

**CHUTZPAH: THE
JEWISH VOICES
BEHIND AMERICAN
COMICS CURATOR'S
GUIDE**

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MOP
MUSEUM OF POP CULTURE

To Cut off a Hydra's Head: American Antisemitism in the Golden and Silver Era of Marvel Comics and Today.

“Cut off my head, two more shall take its place.”

- Zola of HYDRA's Nazi science division in
Captain America: The Winter Soldier

Antisemitism is like a hydra. Cut off one head and two more appear. It may switch up its costume over the decades but under the mask the same nefarious hatred lurks with its glowing eyes and awaiting hungry maw. This age-old hatred has been battled by many. Many fought, and many fled looking for places safer than living among this metaphorical serpentine monster. There is no cowardice in either choice. Antisemitism has changed and shifted with society, but it is still very much present today just as it was in the 1930s through the 1960s; the heyday of Marvel comics.

American Antisemitism During World War II

It may seem like a bit of an oxymoron to discuss antisemitism during the height of Marvel's success. It sounds contradictory, doesn't it? The flourishing of an inherently Jewish company in the midst of hatred and crisis. People are resilient, and Stan Lee (born Stanley Leiber)ⁱ, Jack Kirby (born Jacob Kurtzberg)ⁱⁱ and Joe Simon (born Hymie Simon)ⁱⁱⁱ are shining examples of Jewish resilience.

The landscape for Jews in America prior to and during U.S. involvement in the war was complex. Despite the victory gardens and patriotic red lipstick, life was tense for American Jews. Nazism established a foothold in America. The German American Bund, a Nazi organization inspired by Hitler gained members as they preached for a



Bund rally in Madison Square Garden, 1939. Image of George Washington flanked by Swastika banners. courtesy of NPR.

fascist America.^{iv} They were the most influential of the American Nazi groups and spread antisemitic propaganda that “claimed Jews were the enemies of both Germans and Americans. Bund members promoted the lie that Jews were conspiring to control politics, economics, the media, and other areas of society.”^v The Bund organized everything from

youth summer camps aimed at indoctrinating German

American youth to rallies such as the infamous Madison Square Garden rally in 1939.

This kind of deeply antisemitic attitude did not end with the Bund as approximately 66% of Americans believed “German Jews were either ‘entirely’ or ‘partly’ to blame for their own persecution.”^{vi}

While seemingly always present, the hydra that is American antisemitism was prominent during war time years. Beginning in the 1930s and continuing into the 1960s, *The Public Opinion Quarterly* collected and published mass public poll data^{vii} on antisemitic attitudes and beliefs about Jews. The results were published in 1965. Below are a few of the questions asked and the related response data.

*Have you heard any criticism or talk against the Jews in the last six months?**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>
1940†	46%	52%	2%
1942†	52	44	4
1944†	60	37	3
1946†	64	34	2
1950†	24	75	1

Do you think the Jews have too much power and influence in this country? (OPOR, July 15, 1942)

Yes	44%
No	41
No opinion, no answer	15

Do you think that Jewish people in the United States have too much influence in the business world, not enough influence, or about the amount of influence they should have? (NORC)

	Jan. 1943	Dec. 1944	Nov. 1945
Too much	49.7%	57%	58%
About right	33.4	29	30
Qualified answers	1.6	1	*
Not enough	2.0	2	1
Don't know	13.3	11	11

* Less than 0.5%.

Why do you think Hitler took away the power of the Jews in Germany? (OPOR, July 15, 1942)

Sympathetic or neutral reasons:	
Hitler hates the Jews	18%
The Jews are scapegoats	7
Germany is overcrowded	*
Anti-Semitic reasons:	
The Jews are too powerful	20
The Jews are running the economy	26
Mention of Jewish traits	2
The Jews will ruin the country	1
Other reasons	4
Don't know, no answer	26
	104%†

* Less than 0.5%.

† The figures add to more than 100 because some respondents gave more than one answer.

Why did so many Americans believe Jews had too much power and influence?

There is no simple answer. First, we have the backdrop of the Great Depression which began in 1929 and only ended when the U.S. entered the war in 1941.^{viii} This is important because there is a documented pattern of antisemitism spiking during periods of economic hardship. Antisemitism^{ix} rose during the Great Depression^{ix} as well as during

the 2008 recession.^x When the going gets tough people become angry and desperate and it can feel easier to put the blame on a secret cabal of Jews controlling the economy than look at a government that repeatedly fails you. This might sound surprising but in Germany this was the kind of propaganda Hitler was spreading; and it was working.^{xi} Support for him grew.

Many of these conspiracy theories reached a wider audience through *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Soviet Russian hoax that first appeared in 1903. *The Protocols* was a fabricated text from supposed meetings held by the so-called “learned elders of Zion.”^{xii} This publication claimed there was a secret group of Jews that planned to control global politics, the economy, the media, and society in order to benefit the Jewish people.^{xiii} *The Protocols* also described fabricated plans to erase all other religions and keep the world in a perpetual state of war.^{xiv} Though debunked in 1920, it remained popular. It played into antisemitic conspiracy theories that were already in the public consciences and retold stories that had maintained popularity since the Medieval era to “justify” hatred, exile, and murder of Jews; such as false stories of Jews killing Christian children and putting their blood in matzah, killing Jesus, and spreading disease.

Some people look for something to validate their already held beliefs and hatred. The *Protocols* functioned that way for many. People did not question what they were reading, they were not thinking critically about this book's contents because it was what they *wanted* to hear or made them feel correct in holding racist ideas. This was the climate in which Marvel’s Jewish writers were working, and it made their work even more powerful as it was challenging the antisemitic views of their time. Widespread

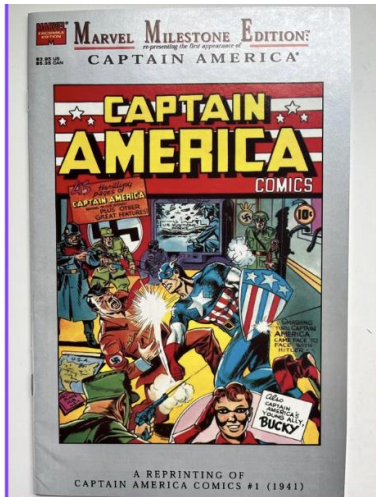
antisemitism did not stop them writing and publishing Jewish stories; in fact, it motivated them.

Standing Strong in The Face of Hatred: From Punching Hitler to Invoking Ancient Protectors

Jack Kirby, Joe Simon, and Captain America;

“We were the most unheroic looking odd couple-one that was to bring to life, between comic book covers, countless symbols of muscularity, daring and utter perfection in the American male”-Joe Simon, *The Comic Book Makers*.pg 40.

Kirby and Simon met in 1940 when Simon got a job at Fox Publications and would go on to form one of the most famous creative partnerships of all time. Jack Kirby was a first generation American born to Jewish-Austrian parents in Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1917.^{xv} Kirby grew up in poverty in the cramped tenements surrounded by other Jewish immigrants where many turned to street gangs for allyship, resources, and way to have some control within their communities.^{xvi} Later in life Kirby credited his childhood as “growing up in a rough neighborhood where good boys learned to survive by acting tough and standing up to bullies as a primary inspiration for his comic book work and his politics.”^{xvii} Joe Simon was born in 1913 to Jewish immigrants from Britain.^{xviii} He lived in Rochester, New York, in a setting very much akin to that of Kirby's childhood.



1995 reprint of Captain America #1, March 1941. Photo courtesy of Madeleine O'Connor.

The chutzpah, or excessive confidence these men possessed shined through with the creation of Captain America in 1941, a collaboration between Kirby and his creative partner and fellow Jew, Joe Simon.^{xix} Captain America was Kirby and Simon's response to Hitler and the States neutrality (and also their attempt at stealing some of Batman's thunder). To the U.S. the message was clear: *do the right thing!* and to Hitler, *we will destroy you!* In his

memoir *The Comic Book Maker* Simon says "Our government's propaganda was preparing us for the day when the U.S. would enter the war...Wouldn't they love to see him [Hitler] lambasted in a comic book. By a soldier. A meek, humbling private with muscles of steel and a colorful, star-spangled costume under his khaki army uniform. Wouldn't we all!"^{xx}

Captain America #1 made quite a splash! He was such a hit that he drew the attention of the Bund who sent three thugs to Kirby and Simon's office to fight the men responsible for disrespecting Hitler and to "to show him what real Nazis would do to the Sentinel of Liberty."^{xxi} Not expecting Kirby to silently roll up his sleeves and head to the lobby for a 3-on-1 fight, they fled before he arrived.^{xxii} Kirby was a tough man who was not one to back down in a fight. After all during the draft his goal was to "go into the Army, kill Hitler, and get back before the readers missed us [Simon and Kirby]."^{xxiii} Fear was never something to hold him back from standing up for himself and what was right.

It was a bold move to publish a comic like this. Not only did it jeopardize their safety, but it made a strong political statement before official U.S. military involvement in the war during Roosevelt's long stance of isolationism and neutrality. After Hitler took

power, the Reich tried to hide the extent of the atrocities being committed by the Nazi party, but news got out through the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), a news bureau with well-developed foreign contacts.^{xxiv} The JTA was publishing eyewitness accounts and testimonies of horrific mass killings in local Jewish American newspapers whose audience was the very community Kirby and Simon belonged to.^{xxv} Mainstream American newspapers such as *The New York Times* published few of these accounts but often buried them inside the paper.^{xxvi} News of the genocide was not deemed worthy of the front page for quite some time.^{xxvii}

As soon as Hitler took power, the United States government had access to information on how the Third Reich was persecuting Jews and other minority groups but largely ignored the problem.^{xxviii} Regardless of what was known about Hitler's nefarious plans, the U.S remained neutral for the first two years of the war, then lifted the Neutrality Act of 1937 so they could sell non-military goods to favored at-war countries for cash.^{xxix} It is important to note that when the U.S. engaged on a military level it was not about saving the Jewish people and ending the Holocaust but neutralizing a threat to democracy. There is a myth that the United States was ignorant to what was happening in Europe however that was not the case. In fact, Paul Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* in 1933.^{xxx} The issue featured an article on Hitler's cabinet that contained quotes from the cabinet that directly threatened the safety of Jews.^{xxxi} This political environment made Captain America all the more powerful. He was a strong symbol against fascism created by American Jews who wanted to see their country do something to help their families in Europe. He represented what they wanted from America; a hammer against Hitler and his virulent

hatred. Not only getting involved when the fighting got personal, or there was money to be made but because human beings were getting hurt.

Post WWII: Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Benjamin Grimm aka The Thing;

“And here's something else I know. Remember the tale of the golem Benjamin? He was a being made of clay--but he wasn't a monster. He was a protector.”- Hiram Sheckerberg to Ben Grimm, *Fantastic Four* #56, 2002.

Ben Grimm, better known as The Thing and a member of the Fantastic Four was created in 1961 during the pinnacle of Marvel's Silver Age. Ben is unique because he has been considered a Jewish character by many since the beginning, but his identity was not outright confirmed in a comic until 2002 with the publication of *Fantastic Four* #56.^{xxxii} Even before the confirmation, it was clear that Ben held a lot of Jewishness from his rough and tumble youth to embodying an ancient magic. Ben grew up in the Lower East Side and was a member of the fictional Yancy Street Gang.^{xxxiii} Sounds like Kirby's childhood, doesn't it? Both are from the Lower East Side, and both joined street gangs.^{xxxiv} Even the street name echoes the one Kirby grew up on; Delancey street, and Ben on Yancy street.^{xxxv} Ben is certainly a little bit autobiographical for Kirby who was grappling with his past and Jewish identity through Ben as he seems to reflect on his childhood of street brawls and the kind of complex man it turned him into.

There is an element of deep sadness to Ben's character. He grew up looking like everyone else, until he reluctantly agreed to pilot his dear friend Reed Richard's ship, and they passed through a cosmic ray storm which mutated them all.^{xxxvi} Ben is the only member of the Fantastic Four whose mutation triggered such a deeply physical change

that cannot be turned on and off. The other three can maintain a “normal” appearance, but not Ben. He is the outcast whose form triggers repulsion in those who see him; the monster with no malice in his heart. This sort of experience, one of being shunned or upsetting people through one’s presence alone is unfortunately one that can feel deeply relatable for some Jews, leading them to hide that facet of their identity just as Ben does for a very long time. When a fellow Jewish man asks him why he never spoke of his Jewishness, Ben responds: "Figure there's enough trouble in this world without people thinkin' Jews are all monsters like me."^{xxxvii} But that's the thing, Ben is *not* a monster. He’s a protector. A hero. A golem.

Have you ever heard of a golem? They are creatures from Jewish folklore made of clay very much resembling The Thing.^{xxxviii} The most well-known story of this creature is the Golem of Prague. Created from river clay in the 16th century this golem was created by a Rabbi desperate to protect the Jewish ghetto of Prague from violence.^{xxxix} Like Ben golems are protectors that require a strong moral code to guide them, so they do not fly into a destructive rage.^{xl} The story of the golem is held to be true by many and speaks to the responsibilities we hold as people with power. We must never use our power for selfish means or let it erode who we are. That is something that Ben understands well, and regardless of the way he is treated for his golem-like appearance he doesn't fly into a rage; he continues to protect his community.

It's easy to wonder what the big deal was about publishing a character like this in the 60s. After all World War II was over. Didn't things return to normal? Things did indeed return to normal; the problem is that antisemitism is a part of that norm. In the 60s there were still neighborhoods that refused to sell a home to Jews, private athletic clubs that banned Jews, and businesses that refused to hire them.^{xli} The 1960s saw the

Civil Rights Movement and a lot of change; including the fight for Jewish Studies in colleges alongside the brave students fighting for African American Studies.^{xliii} Life was hard for marginalized communities and a character such as Ben, a misunderstood man, probably felt deeply relatable to many readers, Jewish or not.

American Antisemitism Today

“Take your racist, anti-Semitic crap and shove it!”-Spider-Man, *Non-Stop Spider-Man #4*, 2021.

It would have been wonderful if Captain America could have ended antisemitism with that famous punch to Hitler as seen on the cover of *Captain America #1*. Sadly we live in no such reality; the hydra grew another head so to speak. We have witnessed antisemitism spike in the United States by nearly 400% since 2023.^{xliiii} In August of 2023 an armed man opened fire outside a Jewish school after he was unable to gain entry.^{xliiv} In November of 2024 we watched neo-Nazis march through Columbus, Ohio.^{xliv}



Neo-Nazis march through Columbus, Ohio. 2024.
Photo courtesy of CNN.

We are witnessing a revival, an evil sludge oozing from the depths. The hydra is rearing its ugly head yet again. The same age-old tropes still hold sway. Remember *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*? It remains popular today

regardless of the fact that it has been debunked.^{xlvi} It has been translated into countless

languages and remains available online and in print; in fact, it has been revised by neo-Nazis and antisemites to blame Jews for everything from terror attacks such as 9/11 to COVID-19, and to deny the Holocaust.^{xlvii} *The Protocols* currently has a 69% “like” rating on Google.

Earlier this year an attempt to survey antisemitism among graduate students had to be shut down due to such high levels of defensiveness and agitated answers when respondents were asked about their beliefs in popular antisemitic tropes. Before the survey was removed, 26% indicated that yes or maybe (a majority being yes) to the questions “Do Jews have too much power in the media?” and 13.3% said maybe in response to “Do Jews have too much control in the government?”. Navigating a world where you have become the monster under the bed to people is exhausting and it can become hard to know who you can trust and who you are safe with; which is why 27% of American Jews have decided to hide their identity for their own safety.^{xlviii}

Where does that leave us as a society, and where does that leave the Jewish community who has been ringing the alarm bells for a long time now? People need to listen to one another. Antisemitism is a hate where people argue over the definition. So often shouting over the voices of Jews in an attempt to invalidate our experiences or to tell us to be quiet. Everyone has a cornucopia of different experiences, histories, and stories. It is possible to find unity regardless of our differences through shared values and hate must *never* be one of those values. When we decide we know more about a form of racism than the group experiencing it, we are doomed. When hate starts to flourish as it has, we must stand firm and say *no* even when it makes us unpopular.

The Visual Language of Comic books in Fighting Hate

Comics are first and foremost a visual medium. Their immaculately illustrated and colorful panels help push the story and have the ability to touch hearts through not just reading but *seeing*. You can see the hope, pain, anguish, and joy on the faces of the characters. They become all the more real to the reader and promote a sense of empathy in children^{xlix} and adults.^l This visual element is critical when it comes to Jewish representation and combatting antisemitic caricatures.

Antisemitic imagery can be found in every corner of the internet. All you must do to find it is open Instagram, TikTok or Reddit to find something like this:



These stills are from a video on Instagram from May 2025. Along with its images of a crucified Jesus, it detailed "secret tunnels" where Jews hid and had a "fried foreskin festival". It had 36,000 likes. The long noses and exaggerated features on the figures are the same stereotypical and racist features that have been showing up on caricatures of Jews for hundreds

of years.^{li}

While antisemitic imagery is severe online it does not end there. This image on the right was circulated at Harvard in 2024.^{lii} It depicts a hand with a star of David with a dollar sign in the middle holding the nooses of a Black man and an Arab man effectively blaming Jews for not only the persecution of the Black and Arab communities but also the history of lynchings and violent murders of the Black American community. These images not only endanger the Jewish community but also can take a grave toll on the psyches of those constantly exposed to such extreme hate. Prolonged and consistent exposure to hate speech can shatter how one sees themselves and lead to a myriad of problems from loneliness to a very serious collapse of their mental well-being.^{liii}



Scarlet Witch a Romani-Jew as depicted in *Scarlet Witch the Complete Collection* by James Robinson

believe in. Comic books provide something to turn to when it feels like you have nowhere else to go.

Comic books can provide unique support. Not only can they counter these harmful visuals and challenge racist views about the Jewish people but also provide a safe space for Jews. Jewish readers get to see themselves as strong, complex, beautiful and smart. They get to see their people squash the bully and come out on top. Readers get to see someone who *understands* what it feels like to be struggling and scared but remains steadfast, inspiring them to stay strong and stand up for themselves and what they

Conclusion: Hope is Not Dead

“If you want our home, you’ll have to fight for it. If you want our world, you’ll have to take it. If you want our blood, you’ll have to pay for every drop. And if you take our lives...we will be avenged.”-Captain America aka Sam Wilson. *Blood Hunt* #3. 2024.

The horrifying truth is that not much has changed over time where the Jewish people are concerned. We find ourselves facing the same accusations and the same threats. In a twist, even with fear so high, and people hiding who they are, Judaica sales in America have actually gone up signifying that many Jews are done hiding and their response to heightened antisemitism is to embrace their identity.^{liv} We are tired of hiding the way our families had to for so many generations. People are turning to developing a practice and finding strength in community. The rage and hate directed at the Jewish people has not broken our spirit as we continue to write Jewish stories, call out hate and challenge the stereotypes held by so many Americans today. Writers like Fabrice Sapolsky tell the stories of the Chinese Kaifeng Jews in his superhero comic *The Last Jewish Daughter of Kaifeng*, and Michael Chabon’s *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* follows two Jewish boys who fled Nazi occupied Germany for the U.S and their creation of a Hitler fighting comic book hero as they try to bring their families to America.

The Jewish community is remaining strong in the face of hate. We’ve survived it before. We will survive it again. As Captain America said “Just hold on until the sun shines again. Because **it will**. Captain America Out.”



A DEEPER LOOK

Magneto, Moon Knight, and Kitty Pryde are all heavily shaped by their Jewishness. They are the few characters that simply do not make sense when their Jewish identities are stripped away for television, and therefore they have retained their identities. Their creators explored different elements of their own Jewishness and they each tackle very real elements of life people cope with every day such as grief, anger, generational trauma, but also the deep want to help those in need and rise above pain.

Magneto, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

“Mankind has always feared what it doesn’t understand” -Magneto, *X-Men*.



Magneto is one of the most complex characters in Marvel’s comic and cinematic universe and is a reoccurring antagonist in the X-Men universe. He is what happens when vengeance takes precedence, when you stop seeing the humanity in people because you’ve seen enough-when you decide that people are either all good or all bad. Magneto has had two different names in the comics and movies; Erik Lehnsherr and Max Eisenhardt. Born a mutant and a Jewish-German, only his youngest years were free of Nazi tyranny as he and his family were

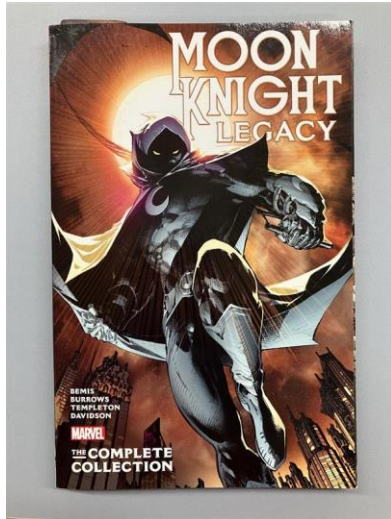
kidnapped and put in Auschwitz when he was only a teenager. He escapes the camp with the love of his life, Magda, in 1944.

Magneto is that part of all of us who have decided we will never be hurt again. He climbed the power ladder completely going from Holocaust survivor to super villain and occasional anti-hero. He is a fascinating and compelling look at Jewish trauma and what happens when we let our pasts control who we are. It is easy to let our fear overshadow our good intentions. Who doesn't want revenge? It can even feel righteous. But is it worth it when it costs us our humanity? Magneto's goal centers on wiping out regular humans to secure the safety of mutants; people born with superhero-like abilities. His plan is a devastating one. It sounds paranoid. Didn't people like superheroes? People liked heroes that suffered through experiments or a crazy accident that gave them powers. Those born with powers, born different, were seen as threats and met with fear by the government and everyday people mirroring issues of antisemitism and racism.

Erik's story has been repeatedly changed by writers over the years and what is canonically true can be hard to decipher such as whether he fathered Scarlet Witch and Quick Silver. What remains true is his past as a Holocaust survivor still drives much of what he does. Erik's attempts at destroying non-mutant humans come from the behavioral similarities he saw between the non-mutants and the Nazis. Both groups passed identification laws, wanted to restrict access to various jobs, and wanted their targeted group to have no power. He was watching history replay right in front of his eyes; except this time instead of coming after the Jews, they were coming after the mutants. Driven by trauma, fear and a twisted sense for justice Magneto decided it was his right to play God and it cost him his humanity.

Moon Knight, created by Doug Moench and Don Perlin

“When it came down to it, I was the weak one. I sold out everything I had been raised to believe to save my own neck. To further indulge my addiction to violence. My father’s God took us out of Egypt. My new god has kept us there”.



-Marc Spector, *Moon Knight* #5 2021.

Every year on Passover we tell the story of Moses and the Israelites' flight from Egypt. We thank God for delivering us to the promised land and freeing us from the Pharaoh’s evil hand. Did you know that the Talmud teaches us that only 20% of Jews left Egypt with Moses? Many were too afraid, too steeped in Egyptian culture to leave. That story is mirrored in Moon Knight aka Marc Spector. Marc is quite literally the Jew who never left Egypt -- a slave to Khonshu, god of the moon and vengeance in return for his life. How did Marc and Khonshu meet? Before Marc was Moon Knight, he was a mercenary. It was a botched job in Egypt that left him dying on the steps of a temple dedicated to Khonshu. Khonshu needed a servant to dole out vengeance and protect those who travel at night, and a mercenary is the perfect fit. He offered Marc a deal: be my knight or die. Marc chose to be his knight and was granted a suit that seemed to heal him and allow him to glide through the night sky.

Marc has a complicated relationship with Khonshu, just as he did with the Jewish people’s God. Marc saw his people violently murdered by a serial killer from Hitler’s nazi science divisions HYDRA in the basement of his synagogue as a child. He felt abandoned and powerless.

It was fleeing this serial killer that triggered his dissociative identity disorder, and Steven Grant split off to give Marc the push to flee when he was too shocked and terrified to do so. Jake Lockley the Yiddish speaking, harsh but lovable New York taxi driver manifested as well at an unknown later time.

Khonshu was the answer to the perceived abandonment by his people's God. Khonshu appealed to every bloody impulse Marc had and promised he would *never* be powerless again. Haunted by his past and to a degree his choice to serve as the fist of Khonshu, Moon Knight is one of the only heroes who will willingly hurt himself in a manner that becomes blatantly self-destructive if it means saving someone else. Whether this is driven by penance or self-hatred is unclear. Marc holds a deep self-hatred and confesses to his alters, Steven and Jake, that if anyone knew them, why would they ever want to know him. He believes he is the worst of them and is blind to the love his friends hold for him. As long as he fails to see his worth and reconcile his taste for blood, he will always be the Jew stuck in Egypt.

Katherine "Kitty" Pryde created by Chris Claremont

"I'm Jewish. I don't have a "Jewish-sounding" name. I don't look or sound Jewish, whatever that looks or sounds like... So if you didn't **know** I was Jewish, you might not know... unless I **told** you. Same goes for my mutation. I don't have to wear a visor or have blue fur all over me. I can walk around. Just a young woman of the world. But... I'm not."

-All New X-Men #13.-Kitty Pryde

Easily identifiable by her Magen David necklace, Kitty Pryde is a proud Jewish mutant. Born with a genius-level intellect, she struggled in her teens due to splitting headaches. These headaches would later turn out to be her mutation activating. When she was thirteen, she went to her room to rest and woke up on the living room floor. She had phased right through her bed and floor, falling into the room below. Shortly after this incident she would attend Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. Her ability to phase through solid matter made her an invaluable member of the X-Men where she was known as Shadow Cat.



Unlike many of the Jewish characters in Marvel, Kitty is not pessimistic and tortured in the same way. Her strength of character and will are based in her Jewishness. She works toward a better future embodying a core Jewish value, *tikkun olam*, which means “repairing the world.”

It is not surprising that so many Jewish characters are so tortured. Their creators were people whose families fled violence in Europe and beyond, and who witnessed the genocide of their people. Lee’s parents left Romania behind, fleeing a country riddled with antisemitism^{iv} and Kirby would live to hear how Nazis took over his parents' home country of Austria. Kitty was created as a bright light who even gets through to Magneto as they visit a Holocaust Memorial together, emphasizing the importance of community in healing^{vi}. It is important to depict Jews as more than just their traumatic histories, and

Kitty's creator did just that. Instead of being guided by pain and ancestral trauma, she was guided by her love for people and the Jewish values she grew up with.

Kitty Pryde was created by Chris Claremont, a man of legend in the comic book world, and member of the Will Eisner Comics Industry Awards Hall of Fame. Claremont is Jewish himself, living on a kibbutz in Israel when he was young, and later moving to the U.S. with his parents. Claremont is responsible for making the *X-Men* what they are today, and he co-created some of the most recognizable characters such as Storm, Rogue and Gambit. He created a legacy of strong women. Claremont's female characters were heroes in their own right, and they were never present just as eye candy. He wrote not just Jewish women but all women to be complex and shifted away from stereotypes.

ⁱ LEIBOVITZ, LIEL. "So What's the Risk?" In *Stan Lee: A Life in Comics*, 1–12. Yale University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzpv6w2.3>.

ⁱⁱ Hamilton, Sue. *Jack Kirby : Creator & Artist*. ABDO Publishing, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Simon, Joe. *Joe Simon: My Life in Comics*. Titan Books, 2011.

^{iv} The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Americans and the Holocaust." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main/nazis-in-america.

^v The German American Bund: A Pro-Nazi Organization in the United States." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-american-bund.

^{vi} .The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Americans and the Holocaust." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main/nazis-in-america.

^{vii} It is hard to pin down the exact number of participants in these surveys as a number is not stated outside of references to "mass public surveys". These surveys were run by 4 main polling agencies American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), Elmo Roper's polling firm, Hadley Cantril's Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR), and the National Opinion Research Council (NORC). These polls were open

to white Americans and sometimes Black Americans. While we do not have exact numbers, we can determine that the poll responses are more than likely coming from a White Christian population.

viii Richardson, Gary. "The Great Depression." *Federal Reserve History*,

ix Gabriela Tucan and Dumitru Tucan. "The Crisis of the 1930s and American Antisemitism". *American, British and Canadian Studies* Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, 42, no. 1 (2024): 30-51. <https://doi.org/10.2478/abcsj-2024-0003>

x Anti Defamation League. *Financial Crisis Sparks Wave of Internet Anti-Semitism*, 24 Oct. 2008, .

xi "The Great Depression." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-great-depression.

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