

Bibliography

MacDonald, Andrew, and Virginia MacDonald. "Sold American: The Metamorphosis of Captain America." *Journal of Popular Culture* 10.1 (1976): 249. ProQuest. Web. 8 Nov. 2019

Howard, Sheena C. and Ronald Jackson II. "Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation". Bloomsbury Academic. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2013. Web. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RexLAQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=race+relations+between+black+and+white+superheroes&ots=7wpcl4PWRh&sig=MIXBHnCn3Y4XODr-DnfTYAojT00#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Namu, Adilifu. *Super Black: American Pop Culture and Black Superheroes*. University of Texas Press, Austin. 2011, Print.

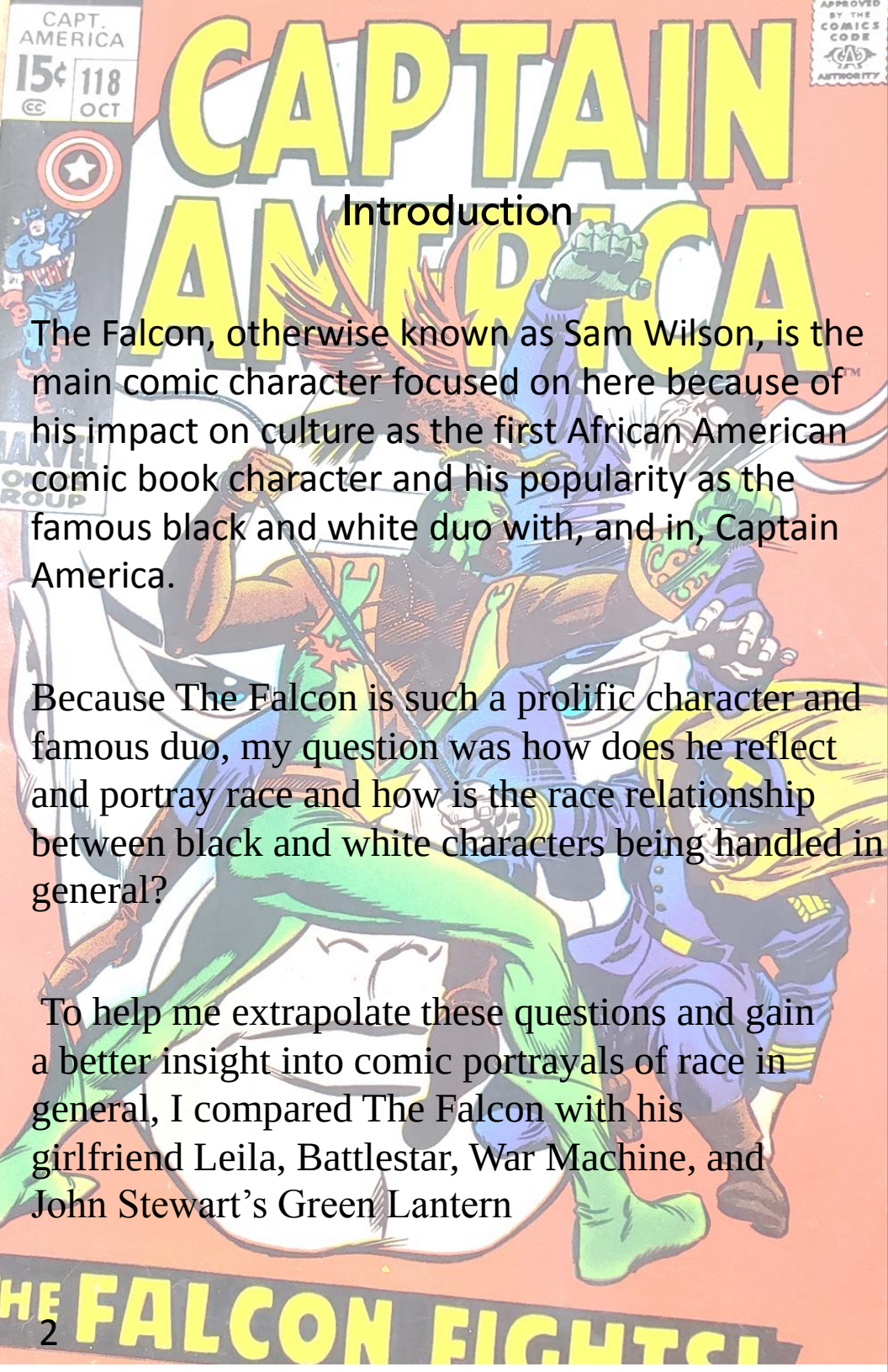


By Rachael Kuipers

RACE FOR RELATIONS

How are black and white partnerships handled?

What do comic book pairings say about race in general?



Introduction

The Falcon, otherwise known as Sam Wilson, is the main comic character focused on here because of his impact on culture as the first African American comic book character and his popularity as the famous black and white duo with, and in, Captain America.

Because The Falcon is such a prolific character and famous duo, my question was how does he reflect and portray race and how is the race relationship between black and white characters being handled in general?

To help me extrapolate these questions and gain a better insight into comic portrayals of race in general, I compared The Falcon with his girlfriend Leila, Battlestar, War Machine, and John Stewart's Green Lantern

Editorial Note

I wanted to say a lot more about this subject than I had room or time for. As a result, some of the things here are simplifications of a more nuanced subject. For example, a lot of the origins of these sidekicks are a product of their time. Most of the creators wanted to have representation but didn't do their research on black culture and hardships beforehand, as was the case for Battlestar. Other times, caricatures and harmful stereotypes carried over to the representations of African Americans that they created. The Falcon, for example, was introduced on an island that had jungle elements. This form of introduction played on the stereotype that all black people were from Africa and wild.

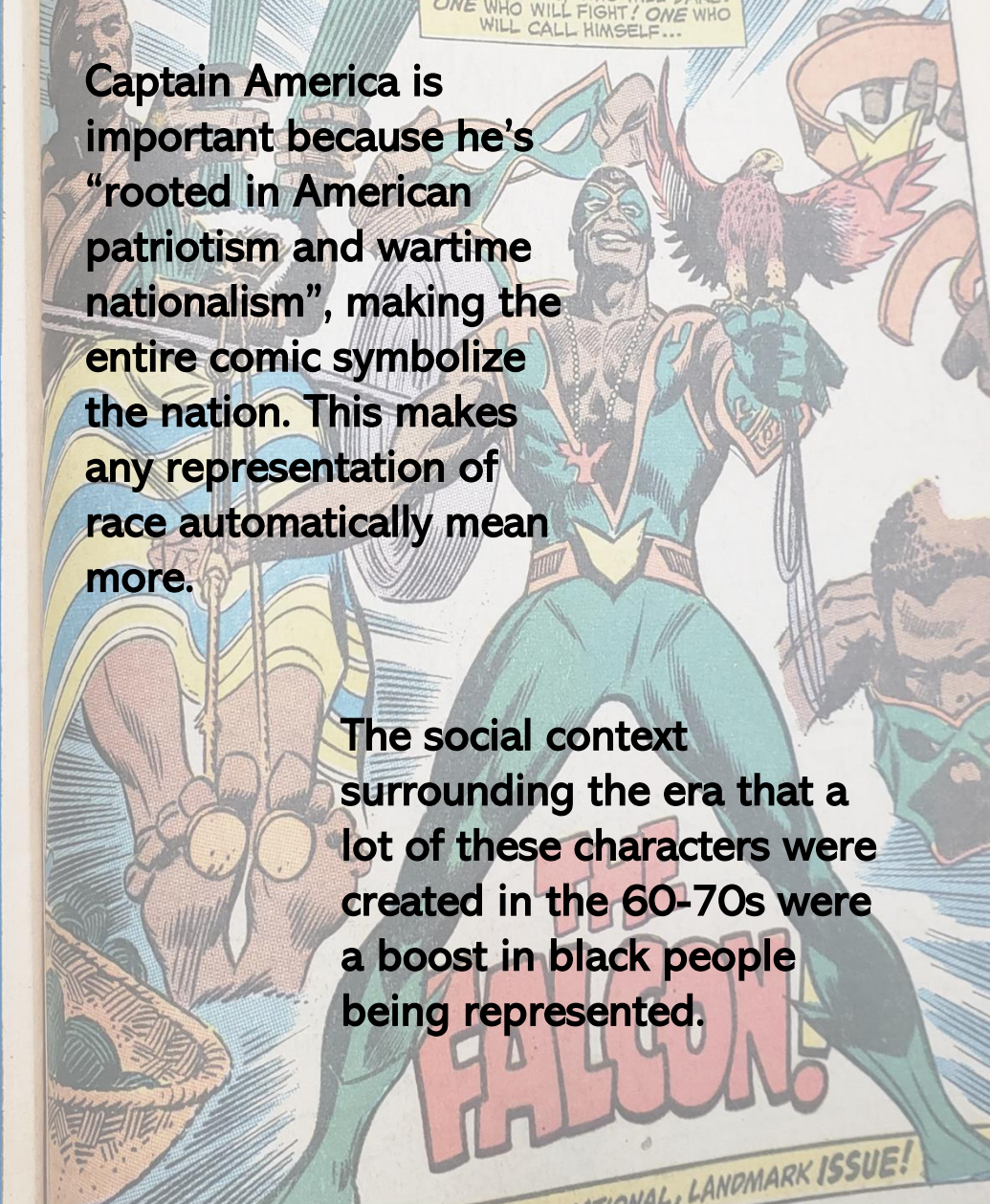
I also didn't go into present day comics, even though the landscape of popular culture and what comics representation looks like has changed. "The contemporary images of African Americans are anchored by the three kinds of discursive practices: assimilationists/invisibility, pluralist/separate-but-equal, and multiculturalist/diversity" (Howard). Each of the comics I addressed had elements of these practices at one point or another, often following the line of popular culture and the thought processes of the time. This is true for Captain America as well.

Captain America and *Captain America and The Falcon* followed the times because the comics were so closely related to America's projection of itself. In a way, it had a reciprocal action to it. What I mean is, because there was unrest in popular culture surrounding race and representation, *Captain America* felt the need to have a more diverse cast, and because it implemented it, America saw themselves and identified with that image even more. America and popular media, including comics, shaped each other and still do, which is why The Falcon was so important to have in the first place. He showed America a version of representation that was constructive instead of harmful.



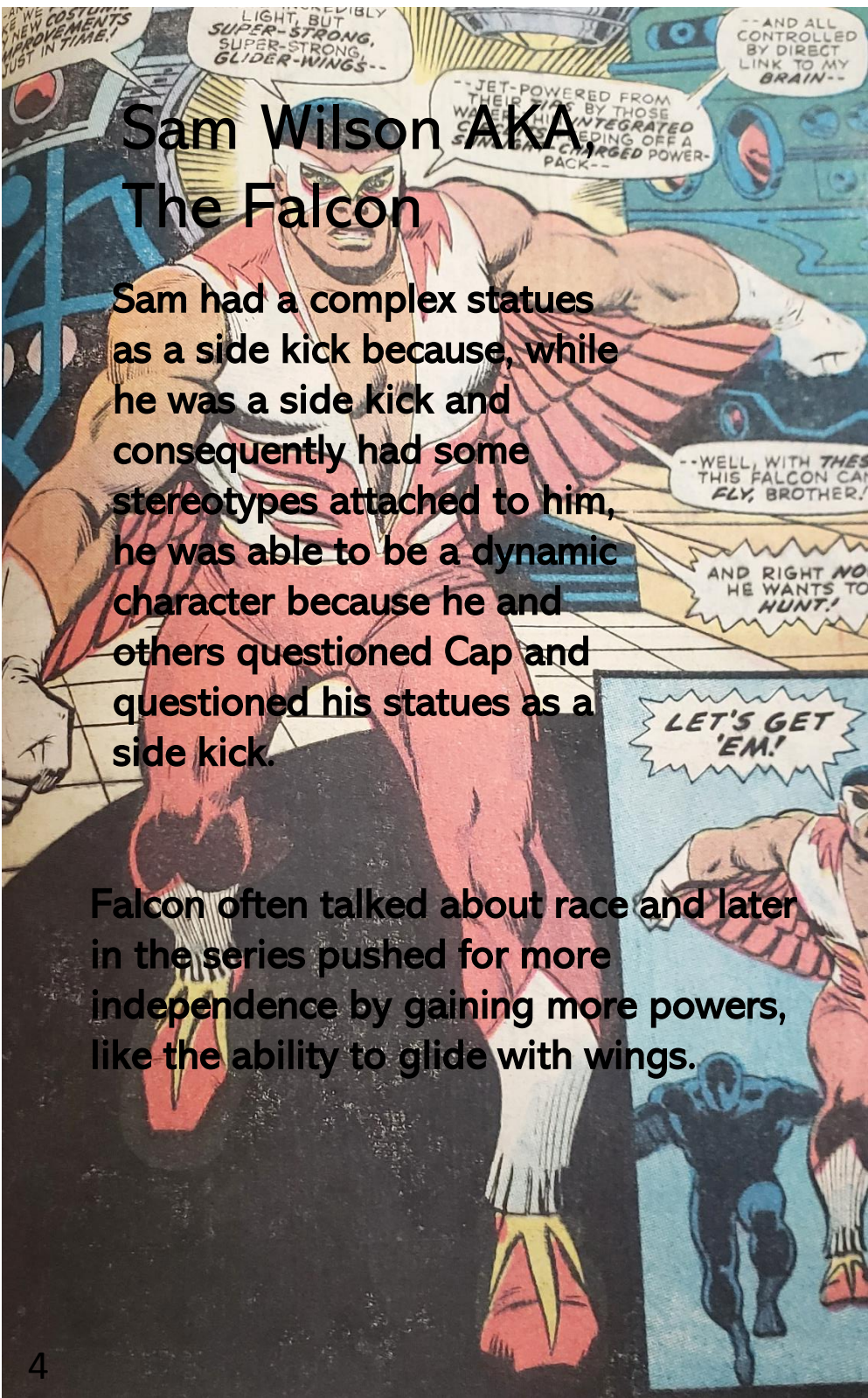
Falcon was able to have such an impact because Captain America embodies National pride and the heart of America

Captain America changed with the times, which made the transition into a partnership with The Falcon work. In the 70s, when The Falcon was first created and introduced, Captain America was “more caught up in the conflicts and disillusionments of his age”, which allowed him to speak to the times and have a social dialogue with it (Mac Donald).



Captain America is important because he's “rooted in American patriotism and wartime nationalism”, making the entire comic symbolize the nation. This makes any representation of race automatically mean more.

The social context surrounding the era that a lot of these characters were created in the 60-70s were a boost in black people being represented.



Sam Wilson AKA, The Falcon

Sam had a complex status as a sidekick because, while he was a sidekick and consequently had some stereotypes attached to him, he was able to be a dynamic character because he and others questioned Cap and questioned his status as a sidekick.

Falcon often talked about race and later in the series pushed for more independence by gaining more powers, like the ability to glide with wings.

Impact

Captain America and the Falcon comic is often lauded as the “most important white and black superhero titles in comic book history” because of how it portrayed race relations in conjunction with its immense popularity. In fact, for a while the Falcon and Captain America were the “most prominent black and white superhero duo”.
(Namu 70)

This is because it “promoted racial reconciliation, equality, and black pride” and was a part of an already popular series, made even more popular with Falcon’s arrival.

Final Thoughts

The Falcon left a legacy of representation without giving up credibility and social awareness on the part of African American representation.

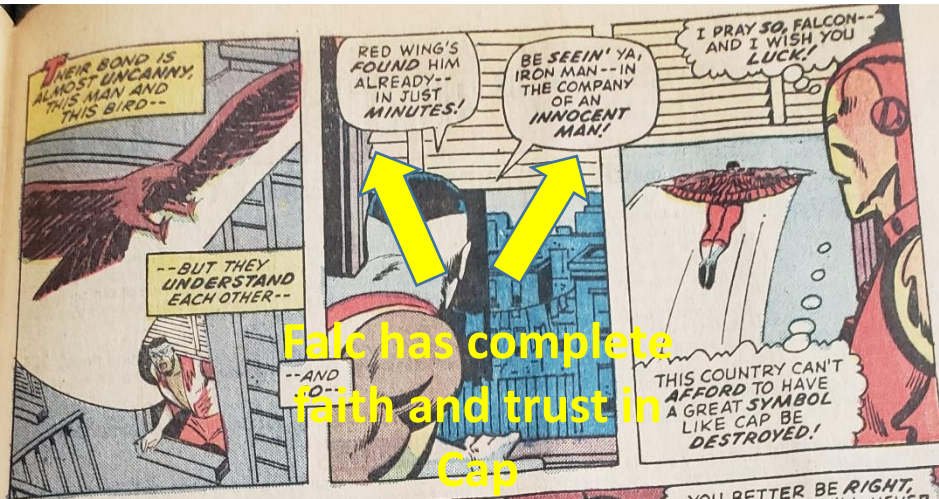
Captain America and The Falcon was far from a perfect example, but together they set a precedence for what race relations should look like: mutual respect and equality, while still remaining independence from each other and individuality.

An example:

Here Falc is mad at Cap for not clueing him into his plan

And that anger has some racial undertones that he starts to address

Falc questions Cap in a way that makes it clear they're supposed to be equals



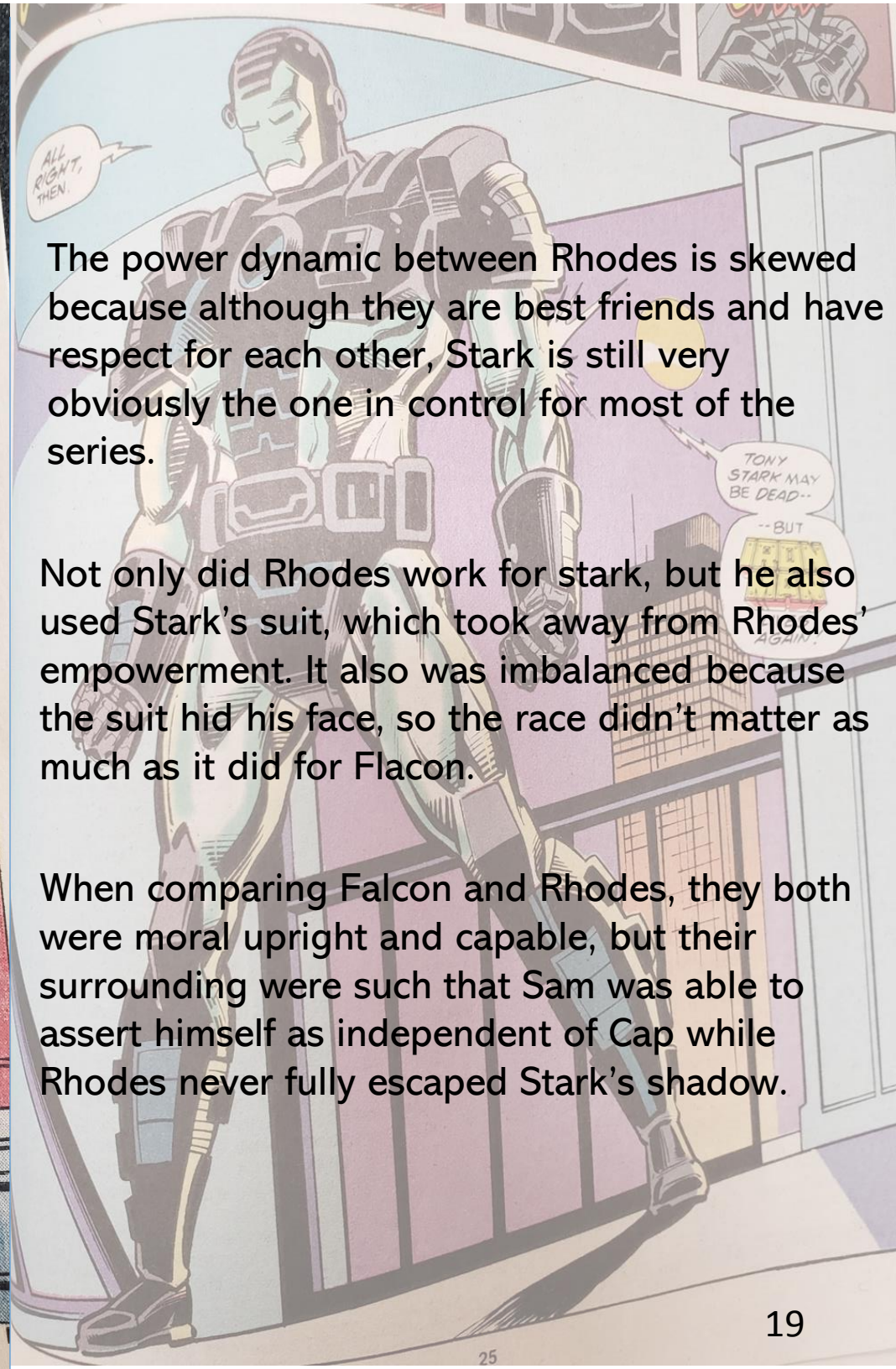
Falc has complete faith and trust in Cap



This shows the other side of Cap and Falc's relationship:



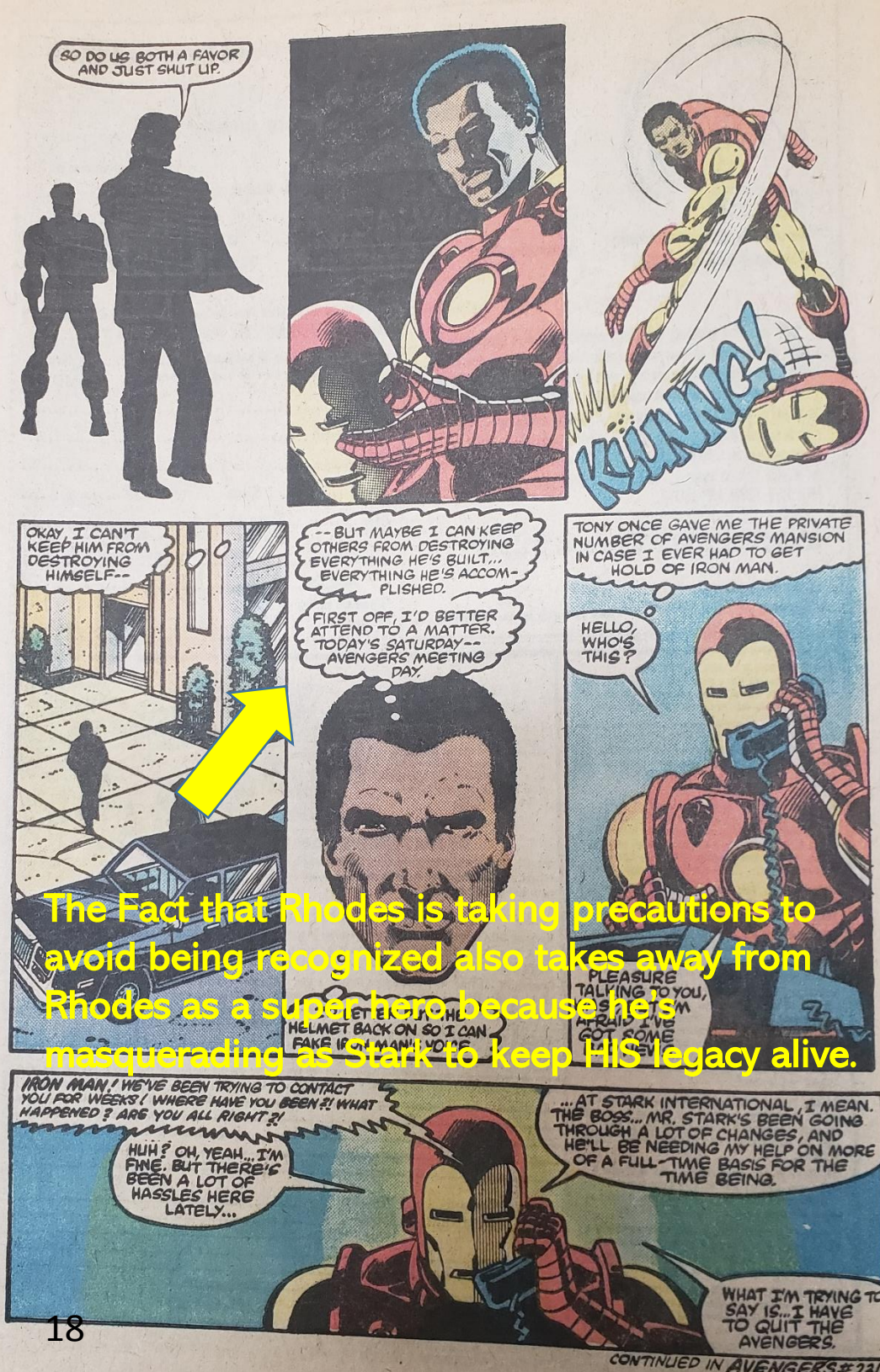
And while Falc is willing to take Cap down if he needs to, they have an extremely close bond



The power dynamic between Rhodes is skewed because although they are best friends and have respect for each other, Stark is still very obviously the one in control for most of the series.

Not only did Rhodes work for stark, but he also used Stark's suit, which took away from Rhodes' empowerment. It also was imbalanced because the suit hid his face, so the race didn't matter as much as it did for Flacon.

When comparing Falcon and Rhodes, they both were moral upright and capable, but their surrounding were such that Sam was able to assert himself as independent of Cap while Rhodes never fully escaped Stark's shadow.



IT GOT YOUR
ATTENTION,
DIDN'T IT?
PROVIDED SOME
EXCITEMENT?

I'M
GETTIN'
TIRED OF
WATCHIN'
THE
DUST
SETTLE.!

Leila (Sam Wilson's Girlfriend)

Leila is one of the people that challenges Sam to gain more autonomy and points out the struggles of black people.

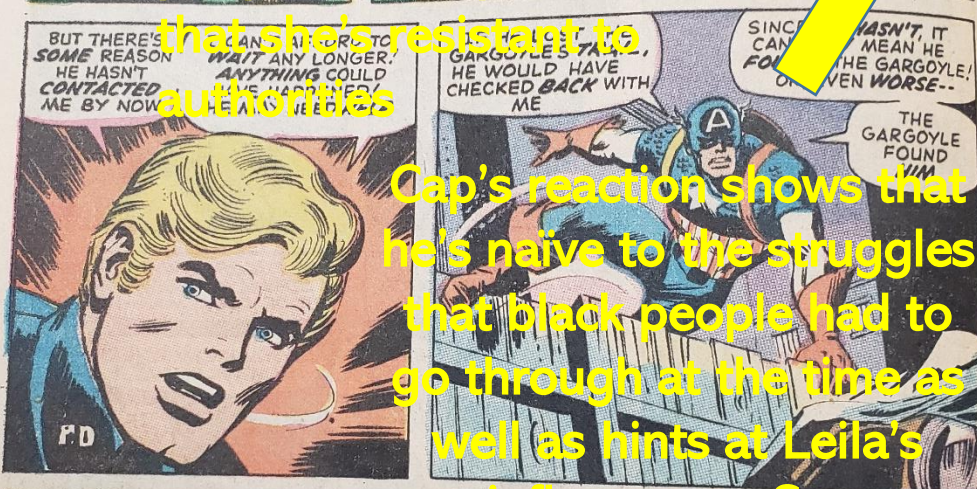
Specifically, she embodies some of the black empowerment that was happening at the time.

WHERE'S
THE
RUSTLING,
HUSTLING,
BUSTLING?

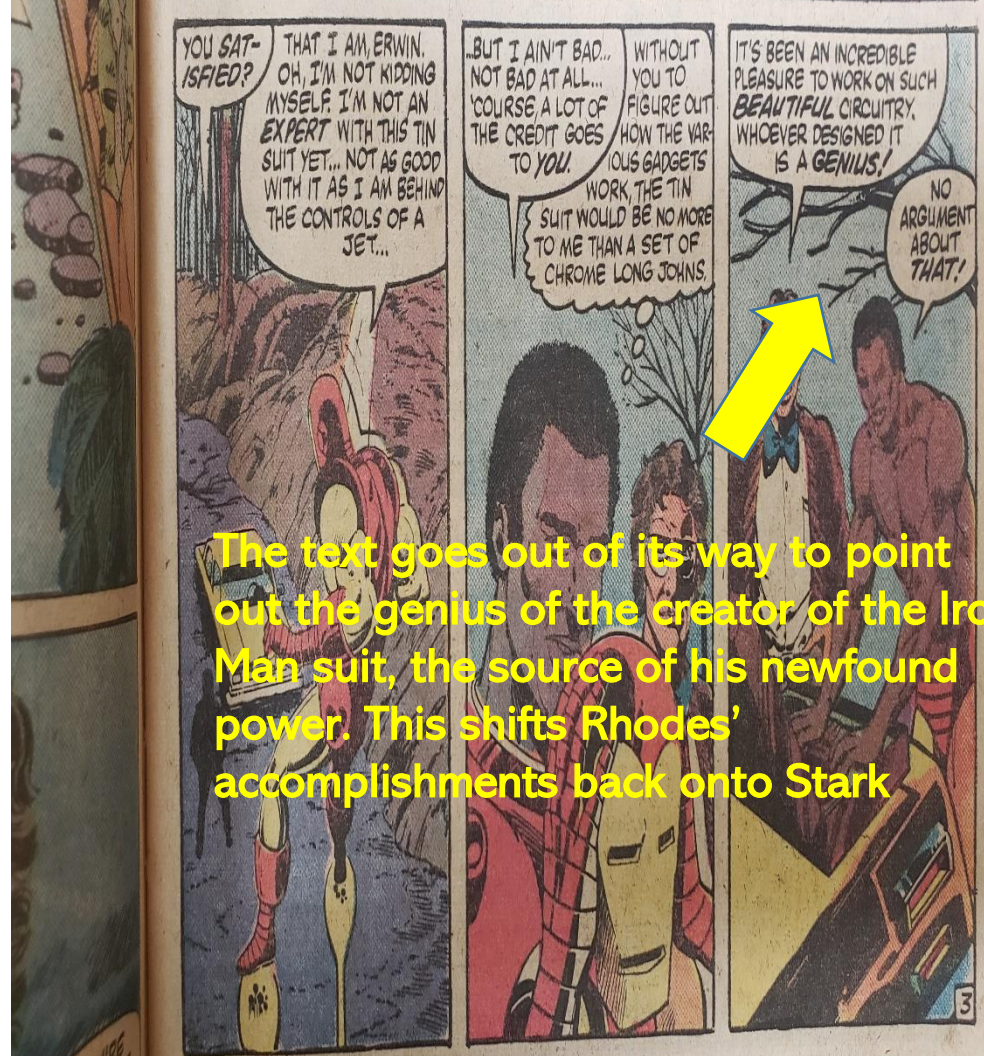
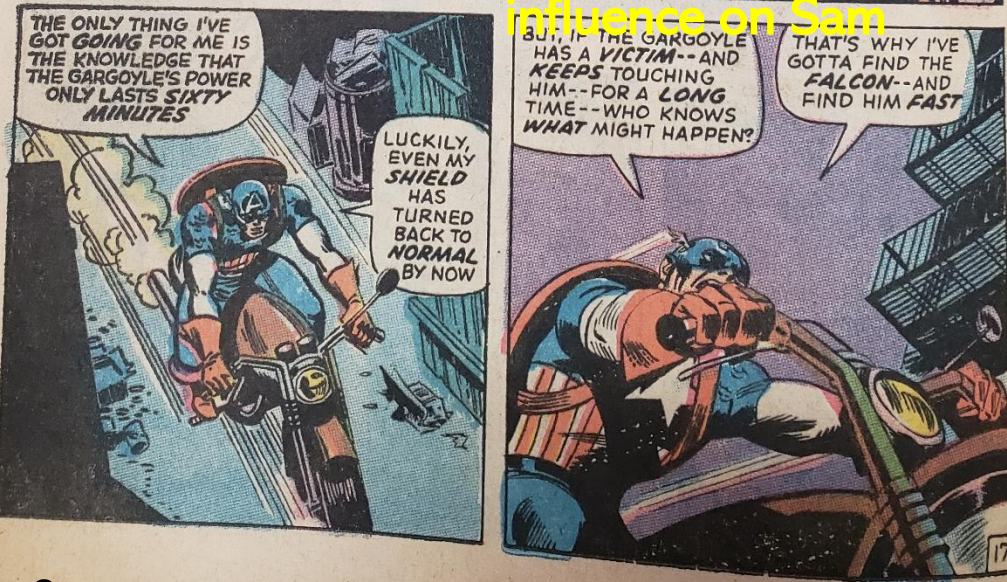
THE
ACTION.?!



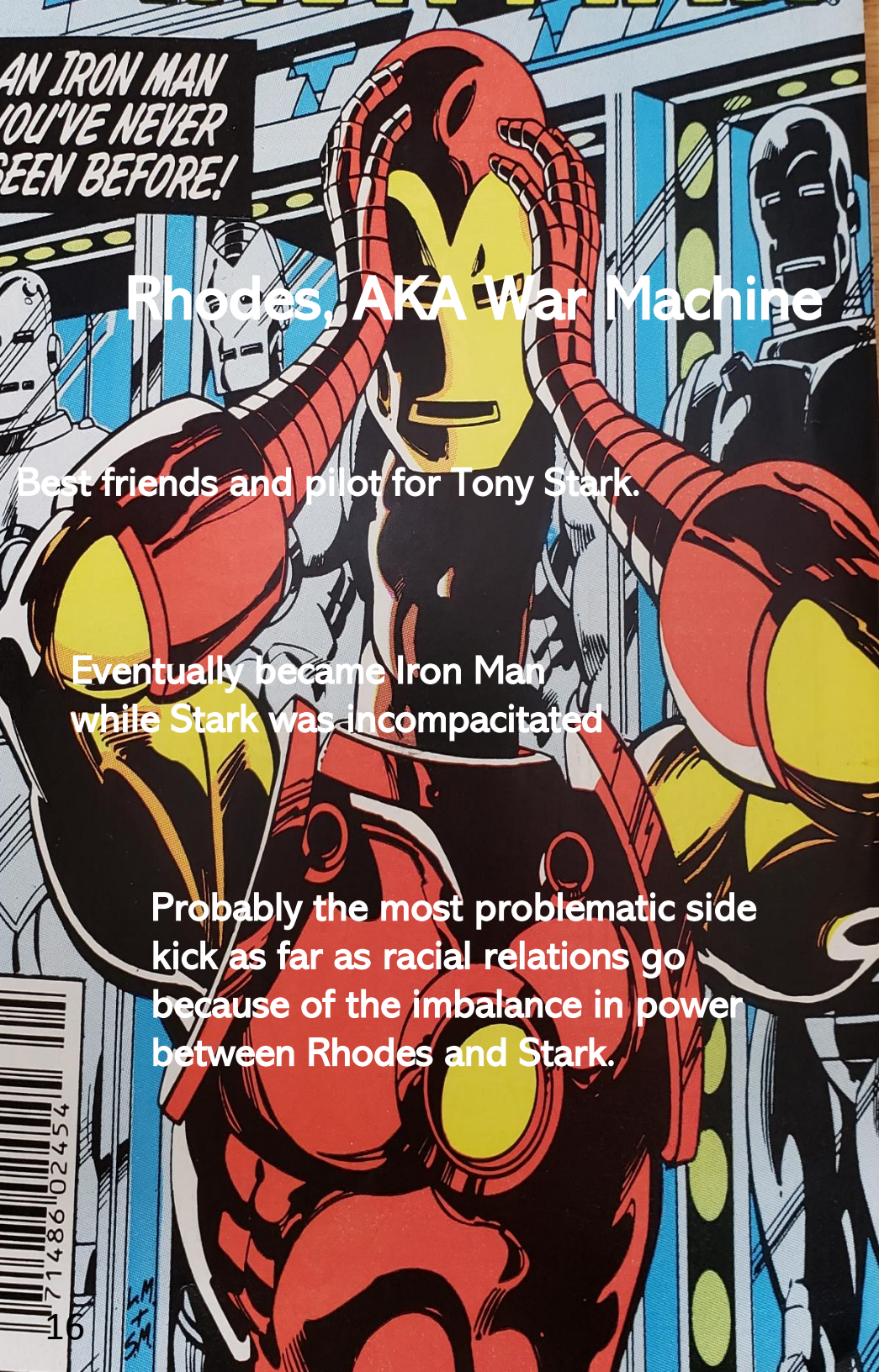
Lack of trust in white people and cops shows that she's resistant to authorities



Cap's reaction shows that he's naïve to the struggles that black people had to go through at the time as well as hints at Leila's influence on Sam



The text goes out of its way to point out the genius of the creator of the Iron Man suit, the source of his newfound power. This shifts Rhodes' accomplishments back onto Stark



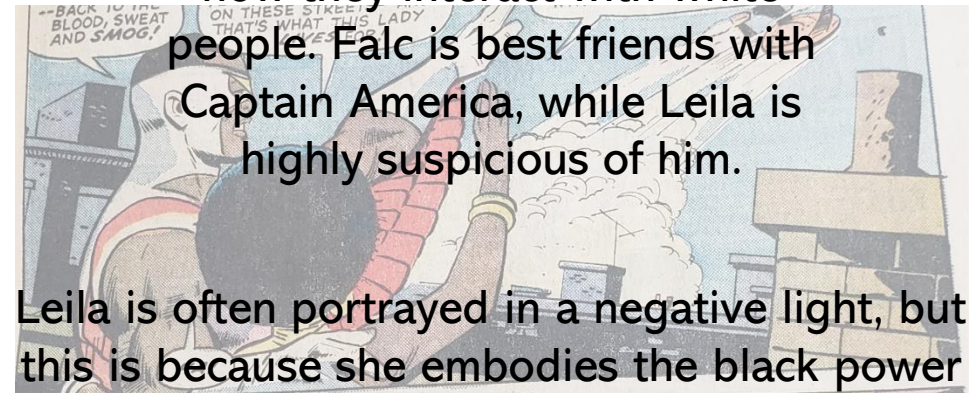
Rhodes, AKA War Machine

Best friends and pilot for Tony Stark.

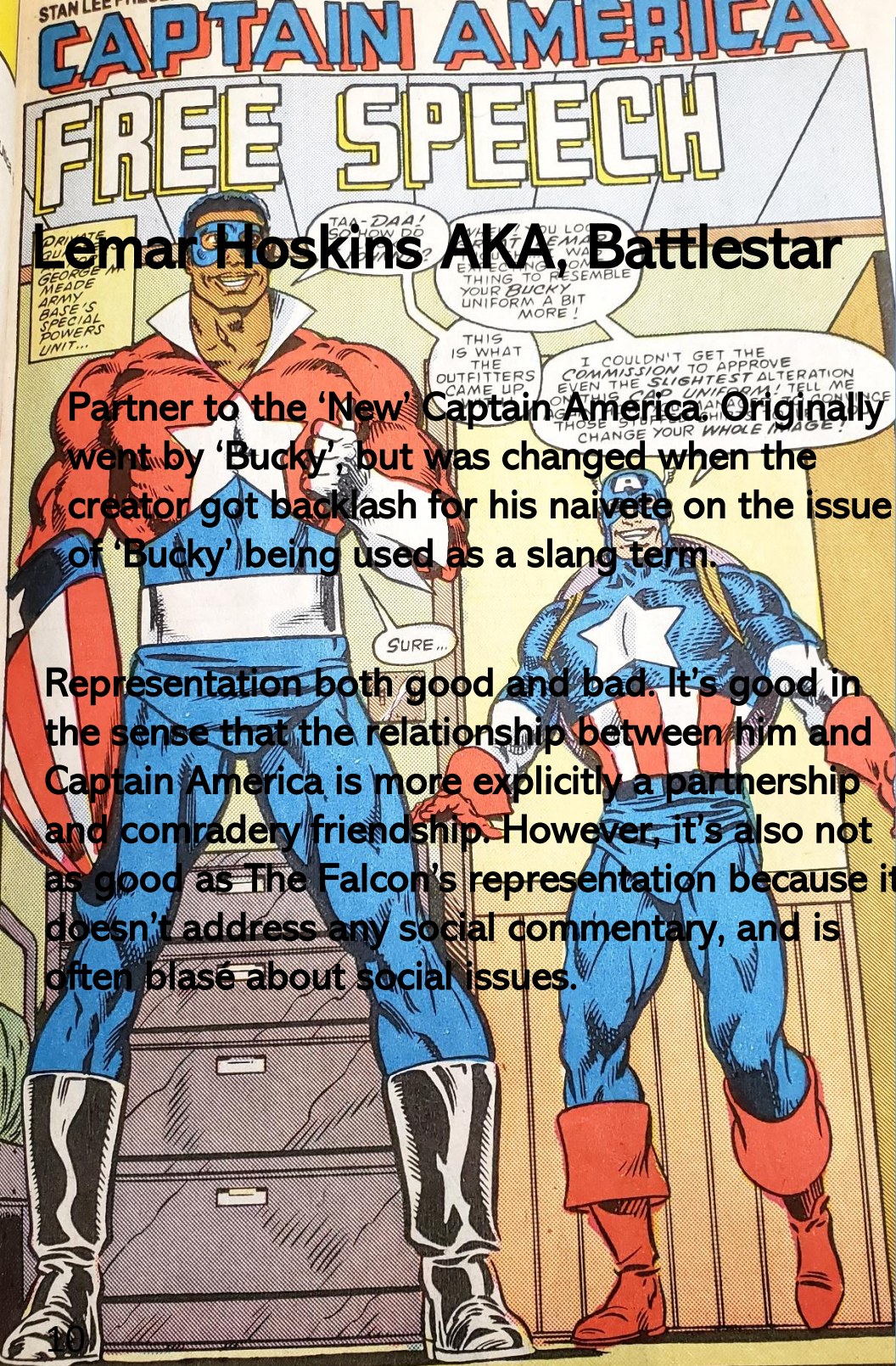
Eventually became Iron Man while Stark was incapacitated

Probably the most problematic side kick as far as racial relations go because of the imbalance in power between Rhodes and Stark.

Falc and Leila differ greatly in how they interact with white people. Falc is best friends with Captain America, while Leila is highly suspicious of him.



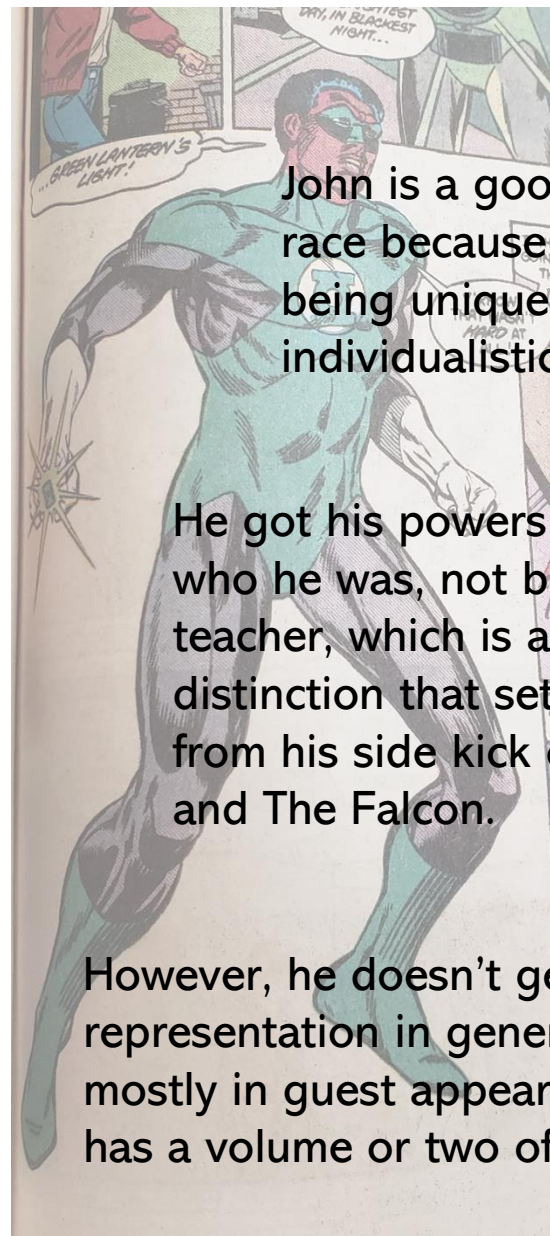
Leila is often portrayed in a negative light, but this is because she embodies the black power movement at the time, allowing the comic to make commentary on the issue in subtle and unsubtle ways.



Lemar Hoskins AKA, Battlestar

Partner to the 'New' Captain America. Originally went by 'Bucky', but was changed when the creator got backlash for his naivete on the issue of 'Bucky' being used as a slang term.

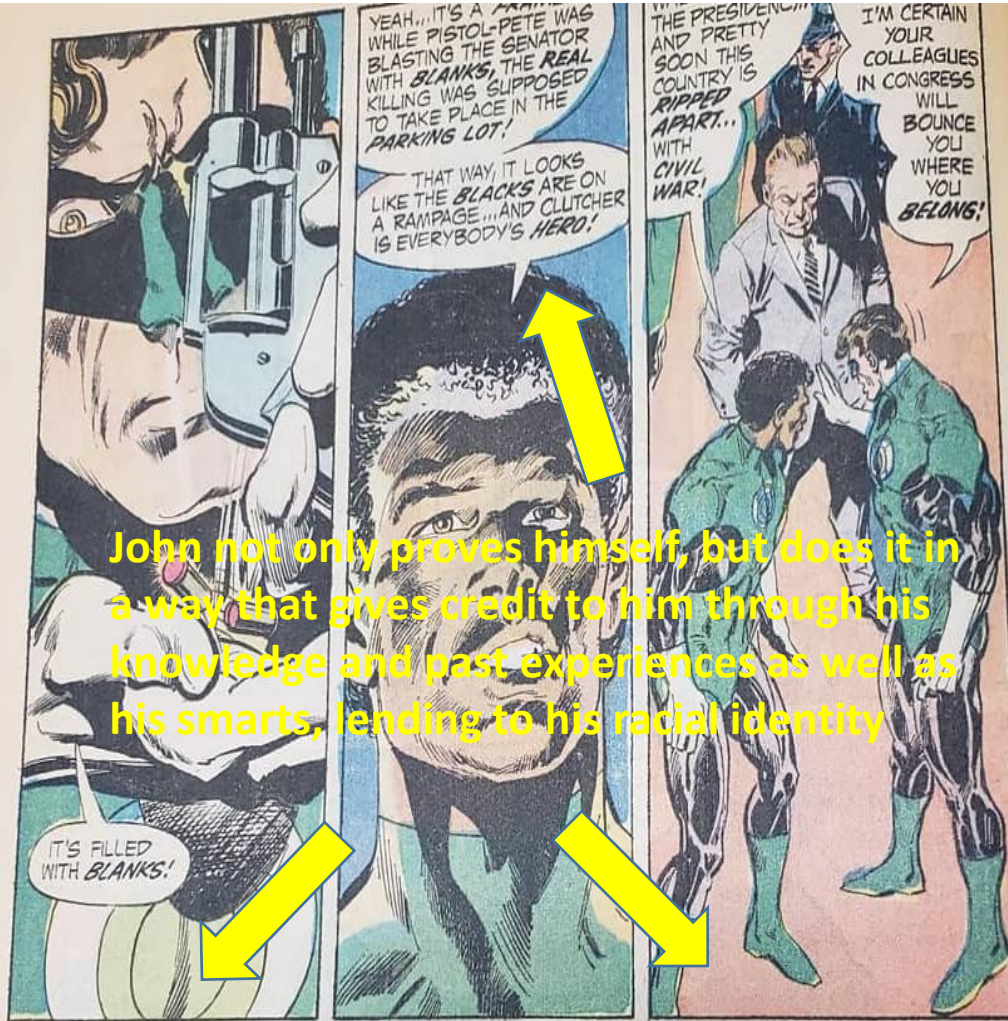
Representation both good and bad. It's good in the sense that the relationship between him and Captain America is more explicitly a partnership and comradery friendship. However, it's also not as good as The Falcon's representation because it doesn't address any social commentary, and is often blasé about social issues.

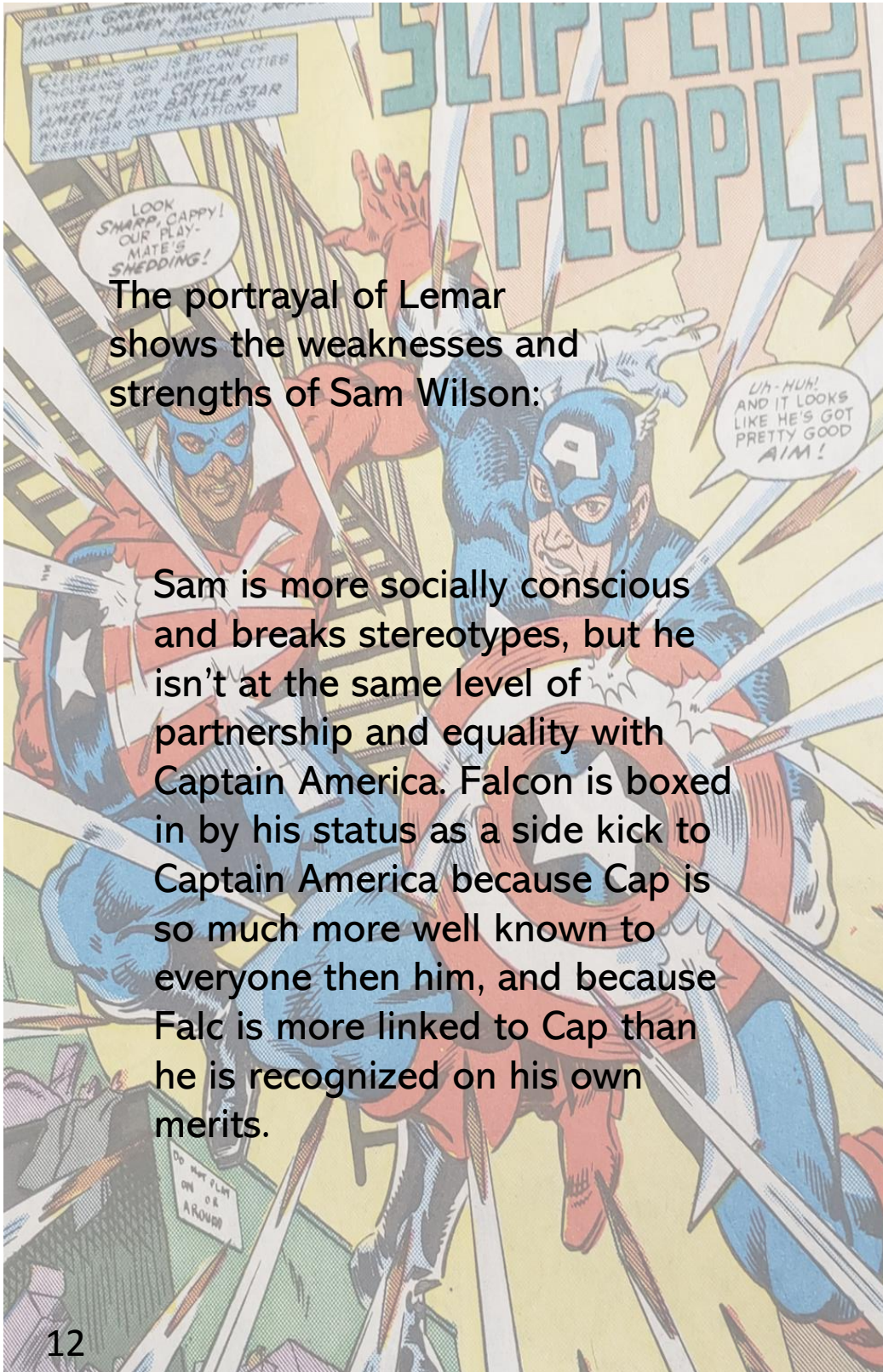


John is a good representation of race because he's shown as being uniquely black and individualistic

He got his powers because of who he was, not because of his teacher, which is an important distinction that sets him apart from his side kick counterparts and The Falcon.

However, he doesn't get as much representation in general because he's mostly in guest appearances and only has a volume or two of his own





The portrayal of Lemar shows the weaknesses and strengths of Sam Wilson:

Sam is more socially conscious and breaks stereotypes, but he isn't at the same level of partnership and equality with Captain America. Falcon is boxed in by his status as a side kick to Captain America because Cap is so much more well known to everyone than him, and because Falc is more linked to Cap than he is recognized on his own merits.



John Stewart AKA Green Lantern

Hal is the alternate to Hal until Hal stepped down and John officially became the Green Lantern

John and Hal don't have as good of a relationship as all of the other examples, but The Green Lantern is the most progressive when it comes to being progressive and socially aware

