

COMICS BEYOND THE MARGINS

ANTEATER COMIX



UC IRVINE LIBRARIES
EXHIBIT

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STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT, IDENTITY, AND IMAGINATION

EXHIBIT ON DISPLAY
MARCH THROUGH OCTOBER 2026

Langson Library
Muriel Ansley Reynolds Exhibit Gallery

UC Irvine Libraries

COMICS BEYOND THE MARGINS

STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT, IDENTITY, AND IMAGINATION

Comics are a narrative medium with a long history as a platform for empowering underrepresented voices. Featuring comics from UC Irvine Libraries' general collections, this exhibit highlights examples from the 1960s to the present day, covering wide-ranging themes — from memoirs to imagined futures and activism — and diverse modes of storytelling.

Comics evolved alongside the global 19th-century boom in mass print media, and by the 20th century, they were a common feature of daily newspapers and an important medium in their own right. The Golden Age of Comics began with the launch of the first issue of *Superman* in 1938 and ended in the early 1950s, amidst inquiries from US government officials and accusations that comics were a cause of delinquent behavior among young people. In response, the Comics Magazine Association of America established the Comics Code Authority (CCA) to screen for “ethical” content.

Underground comix (which used the letter x to distinguish themselves) emerged in the 1960s as a counterpoint to mainstream comics and distributors requiring the CCA Seal of Approval. Small and alternative presses were important outlets for comix and continue to be vehicles for independent voices. From heartbreaking memoirs to surreal, intergalactic tales, the underground comix and other comics featured in this exhibit showcase a wide range of stories, themes, and art styles.

The acceptability of language that people and groups use to self-identify evolves over time. To provide historical context, this exhibit retains the language used at the time of publication.

This exhibit includes content that may be sensitive to some viewers. Discretion is advised.

Curated by
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Designed by
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COMICS AND COMIX

In the 1960s, the underground comix movement emerged as an alternative to the mainstream comics adhering to the Comics Code Authority. Popular into the 1970s, underground comix (which used the x to distinguish themselves) were produced by small presses or self-published. Often featuring adult themes or counterculture topics, these comix could be satirical, sexually explicit, and violent. At the outset, the movement was dominated by male creators who were sometimes criticized for being racist and misogynistic. Women, however, also contributed to underground comix, such as the all-female *Wimmen's Comix* published from 1972 to 1992.

1. "UNTITLED STRIP"

1986. In *The Complete Calvin and Hobbes*, vol. 1, by Bill Watterson, 2005.

- [1] To read a typical comic, start at the top left of the page, and then move your eyes from left to right and down.
- [2] The first panel of a comic often includes the title and author of the work.
- [3] Individual frames, each containing a single scene or drawing, are called *panels*. These panels can vary in shape and size.
- [4] Spoken dialogue (or unspoken thoughts) may appear in speech bubbles (also known as "word balloons") of varying shapes and sizes.
- [5] The empty space between panels is called a *gutter*, which can indicate the passage of time and leave room for the reader to use their imagination to fill in the story.
- [6] Sometimes dialogue appears with no bubble or balloon.
- [7] Comics often use onomatopoeia, or words that imitate sounds, to dramatic effect

2. "COMIX BOOK"

by Peter Poplaski, 1973. In *Underground Classics: The Transformation of Comics into Comix*, by James Danky and Denis Kitchen, 2009.

Peter Poplaski's cover for *Comix Book* is a pointed depiction of the underground comix movement's break with traditional comics.

3. **"ZAP NO. 5"**

by Robert Williams, 1970. In *Hysteria in Remission: The Comix and Drawings of Robt. William*, edited by Eric Reynolds, 2002.

First appearing in the 1960s, *Zap Comix* was a model for later underground comics. The artist, Robert Williams, was a driving force behind the genre, with his work shown in both "lowbrow" and "highbrow" venues ranging from small independent publications to the prestigious Whitney Biennial. He has called his style "feral art."

4. **"IT'S REALLY TOO BAD"**

by Robert Crumb, 1969. In *The Apex Treasury of Underground Comics*, edited by Susan Goodrick and Don Donahue, 1974.

Zap Comix founder Robert Crumb is one of the most well-known underground comix illustrators. Covering American culture, counterculture, sex, and personal memoir, his work has been celebrated, but also criticized for being racist and misogynistic. "It's Really Too Bad" originally appeared in his 1969 comic *Despair*.

5. **"WIMMEN'S COMIX NO 3"**

by Trina Robbins, 1973. In *Underground Classics: The Transformation of Comics into Comix*, by James Danky and Denis Kitchen, 2009.

This cover of *Wimmen's Comix* depicts a harried woman on a *Game of Life*-type game board. The artist, Trina Robbins, was a leader in the underground comix movement and cocreated the first comic book entirely created by women, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, in 1970.

6. **"THE SPIRIT"**

by Will Eisner, 1972. In *Underground Classics: The Transformation of Comics into Comix*, by James Danky and Denis Kitchen, 2009.

The artist Will Eisner is seen as an innovator and the first to popularize the term "graphic novel" to describe works that use sequential art as the basis for storytelling. Eisner created the character Spirit, a masked crime fighter. In this scene, Spirit and a character named Police Commissioner Dolan are breaking into an "underground" sewer, a metaphor for breaking ground in the comics field.

7. **"HIGH ON PMS"**

by Carel Moiseiwitsch, n.d. In *Twisted Sisters: A Collection of Bad Girl Art*, edited by Diane Noomin, 1991.

The artist Carel Moiseiwitsch considers herself an "outsider person," suggesting a view of herself and her work as outside the mainstream. Here, the one-page scene "High on PMS" features a powerful, high-contrast set of images.

8. **"TITS & CLITS COMIX NO. 4"**

by Joyce Farmer, 1977. In *Tits & Clits, 1972-1987*, edited by Joyce Farmer et al., 2023.

This all-female underground comix anthology flips the switch on the otherwise male-dominated comix. Likewise, this image reverses the traditional doctor/patient role, with a nod to the prevailing sexist attitudes at the time.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

As part of the underground comix movement, the freedom to tell stories that were important to the creators resulted in the creation of deeply personal narratives. Then and now, the combination of prose and visuals allows creators to better relay emotions and details than with a prose-only narrative. Some of these works focus on struggles that might be difficult to discuss in person with friends and family, such as physical and mental health issues, traumatic experiences, or sexual and gender identity struggles. Other works highlight the humor and beauty found in everyday experiences.

9. ***THE TALK***

by Darrin Bell, 2023.

Pulitzer Prize-winning comics creator Darrin Bell's graphic memoir *The Talk* focuses on being a Black man in the United States. This sequence shows his mother explaining prejudice to him when he was a child. The intense closeups on faces illustrates the child's attempt to grapple with the emotions surrounding a difficult concept.

10. ***COME HOME, INDIO: A MEMOIR***

by Jim Terry, 2020.

Jim Terry's memoir describes his struggles with alcoholism while also attempting to figure out his identity as a Native American. As Terry fights to remain sober, he realizes that creating comics provides him with the purpose he's been desperately craving.

11. ***INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES: A STORY OF ASPERGER'S, ADULTING, AND LIVING A LIFE IN FULL COLOR***

by Julie Dachez, Mademoiselle Caroline, and Fabienne Vaslet, 2020.

Julie Dachez always felt different from others and was frequently overwhelmed in social situations. This scene, without any words, shows the reader how Dachez feels as if she fades away during a noisy party. After being diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome later in the comic, Dachez understands why she experiences life differently than those around her.

12. **MY DEPRESSION: A PICTURE BOOK**

by Elizabeth Swados, 2005.

Elizabeth Swados, an author and composer, battled depression throughout her life. The basic sketching style she used to show how she felt during her depressive episodes helps the reader empathize. The effectiveness of this simplistic style shows that even those who feel they “can’t draw” can still create comics that tell a story.

13. **DUMB: LIVING WITHOUT A VOICE**

by Georgia Webber, 2018.

After sustaining an injury, Georgia Webber was forced into silence for months in order to allow her voice to heal. Her graphic memoir details this trying time, including when she began to draw comics as a way to process her emotions. Here, we see Webber’s emotional and physical pain radiating from her throat in somewhat violent imagery.

14. **“SHELTER-IN-PLACE SING”**

by Lee Marrs, 2021. In *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology*, edited by Kendra Boileau and Rich Johnson, 2021.

Anyone reading this likely remembers the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. Focusing on the positive aspects of this time, Lee Marrs — one of the most influential women in the underground comix movement — recounts how her neighborhood came together through song, even while remaining physically distant from one another.

15. **“WHAT CONCERNS ME”**

by Alejandro “Jandro” Gamboa, n.d. In *Tales from la Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 2018.

Highlighting the importance of representation, a Mexican American teacher talks with his class of Latinx students about seeing few people who looked like him while he was a student at UC Santa Barbara. He encourages them to change the world themselves and not wait for someone else to do the work for them.

16. **"TAP INTO YOUR TRUE SELF"**

by Grasiela Rodriguez, n.d. In *Tales from la Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 2018.

Who gets to decide a person's identity? Only that person. Latinx artist Grasiela Rodriguez pushes back against people who believe that her art should be more "ethnic" to represent her background, and the art she creates stands on its own merits, despite what others might expect to see.

17. **GAY GIANT**

by Gabriel Ebensperger, 2016.

Growing up gay in extremely conservative Chile in the 1990s, Gabriel Ebensperger often felt isolated. It wasn't until his family got a computer with internet access that he discovered something magical: chat rooms just for gay Chilean men. Being able to create a community meant he could finally connect to other people like him, thanks to technology.

18. **FUN HOME: A FAMILY TRAGICOMIC**

by Alison Bechdel, 2006.

Fun Home explores creator Alison Bechdel's coming out experience set against her father's closeted life. With these events occurring before the internet, we see how important libraries were to her journey. On this page, she searched card catalogs to voraciously read everything she could about lesbians to better understand herself.

19. **A GOOD SPORT**

by Soizick Jaffre, 2024.

Similar to the Olympics, the Gay Games occur every four years, but unlike the Olympics, anyone can participate, even if they're not world-class athletes. Creator Soizick Jaffre details her experience in the 2018 Gay Games using a somewhat surrealistic art style. She was most taken by the community created by the participants, especially those from countries like Uganda, where homosexuality is illegal, and by how the games created lasting global friendships and support networks.

20. **"A PSA FROM THE QUEER CRUSADER"**

by Roman Gaylord, n.d. In *A.B.O. Comix: A Queer Prisoner's Anthology*, vol. 2, ABO Comix Collective, 2018.

A.B.O. Comix is a compendium of artwork created by queer prisoners in the United States. Here, Roman Gaylord emphasizes the importance of representation in media by pleading for a queer superhero to be featured in popular media while letting readers know how they can support people like him more directly. Perhaps the Brown Bomber (see the "Unexpected Superheroes" exhibit case) could fill this role?

21. **FIRST YEAR OUT: A TRANSITION STORY**

by Sabrina Symington, 2018.

Sabrina Symington, a transgender female, details the ups and downs throughout her transition process in her personal graphic memoir. In a cheeky moment after getting a new wig, she is excited to be called a slur generally reserved for cis women because she now physically passes as a woman rather than being misgendered like before.

22. **PERSEPOLIS: THE STORY OF A CHILDHOOD**

by Marjane Satrapi, 2003.

Persepolis gives the reader a glimpse into life in Iran during the late-1970s Islamic Revolution as Iranian society became drastically more conservative. A young adult at the time, Marjane Satrapi fondly recalls how her family continued to secretly host parties with alcohol, even after it became illegal.

23. **GRANDMOTHERS, OUR GRANDMOTHERS: REMEMBERING THE "COMFORT WOMEN" OF WORLD WAR II**

by Han Seong-won, 2023.

During World War II, the Japanese military forced women from Korea (and other countries it occupied) into sexual slavery. Despite the horrors these "comfort women" endured, many flourished later in life, becoming human rights advocates and champions for women's rights. Two of them — Park Ok-seon and Lee Ok-seon — were honored to throw the first pitch and hit the first ball at a professional baseball game, showing that dreams can come true, even after living a nightmare.

24. **“FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION”**

by P. Kristen Enos, n.d. In *Active Voice: The Comic Collection: The Real Life Adventures of an Asian-American, Lesbian, Feminist, Activist and Her Friends!* by P. Kristen Enos et al., 2016.

In the 1990s, P. Kristen Enos contributed a comic column in the regional LGBT-oriented magazine *Blade* that focused on her time as a student and activist at UC Irvine. Bringing the past and present together, we see Langson Library — the building you’re in now! — and other recognizable campus buildings throughout her comics.

25. **MARRY ME A LITTLE: A GRAPHIC MEMOIR**

by Rob Kirby, 2023.

Comics creator Rob Kirby married his longtime partner, John, in 2013 in Minnesota, two years prior to the US Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* legalizing same-sex marriage for the entire country. Kirby was initially hesitant to get married in the eyes of the law because he felt that the life they had built together in the beautiful minutiae of everyday things was a “marriage,” whether it was recognized legally or not.

26. **ALMOST AMERICAN GIRL: AN ILLUSTRATED MEMOIR**

by Robin Ha, 2020.

When Robin Ha’s mother unexpectedly moved their family to Alabama from Korea, Ha felt adrift. She didn’t speak English. She didn’t have friends. But all of this changed when she attended a comics drawing group and finally felt like she found a community.

27. **ARAB IN AMERICA**

by Toufic El Rassi, 2007.

Toufic El Rassi’s moving graphic memoir focuses on the discrimination and stereotypes that many Arabs face in the United States. Here, we can see that different people deal with this in varying ways: Some deny their roots, whereas others vigorously embrace them. How would you react if you faced this type of adversity?

28. **UNDOCUMENTED: A WORKER'S FIGHT**

by Duncan Tonatiuh, 2018.

Primarily focusing on Duncan Tonatiuh's move to the United States from Mexico City, this short piece focuses on his fight with his employer over money earned working in a restaurant and is noticeably influenced by pre-Columbian art, with Tonatiuh drawing on his heritage to tell a modern protest story. This exploration of labor organization ultimately shows the power of how their combined voices helped him and his coworkers to win their fight and to be treated with respect.

29. **I WAS THEIR AMERICAN DREAM: A GRAPHIC MEMOIR**

by Malaka Gharib, 2019.

What happens when people from two vastly different cultures decide to get married? In this instance, they have a big, fat, Filipino-Egyptian-American Southern Baptist-Muslim wedding!

30. **GENDER QUEER: A MEMOIR**

by Maia Kobabe, 2019.

While thinking of switching from she/her to they/them, Maia Kobabe was introduced to the gender-neutral pronouns (e/em/eir introduced by mathematician Michael Spivak), and e immediately knew that they were for em. This comic is an excellent way to learn why personal pronouns matter from the lived experience of someone who struggled with eir gender identity and sexuality for many years.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Boom. Sizzle. Creak. What do these words have in common? They are all examples of *onomatopoeia*, or using a word to imitate a sound or action. Comics have long used this concept in visual storytelling to create atmosphere. When viewing the examples from the diverse range of comics presented here, be sure to read the words aloud — they're fun, trust us! — and notice how the font and size impact the story.

31. **FUN HOME: A FAMILY TRAGICOMIC**
by Alison Bechdel, 2006.
32. **COME HOME, INDIO: A MEMOIR**
by Jim Terry, 2020.
33. **"FLUFFY"**
by Simone Lia, 2003. In *Pictures and Words: New Comic Art and Narrative Illustration*, edited by Roanne Bell and Mark Sinclair, 2005.
34. **THE PRIDE OMNIBUS**
by Joe Glass et al., 2021.
35. **"THE ENDOWMENT FACTOR"**
by Rupert Kinnard, n.d. In *Oops... I Just Catharted!: Fifty Years of Cathartic Comics*, by Rupert Kinnard and William O. Tyler, 2025.
36. **THE NIGHT EATERS: SHE EATS THE NIGHTS, VOL. 1**
by Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda, 2022.
37. **SUPERMAN SMASHES THE KLAN**
by Gene Luen Yang and Gurihiru, 2020.
38. **BLACK, VOL. 1**
by Kwanza Osajyefo et al., 2017.
39. **WUVABLE OAF**
by Ed Luce, 2015.
40. **PRINCE OF CATS**
by Ronald Wimberly, 2019.

41. **AFTER THE RAIN**
by Nnedi Okorafor et al., 2021.
42. **OCTAVIA BUTLER'S KINDRED: A GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATION**
adapted by Damian Duffy and John Jennings, 2017.
43. **"GIVE ME LIBERTY: 2. TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT"**
1990. In *The Life and Times of Martha Washington in the Twenty-First Century*, by Frank Miller and Dave Givens, 2010.
44. **PREGNANT BUTCH: NINE LONG MONTHS SPENT IN DRAG**
by A.K. Summers, 2014.
45. **"WALKING THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE TO WORK"**
by Mo Willems, 2002. In *9-11: The World's Finest Comic Book Writers & Artists Tell Stories to Remember*, by Steven Seagle et al., 2002.
46. **BEIRUT**
by Barrack Zailaa Rima, 2024.
47. **THE BEST WE COULD DO: AN ILLUSTRATED MEMOIR**
by Thi Bui, 2017.
48. **"THOSE FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS: THE FREAKS PULL A HEIST"**
by Gilbert Shelton, 1971. In *The Apex Treasury of Underground Comics*, edited by Susan Goodrick and Don Donahue, 1974.
49. **"SUBVERT COMICS"**
by Spain Rodriguez, 1972. In *The Apex Treasury of Underground Comics*, edited by Susan Goodrick and Don Donahue, 1974.
50. **"UNTITLED STRIP"**
1987. In *The Complete Calvin and Hobbes*, vol. 1, by Bill Watterson, 2005.
- 51-52. **MARCH: BOOK ONE**
by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, 2013.
53. **"MONOGAMY"**
by Lyn Chevli and Joyce Farmer, 1977. In *Tits & Clits, 1972-1987*, edited by Joyce Farmer et al., 2023.

NONTRADITIONAL STORYTELLING

The medium of comics allows creators to tell stories in unique ways. The nontraditional methods highlighted here are no exception, ranging from stories told with no words to those that combine historical people and fictional cartoon characters. This approach makes some stories easier to understand, such as the use of newspaper clippings superimposed over visuals (as opposed to footnotes) in the graphic adaptation of the nonfiction book *Showtime at the Apollo*. Other examples, like the geometric patterns in *Solve for X*, might be more difficult to grasp at first glance, prompting the reader to interpret the message through their own lens to create a personal connection.

54. ***“MJAU BEIBI”***

by John Arne Sæterøy, 2003. In *Pictures and Words: New Comic Art and Narrative Illustration*, edited by Roanne Bell and Mark Sinclair, 2005.

Norwegian cartoonist Jason (John Arne Sæterøy) leans into the humorous side of cartoons with this simple one-page strip. In a story with no words, we observe a skeleton tossing and turning in their bed (i.e., grave), unable to sleep. In a turn that many of us can probably relate to, the skeleton gets up for a snack, and then watches some TV before heading back to bed, finally able to rest. Difficulty sleeping — one more aspect we can attribute to the universal human condition.

55. ***BOY ISLAND: A COMIC***

by Leo Fox, 2024.

In a world where men and women have been forcibly separated to live on two different islands, Lucille — living on Girl Island — realizes that he belongs on Boy Island. He needs to cross the water on a ferry, which requires the payment of a precious memory. Here, we see the psychedelic imagery of the hole in Lucille’s head after his payment has been accepted by the ferryman, showing the pain that many people experience when grappling with their gender identity.

56. ***MY FAVORITE THING IS MONSTERS, VOL. 1***

by Emil Ferris, 2016.

Taking the form of a sketchbook diary rather than traditional sequential frames, this 400-page comic follows 10-year-old Karen Reyes as she investigates the murder of her upstairs neighbor. This page exemplifies the form with the portrait of Reyes’s neighbor and her cat “attached” to a diary page by a drawn paperclip.

57. **"SOLVE FOR X"**

2007. In *The End*, by Anders Nilsen, 2013.

Following the death of his fiancée, Anders Nilsen processed his grief by creating comics. On this page, there is a disconnect between the words — focused on what the future might hold for him — and the absurdist, linear visuals. The reader might interpret these growing and changing patterns as the author's mental state, which is constantly running and moving, not allowing him any peace.

58. **EXIT STAGE LEFT: THE SNAGGLEPUSS CHRONICLES**

by Mark Russell and Mike Feehan, 2018.

Exit Stage Left mixes Hanna-Barbera animated characters with real events from the mid-20th century. In this comic, the character Snagglepuss is loosely based on gay playwright Tennessee Williams. His successful period in the 1950s coincided with the Red Scare, a time when US Senator Joseph McCarthy attempted to uncover Communists and other "subversives" in the United States. Although Williams wasn't subpoenaed by the US House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities, this scene imagines how Williams, as Snagglepuss, might have responded if interviewed.

59. **SHOWTIME AT THE APOLLO: THE EPIC TALE OF HARLEM'S LEGENDARY THEATER**

by Ted Fox and James Otis Smith, 2018.

The visual nature of this comic adaptation could be significantly easier for some readers to engage with than the original, prose-only nonfiction book of the same name. It blends original art with preexisting visuals, such as the newspaper clips seen here that are superimposed on the comic art.

60. **"AND HERE MY TROUBLES BEGAN"**

1986. In *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, by Art Spiegelman, 2011.

Over the course of two volumes, *Maus* tells the traumatic experience of Art Spiegelman's father as a Jewish Holocaust survivor interspersed with scenes of Spiegleman's own life growing up and learning about his family's past. One of the many noteworthy parts of *Maus* is that people are depicted as animals - most notably, Jewish people are mice, and Nazis are cats. In this scene, we see Spiegelman drawing himself with a mouse mask, which could reflect his internal struggles with his Jewish identity and guilt and anxieties about the subject matter. Here, he directly addresses the reader about the commercial success of his writing, which he sees as built on the death and trauma of countless Jewish people.

ACTIVISM

By combining images and text, comics can tell powerful and persuasive stories that take the form of personal narratives, biographies, histories, or fiction, often with activist or social justice themes. The themes showcased here include prison culture, political and social justice activism, and environmentalism.

61. **TOXIC TROPICS: A HORROR STORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE**
by Jessica Oublié and Nicola Gobbi, 2024.

Toxic Tropics documents the history of 20th-century environmental crimes and resistance movements, illustrating the impact of France's use of a pesticide in Guadeloupe and Martinique from 1972 to 1993. As a result, these two islands register some of the highest rates of certain cancers today.

62. **MARCH: BOOK ONE**
by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, 2013.

The first in a series of three autobiographical graphic novels, *March: Book One* tells the story of the activist and politician John Lewis. Additionally, the book presents a broader narrative about the civil rights movement in the 1960s in the United States.

63. **"PIN-UP"**
by Gregory Garay, n.d. In *APB: Artists Against Police Brutality: A Comic Book Anthology*, edited by Bill Campbell, Jason Rodriguez, and John Jennings, 2015.

This comic book anthology includes multiple stories of police brutality, using a range of narrative types, from flash fiction to short essays. In an effort to increase awareness, the book takes a stand against systemic oppression, with proceeds going to the Innocence Project, an American nonprofit that challenges wrongful convictions. Here, the blindfolded figure of Lady Justice (a metaphor for systemic oppression) swings her sword through the midsection of a young man wearing a hoodie in what appears to be a court scene.

64. **"WE ARE ALL ELDERS"**

by Vivi Veronica, 2018. In *Our Work Is Everywhere: An Illustrated Oral History of Queer & Trans Resistance*, by Syan Rose et al., 2021.

This collection by queer and trans authors illustrates their experiences on themes such as Black femme mental health, Pacific Islander authorship, fat queer performance art, disability and healthcare practice, sex worker activism, and more. Vivi Veronica's story describes the ways that the collective trans community provides mutual support and education.

65. **FLYING KITES: A STORY OF THE 2013 CALIFORNIA PRISON HUNGER STRIKE**

by Stanford Graphic Novel Project, 2021.

Inspired by the historic 2013 California prison hunger strike, this semifictional account of the efforts of the Short Corridor Collective leaders and the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition seeks to raise awareness of the damaging effect of solitary confinement on incarcerated people. This multipage scene depicts the psychological impact of solitary confinement.

66. **REDBONE: THE TRUE STORY OF A NATIVE AMERICAN ROCK BAND**

by Christian Staebler, Sonia Paoloni, and Thibault Balahy, 2020.

Redbone tells the true story of a Native American rock band that influenced popular artists in the 1960s, including The Doors and Jimi Hendrix. The book describes the band's decision to control their own creative vision and maintain their cultural identity in the face of pressure from the music industry.

67. **DIARY OF A RELUCTANT DREAMER: UNDOCUMENTED VIGNETTES FROM A PRE-AMERICAN LIFE**

by Alberto Ledesma, 2017.

Alberto Ledesma uses his art to process his personal experiences and activism. His illustrations, which often sit beside explanatory text, cover themes such as the pressure to be a high achiever and being "hyper documented" while living undocumented in the United States.

68. **"ABORTION EVE"**

by Lyn Chevli and Joyce Sutton, 1973. In *Tits & Clits, 1972-1987*, edited by Joyce Farmer et al., 2023.

First published in 1973 to mark the passing of US Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade*, "Abortion Eve" takes on the topic of unwanted pregnancy. One panel in the comic reads, "Scientific research shows that certain groups of people are immune to this dreaded affliction. For example, not one President of the United States has ever been known to suffer from it."

IMAGINED FUTURES

Comics are an evocative medium for depicting the future as it could be, often with science fiction or fantasy elements that demonstrate resistance to expectations and the status quo. Imagined futures can be utopian or dystopian and cover topics such as migration, climate futures, or social or political systems taken to the extreme as a means of reflecting our current reality.

69. ***"MARTHA WASHINGTON STRANDED IN SPACE"***

1995. In *The Life and Times of Martha Washington in the Twenty-First Century*, by Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons, 2010.

Written by Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons for Dark Horse Comics starting in 1990, this comic follows a Black female protagonist from her childhood in Chicago all the way out to space. Set in a dystopian future, the stories often cover themes such as freedom, justice, and the fight against oppression.

70. ***INVISIBLE KINGDOM***

by G. Willow Wilson, Christian Ward, and Sal Cipriano, 2022.

In *Invisible Kingdom*, two female protagonists — one a religious acolyte and the other a freighter pilot — investigate and uncover a conspiracy between a religious organization and a galactic mega-corporation. The book, which is part of a series, features large, luscious images and a unique style, including digital art. Christian Ward won the 2020 Eisner Award for Best Painter/Digital Artist for this book.

71. ***THE SEEDS: A GRAPHIC TALE IN FOUR ACTS***

by Ann Nocenti and David Aja, 2020.

Depicting an apocalyptic future, *The Seeds* tells the story of aliens who have come to harvest seeds from the dying planet Earth. Touching on themes of technology, environment, and personal relationships, it is a story about people deciding to show each other compassion even as the world ends. Bees, hives, and the hexagonal honeycomb pattern are recurring visual elements.

72. **"PRESIDENT BITCH: PART ONE"**

2016. In *Bitch Planet, Book 2*, by Kelly Sue DeConnick et al., 2017.

The publisher of the *Bitch Planet* series, a work of dystopian feminism, describes it as, "Margaret Atwood meets *Inglourious Basterds*." Fake, subversive ads are sprinkled throughout the issues, including "Put It on Your Face," which features makeup products such as the "Vagina Dentata Volumizer."

73. **LAGUARDIA: A VERY MODERN STORY OF IMMIGRATION**

by Nnedi Okorafor et al., 2019.

Winner of the Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album and the Hugo Award for Best Graphic Novel, the four-issue Afrofuturist comic series *LaGuardia* engages in topics such as immigration and equality. In this excerpt, the protagonist sneaks a sentient plant species through immigration at a spaceport. Because the authorities don't recognize the being as sentient, the text reads, "Fear and racism have their uses."

74. **"PIN-UP"**

by Kristina Collantes, n.d. In *Prism Stalker*, vol. 1, by Sloane Leong, 2018.

Prism Stalker tells the story of a refugee who is taken to contribute to the colonization of a complex, psychic planet on behalf of a galactic empire. The author's front page acknowledgement reads, "To everyone who shored up my broken parts and reminded me of the many possible futures when all was eclipsed; this is for you."

UNEXPECTED SUPERHEROES

When many people think of superheroes, they might picture Superman or Captain America, but not everyone sees themselves in these characters. Other comic superheroes, many of whom have flown under the radar of pop culture, represent a more diverse range of identities. From demon-fighting, 92-year-old Ma Etta to the “super” listening abilities of newly deaf elementary school student Cece, these characters can inspire those who have not previously seen themselves or their communities depicted in the pages of mainstream superhero comics.

75. **“A DAY AT COSTUMECO”**

by Jeff Yang and A.L. Baroza, n.d. In *Secret Identities: The Asian American Superhero Anthology*, edited by Jeff Yang et al., 2009.

A mother with superpowers doesn’t have to fight crime. Instead, she can use her ability to create small portals to discipline her misbehaving children in the backseat of the car while driving. How many busy moms wish they could do the same?

76. **“CHAPTER THREE”**

2019. In *Bitter Root Omnibus*, by David F. Walker, Chuck Brown, and Sanford Greene, 2023.

Primarily set in 1920s Harlem, *Bitter Root* focuses on the Sangerye family, who fight monsters that are driven by racism and greed. The family matriarch, 92-year-old Ma Etta, primarily supports younger members of the family, but as we see here, she’s still able to physically take on a monster, demonstrating that the fight against evil knows no age, gender, and ethnicity.

77. **EL DEAFO**

by Cece Bell, 2014.

When Cece loses most of her hearing as a result of an early childhood illness, she learns to use a mechanical Phonic Ear to help her maintain friendships and learn in school. After discovering that she can use the Phonic Ear’s microphone to hear things that are far away, she believes she has superpowers and is ready to listen to everything she can for the good of her friends and family.

78. **IT'S A BIRD...**

by Steven T. Seagle and Teddy Kristiansen, 2004.

Protagonist Steve Berry grapples with the decision to be tested for Huntington's Disease, which his family history indicates he is at risk to develop. At the same time, he must also decide whether to accept a job as the primary author of *Superman*, arguably the pinnacle of any comics creator's career. Berry finds that his hesitancy to write *Superman* is due to his issues with the character: Rather than viewing him as the ultimate superhero, Berry realizes Superman can be seen as a fascist who forces his own morals on everyone else. Instead, Berry believes that everyday people who assist others are possibly the biggest superheroes among us.

79. **"HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO!"**

2011. In *The Pride Omnibus*, by Joe Glass et al., 2021

Riffing off mainstream superhero teams like the Avengers and the Justice League, gay comics creator Joe Glass developed the first all-queer team: the Pride. Composed of heroes representing many different sexualities and gender identities, this team exists to fight for the oppressed, while also reminding the world that queer people exist and can make a positive difference.

80. **"ISSUE NO. 8"**

In *America, vol. 2: Fast and Fuertona*, by Gabby Rivera et al., 2017.

America Chavez, better known as the superhero Miss America, is the first lesbian Latinx character by major comics publisher Marvel. In her self-titled series, she attends Sotomayor University along with other superpowered individuals. This panel shows that even busy superheroes need personal time for mental health and relaxation.

81. **"EARLY SKETCHES OF THE BROWN BOMBER"**

by Rupert Kinnard, 1976. In *Oops... I Just Catharted! Fifty Years of Cathartic Comics*, by Rupert Kinnard and William O. Tyler, 2025.

While a student at Cornell University, Rupert Kinnard wanted to see superheroes that reflected him, a gay Black man. Because mainstream publishers weren't creating this content, Kinnard started a strip in Cornell's student newspaper to fill this gap. Thus was born the Brown Bomber, who was just as apt to satirize current political and world events as he was to fight crime. The beginnings of this iconic and unique character are captured here in early sketches by Kinnard.