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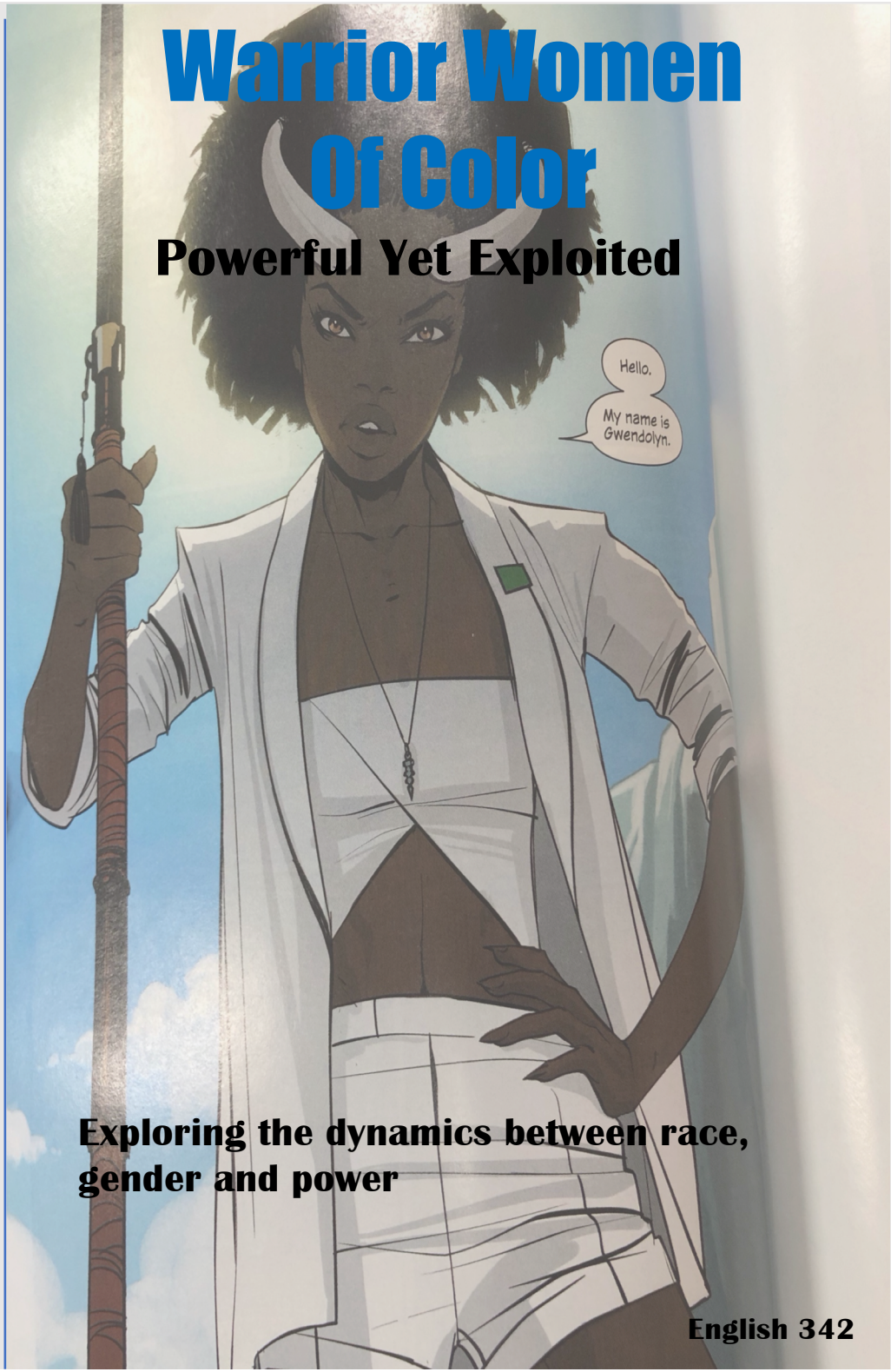
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Alexa Holl

Warrior Women Of Color

Powerful Yet Exploited



Exploring the dynamics between race, gender and power

English 342

Racism Within The Warrior Woman Archetype



How are female warrior characters of color in comics presented differently than female warrior characters who are white?

Throughout comic series warrior women of color, particularly Black women, have only been included in order to bring diversity, further the plot of the story through traumatic events, or to help develop white main characters. By examining many warrior women of color and comparing them to white warrior women, we can begin to understand the difference in presentation of women of color and white women in comics as well as what that means today.

In Conclusion

Through the characters presented in this zine, the differences between the presentation of women of color and the presentation of white women in comics are undeniable. Women of color are created for the benefit of other white characters and to contribute (through their trauma) to a plot that is rooted in whiteness, while white warrior women characters are developed and have their own individual character traits that do not exist to serve another character's development and the plot also revolves around them and not the other way around. It is my greatest hope that more development is done on the characters of all of the women of color presented in this zine, and that more superhero comics will come out where the characters of Black warrior women are created to shine on their own as the main characters and not for the benefit of white counterparts.

Why Should You Care?

Lack of representation of true warrior women of color as main characters in comics can be detrimental to the self esteem of young women of color! If warrior women of color are only in comics for the betterment of white characters and readers what does that tell them about their own worth?

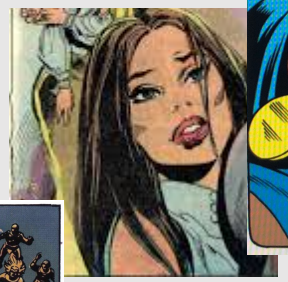
We need to do better!



"Even now in the twenty-first century, few black superheroes have appeared thus far on television and in films" (Davis 1)

Spot The Difference!









Is this a question of color?

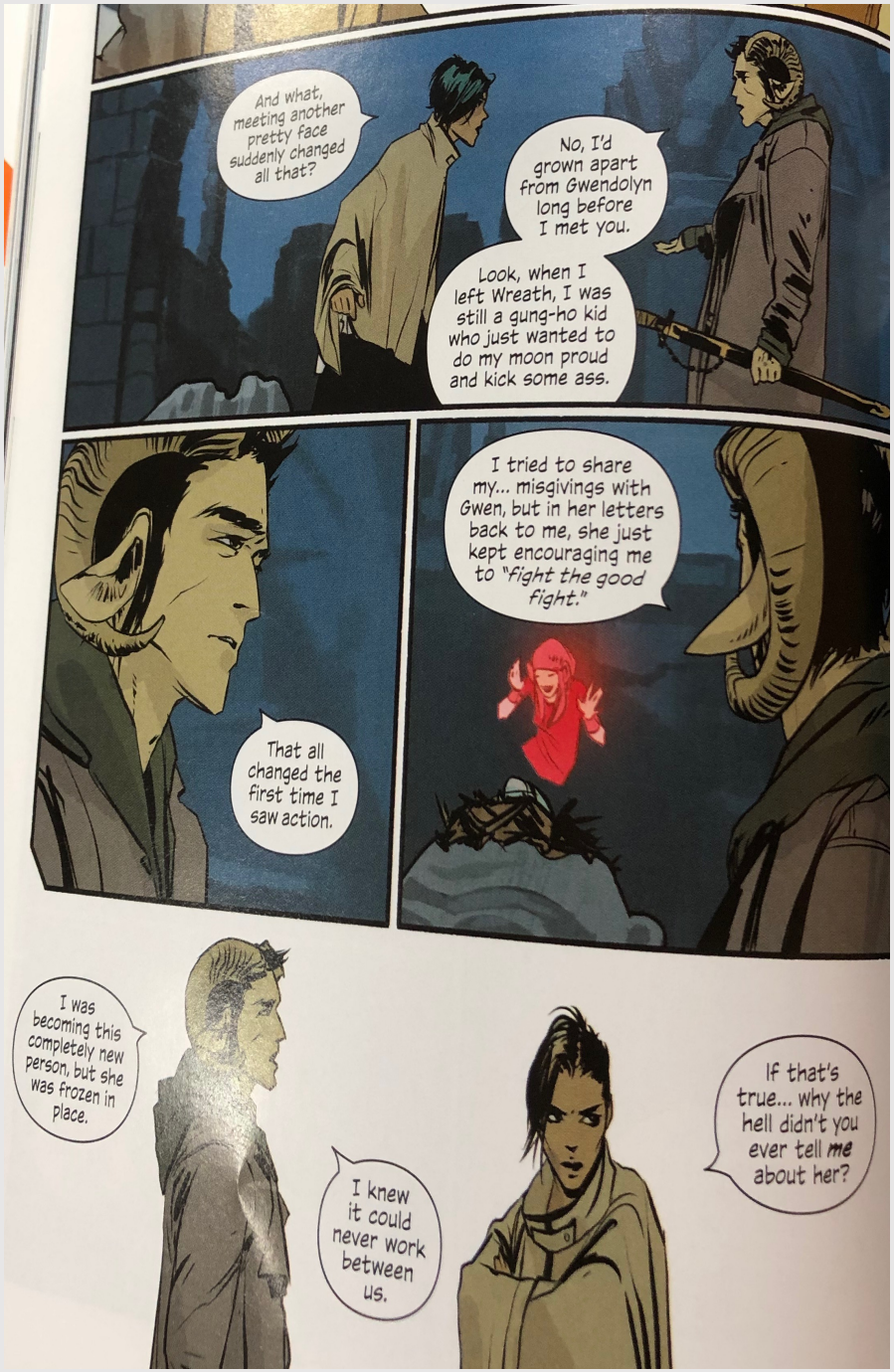
Secondary characters (at least secondary to their white foil), character created to help develop another character, created to help the plot, and they all have popular or main characters as counterparts.







Main characters, have their own character development, plot is centered around them, and they all have lesser known counterparts



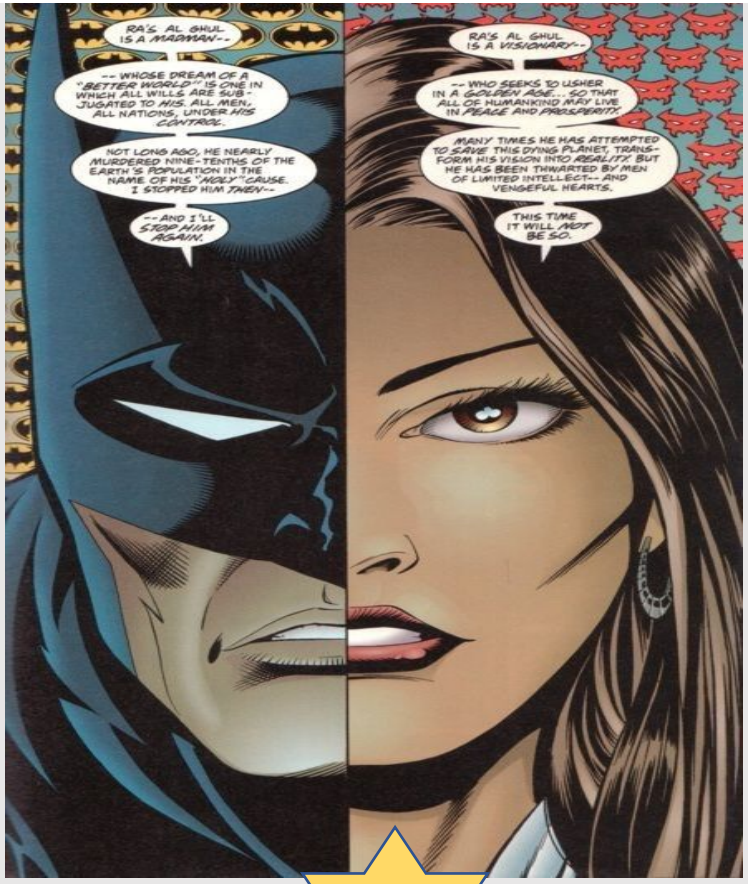
Talia Al Ghul VS. Gwendolyn

- **Warrior woman character of color: Middle Eastern**
- **Used to move along the plot of the comic by providing romantic tension for the main character.**
- **Portrayed as very tortured and pained because of her trauma which causes her to not be a labeled as a "hero" character or a "good" character.**

- **Warrior woman character of color: Black**
- **Used to move along the plot of the comic by providing romantic tension for the main character also causing tension with the main character's wife.**
- **Portrayed as very tortured and pained because of her trauma which causes her to not be a labeled as a "hero" character or a "good" character.**

RESULTS:

Overall Talia and Gwendolyn are extremely alike and have been treated and exploited in similar ways in their comics as women of color!



VS.



Gwendolyn

Gwendolyn, an important character in the Saga comic series, is a powerful Black warrior woman who wields a frightening staff and has horns growing out of her head. However, despite having all of this power, Gwendolyn still seems to be labeled as a secondary character in the series, her only purpose being to move the storyline along.

The scene on the previous page is the first time that Gwendolyn is discussed in depth during the series, and in a sense this is also when she is introduced even though she does not have a physical presence in the comic at the time.

As you can see, Gwendolyn does not even have her own introduction as she is already being used as the main cause of tension between two of the main characters, and this is before she even has time to be introduced as her own individual character. This causes her to be a prime example of how warrior women of color are exploited in comics!



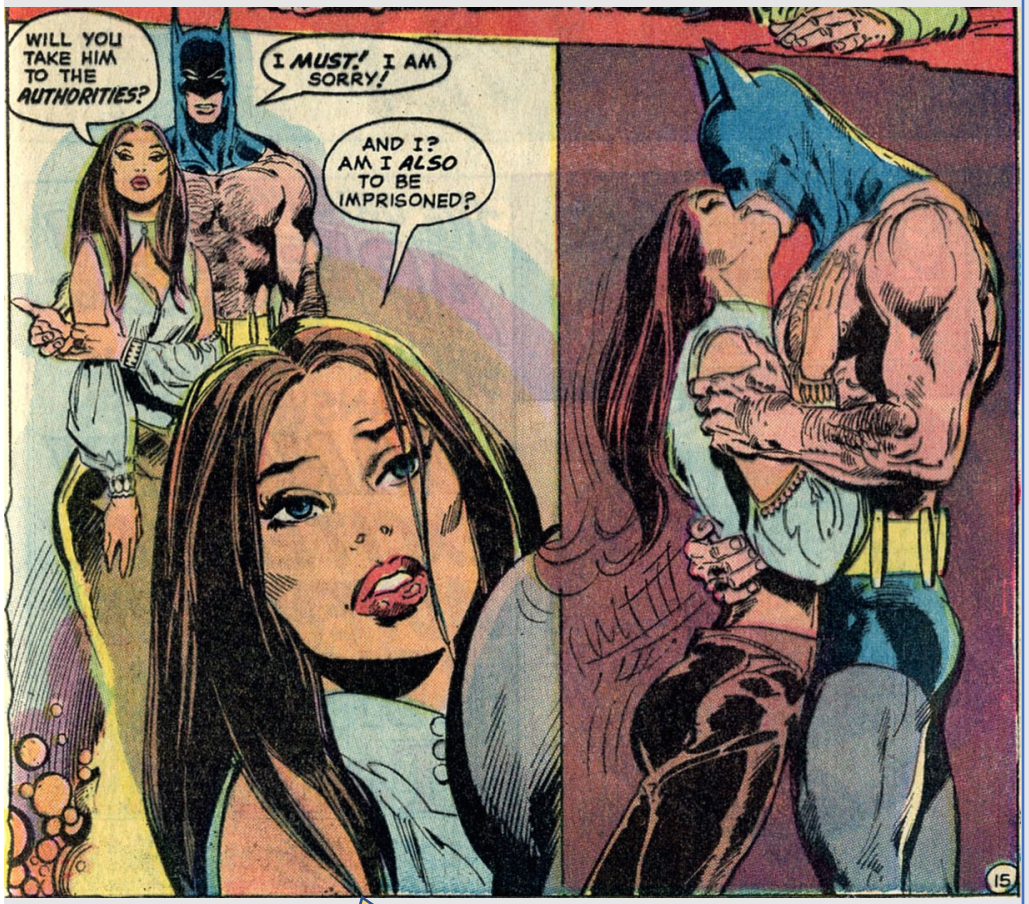


Talia Al Ghul

- **Comic Series:** First appeared in *Detective Comics* #411
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** Middle Eastern
- **Relationship/s:** She has an on and off relationship with Batman and he even becomes her ex-husband at one point. This relationship is part of the reason she is exploited because it means that she exists just to cause tension for the main character, Batman, as she is the daughter of a criminal but also Batman's lover. The trauma and problems she faces because of her ties to the two opposing men cause her to not be seen as a good guy but also not a villain.
- Is she exploited?: Yes! Talia's entire character and identity was created in order to develop the plot and to develop Batman's character. While she does have the potential to have a lot more development because of her relationship with her father and his company, recent writers such as Grant Morrison have not used this and keep Talia's role as either total villain or Batman's lover, not delving into her true character.

What do readers think?

"[Grant Morrison stripped her of everything that made her compelling" (thecomicvault 1)



I love being used just to move along a plot!

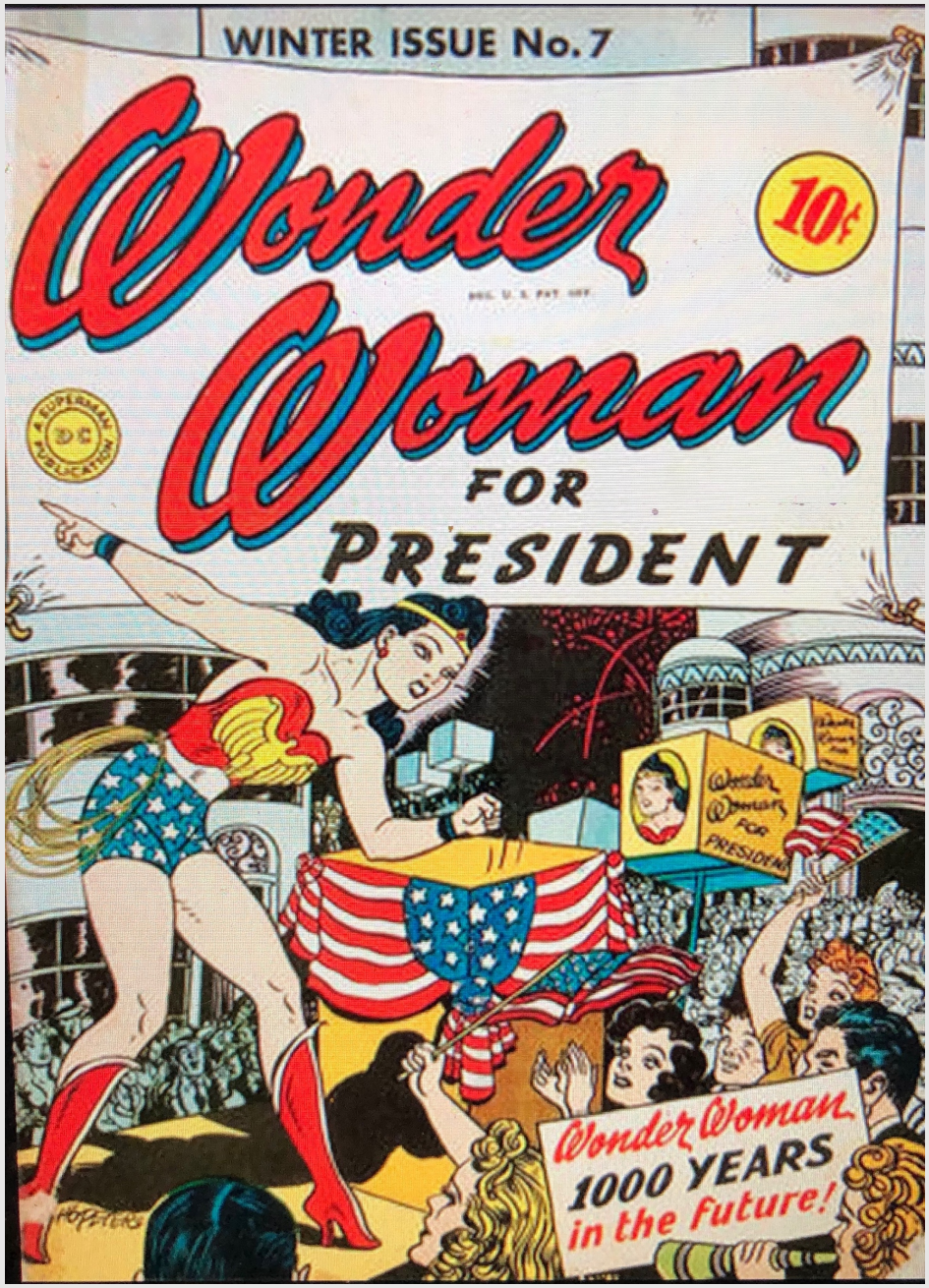
Gwendolyn:

A Victimized Warrior

- Comic Series: *Saga*
- Race and/or Ethnicity: Black
- Relationship/s: One key relationship is the relationship between Gwendolyn and Marko. Gwendolyn and Marko were engaged and Marko cut things off, deeply wounding Gwendolyn. The trauma that she faced because of this essentially makes up most of her character as her main role is to further the plot by creating tension between Marko and Alana by having the "tortured ex-lover" role.
- Is she exploited?: Yes! Not only is Gwendolyn used to further the plot she is also used for the character development of others such as Marko. She has little character development of her own that is just for her character and not to serve others.

What do readers think?

"Gwendolyn also functions as a metaphor for Marko's past life catching up with him" (Mesa 1)



Storm VS. Gwendolyn

- Black warrior woman
- Storm does have a lot of individual development and is a very important main character, however she was partly created to be a less important foil to Jean Grey, a white warrior woman.
- Storm has many traumatic events happen to her over and over throughout the series, and these happen much more often to her than any of the white characters. Storm is used so that the drama created from the trauma that she endures is still there, but so that white characters don't have to endure it

- Black Warrior Woman
- Gwendolyn was created completely for the development of other characters and to add tension to the plot she was not created to be her own individual character.
- The trauma that haunts Gwendolyn and negatively impacts her also serves to benefit the plot and entertain the audience, but without white characters having to go through it.

RESULTS:

Storm and Gwendolyn are similar as both characters have been exploited by whiteness.



VS.



Wonder Woman

- **Comic Series:** First appearance in ***All Star Comics*** #8
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** White
- **Relationship/s:** Wonder Woman has several relationships throughout her appearance in comics including one with Superman himself, however, none have taken away from her individuality and her own character development. Wonder Woman was not developed for the purpose of these relationships, she was developed as her own character.
- **Is she exploited?** While Wonder Woman has been sexually exploited by comic creators, she has not been exploited in the same way that warrior women of color have been in comics. Wonder Woman is still her own character and a primary character. She was not created just to move along a plot, add diversity, or add to another character's development like many warrior women characters of color are.



Storm

- **Comic Series:** First appears in ***Giant Size X-Men #1***
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** Black, African
- **Relationship/s:** While Storm does have a relationship wish Black Panther and later even marries him, this relationship was not the reason that storm was created. Storm does have a friendship with Jean Grey, however, which is one of the ways she is exploited.
- **Is she exploited?:** Yes. Many times, Jean and Storm are compared to each other, however Storm goes through many traumatic events, but receives less attention in the comics than Jean who is one of the top main characters. Because of this it could be argued that Storm was created as a counterpart to Jean Grey to provide tension and also as an outlet so that all the traumatic events don't have to happen to white characters.



Nubia

- **Comic Series:** First appears in *Wonder Woman* #204
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** Black
- **Relationship/s:** While a relationship with Hippolyta is hinted at in later comics, Nubia appears to have no explicit romantic relationships. She does have a familial relationship, however, to Wonder Woman as they are sisters. Nubia's character is exploited by this relationship because her entire character was created to support Wonder Woman's character development.
- **Is she exploited?:** Yes! Nubia's character was not created to stand out on its own and be developed on its own, and she was only created in order to provide tension and aid to the plot as well as help Wonder Woman's character develop. Nubia's character has so much potential to become something amazing and individual, but that potential has not been unlocked.

What do readers think?

"Celebrating strong characters like Nubia more visibly may allow girls to feel connected and inspire them to walk in confidence in a world that can make them feel invisible" (Moss 1).



Who will win?



Nubia VS. Wonder Woman

Also Gwendolyn!!!

- Black warrior woman
- Much like Gwendolyn's character is used, Nubia was created to help develop Wonder Woman's character and help move the plot along by providing a counter-part to Wonder Woman, but she is not shown to be of equal importance in the comics because compared to Wonder Woman, Nubia is barely in the comics.
- Has a lot of power but little importance in the comics compared to Wonder Woman. Nubia does not have a series of her own, is not part of the Justice League, and is not shown to have any romantic relationships.

- White warrior woman
- Wonder Woman's character is not used at all because she is the main character so she gets to develop on her own and the plot revolves around her not the other way around.
- Wonder Woman has her own series, is a crucial member of the Justice League, and is shown to have many romantic relationships.

RESULTS:

Nubia and Gwendolyn are very alike while Wonder Woman is different than both of them!