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The Blacker the Ink

Constructions of Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art

Edited by Frances Gateward and John Jennings

DESCRIPTION

Winner of the 2016 Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for Best Academic/Scholarly Work

Winner of the 2016 Ray and Pat Browne Award for Best Edited Collection in Popular Culture and American Culture by the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association

Winner of the 2016 PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles Award for Excellence in Literature

When many think of comic books the first thing that comes to mind are caped crusaders and spandex-wearing super-heroes. Perhaps, inevitably, these images are of white men (and more rarely, women). It was not until the 1970s that African American superheroes such as Luke Cage, Blade, and others emerged. But as this exciting new collection reveals, these superhero comics are only one small component in a wealth of representations of black characters within comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels over the past century.

The Blacker the Ink is the first book to explore not only the diverse range of black characters in comics, but also the multitude of ways that black artists, writers, and publishers have made a mark on the industry. Organized thematically into “panels” in tribute to sequential art published in the funny pages of newspapers, the fifteen original essays take us on a journey that reaches from the African American newspaper comics of the 1930s to the Francophone graphic novels of the 2000s. Even as it demonstrates the wide spectrum of images of African Americans in comics and sequential art, the collection also identifies common character types and themes running through everything from the strip *The Boondocks* to the graphic novel *Nat Turner*.

Though it does not shy away from examining the legacy of racial stereotypes in comics and racial biases in the industry, *The Blacker the Ink* also offers inspiring stories of trailblazing African American artists and writers. Whether you are a diehard comic book fan or a casual reader of the funny pages, these essays will give you a new appreciation for how black characters and creators have brought a vibrant splash of color to the world of comics.

AUTHOR/EDITOR BIOGRAPHY

FRANCES GATEWARD is an associate professor in the department of cinema and television arts at California State University-Northridge. She is the editor of *Seoul Searching: Cultural Identity and Cinema in South Korea*.

JOHN JENNINGS is a professor of media and cultural studies, University of California Riverside where he is Nasir Jones Hiphop Fellow. He is the author of *Black Comix: African American Independent Comics*, the award-winning graphic novel *The Hole: Consumer Culture*, and the national bestseller, *Kindred*, a graphic adaption of Octavia Butler's classic novel.

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