



All About Black Superheroes

The END
Thank you



By TiTi Zou

This zine focuses on the connection between Black Superheroes and real events have happened in the U.S. history.

- ◇ **Unethical Case**
- ◇ **Exploited Black Characters**
- ◇ **Stereotype of African Americans**
- ◇ **Changing of the Representation of African Americans in media**

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Luke Cage & 4 Characters:

Conclusion

Dalbeto and Oliveira state that, “Storm was created in this context. So, even if her origin may be attributed to the sociocultural circumstances of the time, it is impossible to deny that economic implications were crucial to the creation of such a character” (p.2). One of the purposes of Blaxploitation was to increase the profit in the market by attracting more audiences of diverse groups. The creation of Storm was absolutely one for that purpose. Additionally, Luke Cage, Falcon, Blade, and Black Panther’s appearances boosted the profit of comic companies and the film factory. Even though, starting from 1970s, there were more black characters appearing in the media than previously, the existence of stereotype of African American people were still showing in the media world. Black characters are always involved with violence and crimes, for example, Luke Cage and Falcon were gang members and Storm was a thief. In addition, their family background was negative. For example, Luke Cage was born in a violent neighborhood and Blade was born in a whorehouse.

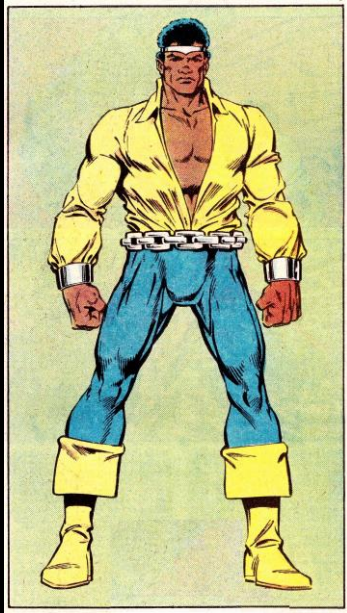
The negative representation of Black characters implicitly reflects a lot of historical events like Tuskegee syphilis experiment and Blaxploitation. As the time goes on, the representation of Black characters gradually becomes more positive, like Black Panther was raised in a high-tech and fancy world and he is in a rich family background. The media world was starting to involve diverse culture like Wakanda tribe in Black Panther and relate to more diverse people.

MAIN CHARACTER:

Luke Cage



Introduction of Luke Cage:



Luke Cage who is in the mainstream comic book published by Marvel Comics. He is **the first black superhero that appears in a comic book as the protagonist and has his name as the title**. Luke Cage's first appearance is in *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* released in June 1972 (Wikipedia, "Luke Cage"). Luke Cage was named as Carl Lucas before he became a superhero. Carl Lucas was raised in a **low-class** neighborhood and was involved in a **gang** at the beginning. The way that he became a superhero was being a volunteer in an experiment when he was in **prison**. The experiment accident caused Carl Lucas to become a superhero, Luke Cage, who has superhuman strength and impervious skin.

More Characters/ Black Panther continue –



- ◇ Name: T'Challa & Black Panther
- ◇ Time: Created in July 1966
- ◇ Superpower: Like a Wakanda Panther that has acute senses, enhance strength, speed, agility, stamina, durability, healing, and reflexes.
- ◇ Highlights:
 - He is **the first superhero of African descent** in mainstream American comics (Wikipedia).

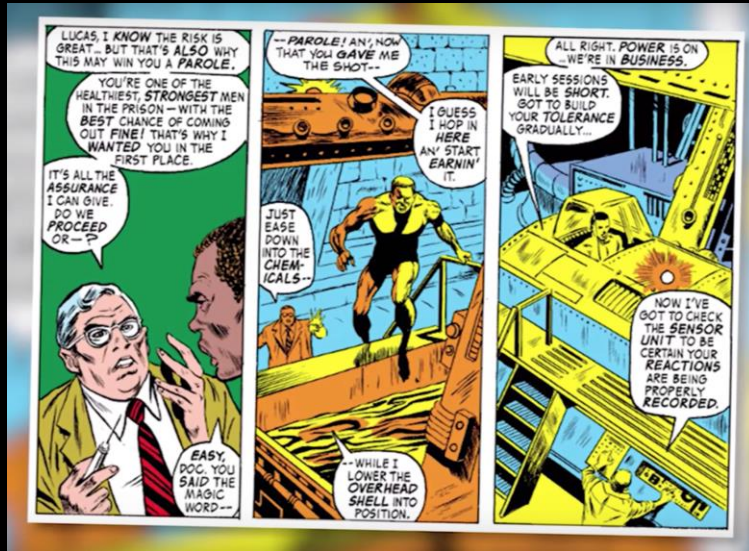
Black Panther



Luke Cage is created by Archie Goodwin, George Tuska, and Roy Thomas (Wikipedia). He is described as a black guy who lived in a **lower-class** neighborhood and was involved in a lot of **violence**. His background setting implied that the African American character in the comic books was still depicted **negatively** in the 1900s. There is still a bias about African Americans in the media. The reason for the bias is compared to other superheroes, Luke Cage seems **less educated**, more **violence-related**, and has a **lower status** in society. African American character's setting is more **inferior** compared to others, which reflects the real social status that African Americans are in the United States.

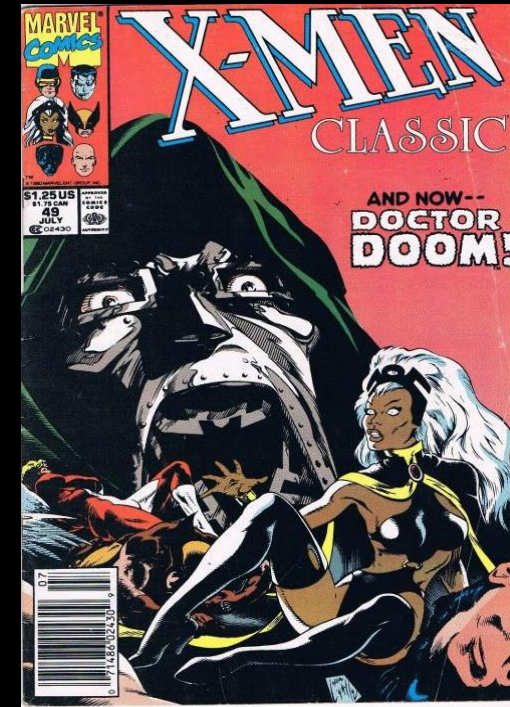


Luke Cage becoming a Superhero:



Luke Cage turned to a superhero, because he participated in an experiment for early parole. However, he didn't get the parole. "Dr. Burstein informs Lucas that he will be desensitized to the test chemicals gradually, to build his tolerance. He tells Lucas that the test chemicals will impart immunity to all illness" (Packer). Dr. Burstein lost the control of the chemical input, so Luke Cage was exposed to the high-concentrated chemicals too much. This accident caused Luke Cage turned to a superhero whose body is **impenetrable**.

More Characters/ Storm continue--



- ◇ Name: Ororo Munroe or Storm
- ◇ Time: Created in May 1975
- ◇ Superpower: Controlling weather & using magic and witchcraft
- ◇ Highlights:
 - She is **the first major female** character of African descent in comics.
 - She has **claustrophobia**.
 - She **lost** her **parents** because her parents were involved in a conflict.
 - She is a **skilled thief** since she was young (Wikipedia).

More Characters Storm -

Storm



Superhero Reflects I -

What is Tuskegee syphilis experiment?



“In brief, the United States Public Health Service (PHS), from 1932 to 1972, conducted a study of the effects of **untreated** syphilis on impoverished, rural, **African-American males**” (Smolin).

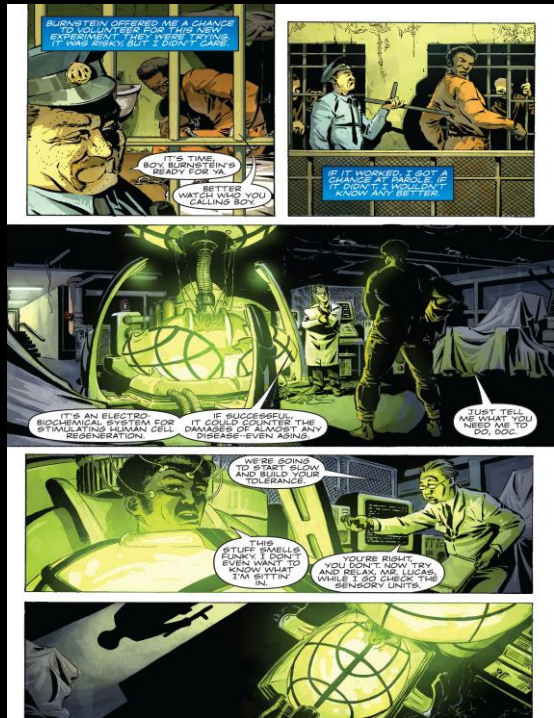
“The studies seem to move from one deprived population to the next--from the segregation era, poor, **African-American men** of Macon County, Alabama, **suffering** from untreated syphilis; to poor children in Baltimore, Maryland, subject to unsafe lead paint in low-cost housing; to poor, pregnant women in developing nations **suffering** from untreated HIV infections and their unborn children/fetuses and newborn babies at risk for the transmission of HIV infection” (Smolin).



Superhero Reflects I-

Tuskegee syphilis experiment & luke Cage

In July 1972, Tuskegee Syphilis study was exposed to the public. About 600 incarcerated African-American men were enrolled in this study, some of whom had Syphilis prior to the experiment, and some of whom were infected with the disease as a result of the medical experiment (Nix). **The experiment participants were not told they wouldn't be treated until they died, which was the same situation to Luke Cage.** Therefore, the experiment that turned Luke Cage into a superhero attracted awareness to the "Tuskegee Syphilis Study," and also brought about awareness to the treatment of those who are incarcerated.



More Characters Blade continue-



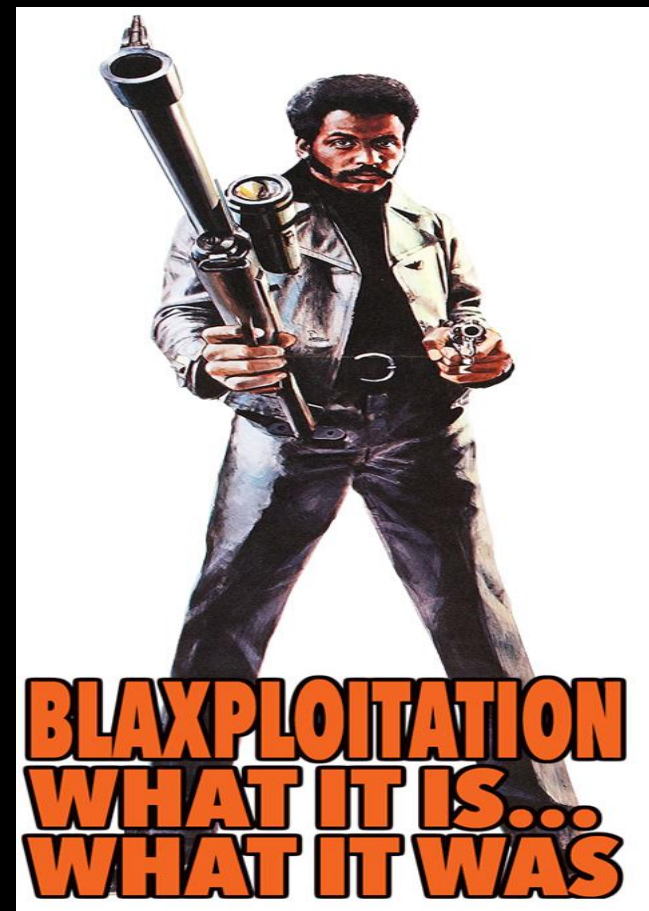
- ◇ Name: Eric Stokes Brooks or Blade
- ◇ Time: Created in July 1973
- ◇ Superpower: A vampire who has a prolonged lifespan, the ability to sense supernatural creatures, and an immunity to complete vampirism.
- ◇ Highlights:
 - He was born in a **whorehouse**.
 - His mom is **prostitute** and was **killed** when Blade was very young (Wikipedia).

Blade



What is Blaxploitation?

“THE BLAXPLOITATION MOVEMENT IS ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING periods in filmmaking history. Defined as films made by black and white filmmakers between 1970 and 1975 to **capitalize on the long-neglected black movie audience** (Lawrence 18), the move-ment began with the release of *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1970) and flourished due to an ensuing rush of **profitable films**” (Lawrence and Butters, P.745).



Superhero Reflects 2 –

Blaxploitation & Luke Cage

Sharon Packer, M. D. also mentioned that Luke Cage highlighted the Blaxploitation genre in her article, *Luke Cage Comics And Race-Based Unethical Medical Experiments*. The blaxploitation genre started during the early 1970s (Wikipedia, “Blaxploitation”). It included plenty of stereotypical African-American characters in film and television. Luke Cage, of course, is one of the examples of stereotypical characters created during that time. However, it also presented African Americans as heroes during that time. This made the **representation of African Americans in the media world move to a more positive perspective**. In addition, Blaxploitation films were made for all audiences and became very prevalent, because the U.S. film industry realized that blaxploitation films attracted a lot of audiences across race and increased their profits. Therefore, even though the representation of African Americans in media was changing positively during that time, **African American characters were still biased and exploited**.

More Characters/ Falcon continue–



- ◇ Name: Samuel Thomas Wilson or Falcon
- ◇ Time: Created in September 1969
- ◇ Superpower: Having natural affinity for birds and can controlling them & Having a mechanical wing
- ◇ The **First African-American superhero** in mainstream comic books
- ◇ Highlights:
 - The neighborhood he lived with his parents involving **violence**.
 - He used to be “Snap” Wilson and was a professional **criminal & gang** member (Wikipedia).

Falcon



Superhero Reflects 3 –

Luke Cage VS Other Superheroes



Superhero Reflects 3 –

Why Luke Cage is different from them?

Iron Man has a fancy and expensive armor. Captain America and Spider man all have a customized and amazing suit. In addition, Captain America has an impenetrable shield. Why does only Luke Cage have an **ordinary** outfit, a pair of **iron cuff** and a big **mental chain** on his waist?

Luke Cage's outfit implies the stereotype of African American people. His ordinary suit reflects the low-class status of African American people in the U.S. society comparing to other groups of people. The iron cuff that looks like a **handcuff** and the heavy mental chain, which are obviously related to violence and crime. This indicates a stereotype of African American people that they are always involved in **violence**. Therefore, comparing Luke Cage's outfit with other white characters reflects the **stereotype** that people had in 1970s and the negative representations of African Americans in media.

