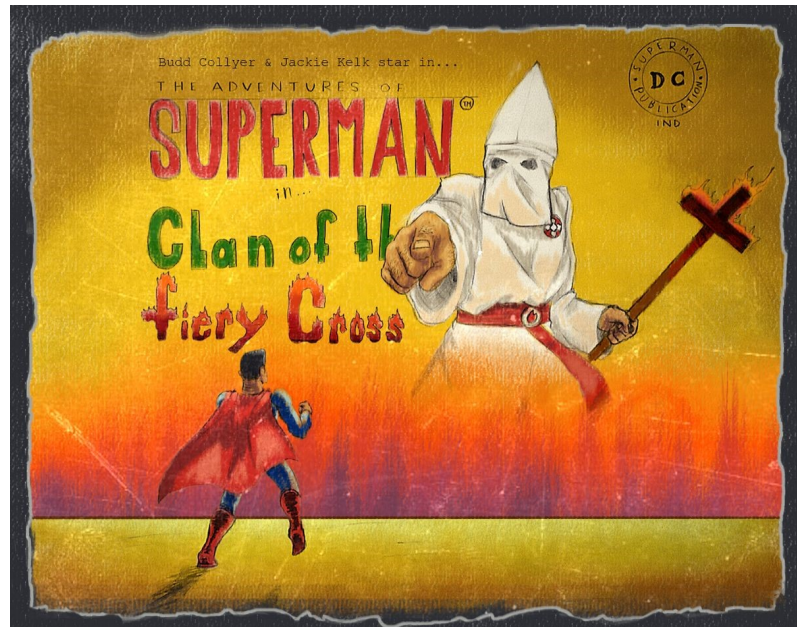
What was unique about Jackie Ormes was that she was both black and a woman.



Two things that could have worked against her in an industry that, to this day, has remained predominantly white male oriented. A year later DC Comics launched Action Comics, the first comic book to feature Superman. In 1946 Superman fought a new enemy, the Ku Klux Klan in the Adventures of Superman radio serial.

In the audio adventure, called "The Clan Of The Fiery Cross" Superman battled the Klan after a Klan infiltrator, Stetson Kennedy contacted the producer of the radio show with the idea of exposing the group to a national audience and educating children about their activities.

From June to July 1946, Superman exposed Ku Klux Klan codewords, rituals and its bigotry, all based on intel collected by Kennedy. He became Klan Enemy No 1, with Grand Dragon Sam Green offering a reward for killing him while the show damaged the group's reputation and led to a steep decline in membership from which the KKK never recovered.



In 2019 DC Comics published a 3 part series called "Superman Smashes The Klan," loosely based on the 1946 radio serial.

By the 1950's Torchy Brown reflected the Civil Rights struggle. In the pages of EC Comics the story "Judgement Day" published in 1953 caused more problems for a publisher who was always in trouble with authority. A year before Dr Martin Luther King began to lead people towards a dream of freedom and equality "Judgement Day" questioned separation by colour in a Science Fiction story ...



It wasn't long before EC Comics were 'forced' out of business by a new code, The Comics Code Authority, created in 1954. The same year the Civil Rights Movement began.



However, what the Comics Code didn't realise was that a soon as a rule was made it can be broken. Instead of seeking approval from the Comics Code some publishers went 'underground', whilst others published material independent of the Code.

During the Civil Rights struggle, many were inspired and informed by a comic, "Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story," which was a 16-page comic book published in 1957 by The Fellowship of the Reconciliation.



"The Montgomery Story" was written by Alfred Hassler and Benton Resnik with illustrations by Sy Barry, was widely distributed among civil rights groups, churches, and schools. Over 50 years after its initial publication, the comic inspired the best selling, award winning "March" trilogy by Congressman John Lewis, himself a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement.



In 1965 "Help" magazine attacked the stupidity of racism and the Ku Klux Klan by printing the following cartoon.

THE ENEMY . . . The first thing a Klansman must learn is that the enemy is often very *SUBTLE*. He is often able, through *Godless Scientific Miracles*, to assume any number of *HEINOUS DISGUISES* in order to gain the unwitting *Sympathy of the good and simple people of America*.



In this example from a *CASE STUDY*, a Communist agitator from the North was able to assume the disguise of a *CUTE PICKANNINNY* and enroll in a white school where he began to *INDOCTRINATE* the children in *ONE-WORLDISM* and unholy *MISCEGENATION*. He is now on display at the *Klan Museum*.



Camouflaged as a gentle old *nigru man*, this *INSIDIOUS MEDDLER* was brought before a *JUST TRIBUNAL*. He was convicted of selling *DOPE* and *HEROIN* to children and was later sentenced to three years of swimming an *Alabama river* with 300 pounds of chains.



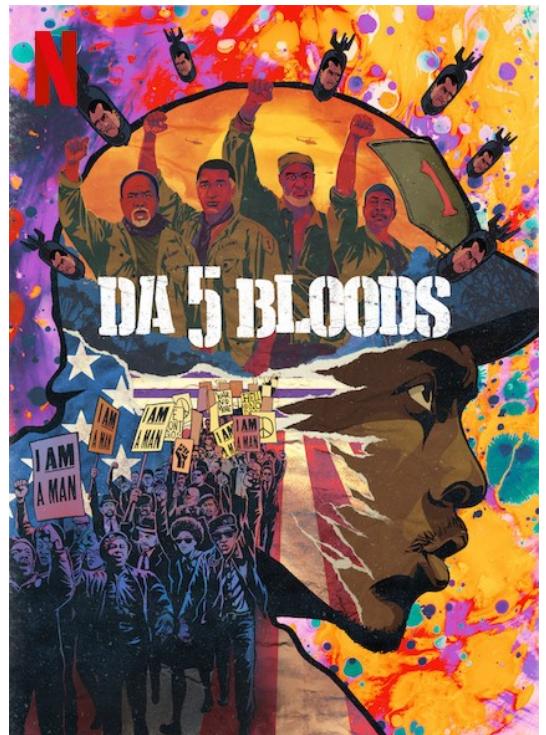
Many and nefarious are the schemes and *PLOTS* used to *SUCK DRY* the economy of the South while fattening the coffers of the *JEW NIGRAS* for the day when they move to take over the weakened country. The disguise above was found to be so realistic it could not be removed and the agitator had to be shot.

©1965 by Help Publishing Co., Inc



This cartoon is also from 1965, a time when America was fighting in Vietnam and many African-American soldiers were struggling to come to terms with a country where their own freedom was still being fought for. In a single panel this is conveyed simply and effectively, as the soldier fighting the war in Vietnam gets word about the March to Selma which took place during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Vietnam experience was further explored in the 2020

Spike Lee Movie "Da 5 Bloods" whose "Psychedelicide" poster by Gravellis And Associates was an outstanding piece of comic art.



In 1966 Marvel Comix launched its first black superhero, Black Panther, in the pages of the Fantastic Four. On October 15th of the same year The Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, California.





In 1972, Marvel Comics published the second Black Superhero to have his own title, Luke Cage, also known as Power Man. He first appeared in “Luke Cage, Hero For Hire” in June of that year. The character was created during the Blaxploitation era and was an ex-convict imprisoned for a crime he did not commit who gains the powers of superhuman strength and unbreakable skin after being voluntarily subjected to an experiment. After leaving prison he becomes the hero for hire.



The character has since been adapted from the comics into a live-action television series set in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This premiered in September 2016, along with a second series which released in June 2018.

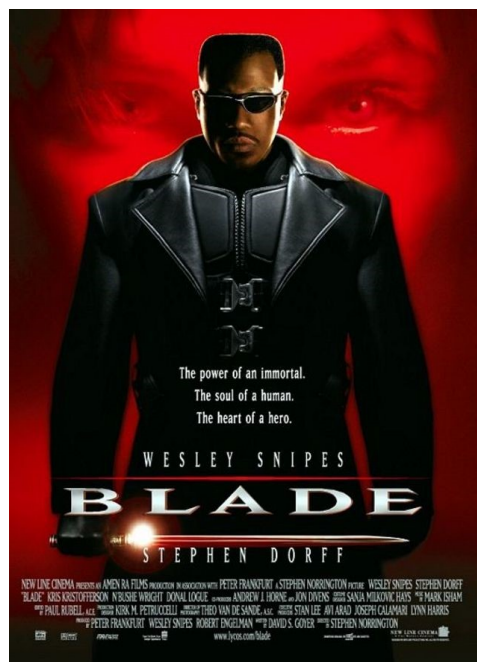
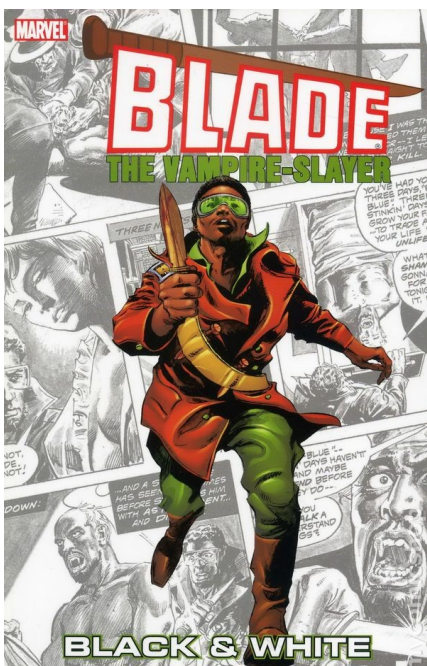


It was another black hero, though, who would open the door to Luke Cage in this new Universe after he had been freed from the pages of the comic book that brought him to the attention of the comic buyers. His creator, Marv Wolfman, deliberately stopped using the character for fear that he would upstage other supporting characters.

Blade first appeared in the July, 1973 edition of Marvel Comics’ ‘Tomb Of Dracula’.

Although Blade proved to be more than just a supporting character in the comics it was Wesley Snipes who brought the half-human, half-vampire hero to the attention of everybody in the 1998’s Marvel movie.

The film has since been cited as being the beginning of the Marvel’s Cinematic Universe .



Marvel Comics wasn't the only major publisher who showed an interest in making a difference.

Towards the end of the 1960s Green Lantern buddied up with Green Arrow and went in search of the 'real' America in an attempt to make things right. Their classic journey had begun with a confrontation between Green Lantern and an elderly black man. This was Green Lantern's very own Judgement Day.

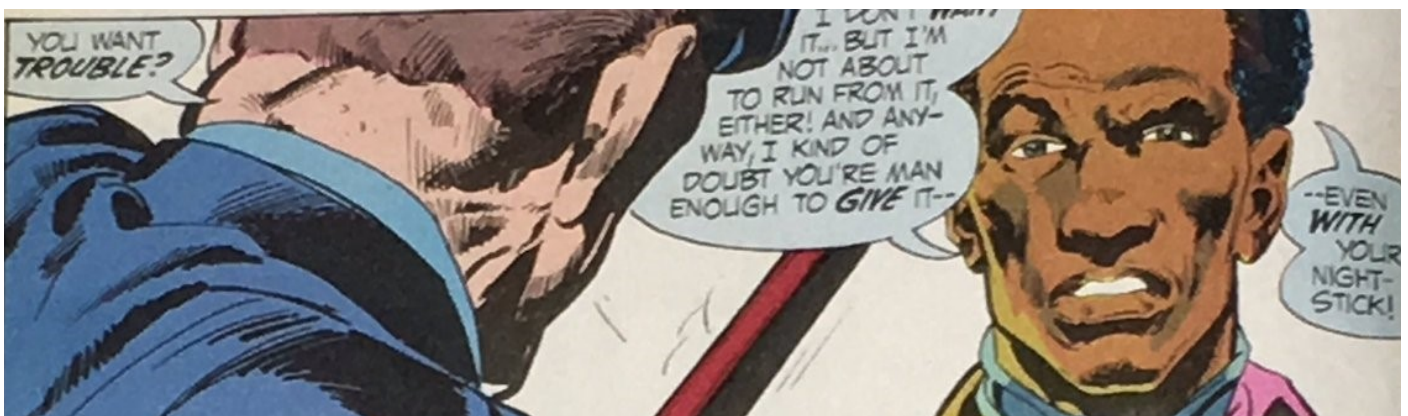
For all his super powers he felt helpless.



In the December 1971 issue of Green Lantern/ Green Arrow John Stewart was introduced as a substitute Green Lantern.



John Stewart became DC Comic's first black superhero and has been a major recurring character within the Green Lantern storylines ever since his debut. Between 1984 and 86 he took over the role from Hal Jordan. Stewart was featured as one of the lead characters on the Justice League Cartoon series from 2001 and In 2011, John Stewart starred in the New 52 relaunch of Green Lantern Corps becoming the sole lead character of the title from 2013 until the series' conclusion in 2015. The title was changed to "Green Lantern: The Lost Army" which also stars John Stewart as the lead.



In April, 1977 Black Lightning became the new hero on Superman's turf, Metropolis, fighting drugs in the neighbourhood where he had been raised. The story opened with a quote, "Justice, like lightning, should appear to some men hope and to other men fear."

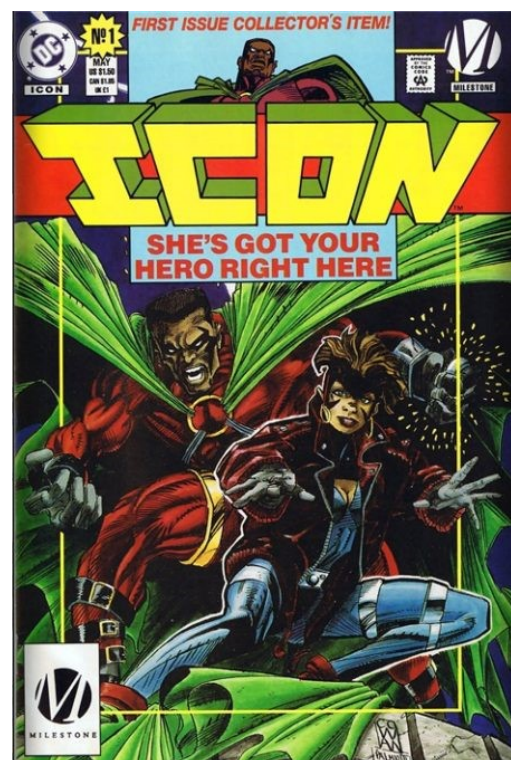
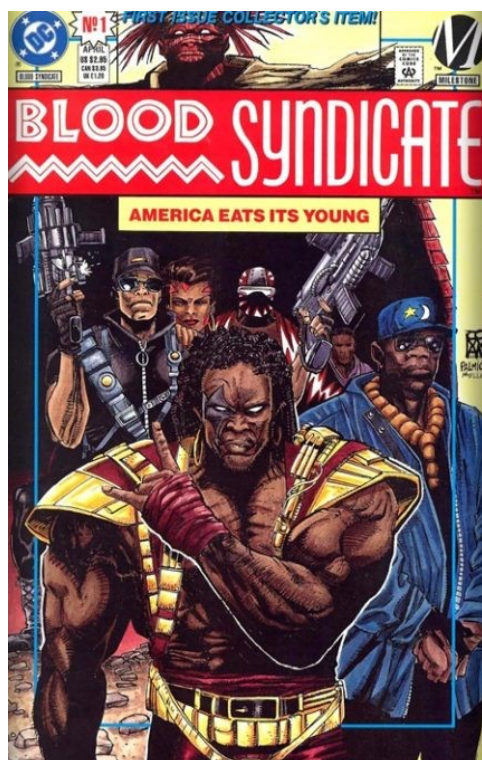
In 2018 Netflix launched the Black Lightning character to a new television audience..



Milestone Media was founded in 1993 by a coalition of African-American artists and writers who felt that minorities were underrepresented in American comics. Milestone Media was their attempt to correct this imbalance and were able to make a deal with DC under which DC would publish Milestone's comics, but Milestone would retain all legal and creative control, including copyright.

The comics were published under the Milestone imprint.

. Notice the Blood Syndicate book title , "America Eats It's Young" as we move back to the future with the comic book influence on music.





In 1955, at the time of the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum, the Comics Code was taking effect and EC Comics had produced the groundbreaking "Judgement Day", George Clinton was forming his first group, The Parliaments. Moving into the 1960s America was at war in Vietnam.

The culture of drugs linked with both comics in the Underground ones and in the music of artists like Jimi Hendrix. Who was influencing a new generation of black artists like George Clinton.

By 1970 Jimi Hendrix was dead and the music known as Funk carried his style forward with groups such as Funkadelic, spearheaded by George Clinton. After their first 4 albums the covers were all designed by Pedro Bell.

Their fourth album was entitled "America Eats It's Young" which was used by Milestone's Blood Syndicate but the fifth album "Cosmic Slop" introduced us to the unique comic related album work of Sir Lieb of Funkadelica.

Pedro Bell





As Funk began to influence music, so too did the album covers and as well as Underground artists like Rick Griffin. Graffiti artists became part of the new culture of Hip Hop

Hip Hop not only sampled music from such groups as Funkadelic and Parliament but also borrow images from Underground artists as New York became the focal point for 'Wild Style'.

Suddenly cartoons were no longer seen in newspapers and magazines but were on every subway, wall and train.

Once again, something linked with comics had become controversial.

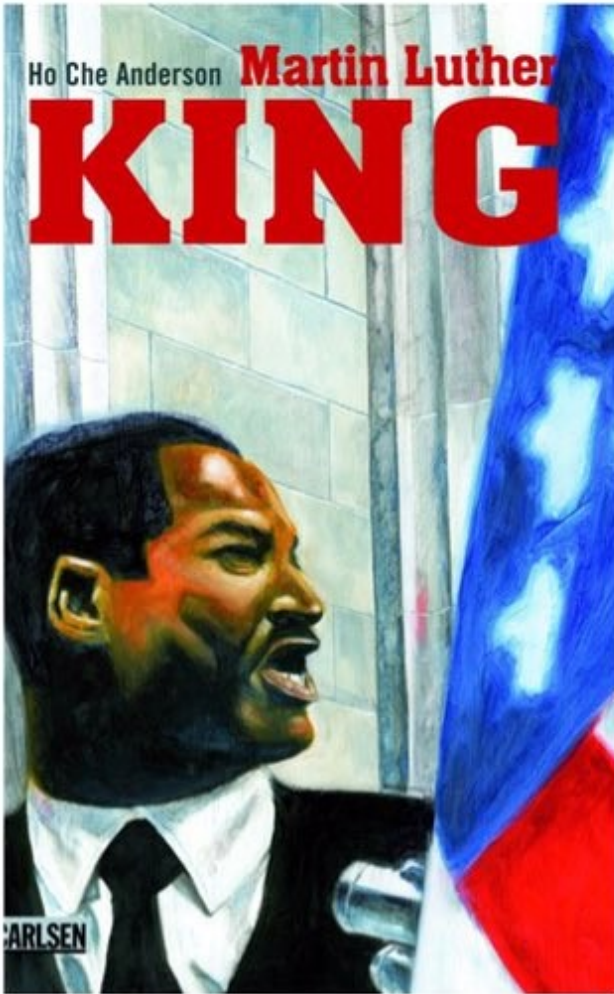
Opinions were split, some people thought that the graffiti art made run down areas look better whilst others saw it as vandalism.



In 2020 graffiti art continues to be used to express the views of people at community level and is a potent, creative weapon when needed to highlight injustice. In the aftermath of George Floyd's death, graffiti art sprang up all over America.

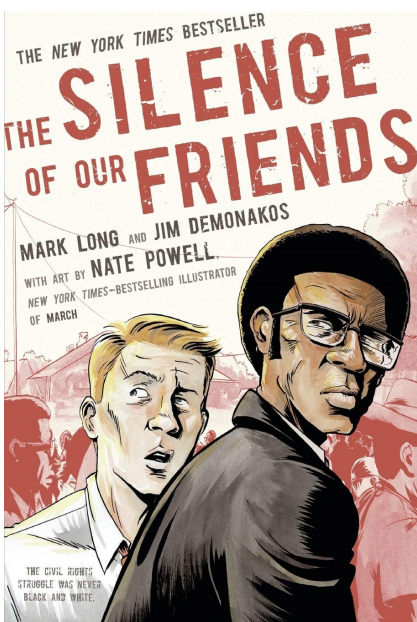


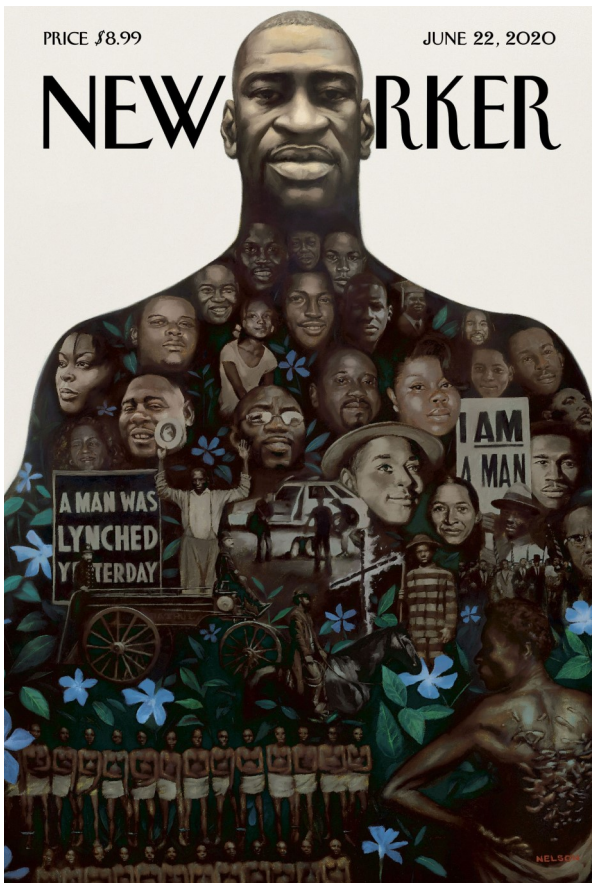
In 1993 Ho Che Anderson wrote, designed and illustrated a series of comic books based on the life of Reverend Martin Luther King.



“The Silence Of Our Friends “, published in 2012 is a story based on the childhood memories of writer Mark Long about the friendship between a white television reporter and a black College Professor during the student protests of 1968. It effectively shows the small ways in which racism was reinforced by society as well as the larger issues that both men faced in different ways.

John Lewis, American Civil Rights leader and politician who led the march that was halted by police violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, co-authored “March” published in 2013 to tell the story of the Civil Rights Movement to a new generation. Both “The Silence Of Our “Friends” and “March were illustrated by Nate Powell.





Kadir Nelson, who has worked for Marvel created the June 2020 cover of the New Yorker devoted to the history of violence inflicted on black people in the United States. Entitled 'Say Their Names', the powerful illustration features George Floyd, the US citizen recently killed by a police officer in Minneapolis. It shows his body imprinted with images of individual victims, placards, scenes from history and pertinent symbolism.

More than ever comic books and the art forms related to them are important in getting messages across to the masses.

Historically storylines have been placed within the safety of fiction. However, the truth being faced in the world are now being seen standing alongside these fantasy settings as facts.

The contribution of African-American artists and writers has been important throughout the history of Popular culture and helped to influence not just the comic books we read, but the films we watch



... as well as the music and style we enjoy.

DC Comics are due to re-launch Milestone Comics in 2021 and Marvel are committed to publishing more comics that reflect diversity.

Not...The End!

