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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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IMAGINING BROTHERHOOD:THE COMICS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, 1941 – 1948SUMMARY

This thesis argues that the comics produced by the American Jewish Committee during and immediately after the Second World War are significant cultural artifacts that visualized complex political messages to millions of American workers and soldiers. The comics *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort* claimed patriotic citizenship for American Jewish men participating in the war effort at home and on the front. They formulated a powerful American individual and social body, a brotherhood, capable of winning the war. The comics *There Are No Master Races!* and *They Got the Blame* employed scientific advances in the understandings of cultural development and race to argue that racial and religious brotherhood was the natural way of human existence. Simultaneously, they defined those who opposed racial and religious brotherhood as psychologically disturbed individuals who threatened the stability of the American social mind and American democracy. The comics *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker* labored the fight for brotherhood by unifying it with the post-war goals of the national labor unions. Ultimately, in these comics the AJC defined the meaning of Americanism, claimed a place for American Jews in national culture and politics, and constructed American capitalist democracy as the only system capable of securing domestic economic stability and world peace.



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## Abbreviations

ADL	Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AJC	American Jewish Committee
AJCongress	American Jewish Congress
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CPUSA	Communist Party USA
FEPC	Federal Employment Practices Commission
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
NLS	National Labor Service
OWI	Office of War Information
SC	Survey Committee
UN	United Nations
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: The Comics of the American Jewish Committee

The great commercial illustrators and cartoonists – Rockwell, Leyendecker, Raymond, Caniff – were at their zenith, and there was a general impression abroad that, at the drawing board, a man could not only make a good living but alter the very texture and tone of the national mood.

– Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*

On a dark night in the summer of 1945, Ku Klux Klan leader William J. Simmons, Mississippi Democratic Senator Theodore Bilbo, Adolph Hitler, and a corrupt business owner gathered on the lawn of a white wooden shack somewhere in Georgia. Linking hands the four figures danced in a circle and united in song: “We don’t like Catholics! Or Jews! Or Negroes! Or foreigners!” Behind the circle, the lifeless body of a black union organizer hung from the branch of a tree. Across from this victim of hate, a sign illuminated by the new moon read: “White Protestants Only.” The scene was not a photograph, nor was it secret footage of a conspiracy. It was a carefully orchestrated political image from the pages of the 1946 comic book *Joe Worker and the Story of Labor* created by the American Jewish Committee and their National Labor Service department for scores of labor unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the American Federation of Labor.<sup>1</sup> The scene illustrated the problems faced by labor unions in the post-war period: racial, religious, and ethnic hate; and intimidation and violence against workers who demanded better conditions. Yet the image also urged the nations’ union men to fight bigotry and to secure political justice and economic stability in post-war United States.

This thesis uses the comics produced by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) between 1941 and 1948 to initiate a discussion into the development and representation of the idea of brotherhood. During the war, the brotherhood the AJC imagined was both racial and religious; in the post-war economic downturn, the Committee imagined this brotherhood through an increasingly economic framework.

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity, *Joe Worker and the Story of Labor* is hereafter referred to as *The Story of Labor*.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore:

During the Second World War and the early Cold War, the AJC used radio, television, film, and print media to educate Americans on the dangers of racial and religious prejudice. *The Story of Labor* was part of this mass campaign. By early 1942, some fifteen million comic books were sold each month nationwide, with the figure climbing to twenty-five million by December 1943. Since readers often exchanged comics, an issue's readership increased fivefold.<sup>2</sup> In August 1944, the *New York Times* reported that one of every four magazines shipped to troops overseas was a comic book.<sup>3</sup> With around one hundred million Americans reading comics, the AJC financed the creation and publication of *The Story of Labor*, as well as the comics *Three Pals*, *Extra Effort*, *They Got the Blame*, *There Are No Master Races!*, and the comic strip *Joe Worker* to promote democratic values as well as racial and religious brotherhood among Americans at home and on the front.<sup>4</sup> For the AJC, democracy and brotherhood were rooted in the understanding that camaraderie across races, religions, and ethnicities was the natural and rational way of social existence. Brotherhood meant a commonality between people who saw each other first and foremost as American and shared a belief in democracy and religious freedom. They worked harmoniously together and had solidarity with those who fared worse economically and politically.<sup>5</sup> As citizens, this racial and religious brotherhood had a responsibility to defend democracy, its institutions, and all Americans from the threats posed by tyranny and totalitarianism.<sup>6</sup>

Prominent American Jews, mostly German immigrants, set up the AJC as an interest group in response to the brutality of the 1906 Kishinev pogroms in the Russian Empire. Through links with other organizations the AJC aimed "to prevent the infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews and to alleviate the consequences

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<sup>2</sup> Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 31. For the popularity of comics see: William W. Savage, Jr., *Comic Books and America, 1945 – 1954* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 31.

<sup>4</sup> William Moulton Marston, "Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics," *The American Scholar* 13 (Jan. 1944): 35; W. W. D. Sones, "The Comics and Instructional Method," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 18.4 (Dec. 1944): 233. Clarification of terminology: a comic book is comprised of several stories; a comic strip is a one-page installment of a continuous story; a comics, used for singular and plural, is one story, usually four to twelve pages long. For clarity, *comics* is also used when referring to the above together.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of civic nationalism in the twentieth century: Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), esp. 128-237.

<sup>6</sup> For a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century definition of brotherhood by Railroad Union men: Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable, White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877 – 1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 47-60.

of persecution.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, since its inception, the Committee worked towards the protection of Jews around the world.<sup>8</sup> Richard C. Rothschild, a specialist in advertising and public relations, joined the AJC’s Survey Committee (SC) in 1938. His directives on the uses of the mass media for combatting anti-Semitism remained the basis of the AJC’s public activity for years to come. Rothschild argued that exposing anti-Semitic propaganda as false and picketing anti-Semitic gatherings was counterproductive because it gave such groups publicity. Instead, he reasoned, American Jewish organizations should promote a positive image of Jews and expose the brutality of anti-Semites and Nazis, thereby making anti-Semitism and prejudice abhorrent to the public.<sup>9</sup> In 1941 the SC and the AJC amalgamated, and Rothschild headed the Public Information and Education Department, which set out to instruct Americans on the dangers of prejudice and to counteract anti-Semitic and Nazi propaganda.<sup>10</sup>

The AJC comics reached millions of workers in the defense industry, soldiers in training and on the front lines, children at school, and members of religious and pro-democratic organizations with appeals to defend the civil liberties of all Americans. The comics communicated to readers the country’s aims in the war and the importance of racial and religious brotherhood; they called for support for workers on the home front and stressed that defending the country’s democratic institutions was vital. Simultaneously, the comics captured and projected complex ideas about American citizenship, as well as the political and economic system. This thesis tells the history of the AJC comics in the context of the Second World War and the early Cold War. It reveals the complexities and contradictions behind the political, economic, and cultural arguments the comics presented to their readers. Ultimately, this thesis argues that these

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<sup>7</sup> “Jews to Help Race,” *New York Daily Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1906, Inaugural Year, American Jewish Committee Archives (hereafter AJCA), accessed May 20, 2012, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3010>.

<sup>8</sup> For the AJC mission statement: “Who We Are,” American Jewish Committee online, accessed Sep. 1, 2011, [http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijITI2PHKoG/b.789093/k.124/Who\\_We\\_Are.htm](http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijITI2PHKoG/b.789093/k.124/Who_We_Are.htm). For the history of the AJC see: Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945 – 2006* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007); Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee 1906 – 1966* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972); Nathan Schachner, *The Price of Liberty: A History of the American Jewish Committee* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1948).

<sup>9</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 13-14; Richard C. Rothschild, “Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?” (New York: Survey Committee, 1940), Survey Committee (hereafter SC), AJCA, accessed May 10, 2012, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-18.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-18.PDF).

<sup>10</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 13; Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 15; Schachner, *The Price of Liberty*, 164.



previously overlooked comics reflected and projected ideas that visually and ideologically expanded the definition of Americanism to include religious and racial minorities.

For Rothschild and those who succeeded him, the AJC had to portray anti-Semitism as an American, rather than as a Jewish, problem in order to fight it most effectively. Accordingly, the organization kept its name out of the headlines, and their educational comics never carried the logo or stamp of the Committee. Instead, the comics were often published through other organizations and had the logos and stamps of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the Parents' Institute, and the AJC-affiliated Community Service Department and National Labor Service. The main technique to combat anti-Semitism was a "salting in" process, where the AJC worked pro-democracy and anti-discrimination messages, as well as positive portrayals of Jews into every avenue of the mass media until the producers of culture believed that they had thought of it themselves and any trail back to the Committee was long gone.<sup>11</sup>

The approach was a result of the historical and cultural atmosphere. Numerous reprints of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* constructed a global Jewish conspiracy, despite being exposed as forgeries. European and American Jews were accused of both leading a communist Bolshevik revolution and being greedy capitalists; they were portrayed as both warmongers and international bankers set on global domination. Therefore, the Committee believed that arguing for racial and religious brotherhood by a Jewish organization would do more injury than good to the cause of protecting the civil liberties of all minorities. Anti-Semitic propaganda defined the issue as "the Jew against Civilization;" conversely, with Rothschild's help, the AJC comics shifted the issue to "subversive groups against Civilization," including Jews.<sup>12</sup> The AJC comics defined civilization as American capitalist democracy and subversives as those opposed to the system, the civil liberties protected by the Constitution, and racial and religious brotherhood.

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<sup>11</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 50.

<sup>12</sup> Rothschild, "Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?," SC, AJCA.

Another reason for the Committee to keep its name out of the headlines was their preference for work behind the scenes and their portrayal of anti-Semitism as an American, rather than a Jewish, problem.<sup>13</sup> The AJC expected that most of their fellow countrymen would not care about what was happening to Jews; but the Committee understood that they could be educated to see anti-Semitism and discrimination as defects in American democracy as well as violations of the values of liberty that the country held dear.<sup>14</sup> This thesis shows that comics were an important part of the work the AJC did for intergroup harmony, for Jewish acceptance within American society, and for the fight for the defense of civil liberties. Previous scholars have examined American Jews and their organizations, popular culture, comic books, and constructions of citizenship and Americanism separately. In contrast, this thesis unifies these approaches to reveal a forgotten mass propaganda campaign that played a vital role in re-constructing Americanism in the 1940s and reassesses the place of Jews in American citizenship, culture, and politics.

The two major studies of the AJC by Naomi W. Cohen and Marianne R. Sanua provide an important overview of the one-hundred-year history of the organization, which has no place for the AJC comics.<sup>15</sup> Cohen argues that the work of the SC to defend Americanism and to combat Nazi propaganda since the late 1930s prevented the AJC from fading into insignificance while new organizations such as the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) attracted sympathizers from the Jewish community.<sup>16</sup> Stuart Svonkin re-constructs the operations of the AJC, the AJCongress, and the ADL in what participants have described as the “intergroup relations movement,” or “*community relations* or *human relations*” movement.<sup>17</sup> Svonkin argues that after the war, these organizations and their leaders advanced political liberalism and civil rights, developed strategies for combatting prejudice and discrimination, formulated an ethnic identity for an American

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<sup>13</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> In the mid-1990s, as a complement to Sanua's study, the AJC once again employed mass culture and created an extensive online digital archive that has been invaluable for this study. See: Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, xi.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 193, 193-264.

<sup>17</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 1; Thomas Cripps refers to the movement as “conscience-liberalism,” in *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie From World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: oxford University Press, 1993).

Jewish community increasingly distant from its immigrant roots.<sup>18</sup> Building on these works, especially Svonkin's, this thesis takes a deeper look at the actual materials produced by the AJC as part of the intergroup relations movement, or the fight for brotherhood, recognizing their importance and their ability to reflect changing attitudes and convey complex ideas to the population.

This thesis stresses the importance of the origins, the method, and the people involved in the production of mass media. Analyzing the origins of the comics within a specific organization or set of individuals enriches our understanding of the organization itself. Importantly, it enables an interpretation of the cultural product within a specific context of ideological, organizational, and personal beliefs. According to Cohen, even in 1943 the President of the AJC, Joseph J. Proskauer, allowed the majority of the Committee's projects to proceed under their own momentum, irrespective of changes in the administration.<sup>19</sup> Even if the director, or the AJC Executive Committee, had little impact on the printed material produced by the sub-departments, the ideas that the comics presented were of the AJC members and followed the Committee's specific organizational directives. Indeed, though Proskauer lacked control over the production of educational materials, the Committee's leadership would have opposed a disagreeable strategy. Therefore, this thesis will evaluate the AJC, and when possible, the impact of individual members, including artists and writers, who worked to defend Americanism, Jews, and brotherhood.

This thesis focuses on the visualization of the advancement of civil rights, the visual strategies for combatting prejudice and promoting brotherhood, and the visual development of Jewish ethnic identity by the AJC and its employees. Svonkin acknowledges the Committee's idea that the mass media can influence individuals' attitudes and behavior, but overlooks the AJC comics; studies of comics often ignore the means and origins of production.<sup>20</sup> Steve Martin assumes that the CIO produced *The Story of Labor* and *They Got the Blame* because the copies he uses carry a message from the CIO president Phillip Murray.<sup>21</sup> But, these were reprints. Knowledge of actual

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<sup>18</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 239.

<sup>20</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Martin, "Establishing Counter-Hegemony through Narrative: The Comic Books of the Congress of Industrial Organizations," in *Who Says? Working-Class Rhetoric, Class Consciousness and*

authorship is essential when interpreting such materials and the ideological assumptions behind their messages. Authorship is important in understanding the preferred reading of these comics, but the study of their reception is much more complex and because of lack of empirical data, often beyond the scope of this thesis.

Together with the AJCongress and the ADL, the AJC collaborated with the National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and numerous CIO-affiliated unions. Through this careful alliance with existing political, religious, fraternal, and service organizations, Svonkin concludes, the AJC packaged its philosophy and penetrated all of the U.S.<sup>22</sup> The strength of the AJC propaganda lay in the “multiplier” effect: the Committee made their materials and research widely available, often free, to numerous organizations that were willing to cooperate in the fight for brotherhood and the defense of civil liberties. Through these affiliations and techniques, the AJC comics reached millions: labor unions represented fourteen million Americans; the National Education Association represented hundreds of thousands of teachers who had millions of children in their care; the organized Methodist church represented millions of Americans. They all received and re-printed materials produced or sponsored by the AJC.<sup>23</sup> These materials, including comics, crafted a visual politics of brotherhood, Jewishness, and democracy for millions of Americans.

Studies in labor history often overlook the printed educational materials of labor unions and organizations despite the importance labor unions have placed on the education of their members.<sup>24</sup> Pamphlets produced by educational departments and distributed to union members at strikes or on the shop floor, remain at the bottom of

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*Community*, ed. William DeGenaro (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2007), 256-270; Steve Martin, “Anti-Conspiracy and Anti-Propaganda Rhetoric in *Joe Worker and the Story of Labor: The Use of the Comic Book Form*,” *Journal of the Wisconsin Communication Association* (Summer 2000): not listed.

<sup>22</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 17-18; Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> See for example: Alice Kessler-Harris, “Problems of Coalition-building: Women and Trade Unions in the 1920s,” in *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (New York: Routledge, 1985), 110-138; Daniel Katz, “Race, Gender, and Labor Education: ILGWU Locals 22 and 91, 1933-1937,” *Labor's Heritage* 11.1 (2000): 4-19; Michael Goldfield, “Race and the CIO: The Possibilities for Racial Egalitarianism During the 1930s and 1940s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 44 (Sept. 1993): 1-32.

archival boxes. Yet these printed materials, including the AJC comics, were often the first point of contact between workers and their labor organizations. The messages they carried were of the people and organizations responsible for their production, not just the union leaders. Bernard Bailyn analyzes pamphlets produced in the years before the American Revolution as political documents that reveal the assumptions, beliefs, and ideas behind the events of the time.<sup>25</sup> This has been an important guide in my discussion of previously ignored but powerful forms of mass culture. This thesis shows that the AJC comics communicated to their readers lasting approaches to solving social, economic, and political problems, and also exposed their makers' assumptions.

Studies of propaganda have been valuable for understanding the reciprocal relationship between national policy and its mass visual vocabulary. A significant building stone is Leila J. Rupp's comparison between the popular public images of women in the pre-war and wartime propaganda of Nazi Germany and the U.S.<sup>26</sup> Studies by Zbynek Zeman and Anthony Rhodes of wartime propaganda posters, films, and comic strips from the U.S., Nazi Germany, the USSR, France, Italy, China, and Japan, highlight that propaganda was both ephemeral and disposable.<sup>27</sup> Victor Margolin affirms that propaganda intended to directly influence troops and civilians without substituting military strength, extensive resources, or skillful negotiation.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the AJC comics were often distributed free, were printed on low quality paper, which made them particularly disposable, and carried messages supposed to directly influence Americans on the front and at home. The AJC comics were part of the national wartime propaganda campaign; their combination of visual rhetoric, organizational policy, and national and public responsibility packed real power.

At its core, this thesis asserts that the AJC educational comics were a significant part of wartime cultural production. The study of comics has been hindered by, what

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<sup>25</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), x, 8, 1-21.

<sup>26</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939 – 1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Zbynek Zeman, *Selling the War: Art and Propaganda in World War II* (London: Orbis Publishing, 1978), 7; Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda the Art of Persuasion: World War II* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> Victor Margolin, foreword to *Propaganda the Art of Persuasion: World War II*, by Anthony Rhodes (London: Angus & Robertson, 1976), 7.

Rocco Versaci calls, their common perception as “juvenile, disposable trash.”<sup>29</sup> Another reason comics remain a misunderstood and frequently dismissed area of study, is partly because academics tend to lack the methodology to “read” them with attention to language, images, and text, as well as the historical, cultural, political, and economic context of production and reception.<sup>30</sup> Joseph Witek explains that the “rise of semiotic studies and an accompanying interest in the relations of verbal and visual languages has spawned several academic scholarships of comic books.”<sup>31</sup> But, oftentimes, comics’ artists produce studies with a better-developed methodology, sensitive to the process of production and reception. For example, the methodological approaches to comics by the comics artists Danny Fingeroth and Will Eisner, and John Benson, David Kasakove, and Art Spiegelman in “An Examination of ‘Master Race’,” have been valuable building stones for the development of the methodological approach this thesis takes towards comics.<sup>32</sup> This thesis employs a reading strategy sensitive to the political, economic, and cultural context of the production of the AJC comics.

Existing studies of comics have been predominantly concerned with well-known graphic novels such as Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor* and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*.<sup>33</sup> The media and scholarly attention these comics have received dates back to the nomination of *Maus* for the National Book Critics Circle Award in the late 1980s, and Spiegelman’s reception of a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for *Maus II*.<sup>34</sup> *Maus* has even become a popular text in Anglo-American literature courses. Some

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<sup>29</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Although the study of comics is increasing, it is not a part of mainstream historical inquiry, and historians have a tendency to overlook the medium. On the other hand, comics have been used to write history. See: Spain Rodriguez, *Che: A Graphic Biography*, ed. Paul Buhle (London: Verso, 2008); Harvey Pekar, adaptation, *Studs Terkel’s Working: A Graphic Adaptation*, ed. Paul Buhle (New York: The New Press, 2009); Howard Zinn, Mike Konopacki, and Paul Buhle, *A People’s History of American Empire: A Graphic Adaptation* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008). For a sociological methodology: Casey Brienza, “Producing comics culture: a sociological approach to the study of comics,” *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 1.2 (Dec. 2010): 105-119; Casey Brienza, “Books, Not Comics: Publishing Fields, Globalization, and Japanese Manga in the United States,” *Publishing Research Quarterly* 25.2 (2009): 101-117.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Witek, *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Danny Fingeroth, *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero* (New York: Continuum, 2007); Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist* (New York: Norton, 2000); John Benson, David Kasakove, and Art Spiegelman, “An Examination of ‘Master Race’,” in *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 288-305.

<sup>33</sup> See: Witek, *Comic Books as History*.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Witek, “Imagetext, or, Why Art Spiegelman Doesn’t Draw Comics,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 1.1 (2004): 1.

comics have become high culture: the format of traditional comics, printed on cheap acid paper, has given way to sturdy gloss paper and hardbacks; the medium is being chosen by “serious” writers to produce graphic novels. Comics are now found in specialized comics shops, high street bookshops, and public libraries.<sup>35</sup> For Witek, comic art is a “literary medium in transition from mass popularity and cultural disdain to a new respectability as a means of expression and communication.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, “serious” artists produce lengthy narratives, gain publishing deals, and receive literary awards to enable the move from disposable trash to respectability and high culture.<sup>37</sup> But even when comics are “trash” they can still play a vital political role. This thesis emphasizes that, irrespective of their low quality, the AJC comics carry political integrity, address a significant subject matter, and embody the ideology of their producers. In part, this story of the AJC comics catches up to the uses comics have been put to in the 1940s. Comic book creator Danny Fingeroth has stressed the importance of Jewish artists utilizing the medium of comics and constructing superheroes in response to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism within American society.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the current scholarly fascination with *Maus* would undoubtedly benefit from a deeper understanding of the history of Jews through their participation in the production of the comics that are the focus of this thesis.

The AJC comics were educational materials that reached millions of soldiers, workers, teachers, and students. In the 1940s, educators became aware that, because of their popularity, comics could be effectively used for teaching.<sup>39</sup> Around one hundred million Americans read comics including 95 percent of eight- to fourteen-year-olds, and 65 percent of fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds.<sup>40</sup> The existence of titles such as *Picture Stories from the Bible*, *Picture Stories from American History*, *True Comics*, *Real Life Comics*, *Classic Comics*, as well as various comic strips on history, geography, and science in *Junior Scholastic*, meant that readers were already receptive to education through comics.<sup>41</sup> Unsurprisingly, the AJC’s work with the military and the labor

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<sup>35</sup> Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> See: Fingeroth, *Disguised as Clark Kent*.

<sup>39</sup> See for example: Irving Flinker, “Promoting Social Understanding in the Social-Studies Classes” *The School Review* 54.8 (Oct. 1946): 476-479.

<sup>40</sup> Marston, “Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics,” 1; Sones, “The Comics and Instructional Method,” 233.

<sup>41</sup> Sones, “The Comics and Instructional Method,” 234-235.

unions employed comics to train and influence the behavior and morale of soldiers and workers.<sup>42</sup> The negative connotations of the word “propaganda” and its link to totalitarian dictatorship led the U.S. government to insist that the work of the Office of War Information (OWI) was “public information.”<sup>43</sup> The AJC too regarded their comics as informational and educational. To a degree, these were positive propaganda materials that promoted brotherly relations between Americans. In 1944, Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, the Director of the Child Study Association of America, affirmed that comics could be a potent educational tool.<sup>44</sup> Gruenberg further explained that since comics have a common appeal, they are a social force that transcends differences in taste and signifies the progressive democratization of culture.<sup>45</sup>

Overviews of cultural history, including the work of Michael Denning, fail to address comics, despite their popularity in the 1940s, and overviews of comics fail to consider educational comics.<sup>46</sup> For Witek, comics in American history were rarely used to tell stories about real people and real events, instead focusing on wish fulfillment, projections of power, and generic formulas.<sup>47</sup> Although such an observation could be accurate for some comics, for the AJC comics it is not. The AJC comics were concerned with historical accuracy and scientific facts, relied on the real experiences of soldiers and workers, and educated their readers. Giving the AJC comics the attention they deserve, this thesis is a democratization of the scholarship of cultural production that goes beyond the walls of museums and art galleries to encompass mass “trash” culture.

The creators of the AJC educational comics employed the experiences of real American soldiers and workers and in the process, re-formulated American Jewish identity, re-constructed American identity, and re-defined Americanism. Of course, the majority of these creators were first and second generation American Jewish men who were prevented from practicing art in the more prestigious arena of advertising because of quotas for colleges and prejudice in the business.<sup>48</sup> *Batman* creator Stan Lee has

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>43</sup> Rhodes, *Propaganda the Art of Persuasion*, 139-146; Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 90-91.

<sup>44</sup> Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, “The Comics as a Social Force,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 18:4 (Dec. 1944): 208.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 208, 209.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: the Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Fingerioth, *Disguised as Clark Kent*, 27.



considered the impact anti-Semitic propaganda had on working comics artists: “When we created stories about idealized superheroes, were we subconsciously trying to identify with characters who were the opposite of the Jewish stereotypes that hate propaganda tried to instill in people’s minds?”<sup>49</sup> Fingerroth argues that Jewish comics artists were uniquely fitting to create “a legion of special beings, self-appointed to protect the weak, innocent, and persecuted at a time when fascism was dominating the European continent from which the creators of the heroes hailed.”<sup>50</sup> The superhero genre was popular during the war; so too were the narratives of real Americans who fought fascism. The AJC writers and artists relied on the real abilities of soldiers and workers defending their country. It would be impossible to uncover the authorial intent of the comics’ creators, but this thesis does expose the ways the images they created operated in the cultural, political, and historical context of the 1940s.

To begin a study of comics requires an understanding of what comics are, how they operate as a language system, and how they construct meaning. For Versaci, they are a medium with stylistic elements and an ability to convey ideas in a different way to a chaptered book.<sup>51</sup> For Eisner, comics, or *sequential art*, is “a distinct discipline, an art and literary form that deals with the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea.”<sup>52</sup> Witek sees comics as “narratives and as cultural productions [that] merit serious critical analysis.”<sup>53</sup> This thesis understands comics as a form of visual popular culture capable of transmitting complex ideological messages and ideas. In comics, image and text cooperate to construct meaning. Writers, artists, inkers, colorists, printers, and editors collaborate to produce comics and employ their contemporary visual culture to guide a reader’s interpretation. According to Thierry Groensteen, comics panels are a “sophisticated structure,” where the detailing of the inking, coloring, and drawing enables the play of image, text, ideology, and

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<sup>49</sup> Stan Lee, foreword to *Disguised as Clark Kent*, by Danny Fingerroth, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Fingerroth, *Disguised as Clark Kent*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 182-183.

<sup>52</sup> Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, xi.

<sup>53</sup> Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 3. For further approaches to reading comics see: Douglass Wolk, *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007); Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons, eds. *The Language of Comics: Word and Image* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001); Jan Baetens, “Revealing Traces: A New Theory of Graphic Enunciation,” in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 145-155. Include paul buhle

perception.<sup>54</sup> This thesis is based on the premise that knowledge of the context of production and reception of comics is essential for their understanding as complex systems of meaning.

Two questions remain: how does the language of comics operate? How do comics construct meaning? For Witek, comics have developed a “complex narrative grammar and vocabulary based on an inextricable combination of verbal and visual elements.”<sup>55</sup> For Groensteen, they are “an original ensemble of productive mechanisms of meaning,” where the combination of image and text creates an altogether different language and connotation.<sup>56</sup> For Eisner, image takes priority to modify and define the intended meaning of the words, and the language of comics relies on a visual experience common to both creator and audience.<sup>57</sup> The construction, repetition, standardization, and normalization of common visual culture in comics can reveal the interplay between image, text, and intended interpretation. Even in the mid-1940s, educators recognized the importance of a shared language. W. W. D. Sones, Professor of Education and Director of Curriculum Study at the School of Education of the University of Pittsburgh, affirmed that comics employ a universally understood language.<sup>58</sup> Through this collective knowledge comics’ writers, artists, and readers develop and interpret meaning. The construction and interpretation of comics is a collaborative exercise between creators and readers that relies on the interplay between the image and text of each panel, as well as the relationship between the comics and the historical, ideological, and cultural context of production.

This thesis tackles both the construction and the interpretation of meaning, revealing, when possible, the creators’ assumptions, the comics’ intended meaning, and the audience’s expected interpretations. Similar to the work done by Erin A. Smith on pulp magazines, this thesis reveals that meaning in the AJC comics is shaped by the unstable interplay and tension between image and text, between writers, artists, and

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<sup>54</sup> Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 12; also see: Benson, Kasakove, and Spiegelman, “An Examination of ‘Master Race’.”

<sup>55</sup> Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 2, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 106, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Sones, “The Comics and Instructional Method,” 233.

audience, between historical, ideological, and cultural contexts of production.<sup>59</sup> The meaning in the AJC comics is derived from the joint workings of image and text. Yet, since a writer, artist, colorist, inker, and letterer were involved in the construction of comics, the idea of a singular image is itself problematic. The relationship between image and text is not always symbiotic. At times, they struggle against each other presenting different meanings and suggesting alternate interpretations. Bring to the mix the ideological standpoint of the organization that made and distributed the comics, and the result is a complex production of meaning based on organizational directives, copywriter adaptation of that message, the artist's visual construction of the message, and of course the projected and the real interpretation of that message by the reader. This thesis accesses and exposes this complex production of meaning.

During the war, the AJC comics constructed American whiteness that included Jews. Previous studies of the process of becoming white in America have focused on a slow economic advancement, access to education, migration to suburbs, and the uneasy mirroring of white behavior by Jews in the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> Chapter 2 stresses the importance of visual culture and the actual visual portrayal of whiteness as a force reflecting and constructing ideas about racial and national belonging. The comics *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort* re-appropriated the visual vocabulary of race and painted Jews into American whiteness. Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that throughout the history of European migration to the U.S., whiteness was among the most important possessions one could lay a claim to, especially because it was essential for citizenship.<sup>61</sup> Karen Brodtkin argues that Jews became "white folks" with the help of the GI Bill, which disproportionately helped male, Euro-origin GIs, including Jews.<sup>62</sup> According to Nancy MacLean, in the twenty years following the 1948 removal of restrictive covenants a

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<sup>59</sup> Erin A. Smith, *Hard-Boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>60</sup> See: Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2001); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 187-237.

<sup>61</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8-9.

<sup>62</sup> Karen Brodtkin, "How Did Jews Become White Folks?," in *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Tracy E. Ore (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 63. Also see: Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), esp. 82-105, 128-168; Kathleen J. Frydl, *The GI Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), esp. 169-193.

third of Jews left cities and settled in the newly built suburbs.<sup>63</sup> With the financial help of the GI Bill, their entry into whiteness paralleled an economically led physical migration to the suburbs. For Deborah Dash Moore, Jews became legitimate white Americans because of the formation, acceptance, and celebration of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the military during the war. Americans increasingly saw Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism to share common values that made them the three “fighting faiths of democracy.”<sup>64</sup> Building on these ideas, Chapter 2 will argue that *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort* used the experiences of war to lay claim to American patriotism and manhood for Jewish men. Establishing patriotic citizenship, combined with the visualization of Jews as racially identical to Protestant and Catholic whites, ensured the entry of Jews into American whiteness.

The comics *They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!* employed the experience of wartime religious and racial camaraderie on the front and in the defense industry and simultaneously re-appropriated eugenic discourses on national efficiency to discredit Nazi racial theories. Susan Currell argues that eugenics in the 1930s were a “central, underlying feature of the modern state wherein recovery (economic, social, and personal) and reproductive control were inseparably linked.”<sup>65</sup> But even in the 1920s, the power of eugenics was contested by anthropological studies of cultural relativity and scientific discoveries that emphasized the non-biological existence of race.<sup>66</sup> According to David H. Price, during the 1940s and 1950s, these scientific and anthropological facts about race and society “threatened the power relations of American inequality,” and some aspects of the theoretical approaches to anthropology “potentially threatened Cold War America’s national state.”<sup>67</sup> Chapter 3 will show that the AJC comics combined eugenic ideas about national efficiency with scientific and anthropological studies into race and culture to construct racial and religious brotherhood and American capitalist democracy as a natural and a rational way of existence.

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<sup>63</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: the Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 194.

<sup>64</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>65</sup> Susan Currell, introduction to *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>66</sup> David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI’s Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 30.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

After the war, *The Story of Labor* comic book and the *Joe Worker* comic strips formed a shared struggle for civil liberties and democracy between the labor movement and racial and religious minorities. The resulting unification of the two was a process of *laboring* the struggle for brotherhood. Denning describes the laboring of American culture in the twentieth century as reflective of the pervasive use of “labor” and its synonyms in the period, the proletarianization of American culture, the visibility of the labor of cultural production, and the struggle to rework American culture.<sup>68</sup> Chapter 4 will argue that the laboring of the fight for brotherhood was based on an understanding that workers and labor were the public party that held at heart the defense of all racial and religious minorities, their civil liberties, Americanism, and democracy. Although Denning focuses on the artistic endeavors of the labor unions and the proletariat, Chapter 4 will emphasize that comics were present in the majority of American workers’ lives. According to Kermit Elby, Assistant Director of Education and Research for the CIO from 1943 to 1945, information presented in comics had more popular appeal than the same facts presented in pamphlet form: compared to a 125,000 distribution of the CIO’s most popular pamphlet, a comic strip’s distribution was 1,000,000.<sup>69</sup> Although the study of the theatre productions and poetry of the labor movement are important for the understanding of the workers’ experiences, Chapter 4 will argue that comics were successfully employed by the AJC and the nation’s labor organizations to unite workers in the post-war struggle for brotherhood and societal betterment.

Scholars of labor, Jewish history, and even American culture have so far omitted the AJC comics, possibly because they are overlooked in archival research. Millions of Americans participating in the war effort read these comics printed in color on low quality paper. The AJC comics are a rich visual historical source, which illustrates that the AJC and the artists and writers they employed produced stories about camaraderie and patriotism, rooted the call for racial and religious brotherhood in the latest scientific developments, and articulated labor-conscious plans for the domestic and international future of American capitalist democracy. This re-discovery of the AJC comics draws together in a new and productive way the study of American culture, Jewish history, labor history, and the construction of Americanism in the wartime and the post-war United States.

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<sup>68</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>69</sup> Gruenberg, “The Comics as a Social Force,” 212.

## Chapter 2

### Jewish Patriotic Citizenship and the War Effort

First American killed in Pearl Harbor -- John J. Hennessey  
 First pilot to sink a Jap ship -- Colin P. Kelly  
 First American to sink a Jap ship with torpedo -- John P. Buckley  
 Greatest American air hero -- "Butch" O'Hare  
 First American killed at Guadalcanal -- John J. O'Brien  
 First American to get 4 new tires -- Abraham Lipschitz!  
 – "The First American"

#### INTRODUCTION

In October 1942, "The First American" became popular in the Boston area around the city's harbor defenses and military bases. By February 1943 the doggerel made its way across the country. It was circulated as mimeographed copies at paint outfits, retailers, furniture manufacturers, tire, lumber and wood dealers, construction companies, financial publications, novelty shops, and even at the Boston City Hall.<sup>70</sup> It was printed in official army bulletins and local newspapers distributed to the personnel of military bases in Wilmington, North Carolina; Memphis, Tennessee; Salina, Kansas; San Antonio, Texas; Kearns, Utah; and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.<sup>71</sup> According to Rothschild, in the space of five months the doggerel reached the majority of military camps in the country.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, mimeographed copies of "The First American" were handed out to workers in war production plants, and the doggerel was printed in the Los Angeles *Shipbuilder's News* and the Long Beach *Labor News*.<sup>73</sup> "The First American" reached what the AJC considered to be the two most important groups of Americans during the war: soldiers on the front and workers in the defense industry, who actively defended democracy and all Americans from the Axis powers.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, "Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments," Dec. 29, 1943, SC, AJCA, accessed Oct. 14, 2010, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/Z498.CV01.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/Z498.CV01.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, "Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army," Dec. 29, 1943, SC, AJCA, accessed Oct. 14, 2010, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/Z498.CV01.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/Z498.CV01.pdf); Memorandum by Rothschild, "Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments," SC, AJCA.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, "Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army," SC, AJCA.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.; Memorandum by Rothschild, "Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments," SC, AJCA. I use the term doggerel in light of its use by Rothschild.

The doggerel captured a common prejudiced sentiment of the population.<sup>74</sup> In as few as six or at times even four lines, the doggerel conveyed a simple message, funny because it was apparently true: Protestant and Catholic Americans patriotically sacrificed their lives for the country in battle; Jews profited from it. The simple structure of the verse and its apparent humor allowed names to be changed and adapted to changes in the war, as well as local and personal conditions. Indeed, Captain Colin P. Kelly sank a Japanese ship in 1941 and was commended by President Roosevelt for his bravery; John P. Buckley, a probable misnaming of Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley, sank a Japanese ship with a torpedo; “Butch” O’Hare received the Medal of Honor on February 20, 1942.<sup>75</sup> By using the experiences of real American soldiers, the punch line also appeared to be true; its accuracy was irrelevant. The doggerel form and its message of patriotism were so popular that two years after its original surfacing, “The First America” appeared on the front. Two Jewish naval officers censored it from a subordinate’s letter:

First man to sink an enemy battleship – Colin Kelly.  
 First man to set foot on enemy territory – Robert O’Hara.  
 First woman to lose five sons – Mrs. Sullivan. Etc.  
 First son of a bitch to get four new tires – Nathan Goldstein.<sup>76</sup>

Keeping the original structure, the doggerel once again emphasized the patriotism and sacrifice of Gentile Americans, simultaneously accusing Jews of draft dodging and war profiteering. The doggerel had been adapted to changes in the war and the expanding cultural lexicon of patriotic sacrifice: it was well known that on November 13, 1942 Mrs. Sullivan from Waterloo, Iowa, lost five sons onboard the USS *Juneau* in the Battle of Guadalcanal. Despite personal interactions with Jewish comrades and superiors, the soldier who recorded the doggerel retained a Jewish name in the punch line and with it the idea that Jews were avoiding the war effort. In the popular imagination, Jews

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<sup>74</sup> For anti-Semitism in the U.S. see: Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Joseph W. Bendersky, “Dissension in the Face of the Holocaust: The 1941 American Debate over Antisemitism,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 24.1 (Spring 2010): 85-116; Gulie Ne’eman Arad, *America, its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>75</sup> In the comic book *Heróis Verdadeiros*, created in conjunction with the Office of Inter-American Affairs in Portuguese for Brazil, the AJC told the true stories of American war heroes including Colin P. Kelly, John D. Bulkeley, and “Butch” O’Hare.

<sup>76</sup> Reproduced from Moore, *GI Jews*, 169-170.

remained unpatriotic draft dodgers and profiteering capitalists even though the U.S. fought against an explicitly anti-Semitic state.

The AJC considered doggerels such as “The First American,” “America’s Fighting Jew,” and “Marines Hymn” so important that operatives collected and transcribed them as evidence of pro-Nazi propaganda blanketing the nation.<sup>77</sup> For Rothschild and the AJC, average Americans were “innocent people” who were “duped” by the apparent humor that covered the “divisive character” of these doggerels.<sup>78</sup> An investigation by the SC confirmed that the doggerels entered military bases through soldiers previously involved with anti-Semitic organizations and through interaction with prejudiced or Nazi-sympathizing civilians.<sup>79</sup>

The popularity of the doggerels in specific areas spoke of existing prejudice against the size of the Jewish population. “America’s Fighting Jew” was especially popular in Boston, because of its large number of Jews. “Marines Hymn” was also popular in areas with a large number of Jews such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and in New York, where Jews were close to a third of the city’s population.<sup>80</sup> Bernard E. Trainor, a retired Marine Lieutenant General and current military analyst for the NBC, was too young to fight in the war but learned the ditty growing up in the Bronx.<sup>81</sup> Rothschild believed that the doggerels exploited existing prejudices and set American against American, religion against religion, and race against race. Together with pro-Nazi organizations, such as the German-American Bund,

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<sup>77</sup> For national press coverage of the threat of Nazi infiltration of the U.S. see: Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933 – 1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 121-132. For the full text of the doggerels see: Transcripts, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Memoranda by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army” and “Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments,” SC, AJCA.

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army,” SC, AJCA.

<sup>80</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, “Urban America as the Jewish Home Front,” *When Jews Were GIs: World War II and the Remaking of the American Jewry* (2002), an adaptation of the David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs, delivered by Deborah Dash Moore to the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, accessed Dec. 3, 2010, <http://www.fathom.com/course/21701756/session1.html>; H. S. Linfield, “Jewish Communities of the United States: Number and Distribution of Jews in the United States in Urban Places and in Rural Territory,” in *American Jewish Year Book Vol. 42, 1940 – 1941*, ed. Harry Schneiderman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), 230-238, *American Jewish Year Book*, AJCA, accessed Nov. 3, 2010, [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/1940\\_1941\\_3\\_SpecialArticles.pdf](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1940_1941_3_SpecialArticles.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 226.



they undermined American unity in the war effort and destroyed the national “will to fight” to enable a Nazi conquest of America.<sup>82</sup>

Within this cultural understanding of Jews and the national prejudice against them, the printed materials available to workers on factory floors and to soldiers at army posts became the battleground for how Americans thought of Jewish participation in the war effort. The AJC employed the apparent visual directness of comics, which promised a large readership for messages combatting anti-Jewish prejudices expressed in popular doggerels. *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort* laid a claim to American patriotic citizenship for Jewish men.<sup>83</sup> Their images of Jewish men visually expanded the definitions and boundaries of both American individual patriotism and the patriotic social body, and normalized the place of Jews within the popular imagination of patriotic citizenship and wartime heroism. *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort* constructed a cross-religious unity among Americans that included the strong patriotic bodies of Jewish men. The comics used fictional and non-fictional stories to present Jewish patriotic citizenship on active military duty and on the home front, and so constructed Jews first and foremost as patriotic Americans. The AJC, with the help of the CIO, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and the Parents’ Institute, circulated its comics in military bases and war plants, where wartime migration brought together scores of Americans from different religious, geographical, class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. There, the comics reached millions of Americans vital for the war effort with the message that religious tolerance was a step towards the protection of democracy. Wartime comics superheroes such as Superman, Captain America, and Captain Marvel fought unrealistic battles against the Nazis and often paid lip service to vague concepts of patriotism and unity.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, the AJC comics illustrated the meaning of Americanism, systematically affirmed Jewish patriotic citizenship, and visually popularized Jews’ place in the war effort and in popular culture.

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<sup>82</sup> Memoranda by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army” and “Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments,” SC, AJCA. For an overview of German military planning against the U.S. see: Gerhard L. Weinberg, “Pearl Harbor: the German Perspective,” in *Germany, Hitler and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 194-204.

<sup>83</sup> *Extra Effort* (New York: War Services Division of the Parents’ Institute, 1942), SC, AJCA, accessed Nov. 20, 2010, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1690>; Jack Alderman, *Three Pals* (New York: Community Service, n. d. [1945]), SC, AJCA, accessed Nov. 20, 2010, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1710>.

<sup>84</sup> Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 53.

## PATRIOTIC CITIZENSHIP ON THE FRONT

Anti-Jewish propaganda helped construct in the American popular imagination an image of Jews as cowards and war profiteers. Jewish men seemed to lack a specific masculinity that made one a patriotic citizen. “America’s Fighting Jew” accused them of avoiding the draft, war mongering, and profiteering from government contracts. The doggerel directly attacked Walter Winchell, a popular Jewish figure opposed to Nazism, as a symbol for all American Jewish men. The second and third stanzas of the doggerel mocked him as a “cunning super-patriot,” a “famous Naval hero,” and as “fearless, brave, and dauntless in showing us the light;” it “exposed” Winchell’s military service as “An Admiral’s Receptionist,” sitting behind a desk during the First World War.<sup>85</sup> Winchell symbolized the alleged unheroic military service of all Jews. He had served during the First World War as an apprentice seaman in the Naval Reserve Force, where admittedly there was little chance of him being sent overseas on active duty.<sup>86</sup> By the Second World War, Winchell was a radio star, reaching millions of Americans every Sunday evening at nine thirty with his show *Jergen’s Journal*, broadcast on NBC-red from New York City.<sup>87</sup> A background sound of a continual Morse code transmission characterized the show and gave it a sense of urgency. An outspoken critic of Hitler and the Nazis, by early 1941 Winchell attacked individuals and Congressmen he perceived to be Nazi sympathizers, and therefore threats to the war effort. He highlighted the complacency of isolationist listeners, and ridiculed critics of his interventionist stance with the “Walter Winchell War Monger Department.”<sup>88</sup> The doggerel caricatured Jewish men and constructed a lack of active military service as both emasculating and unpatriotic; it metaphorically stripped Winchell of patriotic citizenship, and divested his anti-Nazi argument of reliability and power. Given the link between citizenship and military service in the modern state, the denigration of “the Jew’s body” accompanied

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<sup>85</sup> “America’s Fighting Jew,” 19, 23, 24, 14, in Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army,” SC, AJCA.

<sup>86</sup> Neal Gabler, *Walter Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity* (London: Papermac, 1996), 29.

<sup>87</sup> Susan J. Douglass, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination; From Amos ’n’ Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 168.

<sup>88</sup> Douglass, *Listening In*, 171. For audio recording see: Walter Winchell, *Jergen’s Journal*, May 18, 1941, My Old Radio, accessed June 28, 2012, <http://www.myoldradio.com/old-radio-episodes/jergens-journal-w-walter-winchell-ep-1/1>.

attacks on Jewish right to participate in the body politic.<sup>89</sup> To be full citizens, Jews had to actively participate in the country's defense.

To claim patriotic citizenship Jews required a body capable of actively participating in the war effort. In the logic of "America's Fighting Jew," patriotic citizenship was dependent on active military service. However, the emasculation of the Jewish body constructed Jews as incapable of, rather than avoiding, military service. The idea was a European and American misinterpretation of a historical Jewish alternative ideal of masculinity. Jewish society traditionally associated the pale, slender Jewish male body with Torah study and nobility, and the Jewish House of Study was a rabbinic equivalent to the locker room, barracks, or warship.<sup>90</sup> The American emasculation of this figure was also connected to the gendered separation of the private and public spheres. The Jewish House of Study operated as a private male sphere, but in the U.S., the private sphere was reserved for women. It was in the public sphere that American men engaged in politics, participated in military service, and asserted their citizenship. The Jewish masculine ideal of the Yeshiva-Bochur, or the Torah scholar, endured in America after European immigration, but contradicted American ideals of masculinity, derived from physical fitness, rugged frontier individualism, and machismo, that had been the basis of full patriotic citizenship since the First World War.<sup>91</sup>

Within the contest to represent Jewish participation in the war effort, the AJC's comics displayed what the Committee saw as the reality of Jewish patriotism. Simultaneously, the stories normalized the presence of Jewish soldiers' heroism in national war narratives. During the war, Jews were the ethnic group that most disproportionately joined the military: though only making up 3.3 percent of the population, they represented 4.23 percent of the Armed Forces.<sup>92</sup> Rumors that Jews were evading the draft persisted throughout 1942, despite denials from General Lewis

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<sup>89</sup> Moore, *GI Jews*, 27.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel Boyarin, quoted in Moore, *GI Jews*, 28; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 143.

<sup>91</sup> For an overview of civic nationalism and its masculinity see: Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 44-122, 253-255.

<sup>92</sup> *American Jewish Historical Society Newsletter* (Fall/Winter 2003), quoted in Seymour Brody, "American Jews Serve in World War Two," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed Dec. 2, 2010, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/ww2jews.html>.

Hershey, the head of Selective Services.<sup>93</sup> Even as the doggerel “Marines Hymn” alleged that “Only Christian buys [boys] are drafted, / From Coney Island’s sands,” in reality, some 550,000 Jews joined the Armed Forces, with 50 percent of Jewish men aged eighteen to forty-four enlisting.<sup>94</sup> Making use of the ignited interest in soldiers throughout the war, the AJC comics illustrated Jewish patriotism with short stories about Jewish soldiers.

Jack Alderman’s six-page story *Three Pals*, produced around 1945, was based on a real friendship between a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Jew. Blaine Kehoe, George Foster, and Gershon Ross grew up together playing football in Swampscott, Massachusetts. After high school, Blaine joined General Electric, George studied medicine at Tufts, and Gershon enrolled into the civil engineering program at Harvard. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the friends enlisted in the marines, the navy Air Force, and the infantry, respectively. All were killed in action during the war. *Three Pals* appropriated the three men to claim patriotic citizenship for Jewish men and so expanded the image of American whiteness to include Jews. *Three Pals* took the reader through a three-stage construction of American patriotic citizenship that included Jews. First, appealing to the shared experiences of participation in sports, the comics visualized Jewish physical fitness as proof of American manhood. Second, it visualized the bodies of American soldiers, including Jews, as physically fit to fight in the war. Third, the comics demanded recognition for Jewish patriotism in the war effort.

The comics followed the AJC directives for representing Jews as a religious group that was identical to other white Americans. In a context of increased anti-Semitism, the AJC believed that this representation of Americanism would re-position Jews to be acknowledged as part of American patriotism. On the first page, for example, the large images of the three pals are accompanied by captions with their names, each symbolizing a faith group [fig. 2.1]. Simply and effectively, this constructed an important understanding of Jewishness: the image pre-supposed that the reader needed a

<sup>93</sup> John Morton Blum, *I Was For Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harvest, 1976), 174.

<sup>94</sup> “Marines Hymn,” 7-8, Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army,” SC, AJCA; Moore, “The Battle to Enlist: Anti-Semitism in the Armed Forces,” *When Jews Were GIs*, accessed Dec. 3, 2010, <http://www.fathom.com/course/21701756/session2.html>.

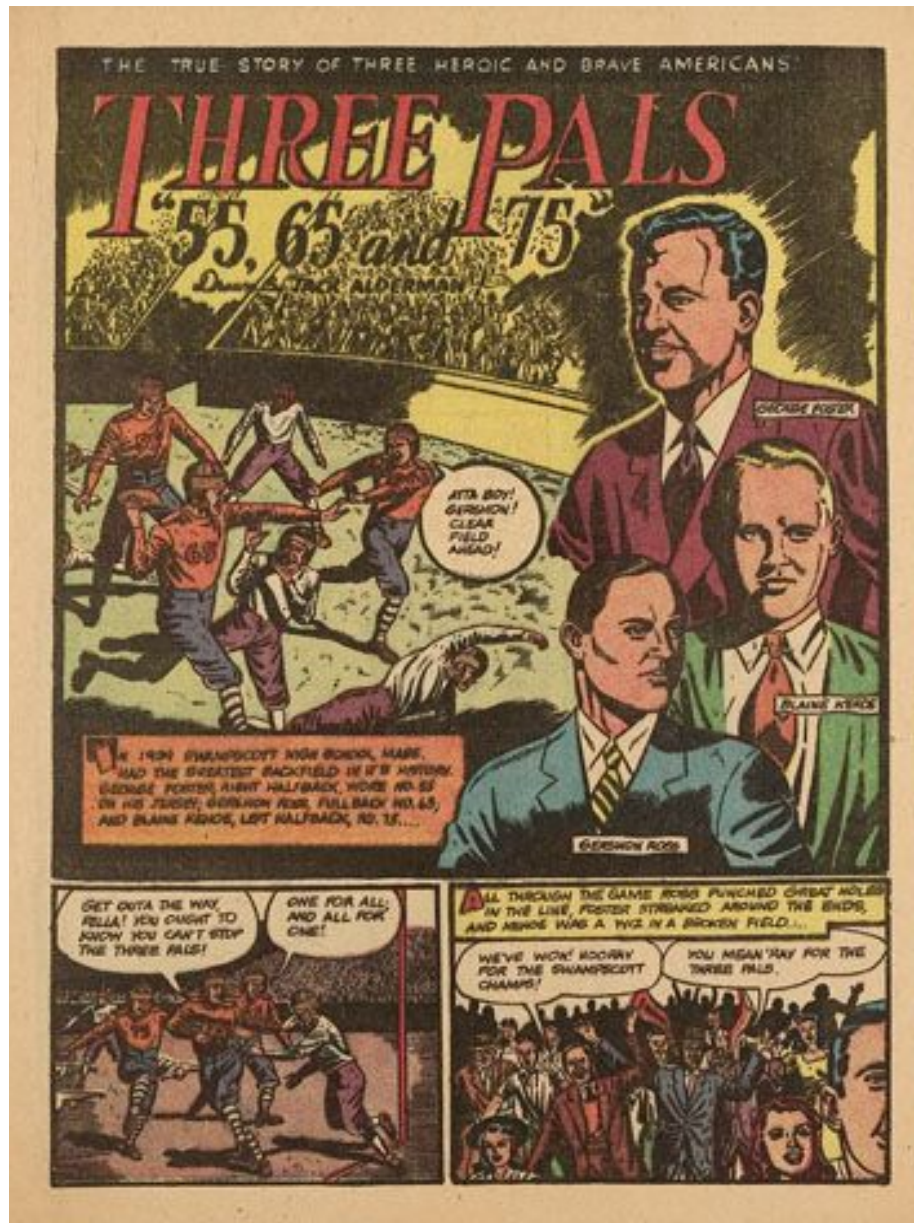


Figure 2.1. Jack Alderman, "55, 65 and 75," *Three Pals*, 1. New York: Community Service, n. d. [1945]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1710>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

caption to identify Kehoe, Ross, and Foster. In other words, the readers were presented with the idea that they were and should be unable to tell a person's religion from on his face. From the first image of *Three Pals*, Jews were depicted as part of American masculinity and patriotism, rather than as a separate racial group.

Participation in sports could establish the physical fitness of American masculinity that in turn could enable military service, and so patriotic citizenship. Sportsmanship provided an alternative expression of masculinity for young Jewish men raised in the U.S.<sup>95</sup> Basketball and baseball were especially popular as badges of American identity, possibly because of the popularity of Hank Greenberg, a Jewish baseball player for the Detroit Tigers. Greenberg interrupted his successful career to volunteer in the war, and later returned to the sport. His movement from the playing field to the front connected sportsmanship with military duty.<sup>96</sup>

The American masculinity of the three pals, including Ross, was reliant on a display of physical fitness. *Three Pals* allocates a third of the composition to sport. The pals win the football cup for their high school team in 1939 and become local celebrities; in every spare hour they follow the same sports, including skiing, sailing, and fishing. *Three Pals* emphasized to readers the importance of sportsmanship and physical fitness for young American men and soldiers. Even when the friends go to college, sports participation is given center stage in the caption describing their experiences: "The three pals all made good in their respective fields. George Foster made the football team and became a star. Ross was chosen all-state maine back and captained the team."<sup>97</sup> The account was accurate. At Harvard, Ross made several appearances on the sports pages of the *Harvard Crimson* through 1941.<sup>98</sup> Active participation in sports replaced the image of the emasculated Torah scholar with the American sports hero. Although Torah scholars were a minority, they overshadowed the majority of American Jews. Sports participation established the physical fitness of Jewish men and provided them with a set of practical skills rooted in sports camaraderie that they could employ on the front.

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<sup>95</sup> Moore, *GI Jews*, 28-29.

<sup>96</sup> See: Gunther Peck, "Tough Jews: The Jewish American Boxing Experience" in *Sports and the American Jew*, ed. Steven A. Reiss (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998) 60-104; Allen Bodner, *When Boxing was a Jewish Sport* (New York: Praeger, 1997).

<sup>97</sup> Alderman, *Three Pals*, 3/5 [indicates page and panel number], SC, AJCA.

<sup>98</sup> "Jack Fisher to Captain '45 Grid," *Harvard Crimson*, Oct. 25 1941; "Coach Boston Gives Out 23 Grid Uniforms to Freshmen," *Harvard Crimson*, Sept. 30, 1941.

*Three Pals* used the cultural power of male bonding through participation in sports to lay a visual claim for Jewish men on American masculinity. The visual articulation of the link between Americanism and sport demanded familiarity with fitness and group activities, essential qualities for success on the front and the claim to patriotism. Playing American football in particular connected sport participation, physical fitness, teamwork, and development of practical skills to the ability to fight. In the comics, Ross describes fighting Japanese soldiers as “a lot like football. Keep smashing the other fellow’s line until you make a hole.”<sup>99</sup> The comment demanded a precise interpretation from readers: Jewish men were playing football at home, displaying American manhood, and defending the country.

The link between the football field and the battlefield was so popular in the early years of the war that Rothschild, working with Nelson Rockefeller at the Office of Inter-American Affairs, employed the imagery on the pages of the propaganda comic book *Heróis Verdadeiros* (*True Heroes*) created for distribution in Brazil. The story “O Marinheiro-Voador” (“The Flying Marine”) begins with the mirrored image of a running man on the football field and the battlefield [fig. 2.2].<sup>100</sup> It visually establishes that the skills Dick learned playing football were instrumental in combat and could save a soldier’s life on the front.

Within the context of *Three Pals* and the larger context of comic books dealing with wartime American heroism, the pals’ sportsmanship was an essential part of their patriotism. The comics unapologetically abandoned the Torah scholar as an ideal in Jewish manhood, and replaced it with strong American bodies ready for combat in the war. Moreover, the visualization of Jewish manhood as American manhood was far closer to the experiences of comics artists, who knew little of rabbinic study growing up in America. The images of sportsmanship between Kehoe, Foster, and Ross imagined a Jewish body and body politic developed through sports camaraderie from a young age, and also reflected the experiences of second generation American Jews. Nonetheless, the comics’ focus on sports participation and physical fitness emphasized an anxiety

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<sup>99</sup> Alderman, *Three Pals*, 6/2, SC, AJCA.

<sup>100</sup> “O Marinheiro-Voador,” *Heróis Verdadeiros* [Office of Inter-American Affairs, 1943], 45-48, SC, AJCA, accessed Sept. 17, 2011, [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS10.PDF](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS10.PDF).





Figure 2.2. “O Marinheiro-Voador,” *Heróis Verdadeiros*, 45. [Office of Inter-American Affairs, 1943]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Sources: SC, AJCA, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS10.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS10.PDF).

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



over the place of the Jewish male body within the American social body. For *Three Pals* and the AJC, the individual physical strength of Jews operated within the definitions and boundaries of American manhood. Furthermore, individual physical strength enabled a metaphorical strengthening of the place of Jews within American society and patriotic citizenship.

The strong Jewish body became a part of American manhood and the social body capable of victory. The first pages of *Three Pals* established that physical fitness constructed through sports participation worked as “proof” that Jewish manhood was American manhood, and recognized Jewish men as physically fit to fight. On page four of the story, Alderman employed the visual and social power of science to affirm the physical abilities of the multi-religious American social body [fig. 2.3]. One panel depicts the medical examination of the three pals upon enlisting. The doctor declares that he had, “Never examined such perfect physical specimens in my whole medical career.”<sup>101</sup> The doctor’s assertion debunked Nazi eugenic constructions of the Aryan race as superior, and insisted that the bodies of Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant American men were equal in physical ability. The assertion also operated within the domestic context: in 1940 almost 40 percent of draftees were refused entry into the army because of deprivation, malnourishment, and related illnesses experienced during the Great Depression.

The images of physically fit Americans on the pages of *Three Pals*, affirmed the masculine potency and physical ability of the nation and its people during the war. The comics constructed a multi-religious American body, or a brotherhood of religions, that had the physical ability to defend the country. In the panel of the medical examination close to a half of the space is blacked out while overhead, an examination lamp illuminates the bodies of recently enlisted men. The men in the background are virtually indistinguishable from each other, and the only way for the reader to identify the three protagonists is by closely inspecting the coloring of their trousers and hair. Since all characters resemble each other, the individual and his identity dissolve.<sup>102</sup> The erasure of individual identity operates as a political strategy to construct a shared identity of American patriotism that encompasses Jews. The artwork visually divests Jews,

<sup>101</sup> Alderman, *Three Pals*, 4/1, SC, AJCA.

<sup>102</sup> Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 16.



Figure 2.3. Jack Alderman, "Medical Examination," *Three Pals*, 4. New York: Community Service, n. d. [1945]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1710>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

Catholics, and Protestants of inherent facial characteristics and physical abilities and sets them onto a path of shared whiteness. Moreover, Gershon is centered under the examination light as though the Jewish body in particular is being scrutinized and scientifically affirmed as a “perfect specimen” of American masculinity.<sup>103</sup> In *Three Pals* sports-based manhood opened American patriotic citizenship to physically fit Jewish men.

Of course, a claim on patriotic citizenship through a performance of American masculinity must be recognized to be legitimate. The recognition, in turn, relies on a shared understanding of American masculinity. For example, the author of “America’s Fighting Jew” saw Winchell as un-American and unpatriotic. In *Three Pals* three panels recognize the American manhood and patriotism of the pals. In one panel, the high school football coach commends the pals for winning the football cup and highlights the link between sports camaraderie and American citizenship: “We’re proud of you, boys’ you’re not only grand football players, you’re fine examples of American youth! Everyone in town knows you and loves you” [fig. 2.4].<sup>104</sup> Speaking for the whole Swampscott community, the coach conveys that playing football, with its inherent connotations of masculine camaraderie, teamwork, and physical fitness, is an essential part of being an American and so recognizes the pals as patriotic citizens. In two panels on the following page, even the town’s shopkeeper defends the pals’ Americanism. A man questions the propriety of Protestant George Foster befriending a Catholic and a Jew: “I’m s’prised Foster pals around with Kehoe and Ross. They ain’t nothin’ but low Irish and Jew.”<sup>105</sup> The shopkeeper responds to the attack: “Those three boys are the finest Americans in Swampscott, an’ don’t you forget it!”<sup>106</sup> Once again, a process of imagined communal recognition affirms patriotism. Moreover, the exchange reminded Irish readers that they too were once considered non-white and suffered ethnic discrimination. “The First American” originated only twelve miles south of Swampscott and condemned Jews for draft dodging, but *Three Pals* articulated to readers, and possibly the residents of Swampscott, that the pals’ cross-religious camaraderie exemplified a strong national body.

<sup>103</sup> For the ideal body see: Christina Cogdell, “Future Perfect? The Elusive ‘Ideal Type,’” in *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti*, ed. Fae Brauer and Anthea Callen (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 239-272.

<sup>104</sup> Alderman, *Three Pals*, 2/1, SC, AJCA.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 3/1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 3/2.



Figure 2.4. Jack Alderman, "Winning the football cup," *Three Pals*, 2. New York: Community Service, n. d. [1945]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1710>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



The articulation and recognition of wartime cross-religious camaraderie, later termed the American Judeo-Christian tradition, ultimately envisioned positive communal relationships between Jews, Catholics, and Protestants in Swampscott and the country as a whole.<sup>107</sup> *Three Pals* normalized cross-religious brotherhood between American citizens and demanded recognition of Jewish patriotism. The comics was part of the AJC's national campaign that enveloped the patriotism of Jewish soldiers into the national cultural vocabulary of the war effort. The AJC actively promoted the image of Jewish patriotic citizenship and religious brotherhood amongst Americans. As part of a so-called "salt in" process, the Committee contacted writers, broadcasters, and publishers to ensure that Jewish-sounding names would be given to fictional characters, and that stories in popular comic books, radio, and television programs would show Jews in a positive light.<sup>108</sup>

Stories about heroic Jews were then salted into the popular comics *True Comic*, *Master Comics*, and *Captain Marvel Junior*, a spin-off of *Captain Marvel*. The six-page format of *Three Pals* allowed it to be salted into a comic magazine as a stand-alone story and it appeared in the Roman Catholic *Timeless Topix: Exciting Dramas of Truth* in October 1945. A short story entitled "Courage Flight," written by Nat Schachner, the man behind AJC's *Joe Worker* discussed in Chapter 4, was salted into *Captain Marvel Junior*.<sup>109</sup> This "war-hero story" about the real experiences of courageous bombardier navigator Lt. Wilfred Holsberg, emphasized positive relations between soldiers and a sense of brotherhood between Americans of different religions and ethnicities.<sup>110</sup> The re-telling of heroic war stories in comics highlighted to readers that the experiences of war were forming a new American brotherhood. In "Courage Flight," Schachner describes this brotherhood as a "tight little family [...] welded into a smooth-running team, a fellowship whose bonds no power on earth could break."<sup>111</sup> Stories of Jewish bravery in the war affirmed to Jewish soldiers their own patriotism and sacrifice. At the

<sup>107</sup> For the origins of the American Judeo-Christian tradition see: Moore, *GI Jews*, 118-155.

<sup>108</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 270.

<sup>109</sup> Nat Schachner, also appearing as Nathan Schachner and Nathaniel Schachner, wrote the English copy of the comic book *Nuestro Futuro – ¿Hombres Libres, O Esclavos?* for the Office of Inter-American Affairs as well as numerous science fiction stories. List of works is available at the Internet Speculative Fiction Database, accessed Oct. 10, 2010, [http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?Nat\\_Schachner](http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?Nat_Schachner).

<sup>110</sup> William E. Blake, Jr., "A View of History: *True Comics*, 1941 – 1945," William E. Blake Collection of True Life 1940s Era Comics, Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, accessed Jan. 12, 2010, <http://www.library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/blake2.html#note7>.

<sup>111</sup> *Captain Marvel Junior* #50 (Fawcett Comics, June 1947 [republication from 1942 series]).

same time, these stories also stressed the cooperation between all Americans on the front, who, working as a “smooth-running team” divested of religious prejudice and bigotry could win the war. Similar to *Three Pals*, “Courage Flight” emphasized that by fighting, living, and dying together, Americans could overcome prejudice and become the embodiment of the American democratic machine. The “salt-in” process ensured that examples of Jewish patriotic citizenship reached millions of Americans on the pages of popular comics, as well as through radio and television shows.

The AJC repeatedly stressed that cross-religious friendships were natural relations between true Americans. At times, such positive descriptions were in stark contrast to the experiences of Jews in the army. Lillian Kimberg, a member of the Women’s Army Corps, wrote home to her father: “You know, Dad, there is anti-Semitism. I have found it in the army.”<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, similar to the AJC, many Jewish soldiers believed that living and working together reduced anti-Semitism, and that the prejudice some soldiers felt was created partly because they had never even met a Jew. Therefore, the AJC considered Jews to be white, similar to white Americans, and as true patriots, fighting for their country. “America’s Fighting Jew” and “The First American” accused Jews of lacking American masculinity and dodging the draft, but the end of *Three Pals* exemplified the reality of Jews enlisting into the army, fighting and dying for their country at the same rate as Protestants and Catholics. In the final panel, George, Blaine, and Gershon walk together across a battlefield; the caption reads:

The three pals will never meet on earth again, but they have done their job gallantly and well; and their spirits mingle as in days of old. Catholic, Protestant, Jew... they died, as they lived ... in true brotherhood ... Americans All! [Fig. 2.5]<sup>113</sup>

The panel visualized the brotherhood and camaraderie of American Jews, Catholics and Protestants. Once again, by portraying the pals as indistinguishable from each other except for their uniforms, the story showed that through military service all men could become patriotic Americans.

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<sup>112</sup> Moore, “The Battle to Enlist,” *When Jews Were GIs*.

<sup>113</sup> Alderman, *Three Pals*, 6/6, SC, AJCA.



Figure 2.5. Jack Alderman, "Americans All!," *Three Pals*, 6. New York: Community Service, n. d. [1945]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1710>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

The visualization of Jews actively participating in combat during the war helped to secure their place as heroic patriots in war memory. Indeed, Lt. Holsberg posthumously received a Distinguished Service Cross, an Air Medal, a Purple Heart, and a Distinguished Unit Badge for his bravery.<sup>114</sup> The courage of the three pals would also be remembered, and, in time, their religious differences would be absorbed into the developing Judeo-Christian tradition that emphasized the common origins of the two religions and defined them as the faiths of democracy. On November 24, 2010, the Swampscott community remembered the three pals and the AJC comics in the local newspaper. Tracy Williams, a distant relative of Kehoe and Secretary to the Swampscott American Legion Post, affirmed that “[c]ommemorating the true story of the ‘Three Pals’ is one way this Thanksgiving Day to ensure that these three heroic, brave young men from Swampscott will never be forgotten for their service and sacrifices” [fig. 2.6].<sup>115</sup> Sixty-eight years after “The Fist American” and “America’s Fighting Jew” claimed that Jews were avoiding active military service, and sixty-five years after *Three Pals* presented cross-religious camaraderie in the war effort, the three pals were remembered as the comics intended, as three brave Americans.

#### PATRIOTIC CITIZENSHIP ON THE HOME FRONT

*Three Pals* affirmed Jewish patriotism on the front, but hundreds of thousands of Jews and the majority of Americans remained at home. Stories of soldiers’ bravery on the front were a sure way to remind the public of Jewish patriotism and commitment to Americanism, but claiming patriotic citizenship on the home front was a lot harder. Anti-Jewish propaganda stressed Jewish inability to fight and those who remained at home employed in the garment industry bore the brunt of accusations. In “America’s Fighting Jew” and “Marines Hymn” the portrayal of Jews as effeminate draft dodgers went hand in hand with accusations that they were greedy capitalists exploiting the

<sup>114</sup> “Full Text Citation for Award of the Distinguished Service Cross, U.S. Army Air Force Recipients – WWII,” Home of Heroes, accessed July 15, 2012, [http://www.homeofheroes.com/members/02\\_DSC/citations/03\\_wwii-dsc/aaf\\_h.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/members/02_DSC/citations/03_wwii-dsc/aaf_h.html).

<sup>115</sup> Kristen Schoenebeck, “Swampscott WWII veterans in illustrated novel,” *Swampscott Reporter*, Nov. 24, 2010. Kehoe, corporal in the U.S. Marine Corp, First Division, was killed in action at Cape Gloucester in the Solomon Islands on Feb. 13, 1944; Foster, ensign in the Navy, whose body was never found, died at sea when his patrol blimp crashed in the Gulf of Mexico on April 16, 1944; Ross, Private First Class in the army, was killed in action at Leyte Island in the Philippine Islands on Oct. 20, 1944.





Figure 2.6. "George Foster, Gershon Ross, and Blaine Kehoe," c. 1939. Photograph. Source: Kristen Schoenebeck, "Swampscott WWII veterans featured in illustrated novel," *Swampscott Reporter*, Nov. 24, 2010.

Reproduced by permission from Chuck Goodrich. © 2010 by GateHouse Media New England.

The photograph is signed by Manuel Ross, Gershon's father. The caption reads: "Their decency, understanding, and kindness shall live in our heart forever. God love and care for them as we did."

wartime economy. “America’s Fighting Jew” portrayed Jews as making military uniforms, shoes, and raincoats. In “Marines Hymn” a supposedly Jewish voice proclaims: “Let the Christian saps go fight the Japs, / In the uniforms we made;” and claims: “They will find us Jews selling / Boots and shoes to the United States Marines.”<sup>116</sup> As one of the few trades available to European Jewish immigrants, the garment industry had provided steady employment since the 1880s. Women worked “unskilled” jobs in the sweatshops and men held skilled positions as tailors. Since the industry was open to entrepreneurship and was not restricted, such skilled employment enabled social mobility for some immigrant Jews.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the feminization of the garment industry meant that the effeminate Jewish male body dominated the doggerels as a way to strip Jews of manhood and patriotic citizenship.

The U.S. military also supported a gendered view of labor, and unlike farming or heavy industry, considered garment manufacturing insignificant to the war effort.<sup>118</sup> “America’s Fighting Jew” further charged that Jews working in the feminized garment industry were unpatriotic capitalists who demanded a profitable contract with the government: “They’ll make your shoes and raincoats to wear out in the fight; / That’s if the contract’s worthy, or if the price is right.”<sup>119</sup> The AJC also overlooked the history of immigrant Jews and followed the engendered view of defense labor: *Extra Effort* claimed patriotic citizenship for Jewish men on the home front through a participation in the masculinized defense industry. *Extra Effort* engaged the national collective memory of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century immigrants working in factories to construct a shared experience of patriotic white American labor.

Popular ideas deemed Jews incapable of manual labor. In February 1942, the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) produced evidence of bias against Jews in the defense industry. Although defense manufacturers rarely specified that they refused to hire Jews, they made it difficult for Jews to gain employment with application forms that often asked for the applicants’ religion or the church they

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<sup>116</sup> “America’s Fighting Jew,” 4, 29, and “Marines Hymn,” 11-12, 15-16, Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army,” SC, AJCA.

<sup>117</sup> Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 61-64, 119-121; Karen Brodtkin Sacks, “How did Jews Become White Folks?” in *Race*, ed. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 83-85.

<sup>118</sup> Moore, *GI Jews*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> “America’s Fighting Jew,” 29-30, Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army,” SC, AJCA.

attended. Moreover, during the war, close to 30 percent of “want ads” in the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* stressed a preference for Protestants or Catholics.<sup>120</sup> The FEPC explained that the preference operated as part of a traditional prejudice stemming from the high number of German and Scandinavian foremen who believed that Jews were incapable of mastering mechanical problems.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, American notions of masculinity included individualism and independence expressed outside familial boundaries.<sup>122</sup> Thus, Jewish men had to supplement their physical abilities with individual initiative and independence to be considered valuable defense workers. *Extra Effort* stepped in to claim patriotic citizenship for Jewish men by visually capturing and affirming their abilities to work in the defense industry.

In February 1943, The War Services Division of the Parents’ Institute published *Extra Effort*, a collection of five stories about defense work, because the AJC believed that the presence of their name on the publication could be detrimental to its success as an educational material. Since 1941, the Parents’ Institute, producers of the *Parents’ Magazine*, used *True Comics* magazine to redirect children’s interest in comics towards education.<sup>123</sup> Having their name as publisher of *Extra Effort* signified respectability and wholesomeness. *Extra Effort* was distributed to CIO-affiliated defense workers who were simultaneously being targeted by pro-Nazi propaganda, including the apparently comical doggerels. Moreover, each of its five stories could be individually salted into comics magazines: “Time Out for Victory” appeared in the March 1943 issue of *True Comics* #22, and “Full Time American” appeared in *True Comics* #23 in April 1943. The other three stories, “Max Kholas,” “The Story of Ed Hoffman,” and “Saved 12,000 Hours a Year!,” focused on Jewish men’s innovation, independence, and initiative as skills essential for American manhood and patriotic citizenship. Furthermore, these stories visualized to readers employed in defense work that, similar to all patriotic Americans, Jews were indeed working alongside them in the same industry.

*Extra Effort* subtly located Jews as part of the defense industry workplace, and constructed complex understandings of Jewish participation on the home front. The

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<sup>120</sup> Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 174.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Moore, *GI Jews*, 35.

<sup>123</sup> Bart Beaty, *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture: a Re-Examination of the Critic Whose Congressional Testimony Sparked the Comics Code* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 109.

three stories of Max Kholas, Ed Hoffman, and Sam Feiner are dominated by an industrial factory landscape where the three men establish their ability to work in the defense industry as equal to their ability to fight. In “The Story of Ed Hoffman,” Ed displays his patriotism by joining the war effort at home and defines work on the home front as support of the soldiers on the front: “I figured that if I couldn’t fight in the air, I might help on the home front.”<sup>124</sup> The layout of the first page allocates equal panel space to war production and to military service, visually equating the two [fig. 2.7]. In two panels at the bottom of the page, Ed appears in both a military and an industrial setting: first, he is turned down from a recruitment center and second, he resolves to support the war on the factory floor. The title panel includes both military service and defense work: Ed stands in front of a war plant, his place in the war effort, and looks up to war planes flying overhead, a direct result of defense production. On the second page, Ed walks in step with an air force pilot, who commends his work on airplane radio transformers: “Important! I’ll say radio transformers are important! A fighter without his radio is like a blind man without his dog!” [Fig. 2.8].<sup>125</sup> The mirrored posture of the two men visually emphasizes that soldiers and workers have equal standing in the war effort and walk in step towards victory. For readers, the language of comics captured the work of Jews in the war effort as essential for victory.

Amidst a national drive for preservation of natural and man-made resources, the stories from *Extra Effort* construct the initiative and independence of Jews through their abilities to innovate and preserve resources. Since the end of the First World War, Japan had conquered much of Southeast Asia and controlled 90 percent of the world’s rubber production. By 1942, U.S. rubber resources were depleting. Donald M. Nelson, chairman of the United States War Production Board, declared that “American resourcefulness, American organization ability, American muscle and American will to win” could solve the shortage of steel scrap, rubber, and other vital materials.<sup>126</sup> The drive to conserve rubber, among other resources, was a direct and personal obligation of each American to the men on the front lines.

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<sup>124</sup> *Extra Effort*, 5/3, SC, AJCA.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 6/2.

<sup>126</sup> United States War Production Board, “An Emergency Statement to the People of the United States,” *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, IA), April 20, 1942, Ames Historical Society, accessed Oct. 15, 2010, [http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/1942.07.21\\_des\\_moines\\_register\\_emergency\\_w2\\_statement.jpg](http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/1942.07.21_des_moines_register_emergency_w2_statement.jpg).

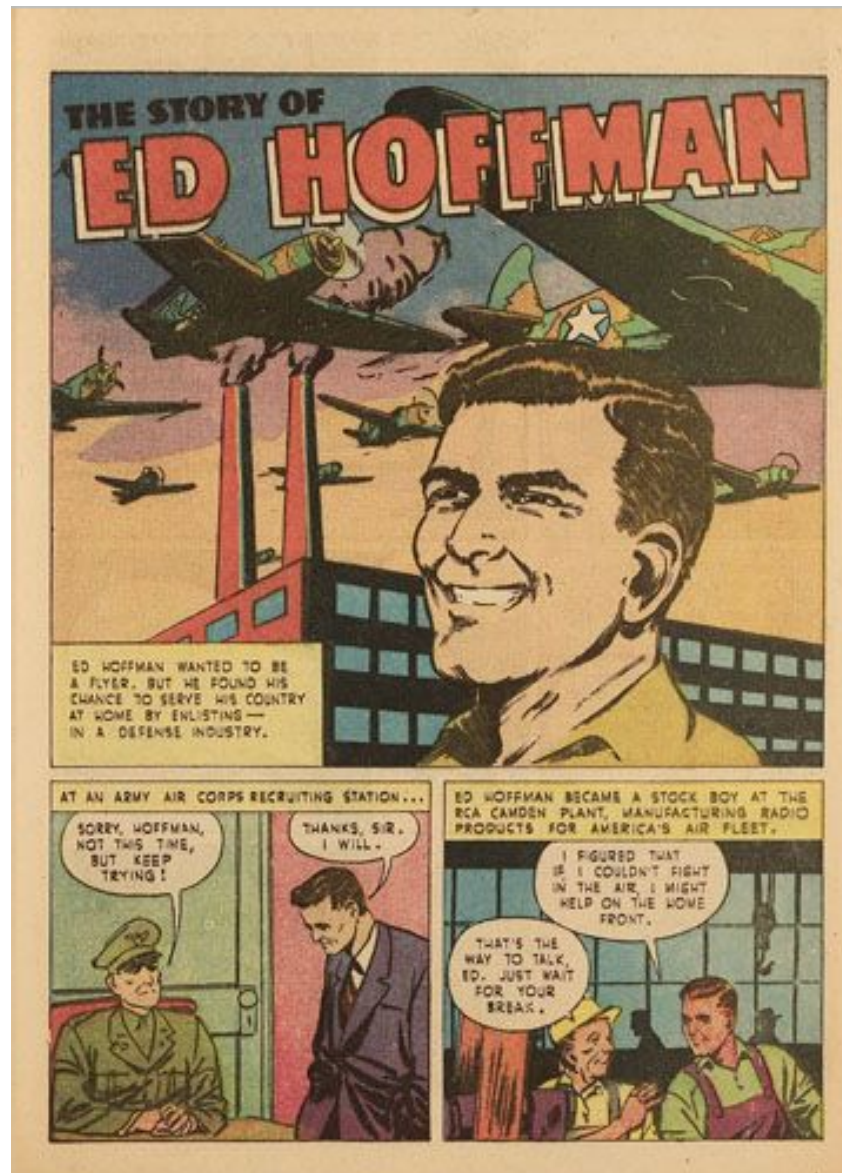


Figure 2.7. “The Story of Ed Hoffman,” *Extra Effort*, 5. New York: War Services Division of the Parents’ Institute, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1690>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1942 by The War Services Division of the Parents’ Institute.





Figure 2.8. "The transformer division," *Extra Effort*, 6. New York: War Services Division of the Parents' Institute, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1690>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1942 by The War Services Division of the Parents' Institute.

The stories of Max Kholas, Ed Hoffman, and Sam Feiner are a direct response to accusations of wastefulness leveled at Jews in “The First American.” Following Nelson’s appeal, the act of resource preservation in *Extra Effort* operates as a sign of Jewish patriotism. Ed becomes a stock boy at the RCA plant in Camden, New Jersey, manufacturing radio products for America’s air fleet. He is promoted to sub-supervisor in a transformer division where he discovers that silicon iron could be used as a substitute for nickel steel – an essential component used in airplane radio transformers.<sup>127</sup> Sam, a sheet metal worker at the San Francisco Bethlehem Steel shipbuilding plant, invents a new gauge so that elbow edges fit perfectly to each other. With true capitalist efficiency the new system saves one thousand man-hours a month and triples the plant’s output. To emphasize Sam’s technical knowledge, a panel is dedicated to his mechanical drawing.<sup>128</sup> Finally, Max, a mechanic at the Westinghouse Company Pittsburgh plant, creates a special cement mixture that holds together belts cut to size. His invention, together with a new way of cutting and stitching the belts, strengthens them and saves precious rubber and leather resources.<sup>129</sup> The three stories emphasize the ingenuity, innovation, and independence of American Jews working in the defense industry. With the focus on Ed, Max, and Sam as Americans, their patriotism also symbolized the commitment of all defense workers.

Similar to *Three Pals*, *Extra Effort* also used the true experiences of Jews. The October 1943 issue of the *Rotarian*, a magazine of the business and professional club Rotary International, documented in the column “Bright Ideas from the Ranks” that the same Edward Hoffman, a twenty-two-year-old from Camden, New Jersey, was responsible for saving 3,000 pounds of nickel.<sup>130</sup> Strategically, *Extra Effort* and Ed’s story were produced specifically for the nations’ defense workers. The true message of cross-religious cooperation in the defense industry and camaraderie between soldiers and workers expanded the understanding of American industrial labor to include Jews.

The stories in *Extra Effort* presented a strong American social body capable of out-producing the slave labor of Nazi Germany. Regardless of the wartime labor unrest, they imagined American workers in a democratic wage labor system, apparently free

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<sup>127</sup> *Extra Effort*, 7, SC, AJCA.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 14/3.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>130</sup> Don Terrio, “Bright Ideas from the Ranks,” *Rotarian*, 26, Oct. 26, 1943.

and supported by their fellow workers and management. Such images stood in stark contrast to the enslaved and exploited workers of Nazi Germany. Americans had read newspaper reports that after Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and continued with its conquest of Eastern Europe, millions of Jews, Slavs, and other “undesirable” people were forced into labor camps.<sup>131</sup> Forced labor, though less productive than paid labor, was essential for the Nazi war machine.<sup>132</sup> In effect, comics about the patriotism of American workers during the war emphasized that their production would lead to victory. The panel concluding Max’s story emphasizes the role that workers, including Jews, played in the war effort [fig. 2.9]. The detailed illustration shows bombardier planes flying above the smoking chimneys of factories and trains transporting workers’ production to the front. A plaque that takes up almost half of the panel reads:

With the kind of “extra” effort and imagination shown by men like Max Kholas, the workers who run the machines that produce the weapons of war and the machinery to forge these weapons, have proven that the soldier-worker on the home front, has an important job to do! And he’s doing it with a skill and determination that says – “Look out Axis! American production is on the way!”<sup>133</sup>

The plaque appears to be welded onto the panel and presumably onto a factory wall. Both the plaque and its message are given further gravitas through the gold coating and the eagle decoration. Both are so visually significant that the message seems destined to last longer than the pulp where it appeared.

*Extra Effort* operated as a political message: it used the innovation and independence of Jewish men to form their American masculinity, and in turn to lay a claim for Jewish men on American patriotic citizenship. Moreover, the comics constructed American production in direct competition with Nazi Germany. At its core, *Extra Effort* accepted the necessity of capitalism for victory and for cross-religious social relations. Factory bosses and managers repeatedly appear in the stories as paternalistic figures that financially support workers’ innovations. Managers actively

<sup>131</sup> Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, esp. 135-197.

<sup>132</sup> Ulrich Herbert, “Forced Laborers in the Third Reich: An Overview,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 58 (Fall 2000): 192-218; Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 528-538.

<sup>133</sup> *Extra Effort*, 4/5, SC, AJCA.





Figure 2.9. "Look out Axis! American production is on the way!," *Extra Effort*, 4. New York: War Services Division of the Parents' Institute, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1690>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1942 by The War Services Division of the Parents' Institute.

recognize workers as patriotic and therefore hold the symbolic power to affirm labor's patriotic citizenship. For example, Max approaches the plant boss to ask for support in his experiments: "I think I'm on the right track, chief. I'd like some time and equipment to work on a cement that will hold the ends of these belts together – firm." The boss gladly agrees: "Go to work on it, Max. You'll get whatever you need" [fig. 2.10].<sup>134</sup> Max then works "day and night" to perfect his cement and receives a \$1,200 check in reward from the Westinghouse Company.<sup>135</sup> The visual space of the story is dominated by the relationship between Max, his innovation, and the manager's support with fourteen out of the nineteen panels dedicated to his experiments and communications with the plant manager. The amount of space allocated, coupled with the story of worker empowerment by management that is capable of recognizing workers' talents, emphasize the importance the AJC placed on positive personal relations between workers and bosses in the defense industry. It is unlikely that management were as supportive as *Extra Effort* suggests therefore these idealized relations re-wrote the reality of the wartime labor unrest.<sup>136</sup> Increases in mechanization, the division of labor, and the enlarging gap between workers and supervisors meant that workers were no longer understood as experts in their field, and unions failed to provide the mechanisms for worker-led decisions on production. Management-led innovation was overpowering the kind that *Extra Effort* presents. Nonetheless, a harmonious capitalist union between talented workers and paternalistic plant managers visually replaced the reality of work stoppages and walkouts. The acceptance of capitalism, the place of American workers, including Jews, within it, and the compositions of wartime labor relations formed a usable past of Jewish wartime patriotism that the AJC employed in future comics.

## CONCLUSION

As anti-Semitic propaganda was blanketing America's military bases and war production plants, the AJC used the popular medium of comics to reach millions of Americans with fictional and non-fictional stories of Jewish men fighting for their country on the front and actively supporting the war effort at home. *Three Pals* replaced

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 2/4.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 3/1, 4/3.

<sup>136</sup> George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 20-21.



Figure 2.10. "One day in 1939 . . .," *Extra Effort*, 2-3. New York: War Services Division of the Parents' Institute, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1690>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.  
© 1942 by The War Services Division of the Parents' Institute.

the effeminate draft dodger from the doggerels “America’s Fighting Jew” and “Marines Hymn” with Gershon Ross, a young athletic man who fights and dies for his country. *Extra Effort* replaced the image of Jews as greedy war-profiteering capitalists with Ed Hoffman, Max Kholas, and Sam Feiner: industrious and innovative men whose talents in the workplace are essential for the war effort. Although the names of these characters defined them as explicitly Jewish, the AJC expected and intended them to be seen first and foremost as patriotic citizens, indistinguishable from other white Americans. The AJC pointed out that Jews participated in patriotic citizenship and that their heroism, industry, and work ethic were a sure sign of their Americanism. The two comics affirmed that Jewish soldiers and workers had the physical fitness and innovation essential for American masculinity. In the process of laying a claim on patriotic citizenship for Jewish men, the comics expanded the definition of American masculinity and whiteness to include Jews.

For the readers of *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort*, the comics affirmed the importance of religious brotherhood and tolerance amongst a community. Be it the townsfolk of Swampscott, Massachusetts, the workers and bosses in the defense industry, or the country as a whole, the comics visualized a brotherhood that would lead to victory. Images of racial and religious brotherhood would become a part of the visual vocabulary of the intergroup relations movement and American culture; they would invoke in readers support for minorities and American capitalist democracy. The AJC hoped that the experiences of wartime camaraderie would create a new sense of brotherhood where tolerance and the preservation of democracy would result in the protection of American Jews in the post-war era from the fate suffered by European Jews in the Holocaust. For the AJC, victory meant that democracy would defeat totalitarianism and Nazi anti-Semitism, and in the process, ensure the recognition of Jews as Americans. In turn, the recognition of patriotic citizenship would guarantee the protection of Jews by their co-citizens, because an attack on Jews would be seen as an attack on democracy and all Americans.

Rothschild and his colleagues from the AJC Education and Public Information Department understood that returning veterans would have an enormous influence on post-war life. Since victory would give prestige to the returning soldiers, the ideas they acquired during the war would be instrumental in shaping American life for years to

come.<sup>137</sup> The Committee also understood that the experiences of workers would be instrumental in shaping wartime and post-war labor relations amidst widespread labor unrest, fears of possible return to the Great Depression, and probable job shortages. Distributing *Extra Effort* through CIO-affiliated unions and in war plants meant that managers probably saw the comics. *Extra Effort* showed to bosses that a harmonious partnership with workers would be crucial for the preservation of democracy. In 1945, the comic strip character Joe Worker would show readers exactly how and why the collaboration of workers and bosses in the imperfect system of capitalism could protect democracy from the threats of totalitarianism.

The AJC also feared that, after the war, demagogues would use the divide and conquer technique, employed by Nazi supporters and anti-Semites during the war, to divide the American people along religious and racial lines. Creating the new racial and religious brotherhood would require Americans to overcome their prejudices against different ethnicities, races, and religions. In contrast to *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort*, which affirmed a strong national body capable of victory, the comics that are the focus of the next chapter secured the sanity and rationality of Americans. In the early years of the war the comics, *They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!* used contemporary scientific and anthropological research to challenge the idea of the Jewish race and to dispute eugenic constructions of inherent racial traits. Both comics scientifically proved that all people are a part of the brotherhood of the universal human race. In the process, they formulated the “American way of life,” or American capitalist democracy, as the rational way of human and social existence.

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<sup>137</sup> Moore, “The Legacy of the WWII Generation,” *When Jews Were GIs*, accessed Dec. 3, 2010, <http://www.fathom.com/course/21701756/session6.html>.

### Chapter 3

#### Science and the Brotherhood of Races and Religions

##### INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the AJC comics *There Are No Master Races!* and *They Got the Blame*, which used contemporary scholarly research from the fields of anthropology, sociology, biology, psychology, and psychiatry to fight prejudice. The scientific approach gave further weight to the AJC's confidence in democracy, and juxtaposed modern scientific research against what the comics constructed as outdated Nazi "pseudo-scientific theories."<sup>138</sup> Together, science and the language of comics developed the visual vocabulary of racial and religious brotherhood. *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort*, discussed in the previous chapter, visualized the bodies of Jewish men as part of the white American masculine body and affirmed the physical abilities of all American men; *There Are No Master Races!* and *They Got the Blame* ensured their psychological stability. *There Are No Master Races!* educated readers that ideas of racial superiority and inferiority were unscientific and therefore irrational. In the process, the comics articulated Jews as a religious group. *They Got the Blame* explained the dangers of scapegoating a minority group, and appealed to a shared history of persecution between Christians, Catholics, and Jews. Both comics connected the idea of racial and religious brotherhood to individual rationality, to national psychological stability, and in turn, to the permanency of American democracy as the culmination of scientifically inspired human progress. At the same time, the AJC comics presented those opposed to brotherhood as psychologically disturbed un-Americans threatening the stability of democracy.

Psychiatrists working with the AJC argued that educational materials should avoid portraying Jews as a weak minority group in need of sympathy and support. Such portrayals, they believed, would lead a prejudiced individual to join the perceived

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<sup>138</sup> Kenneth M. Gould, *They Got the Blame: The Story of Scapegoats in History* (New York: Association Press, 1943), 38.

majority in what he or she believes to be the popular opinion.<sup>139</sup> In other words, for the AJC, equating in the public mind the fight against prejudice with the protection of Jews would be detrimental to their actual defense. Accordingly, the comics articulated Jews as part of American culture under threat, instead of demanding the sympathy of readers by presenting stories of suffering Jews. *They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!* equated the defense of democracy from the irrationality of prejudice with the defense of America's racial and religious minorities. Since the AJC feared drawing attention to Jews as a separate group, their educational materials were published by the YMCA, the Parent's Institute, the Public Affairs Committee, and with imprints from various labor unions. But knowledge of the actual producer of the comics complicates our understanding of the themes, the language, and the arguments they presented to the readers.

Both comics were adaptations of two popular pamphlets. *They Got the Blame* was based on the pamphlet *They Got the Blame: the Story of Scapegoats in History*, written by Kenneth M. Gould, editor of *Scholastic* magazine, using documents and extensive research into prejudice provided by the AJC. The YMCA, which the AJC continuously worked with during the war to promote the ideas of brotherhood, published the pamphlet in February 1942. Their publisher stamp on both the pamphlet and the comics linked the ideas the publications presented with Christian beliefs. Together with the mixed religious services taking place on the front, the comics participated in the development of the American Judeo-Christian religion.<sup>140</sup> Instead of emphasizing a specific religious belief, be that Catholic, Christian, or Jewish, the comics explained the common roots of the three religions and stressed the importance of religious belief to American citizenship.

*There Are No Master Races!* was based on the 1943 Public Affairs pamphlet No. 85, *The Races of Mankind*, written by Columbia University anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish. Both Benedict and Weltfish were students of Franz Boas, whose academic research countered Nazi racial myths and eugenic ideas of race. The

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<sup>139</sup> "Minutes of Professional Staff Meeting," May 25, 1944, 1-2, Reports and Memoranda on anti-Semitism in America and AJC's work to combat it, 1944-1946, Subject File Anti-Semitism (SF Anti-Semitism thereafter), AJCA, accessed May 6, 2011, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/DigitalArchive.aspx?panes=2>.

<sup>140</sup> For joint religious services on the front see: Moore, *GI Jews*, 118-155.



AJC financially and ideologically supported Boas's scholarship and the publications of other cultural anthropologists.<sup>141</sup> The AJC avoided drawing negative attention to their efforts whilst working closely with religious and pro-democratic organizations and supporting academic headways into racial equality. Even though their comics bypassed American anti-Semitism, they should be understood as part of the Committee's larger educational campaign to establish an inclusive American society that would defend democratic institutions and racial and religious minorities.

During the Second World War, Jews, scientists, as well as the AJC comics all re-defined the meaning of Jewishness in popular culture.<sup>142</sup> The drive towards a firm definition of who the Jewish people were within the U.S. democracy was underlined by a pursuit to scientifically educate Americans out of prejudice. The AJC hoped that once the concepts of "Jew" and "anti-Semitism" were scientifically defined, their fight would be firmly grounded in a methodology with clear goals to be achieved. The AJC sponsored social scientists that considered the meaning of "Jew" in religious, ethnic, linguistic, and racial terms, and simultaneously defined "anti-Semitism" and "anti-Semite" in psychiatric terms. "Anti-Semitism" was a psychotic state of mind of disturbed individuals, and by extension, a malfunctioning of the normal democratic state of society. In order for democracy to succeed, the social mind had to be kept free from the polluting elements of racial and religious prejudice.

The AJC's employment of science to fight prejudice and propagate the ideas of brotherhood emerged from their developing understanding of anti-Semitism as Nazi propaganda: it was a scapegoat technique to divide and conquer the country by setting its people against each other.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, anti-Semitism was a learned attitude that could be educated out of existence with the help of rational science. Gould explained that in a correctly working democracy fears and hatreds are dissolved by political

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<sup>141</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 63.

<sup>142</sup> See for example: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, *The Classification of Jewish Immigrants and Its Implications: A Survey of Opinion; 140 Replies to a Questionnaire and Papers by Nathan Goldberg, Jacob Lestchinsky, and Max Weinreich* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1945).

<sup>143</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, "Combating Anti-Semitism in a War Atmosphere," SC, AJCA, accessed May 12, 2012, [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-27.pdf](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-27.pdf); Memorandum by Rothschild, "Memorandum on Defense Against Specific Attacks," n. d., SC, AJCA, accessed May 10, 2012, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-28.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-28.pdf); Rothschild, "Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?," SC, AJCA.



freedom, universal education, and social welfare.<sup>144</sup> The AJC educational comics brought to their readers the “the light of science” of truly civilized societies to debunk the primitive beliefs of racial superiority so that American democracy could function efficiently.

The brotherhood education campaign and the comics *There Are No Master Races!* and *They Got the Blame* used a common visual vocabulary of societal development through scientific progress. They presented to readers a reform narrative through an apparently unconscious reversal of Nazi ideas of racial purity. The AJC equated societal “betterment” with the fight against prejudice; “threats” to American democracy came from the “irrationality” and “disease” of prejudice used by psychologically “unfit elements” such as Nazis and prejudiced Americans.<sup>145</sup> The Committee feared that these defective elements could spread the psychological disease of prejudice to all correctly thinking Americans, polluting their minds and the American way of life. As a response, the AJC educational propaganda comics secured the mental fitness of Americans to protect democracy from the psychosis of prejudice.

#### THE BROTHERHOOD OF RACES AND RELIGIONS

The AJC employed new theories of cultural anthropology. Cultural relativism and its opposition to inherent racial characteristics had been increasingly accepted since the 1920s, despite the popularity of eugenics. Boas was virtually ignored in 1914 when he proved that cranial capacity of immigrants and white Americans was the same. His theories on cultural relativity were also overlooked during efforts in the 1920s to halt the immigration of southern Europeans, Slavs, and Jews to the U.S.<sup>146</sup> But Boas became a popular figure and even appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine on May 11, 1936. At Columbia University, he educated a new group of Boasian anthropologists including Margaret Mead, Benedict, and Welfish who researched the effects of culture on the

<sup>144</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 17, 52.

<sup>145</sup> Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939 – 1959* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 14. The National Association of Manufacturers used a similar rhetoric to create a vast advertising campaign to propagate ideas of social hygiene, management leadership, and societal betterment through big business.

<sup>146</sup> Spencer Blakeslee, *The Death of American Antisemitism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 31; Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 37, 154.

formation of the individual. Mead's 1928 ethnography *Coming of Age in Samoa* and Benedict's 1934 *Patterns of Culture* stressed the cultural relativity of an individual's experience; both were well-liked texts among scholars and the public. By the 1940s, anthropology and its two competing strands of cultural relativism and eugenics became a field of study that bridged the gap between academic scholarship and culture.<sup>147</sup>

In 1940, with the encouragement of Boas, Benedict published *Race: Science and Politics*, a synthesis of the new anthropology of cultural relativism. In 1943, while working at the OWI, Benedict and Weltfish created the pamphlet *The Races of Mankind*, based on Benedict's *Race*, for distribution to the men in the armed forces fighting side by side with non-white allies in the Philippines and the Solomon Islands.<sup>148</sup> The pamphlet came to life in "an environment already made fertile by a popular anthropology rooted in the idea of multiethnic culture in which everyone had a place," to explain to soldiers that all races could be relied on in battle because intelligence was learned.<sup>149</sup> *The Races of Mankind* was popular among soldiers and civilians alike and even evolved into a widely shown United Productions of America animated film, *The Brotherhood of Man*, that became an education essential in classrooms and union halls.<sup>150</sup> The pamphlet was used for orientation in the army and in the post-war de-Nazification program in Germany.<sup>151</sup> The popular works of these anthropologists transformed cultural relativism into a weapon against Nazism and prejudice, and developed the cultural context where the comics of the AJC operated.

The comics *There Are No Master Races!* adapted the pamphlet *The Races of Mankind* and appeared in the magazine *True Comics* #39 in September-October 1944. The pamphlet was thirty-two pages long, with twelve illustrations by *New Masses* magazine artist Ad Reinhardt. The comic was only seven pages long and therefore

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<sup>147</sup> For the decline of eugenics see: Nicole Rafter, "Apes, Men, and Teeth: Earnest A. Hooton and Eugenics Decay," in *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 249-268; Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 66-134.

<sup>148</sup> Ruth A. Pathe, "Gene Weltfish," in *Women Anthropologists: A Bibliographical Dictionary*, ed. Ute Gacs et al. (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 375.

<sup>149</sup> Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 37; Thomas Cripps, "African Americans and Jews in Hollywood: Antagonistic Allies," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black - Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 266.

<sup>150</sup> Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 164, 166.

<sup>151</sup> Gene Weltfish, quoted in Pathe, "Gene Weltfish," 375.

easily adaptable into a pamphlet, a separate comic book, or a feature in a comics magazine. The novelty of cartoons in the pamphlet appealed to a wide-ranging audience but the images failed to navigate governmental racial politics.<sup>152</sup> Reinhardt's cartoons illustrated the pamphlet, but the nature of the comics form exposed the pitfalls of the reciprocal relationship between image and text, especially the visualization of ideology. *There Are No Master Races!* was read by children, soldiers, workers, and ordinary citizens. The comics employed the popular scientific and anthropological ideas articulated in the pamphlet and with the language of comics, transformed them into complex, and at times contradictory, visual political messages.

The comics used anthropological theories of cultural specificity to undermine ideas of racial superiority and to divest in the readers' minds the Nazi Aryan master race theory of scientific grounding. At the same time, *There Are No Master Races!* articulated racial brotherhood as scientifically viable. First and foremost, the comics' creators fashioned a reliable narrator by adapting the female authors of the pamphlet into a more culturally authoritative male figure. This elderly male academic appears in seven panels to visually remind readers of the scientific basis of both the comics and its argument. A background of props such as x-rays, books, and test tubes reinforce his rational scientific method [see fig. 3.1 and fig. 3.3]. The narrator went on to scientifically prove to the readers that there are no master races and convey a complex understanding of race as a social construct.

Although the comics claimed that skin color lacked the ability to denote inherent intelligence, culture, or beliefs, their rhetoric affirmed the existence of identifiable races defined by skin color. The comics form revealed the complexities and contradictions of constructing a visual and ideological brotherhood in a context of segregation and the AJC's fear of backlash against what could be perceived as radical ideas. The narrator explains that skin color is a result of centuries of human adaptation to geographical location. Three panels juxtapose the three main skin tones: the first original so-called "in-between" color is reserved for the Polynesians, Hindus, and Mongols; the second "lightest" color is represented by primitive cave men; and the third "darkest" color is

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<sup>152</sup> Marianne Kinkel, *Races of Mankind: The Sculptures of Malvina Hoffman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 168.



Figure 3.1. "Since the dawn of mankind," *There Are No Master Races!*, 1. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.





Figure 3.2. "All skin contains the same chemicals," *There Are No Master Races!*, 2. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

exemplified by the people of the tropics [fig. 3.2]. The middle panel debunks the idea that light skin color is superior and synonymous with culture and civilization. Here, light skin is represented by uncivilized cave men instead of civilized Western men. The in-between and the dark color stand as symbols of civilization. In *The Races of Mankind*, Reinhardt's cartoons parallel civilization and culture with an increase of clothing.<sup>153</sup> In *There Are No Master Races!* clothing functions in a similar way: the lack of clothing in the middle image strips the light skinned men of civilization and culture. The cave men wear a fur skirt to cover their genitalia; the other people wear their civilized culture-specific dress. Although clothes denote civilization, the panels avoid the association of Western dress with cultural advancement and thereby debunk the myth of light skin superiority in the racial stratification of the globe.

Yet, the comics' visualization of the chemical development of skin tone fails to construct a sense of brotherhood. The narrator explains that skin color is a variation of chemicals and pigments: "persons with yellow skin have more carotene in their skin, while those with dark skin have more melanin."<sup>154</sup> The explanation obviously focused on the chemical proportions of two out of the three skin variants. The narrator's biochemical explanation of skin tone inevitably defines light skin as the original that yellow and dark skin develop from through an increase in either carotene or melanin, and so contradicts the previous explanation that light skin came from the original "in-between" color. This theorization of skin color drew on Roman and Greek environmental-climatic theory that darker skin was a sign of exposure to the sun of the original and normal white skin, a form of degeneration, and a characteristic of inferiority.<sup>155</sup> The problem with visualizing the original skin tone is even present in the Creation Story on the first page of the comics [see fig. 3.1]. In the image, Adam and Eve, who are described as "the parents of the human race," are blond Caucasians, even though the next page clearly explains that the original people "began to move from their original homes in the central regions to the far corners of the Earth," and that those original people had an "in-between color."<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 168-176.

<sup>154</sup> *There Are No Master Races!* (New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944), 3/6, SC, AJCA, accessed 10 November 2011, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1700>.

<sup>155</sup> David M. Goldenberg, "The Curse of Ham: A Case of Rabbinic Racism?" in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black – Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27; Kinkel, *Races of Mankind*, 168-176.

<sup>156</sup> *There Are No Master Races!*, 2/2-3, SC, AJC.

In these images, the biochemical research and anthropological theories of racial development come head to head with the authors and the artists' visual vocabulary of race representation. It is doubtful that readers noticed these contradictions. Yet, it is exactly these contradictions between the verbal and the visual rhetoric of brotherhood that expose the artists' and the dominant culture's inherent assumptions about which skin color is "normal," and which skin color adds to the variety of the globe.<sup>157</sup> Depicting Adam and Eve as Caucasian could have been an approach to deal with the racial politics of the time. Although readers probably overlooked that it was inconsistent to have a Caucasian Adam and Eve, they would have noticed if the two were an "in-between" color, and may have accused the comics and the publisher of radicalism and of propagating miscegenation. The AJC's use of the language of comics revealed the pitfalls of visually articulating textual rhetoric but continued navigating towards a racial and religious brotherhood.

Amidst a political context of segregation, advocating non-segregated blood transfusion on the front presented another problem to the AJC and the construction of racial brotherhood in their comics. On the last page of *There Are No Master Races!* the narrator explains that, since "all men are true blood relations," different types of non-racially specific blood are used in life-saving blood transfusions on the front [fig. 3.3].<sup>158</sup> The comics and the page in particular, is text-heavy, a sign that the authors prioritized the textual presentation of scientific data and struggled to visualize its results in a way that made the most of the medium. The narrator explains that there are four blood types, O, A, B, and AB, and that an American could have the same blood type as an "Australian bushman."<sup>159</sup> A panel shows blood transfusion on the battlefield: previously the narrator explained that all blood is the same, but the panel shows an all white blood transfusion scene without a black soldier in sight. Although the text scientifically affirms blood brotherhood, the panel inevitably contradicts the idea. Therefore, the comics appears to only pays lip service to the idea of brotherhood. Yet, *There Are No Master Races!* was a cooperative production. Since the script writing, drawing, lettering, inking, and coloring are usually separate processes that, on this

<sup>157</sup> For whiteness and sexuality see: Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>158</sup> *There Are No Master Races!*, 7/1, SC, AJCA.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.





Figure 3.3. "Brothers under the skin," *There Are No Master Races!*, 7. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



occasion, apparently fail to operate together, the comics reveals uncertainty in the use of the language of comics for ideological propaganda.

Furthermore, the visualization of the scientific findings on human biology referred to in the panel operates in a specific political and social climate, and inevitably represents the reality of wartime blood transfusions. After pressure from segregationists and racial purists, the Red Cross segregated blood donations and transfusions and even employed black nurses to provide medical treatment for black soldiers.<sup>160</sup> The AJC's effort to avoid implying miscegenation was so persistent that the pamphlet *They Got the Blame: The Story of Scapegoats in History*, asked readers to discuss the question, "Does 'social equality' imply intermarriage of races?"<sup>161</sup> Obviously, the discussion was supposed to establish a negative answer. The AJC was concerned that their message of racial, cultural, and social equality could be misinterpreted as radical. In this context, the Committee's work to prove that there were neither master races nor inferior ones became both a political and a visual minefield.

*There Are No Master Races!* attacked ideas of an inherent racial intelligence yet played a safer game than the pamphlet. Originally, Benedict and Weltfish analyzed results of intelligence tests conducted on troops by the U.S. Army during the First World War. For the two anthropologists, the results proved that intelligence was a product of specific social and economic conditions, such as access to education. According to the "Median Scores on the A.E.F. Intelligence Tests" the intelligence of "Southern Whites" from Mississippi measured at 41.25, Kentucky measured at 41.50, and Arkansas measured at 41.55. The same test scores put the intelligence of "Northern Negroes" from New York at 45.02, Illinois at 47.35, and Ohio at 49.50. Benedict and Weltfish explained to readers: "Negroes with better luck after they were born got higher scores than whites with less luck."<sup>162</sup> They clarified that differences in income, education, cultural advantages, and other opportunities impacted on an individual's development in both the North and the South. The pamphlet was controversial. In January 1944, the president of the United Service Organizations, Chester Irving Barnard,

<sup>160</sup> Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs*, 259; Thomas A. Guglielmo, "'Red Cross, Double Cross': Race and America's World War II-Era Blood Donor Service," *The Journal of American History* 97.1 (2010): 63-90.

<sup>161</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 56.

<sup>162</sup> Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, *The Races of Mankind* (New York: Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1943), 18.

ordered the YMCA to stop distributing the pamphlet at their clubs.<sup>163</sup> In May 1944, North Carolina Congressman, Democrat Carl Thomas Durham, claimed the pamphlet was communistic and anti-religious.<sup>164</sup> Southern Senators complained to the army that the results showed that blacks were more intelligent than whites. Kentucky Democratic Congressman and Chair of the House Military Affairs Committee, Andrew J. May, prohibited the pamphlet's distribution in the army.<sup>165</sup> But the pamphlet grew in popularity during the war defying bans from military bases. Unfortunately, the controversy over racial equality had a lasting effect on Weltfish. In the spring of 1953, she was called in front of Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee to answer questions about her membership in the Communist Party (CPUSA), her role in the Women's International Democratic Federation and the Congress of American Women, her claims that the U.S. Army had used Germ Warfare against North Koreans, and her use of the intelligence test results in *The Races of Mankind*.<sup>166</sup> In response, Columbia University terminated her contract.<sup>167</sup>

*There Are No Master Races!* stayed clear from controversy by portraying young men in the process of taking the intelligence test rather than actually visualizing its results [fig. 3.4]. Four figures in the foreground of a panel show that intelligence is not race or color dependent: the white and black soldiers on the left find the test difficult, the ones on the right find it "a push-over" and "a cinch."<sup>168</sup> The comic is far less provocative than the original intelligence test results and the pamphlet. Yet, the panel visualizes the concept of brotherhood through the construction of a desegregated space, at a time when even the army was segregated, and presents an equal distribution of intelligence between black and white Americans. Although articulating brotherhood

<sup>163</sup> "Education: Race Question," *Time*, Jan. 31, 1944, 56.

<sup>164</sup> "Education: Umbilicose," *Time*, May 15, 1944, 38.

<sup>165</sup> Margaret Mary Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in this Land* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 298.

<sup>166</sup> Pathe, "Gene Weltfish," 377.

<sup>167</sup> For a discussion of the trial, including Weltfish's communist affiliations, and Columbia University's response see: Price, *Threatening Anthropology*, 109-135; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Changing the Subject: How the Women of Columbia Shaped the Way We Think About Sex and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 198-205. For further reading on Weltfish see: Juliet Niehaus, "Education and Democracy in the Anthropology of Gene Weltfish," in *Visionary Observers: Anthropological Inquiry and Education*, ed. Jill B. R. Cheneff and Eve Hochwald (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 87-117. For Benedict see: Virginia Heyer Young, "Ruth Benedict: Relativist and Universalist," in *Visionary Observers: Anthropological Inquiry and Education*, ed. Jill B. R. Cheneff and Eve Hochwald (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 25-54.

<sup>168</sup> *There Are No Master Races!*, 4/1, SC, AJCA.



Figure 3.4. "Intelligence," *There Are No Master Races!*, 4. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

through the language of comics could be problematic, the AJC expected readers to understand that intelligence was developed and learned.

Since ideas were learned, explained the comics, they could be culturally and politically manipulated. *There Are No Master Races!* draws historical parallels between the Spanish conquest of Mexico and the transformation of Japanese and German citizens from peaceful to war-minded peoples to expose the supposed superiority of the Aryan master race as a Nazi political manipulation. The comics presents a narrative of transformation wherein the ruling class satisfied their war ambitions by politically and culturally manipulating the people [see fig. 3.4]. The narrator explains that in the sixteenth century the native population of Mexico was comprised of war-like tribes fighting against each other until the Spanish took over the continent. After the Spanish conquest, the Spaniards and the natives intermarried and “today, their descendants are our peaceful good neighbors from below the Rio Grande.”<sup>169</sup> In the panels, barely clothed tribesmen battle against each other, until the Spanish civilize them into peaceful farmers who quietly work the land. Violence and war were learned by the native peoples and could be transformed and civilized out of existence with changed circumstances. As problematic as this construction of Mexican history is, in the wartime context, the panels articulated to readers the possibility of wartime Pan-American cooperation against the Axis and a post-war global transformation into peace.<sup>170</sup>

The warrior native Mexican tribes are tamed by civilization, but Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese leaders reverse the process by transforming farmers into warriors, argued the comics. In a caption above an idyllic scene of Japanese civilization, the narrator explains: “The Japanese – as recently as fifty years ago – were peaceful

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 4/3.

<sup>170</sup> In 1942, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, working with Rothschild and Nathan Schachner, used the comic book *Nuestro Futuro – ¿Hombres Libres, O Esclavos?* (*Our Future – Free Men or Slaves?*) to propagate Pan-American cooperation in Mexico and South America. Elena Hristova, “*Our Future – Free Men or Slaves?*: Imagining Pan-American Cooperation against the Axis in a World War II Propaganda Comic Book” (paper presented at the conference Marginal Cartographies: Researching beyond Borders, University of Warwick, April 28, 2012); Elena Hristova, “*Nuestro Futuro – ¿Hombres Libres, O Esclavos?*: Imagining U.S. – Mexican Cooperation against the Axis powers in a World War II Propaganda Comic Book” (paper presented at the conference Trans-nationalizing Popular Culture, Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Stony Brook University, New York, April 20, 2012).





Figure 3.5. "War-minded peoples," *There Are No Master Races!*, 5. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

fisherman and farmers, poets and artists.”<sup>171</sup> With the opening up of trade between Japan and the U.S. in 1854, Japanese leaders began to emulate U.S. military power [see fig. 3.4]. The transformation of peace culminates into the war-like faces of Japanese soldiers, who resemble the image of Mussolini in the next panel [fig. 3.5]. The open shouting mouths of the Japanese soldier and Mussolini visually emphasize that war-like ambitions are a result of personal desires, not racial inheritance. The narrator explains that Hitler too, revived the “warlike ambitions held in the German ruling caste for many generations.”<sup>172</sup> The construction of the Aryan master race was a way to manipulate the people: “If we are to conquer the world, we will have to teach our youth that they are unbeatable,” explains Hitler.<sup>173</sup> Accordingly, with the help of propaganda, Hitler and Goebbels construct an Aryan master race and use Jews as binary opposites.

These explanations were meant to undermine the strength of the Axis powers and affirm to readers that U.S. soldiers and workers were fighting a people that had fallen for propaganda teaching them to feel superior. By extension, the comics’ argument continued, the Germans and the Japanese were diverted from the rightful course of history by their leaders. Education and civilization would bring them back on track. The AJC set the terms of their educational campaign so that the comics provided biological, anthropological, and historical knowledge that would lead readers to dismiss the existence of an Aryan master race and see through Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda. Dorothy M. Nathan, a staff member at the AJC, reported that when *There Are No Master Races!* was tested to determine its effectiveness, the results showed that it “definitely combats anti-Semitism.”<sup>174</sup> Comics were proving to be useful tools in educating Americans into brotherhood.

In January 1942, Rothschild warned that once the country joined the war there would be a public demand for a scapegoat, a minority group, probably Jews, who could be blamed for war-mongering.<sup>175</sup> To prevent Jews from becoming the scapegoat, the

<sup>171</sup> *There Are No Master Races!*, 4/4, SC, AJCA.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 5/3.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Memorandum by Dorothy M. Nathan, “There Are No Master Races,” July 13, 1945, Folder “Race Relations – Mass Media Publications – ‘There Are No Master Races’ ’44-47,” Box 256, AJC Record Group 347.17.10, GEN-10, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Center for Jewish History, New York (YIVO Archives hereafter).

<sup>175</sup> Rothschild, “Plans for Combating anti-Semitism in 1942,” Jan. 21, 1942, SC, AJCA, accessed May 11, 2011, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-21.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-21.PDF).

comics *They Got the Blame* constructed a brotherhood of religions based on a shared experience of persecution. In the process, the comics' visual language defined Jews as a religious minority with an equal stake in the defense of democracy against irrational Nazism. In 1944, the AJC's *Committee Reporter* praised the publication of the comics *They Got the Blame*, based on the pamphlet *They Got the Blame: The Story of Scapegoats in History*.<sup>176</sup> Compared to the pamphlet's sixty-three pages and nine illustrations, the comics was only seven pages long. The comics' combination of format, medium, and message dwarfed the initial pamphlet run of 22,000 copies with close to two and a half million reprints. Social science teachers from around the country requested the comics; the National Conference of Christians and Jews sent copies to army chaplains; libraries in army hospitals and transports carrying soldiers overseas stocked the comics; even George Walsh, the North California Director of the FEPC requested reprints.<sup>177</sup> The AFL and the CIO distributed their own reprints with added messages from the unions' leaders.<sup>178</sup> The army, as well as religious and labor organizations popularized the message of racial and religious brotherhood as part of the larger intergroup relations movement. *They Got the Blame* created a sense of religious brotherhood among Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish Americans, stressed that religious belief was an essential part of democracy and Americanism, and articulated Judeo-Christianity as the faith of democracy. Simultaneously, the comics argued that Nazi persecution of religious minorities and attacks on religious belief was a sign of un-American primitivism.

*They Got the Blame* plays into the long history of global persecution of religious minorities to unite them in the fight against anti-Semitism. From the outset, the comics communicates that scapegoating is a sign of primitivism that counters the rationality and modernity of American democracy. Taking the reader on a journey through that history, the comics explains that the "primitive Bhars tribe" of India believed in magical rituals and made a young female water buffalo their scapegoat for cholera [fig. 3.6].<sup>179</sup>

<sup>176</sup> "They Got the Blame – A New Venture in Education," *Committee Reporter*, 1944, SC, AJCA, accessed May 14, 2011, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-7.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-7.PDF).

<sup>177</sup> "They Got the Blame," n. d., Folder "Comics Materials produced by the National Labor Service," Box 215, AJC RG 347.17.10, GEN-10, YIVO Archives; *They Got the Blame* (Young Men's Christian Association, 1942), SC, AJCA, accessed Oct. 4, 2010, available at <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1720>. These imprints have resulted in confusion over the origins of the comic book in Martin, "Establishing Counterhegemony through Narrative."

<sup>178</sup> "They Got the Blame – A New Venture in Education," SC, AJCA.

<sup>179</sup> *They Got the Blame*, 1/2, SC, AJCA.





Figure 3.6. "The scapegoat trick," *They Got the Blame*, 1. Young Men's Christian Association, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1720>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1944 by unknown.





Figure 3.7. "Scapegoats in history," *They Got the Blame*, 2-3. Young Men's Christian Association, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1720>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1944 by unknown.

The tribe trusts that driving their scapegoat out of the village will cure the cholera and alleviate all their misfortunes. The historical journey in the comics continues to the Roman Empire, where early Christians became the scapegoat for “drought, flood or famine,” and were “beaten, tortured and executed.”<sup>180</sup> The comics reminds readers that Emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome in AD 64, and that it was even illegal to be a Christian during the reign of Emperor Trajan [fig. 3.7].<sup>181</sup> The two stories link the primitivism of the Indian tribe to the historic persecution of religious groups. Through this shared history of persecution, the comics conveyed to readers that wartime anti-Semitic propaganda was just a part of the traditional scapegoating of religious minorities.

The AJC purposefully focused on the scapegoating of religious groups, rather than racial or ethnic minorities, in order to circumvent the racial politics of the time and to link Judaism and Christianity in a common tradition of persecution. *They Got the Blame* constructs Irish immigrants as a religious minority by focusing their story around a local church and its priest.<sup>182</sup> Later in the comics, another Catholic priest is marched into a concentration camp because his beliefs compelled him to speak out against Hitler [fig. 3.8]. The choice of a Catholic priest was deliberate because a Rabbi would have been counter-productive. Rothschild and psychologists working for the AJC’s Department of Scientific Research argued against isolating Jews as a persecuted group. Instead, they supported the portrayal of Jews as a part of American civilization and the threat of Nazism on religious belief.<sup>183</sup> By developing a historical narrative of religious persecution and simultaneously linking religious belief to civilization, the comics visualized a Judeo-Christian brotherhood as a sign of Americanism under threat from Nazi totalitarianism. The comics conveyed to readers that an attack on American religion was attack on American democracy.

The AJC and the comics’ creators understood that religious convictions held an important place in American society. Moreover, these convictions could link the

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 2/5-6.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 2/5.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>183</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Defense Against Specific Attacks,” SC, AJCA; Rothschild, “Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?,” SC, AJCA.



Figure 3.8. "A world free of prejudice and intolerance," *They Got the Blame*, 6-7. Young Men's Christian Association, 1942. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: SC, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=1720>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. © 1944 by unknown.

wartime plight of American and European Jews to Biblical teachings. In the pamphlet, Gould stressed that religious belief is “spiritually vital” and that hatred of religious minorities violates the proverb, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”<sup>184</sup> Even the scientifically based *There Are No Master Races!* affirmed the importance of religious beliefs. On the first page, the comic roots racial brotherhood in the Creation Story: “The Bible story that Adam and Eve were the parents of the human race gains new strength from science, which shows that all human beings are related, and that no one race is superior to another.”<sup>185</sup> Working together, religion and science confirmed the morality and rationality of racial and religious brotherhood. In *They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!*, the AJC advocated brotherhood by linking shared religious beliefs, scientific proof of racial equality, and American democracy. In a context of accusations of communist sympathies leveled at Jews, religious belief proved their commitment to both American spirituality and American democracy.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, it defined Jews as solely a religious group.

#### PSYCHOANALYZING PREJUDICE AND LAUGHING AT THE NAZIS

*They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!* presented the psychological health of American democracy in opposition to Nazi racial pseudoscience.<sup>187</sup> According to the AJC and their comics, brotherhood rooted in a common Judeo-Christian religious belief and scientifically proven racial equality confirmed the psychological stability and right thinking of Americans. In 1941, Rothschild warned that “the rate at which a nation will slip into a state of confusion and impotence is proportional to the rapidity with which an anti-semitic movement is propagated.”<sup>188</sup> By linking mental stability, physical potency, and the destructive effects of anti-Semitism, Rothschild explained that only persistent education could prevent national confusion and impotence during the war. Americans had to refine the borders

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<sup>184</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 52.

<sup>185</sup> *There Are No Master Races!*, 1/2, SC, AJCA.

<sup>186</sup> On Feb. 20, 1939, J. Wheeler-Hill, National Secretary of the German-American Bund, in his opening address at Madison Square Garden, stated that the organization opposed the “all international Marxist and therefore Jewish preaching of Class-Warfare.”

<sup>187</sup> A version of this section was presented by the author at the University of Sussex American Studies Research Seminar on January 31, 2012, and at the University of Sussex History Department Postgraduate Workshop on March 14, 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Rothschild, “On Plans for 1941,” 7, SC, AJCA.

of sane democracy and learn to recognize racial pseudoscience and prejudice. In turn, recognizing scapegoating as a Nazi propaganda tool would preserve the health of the country. The AJC constructed the scapegoat technique, as well as hatred of minorities and belief in Nazi pseudoscience as a form of uncivilized primitivism used by un-American savages living in a “simple world of terror and superstition.”<sup>189</sup> These savages were the opposite of rational Americans living in a complex world defined by scientific knowledge. Although the multi-ethnic American body was capable of fighting the war, the American mind too had to be prepared for the fight.

The AJC’s visual propaganda actively engaged in an “association process” to define scapegoating and its prejudiced users as primitive and psychologically damaged. The method combined research in psychology, psychoanalysis, and conscious and subconscious desires, to persuade the population of the merit of a new idea or product by connecting it to an existing belief. Rothschild explained that whether that belief was positive or negative was irrelevant: “We like something which is associated with a likable thing. We dislike or hate something which is associated with a disliked or hateful thing.”<sup>190</sup> Rothschild had a deep understanding of how the average American bought an idea. He believed that anti-Semites and Nazis had accessed the “deep rooted desires or needs” of the population. The AJC too, could access those same desires and needs in the fight against prejudice. Their comics accessed the “deep-seated emotional belief” of each American so that when faced with the idea of brotherhood, a person believed: “This means me.”<sup>191</sup> At the same time, Rothschild rationalized, if the majority of Americans understood the ramifications of the hated Nazis, then “Nazism itself would represent an emotionally repulsive thing.”<sup>192</sup> The AJC hoped that by a process of association, the comics’ readers would see the U.S. as the epitome of modernity and rational thinking. In turn, as patriotic Americans, readers would associate themselves with the opposition to pseudoscience and scapegoating and see them as “strange folk habits” derived from “primitive fears and passions” and “limited knowledge of natural science.”<sup>193</sup> The rhetoric established scapegoating as a mental disturbance; simultaneously, it linked in the public mind the mental stability of Americans to the

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<sup>189</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 9.

<sup>190</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Defense Against Specific Attacks,” 4, SC, AJCA.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 10, 13.



country's ability to fight in the war. Even Elmer Davis, Director of the OWI, agreed that securing the workings of the American mind through scientific education would be instrumental in setting the nation on a path of thinking straight after the war.<sup>194</sup> Davis explicitly connected the future of democracy to the psychological health of the nation and every individual within it. The AJC ensured the mental stability of the nation by containing and curing the fanatical mental disease of racial and religious prejudice.

The problem with combating prejudice, and anti-Semitism in particular, emerged from the ambiguous definition of the term "anti-Semitism" as well as the problems the AJC and most Americans faced with defining what "Jew" meant. In 1945, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, at the time known as the Yiddish Scientific Institute, asked prominent Jews and Gentiles, as well as many educators, academics, politicians, and labor leaders about their opinion on the deletion of the category "Hebrew," meaning the Jewish race, from U.S. immigration forms. Most respondents agreed that it should be removed, however, had difficulty in establishing what being Jewish meant and therefore what should be the replacement term. For some, Jews shared linguistic knowledge, a definition complicated by those unfamiliar with Yiddish or Hebrew. For others, Jews shared a religion, yet even this characterization was problematic in regards to non-practicing Jews. For those who replied to the questionnaire, being a Jew was a combination of shared linguistic and religious history, common ethnic roots, a shared past of persecution, and, most importantly, a sense of self-identification.<sup>195</sup>

In contrast, the concept of "anti-Semitism" was based on the idea that Jews were a racial group. Wilhelm Marr (1818–1904) coined the term in his influential essay *The Victory of Judaism over Germandom, Considered from a Non-Religious Point of View*, which had gone through twelve editions by 1879.<sup>196</sup> Marr insisted that Jews be treated as a race and replaced the words Jew and Judaism with "Semite" and "Semitism." Coupled with the prefix "anti," the words gained global usage.<sup>197</sup> The AJC faced a problem in finding a meaning and a cure for "anti-Semitism," because the concept was

<sup>194</sup> Elmer Davis, foreword to *They Got the Blame: The Story of Scapegoats in History*, by Kenneth M. Gould (New York: Association Press, 1943), 3-4.

<sup>195</sup> YIVO, *The Classification of Jewish Immigrants*, especially replies 2, 41, 77, 114.

<sup>196</sup> Marr founded the League of Anti-Semites, which although failed as an organization was one of the first efforts to create a popular anti-Semitic political movement.

<sup>197</sup> Blakeslee, *The Death of American Antisemitism*, 14-15.

constructed outside of the Jewish experience. But the Committee pressed on. By searching for a cure for anti-Semitism, the AJC engaged in a re-construction of what racial and religious prejudice would mean for straight thinking Americans after the war. In their propaganda, the meaning of prejudice became intrinsically linked to the mental health of the individual and the country as a whole.<sup>198</sup>

The Committee financially and ideologically supported psychoanalytic research that interrogated the mental workings of anti-Semites to establish anti-Semitism as a psychological disease that could be cured with the right treatment. The rhetoric of the psychosis of anti-Semitism was popularized in 1882, when Leon Pinsker, a Russian Zionist and physician developed “Judeophobia” as a medical term to replace “anti-Semitism,” and defined the phobia as a psychosis transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>199</sup> By the 1940s, the leaders of the AJC defined anti-Semitism and prejudice as “mental disorders.”<sup>200</sup> Rothschild argued that “racial and religious hatreds are fatal to the permanent health of a democracy,” and that racial and religious scapegoats are only demanded in “the realm of madness.”<sup>201</sup> John Slawson, the AJC Executive Vice President, who had received a PhD in psychiatry, spoke of anti-Semitism as an “emotional disease.”<sup>202</sup> The pamphlet *They Got the Blame* warned readers that extreme intolerance had a destructive effect on the mind, undermined the personality, and even physical health.<sup>203</sup> Put simply, the hysteria of prejudice and anti-Semitism could lead to the psychical inability of the individual and the country to defend itself and democracy.<sup>204</sup> To protect the mental health of American democracy, the AJC would have to cure the individuals infected with prejudice.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Gould’s *They Got the Blame* had questions for group discussion, which suggested that anti-Semitism could be a fatal illness for American democracy and asked the readers to discuss topics such as: “The persecution of a minority ultimately endangers the majority” and “Racial and religious hatreds are fatal to the permanent health of a democracy.”

<sup>199</sup> Leon Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation* (1882), Jewish Virtual Library, accessed April 29, 2011, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/pinsker.html>; Carey McWilliams, *A Mask of Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), 87.

<sup>200</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 206.

<sup>201</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 61; Rothschild, “Report to Survey Committee,” n. d., 18, SC, AJCA, accessed May 10, 2011, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3310>.

<sup>202</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 49.

<sup>203</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 53.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>205</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 49.

The AJC employed a psychiatric vocabulary to define prejudiced individuals as psychologically disturbed. Words such as “frustrated,” “fanatical,” and “weak,” became part of the common definition of an anti-Semite. Leading psychiatrists and social scientists defined the Nazi enemy as misguided, psychologically disturbed, and irrational. The Institute of Social Research, founded in Frankfurt, Germany in 1923 had closed with Hitler’s advent to power in 1933. Many of its members moved to Columbia University and the University of California where, provided with facilities, they continued searching for a cure for anti-Semitism.<sup>206</sup> During and immediately after the war, scholars such as Max Horkheimer, Samuel H. Flowerman, Marie Jahoda, and Theodore Adorno worked in conjunction with the AJC’s Department of Scientific Research. Slawson and the AJC became instrumental in organizing and financing the five volumes of *Studies in Prejudice*, where psychologists and human scientists sought to isolate and cure anti-Semitism and prejudice.

In 1947, the *AJC Committee Reporter* celebrated the findings of the Institute for Social Research. The study found that anti-Semites were fundamentally weak, immature, and dependent; they lacked direction and confidence, feared failure, avoided competition, were unhappy in their marital relationships, and unable to maintain intimate friendships.<sup>207</sup> For the sick personality, anti-Semitism was a compensation of unrealized desire for status, power, money, social advantage, and privilege.<sup>208</sup> In light of these findings, Hitler, as “the world’s most fanatical hater of Jews,” was the archetypal anti-Semitic personality, “miserable and frustrated.”<sup>209</sup> The allusions to marriage and intimacy, references to frustration, and the physical and sexual manifestations of prejudice were an obvious pun on Hitler’s own alleged sexual inabilities and perversions. Moreover, the description implied that Hitler’s anti-Semitism was a tool to gain status, power, and money; his hatred of Jews was a “product of frustrated aggression,” in other words, his own frustrations with himself.<sup>210</sup> The rhetoric of frustrated aggression was so popular that in 1948 the journalist Carey McWilliams affirmed: “Today we know, on the basis of scientific evidence, that frustration breeds

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<sup>206</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 49.

<sup>207</sup> “Roots of Antisemitism Revealed in Study of Psychoanalysts’ Cases,” *Committee Reporter*, May 1947, 5, quoted in Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 49-50.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 36. For the uses of psychoanalysis see: Stephen Frosh, *Hate and the ‘Jewish Science’: Anti-Semitism, Nazism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

<sup>210</sup> “Minutes of Professional Staff Meeting,” 3, SF Anti-Semitism, AJCA.



aggression.”<sup>211</sup> By deeming Hitler, and so anti-Semites and prejudiced individuals as frustrated fanatics, the AJC divested their ideological message of rational standing. Yet, since the Committee understood that rationality was never the premise of prejudice, their propaganda also ridiculed its followers.

The AJC propaganda used humor to expose the irrationality of prejudice, and to ridicule anti-Semitic propaganda techniques. According to Horkheimer, mocking the scapegoat technique and the myth of the Aryan race should be a priority in the fight against prejudice. He argued that American manuals for recognizing Nazi propaganda on the radio should scorn anti-Semitic propaganda techniques and propagandists rather than rely on intellectual appeals.<sup>212</sup> Rothschild accepted that “humor, poking fun at the anti-Semite is a good weapon against him,” and explained that humor was a “promising way of coping with the subconscious factors involved in anti-Semitism.”<sup>213</sup>

*There Are No Master Races!* directly followed the approach and through a successful use of the language of comics constructed Nazi race ideology as a visual oxymoron. In one panel, Nazi racial theories are juxtaposed to the physical reality of the Nazi leadership to ridicule the “Aryan” race myth [fig. 3.9]. According to Nazi wartime propaganda, and the speech balloons of the three figures, the Aryan man was slender, tall, and blond. Yet, the leaders of the Aryan race in the comics are far from this ideal: Hermann Goering is fat, Joseph Goebbels is short, and Hitler is a brunette. The panel showed that the Nazi Aryan theories were ridiculous when compared to the leaders of the party. Readers were supposed to laugh at the image, the leaders of the Nazi party, and their ideas. The AJC hoped that laughing at the Nazis would also disarm propaganda that employed prejudice. Apart from being funny, the image is a visualization of a well-formed organizational directive, rooted in psychiatric and social research, and produced to make readers understand that Nazi theories lack scientific grounding and are in fact laughable.

The AJC believed that by following the findings and advice of psychiatrists, the ridicule of Nazi racial theories and propaganda would lead Americans to subconsciously

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<sup>211</sup> McWilliams, *Mask of Privilege*, 80.

<sup>212</sup> “Minutes of Professional Staff Meeting,” 3, SF Anti-Semitism, AJCA.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 7.



Figure 3.9. "Pure Aryans," *There Are No Master Races!*, 6. New York: The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1944. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Restored image source: Out of This World, <http://kb-outofthisworld.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/anti-racist-propaganda-in-comics-true.html>.

Image courtesy of Out of This World and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.





disassociate themselves from the mocked ideas. In the process of disassociation, they would embrace racial and religious brotherhood as a sign of patriotism and rationality because, Gould explained, “Americans don’t like to be suckers!”<sup>214</sup> The AJC were no “suckers” either and tested whether their educational comics and cartoons had the power to change minds. During 1945, the *New Masses* magazine artist Carl Rose created a dozen *Mr. Biggott* cartoons for the AJC’s fight against prejudice.<sup>215</sup> Millions of Americans saw the cartoons weekly and monthly in local and national, as well as domestic and army newspapers.<sup>216</sup> In *Mr. Biggott*, Rose used humor to present in a clear-cut way the un-Americanism of prejudice [see fig. 3.10]. The premise of the cartoons was simple: in a setting that spoke of American brotherhood’s wartime bravery, such as a military cemetery, a roll call, or a veterans hospital, Mr. Biggott, drawn with a cobweb growing on his head to signify his ideas as outdated, would make a comment about racial purity or racial and religious segregation. The reader was expected to find the comment inappropriate in the context of the setting and ridicule Mr. Biggott and his beliefs. During research tests for *The Studies in Prejudice* series, the cartoons were shown to a test sample of prejudiced individuals to determine whether they understood the message of brotherhood propaganda.<sup>217</sup> Following the logic of Rothschild’s association process, the AJC researchers hypothesized that by viewing the cartoons, subjects would recognize Mr. Biggott as absurd, and that their identification with his ideas would ultimately lead to a rejection of their own prejudice to avoid identification with bigotry.<sup>218</sup>

The results of the experiment showed that the psychology of prejudice was hard to fight, even with humor and ridicule. Over two-thirds of the sample group

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<sup>214</sup> Gould, *They Got the Blame*, 53.

<sup>215</sup> The *New Masses* was a Marxist publication at a time when the AJC was becoming a prominent partner in the fight against communism. This problem was negotiated by establishing an extra organizational layer between the AJC and the magazine, namely the National Labor Service.

<sup>216</sup> Naomi Grand to Ethel Phillips, Oct. 3, 1945, SC, AJCA, accessed Feb. 7, 2011, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=9150>.

<sup>217</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 50; “Form for the Collection of Clinical Data on Anti-Minority and Anti-Semitic Attitudes,” Feb. 1, 1946, Studies in Prejudice, AJCA, accessed May 10, 2012, [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/5A64.PDF](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/5A64.PDF). Men from the sample group had sought treatment from psychiatric professionals, who then assessed the subject’s attitude to minorities by a questionnaire and through descriptive and observational data. These were used to define the strength of prejudice towards immigrants, minorities, and Jews.

<sup>218</sup> Eunice Cooper and Marie Jahoda, “The Evasion of Propaganda: How Prejudiced People Respond to Anti-Prejudice Propaganda,” *Journal of Psychology* 23 (1947): 17.

misunderstood the message of *Mr. Biggott*.<sup>219</sup> Test subjects transformed and distorted the meaning of the cartoons through what the researchers Eunice Cooper and Marie Jahoda explained to be a “derailment of understanding.”<sup>220</sup> Some interpreted Mr. Biggott’s ideas as a “lower class” symbol; for some, the cartoon became a kind of test for judging personality characteristics; some caricatured Mr. Biggott and made him the target of ridicule; some made him intellectually inferior; some transformed Mr. Biggott into a foreigner or a Jew.<sup>221</sup> Clearly, existing prejudice affected the perception and interpretation of anti-prejudice propaganda. A test subject’s prejudice made him prefer to avoid facing up to his ideas and their implications, rather than defend himself and his views, or admit an error of judgment.<sup>222</sup> Humor and ridicule had little impact on prejudiced beliefs and strengthened existing ideas of racial and religious relations. Cooper and Jahoda commented that people who evaded the intended meaning were irrational and had a “poorly developed ego structure.”<sup>223</sup> Having prejudiced views meant that the person was psychologically disturbed, and his or her resistance to brotherhood propaganda was itself a form of disturbance of normal rationalizing processes. Psychiatrists and social scientists confirmed that anti-Semites were mentally disturbed, which in turn strengthened the AJC’s understanding of anti-Semitism as an irrational disease. Finding a cure for the psychosis of prejudice would be harder than the AJC had imagined.

## CONCLUSION

The AJC employed contemporary sociological, anthropological, and psychiatric research to give scientific grounding to their brotherhood educational campaign. Yet fighting prejudice through comics exposed the difficulty in visually displaying textual and ideological ideas of racial and religious equality in a context of popular anti-Semitism and national segregation. As part of their educational campaign, the AJC comics constructed racial and religious brotherhood as scientifically accurate and as symbolic of right thinking Americanism. Juxtaposed to brotherhood, the comics defined

<sup>219</sup> Robert F. Wagner, “Films Without Endings,” *Educational Technology Research and Development* 3.2 (1955): 141.

<sup>220</sup> Cooper and Jahoda, “The Evasion of Propaganda,” 17.

<sup>221</sup> Cooper and Jahoda, “The Evasion of Propaganda,” 17-18.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 22.

racial and religious prejudice as primitive and un-American. The Committee's desire to isolate and cure prejudice divested anti-Semitism of political logic and defined it as a form of psychosis. The Committee's scientific research showed that their propaganda was struggling to change prejudiced minds. Another disappointment came from reports about the reception of the comics *They Got the Blame*. In 1944, teachers in a Long Island City high school distributed copies of the comics to children normally interested in comic strips. They observed that the students were disinterested in *They Got the Blame* and considered reading the story as homework. The heavy-handed use of text in the captions made the comics appear more educational than entertaining to the young readers. The students soon converted the comics into paper airplanes.<sup>224</sup>

The AJC strategies proved somewhat ineffective, and the Committee devised new ones. Implicit in the *Mr. Biggott* test results was the idea that although prejudiced individuals' minds were hard to change, the beliefs of those Americans who supported racial and religious brotherhood could only be strengthened with anti-prejudice propaganda. In the AJC's post-war strategy, adults and adolescents who already believed in brotherhood became the torchbearers for American democracy. From 1946 to 1948 the comic book *The Story of Labor* and the comic strip *Joe Worker* became a part of the AJC's long-range educational work that linked prejudice to social and economic conditions. These comics constructed American workers and youths as the future protectors of American capitalist democracy, and by extension of its religious and racial minorities. Again, the AJC tried to define anti-Semitism and find a cure. This time, racial and religious prejudice would be understood as a product of economic conditions that could only be eradicated through the power of workers to improve the ailments of capitalism. Once again, the AJC comics would be the visual front-line of the fight against prejudice.

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<sup>224</sup> "Minutes of Professional Staff Meeting," 6, SF Anti-Semitism, AJCA.

## Chapter 4

### Labor and Brotherhood after the Second World War

#### INTRODUCTION

When the war ended, the AJC continued their fight for brotherhood with the comic book *The Story of Labor* and the comic strips *Joe Worker*. The two comics built on the arguments presented in *Three Pals*, *Extra Effort*, *There Are No Master Races!*, and *They Got the Blame*. Relying on the wartime experiences of interracial and interreligious camaraderie of soldiers and workers, they unified the plight of America's unionized workers with the fight for racial and religious brotherhood. In other words, the AJC engaged in a laboring of brotherhood. In *The Cultural Front: the Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Denning explains his use of "laboring" as reflective of the pervasive use of "labor" and its synonyms in the period, the "proletarianization" of American culture, the visibility of the labor of cultural production, and the struggle to rework American culture.<sup>225</sup> But in *The Story of Labor*, the process of laboring was a political appropriation of U.S. history that constructed a shared struggle between American workers and racial and religious minorities. The process of laboring articulated the struggle for brotherhood as the responsibility of workers and their labor unions. The post-war AJC comics used the experiences and the historical memory of soldiers and workers to root the post-war labor struggles in a long labor movement. Thus, through a process of laboring the AJC defined workers and labor unions as a political force for improving the social and economic conditions of all Americans within capitalism and democracy.<sup>226</sup>

*The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker* presented an American political and economic system where capitalism, despite its pitfalls, was essential for democracy to function. In the American imagination, the end of the war established American capitalist democracy as victorious over the slave labor and totalitarianism of Nazi Germany. The AJC hoped that capitalism and democracy would protect America's

<sup>225</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>226</sup> Elena Hristova, "Joe Worker and the Story of Labor: Envisioning the Labor Movement after the Second World War" (paper presented at the Seventh South-East History Hub Conference, University of Kent, June 13, 2012).

racial and religious minorities, especially Jews, from the fate suffered by European Jews in the Holocaust. Rothschild had warned that at times of economic downturn, demagogues could easily scapegoat blacks, Catholics, or Jews, for taking away jobs.<sup>227</sup> The popular wartime anti-Semitic doggerel “Marines Hymn” presented Jews in this way, defining them as the economic beneficiaries of the conflict: “When the War is done and victory won, / All the Jews will have their jobs.”<sup>228</sup> After the war, the Committee appealed to the experiences and historical memory of soldiers and workers to develop an ideological framework where the partnership between labor unionism and racial and religious brotherhood was a pathway towards the economic, political, and social security of all Americans.

In his 1941 State of the Union Address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated Freedom from Want as the intersection of economic and political security, each dependent on the other.<sup>229</sup> By the summer of 1944, the State Department had developed a prognosis for the future economic situation of the liberated European countries.<sup>230</sup> On March 12, 1947, the Truman Doctrine began providing aid to Greece and Turkey, and a year later, in April 1948, the European Recovery Program provided economic support to Western European countries. Roosevelt’s articulation of Freedom from Want, the Truman Doctrine, and the European Recovery Program all relied on the premise that the economic wellbeing of a country ensured internal stability and global peace. For the AJC too, U.S. economic stability meant the stability of the democratic form of government and, in turn, the fundamental freedoms that protected all religious and racial minorities. Moreover, in anticipation of the Red Scare and early Cold War anti-communist hysteria, support for capitalism as fundamental for democracy, worked to disassociate the AJC, as well as the CIO and the AFL, from accusations of communism and Bolshevism often targeted at Jews and labor unions.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> For further agitation techniques exposed in the *Studies in Prejudice*, see: Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study Of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949).

<sup>228</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, “Anti-Semitic Literature in Military Establishments,” SC, AJCA.

<sup>229</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, State of the Union Address, Jan. 6, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, accessed May 12, 2011, <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/od4frees.html>.

<sup>230</sup> David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1992), 21.

<sup>231</sup> For accusations of communism of Jews see: Stuart F. Lane, *Jews on Broadway: An Historical Survey of Performers, Playwrights, Composers, Lyricists and Producers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 94-118; Sanua, *Let Us Prove*, 74-77.



During the war, leading labor organizations including the CIO and the AFL, took the No Strike Pledge but failed to contain rank and file wildcat, sympathy, and race strikes, as well as spontaneous work stoppages.<sup>232</sup> Workers walked off their jobs for reasons as varied as increased working hours and the entry of blacks and women into previously segregated posts.<sup>233</sup> Wartime strikes spoke of workers' anxieties over the changing nature of work, the shifting racial make-up of the workplace, and the desire to hold on to some form of economic and social stability. In 1945, the largest strike wave yet overtook American industries. Once the military began cancelling orders, cutbacks in working hours and mass firings brought on increasing unemployment and a reduction in wages.<sup>234</sup> By October 1945, two million workers were unemployed and the prospects for future employment looked slim with ten million servicemen and women returning to the job market.<sup>235</sup>

As Presidents Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman aimed to create a stable and peaceful global economy, American workers feared that victory over the Axis powers while ridding the world of totalitarianism, would also remove federal economic activity and the consequent demobilization would bring a return to conditions experienced during the Great Depression.<sup>236</sup> A Gallup poll from July 1944 recorded that 55 percent of Americans thought post-war unemployment would be between four to ten million; 8 percent put predictions of unemployment at twenty million or more, almost a third of the fifty-six million workforce.<sup>237</sup> Five months later, in December 1944, another Gallup poll showed that fears of post-war unemployment were rising: 68 percent of interviewees believed that finding employment would be a struggle.<sup>238</sup> In this context, the AJC anticipated that the economic downturn and increase of inflation would lead to

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<sup>232</sup> For the No Strike Pledge and CIO-affiliated union strikes, work stoppages, and walkouts see: Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO 1935 – 1955* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 141-190. For opposition to the No Strike Pledge see: Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO: 1936 – 55* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 320-338.

<sup>233</sup> For wartime race strikes, walkouts, and work stoppages see: Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 69-95; Zieger, *The CIO*, 154-155. For race and labor relations see: Robert H. Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America since 1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), esp. 106-175.

<sup>234</sup> Zieger, *The CIO*, 213.

<sup>235</sup> Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 99; Sacks, "How did Jews Become White Folks?," 88; Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (London: Elek, 1976), 15.

<sup>236</sup> Davis R. B. Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 34-35.

<sup>237</sup> *Washington Post*, July 28, 1944, quoted in Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, 35-36. Total workforce data is from 1940 figures.

<sup>238</sup> *Washington Post*, Dec. 27, 1944, quoted in Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, 36.

the economic insecurity of workers, a destabilization of democracy, and social conditions where demagogues could find easy scapegoats in Jews, blacks, Catholics, or the foreign-born.

The AJC understood that workers, as members of local and national labor organizations, could play a vital role as political agents capable of stabilizing the economic system. Anticipating the work shortages at the end of the war, labor unions had been campaigning for full employment since the war began.<sup>239</sup> Their bargaining power also kept in check profit-driven big business that they saw as ready and willing to use prejudice to pit workers against each other, drive down wages, and prevent non-segregated union contracts.<sup>240</sup> Organized labor also had local and national political power: unions led the fight for a permanent FEPC, supported the abolition of the poll tax, and called for Federal legislation against lynching. With their post-war educational comics campaign, the AJC showed a firm belief that the wartime experiences of union members working with blacks, Jews, and foreign-born Americans, would prevent demagogues from setting race against race and religion against religion in the post-war economic downturn. Of course, soldiers returning from the melting pot of war were about to become workers too. With their experiences of cross-religious and cross-ethnic cooperation on the battlefield they too would become the protectors of capitalism, democracy, and American minorities.

In 1945, the AJC created a new department, the National Labor Service (NLS), which assisted the organized labor movement in an educational campaign against racial and religious intolerance and promoted brotherhood among American workers of all

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<sup>239</sup> The Employment Act of 1946, signed by President Truman on Feb. 20, placed the responsibility for economic stability on the Federal Government. The conservative Republican and Southern Democrat opposition to the act led to the amendment of the full employment clause into no more than a goal of full employment.

<sup>240</sup> See: Mark Fannin, *Labor's Promised Land: Radical Visions of Race, Gender, and Religion in the South* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 182-253; Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State: Economics, Politics, and Institutions in the South 1865 – 1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On June 25, 1941, Executive Order 8802 desegregated the nation's war production industries, after A. Phillip Randolph, leader of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, together with Bayard Rustin, and their March on Washington Movement threatened President Roosevelt with a mass protest because of the hypocrisy of fighting against Nazism abroad while the industries at home remained segregated. For the March on Washington Movement and the FEPC see: Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959).

races and religions.<sup>241</sup> The NLS worked closely with the CIO and the AFL to support their post-war labor and civil rights campaigns. David Sigman headed the new department. He was a former regional director of the AFL and a well-known figure in local and national labor relations at the time. In 1935, Sigman had proposed a bill to the Wisconsin legislature, similar to the National Labor Relations Act, to define and outlaw unfair labor practices.<sup>242</sup> The creation of a separate department to deal with the needs of workers and their unions in fighting prejudice shows how important it was for the AJC to labor the fight for racial and religious brotherhood. As during the war, the creation of a separate department put an extra organizational layer between the AJC and the readers of their comics and allowed the Committee to remain anonymous in the fight against prejudice. The NLS produced radio scripts and recordings as templates for local unions, organized a residential summer school, and provided speakers and trade union specialists to consult on discrimination problems. The educational materials that the NLS produced made “a hard subject easy to understand,” whether that subject was the impact of prejudice on wages, the FEPC, the United Nations (UN), or discrimination in housing.<sup>243</sup> *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker* became popular educational materials among labor leaders and workers alike [see fig. 4.1]. They labored, or appropriated as belonging to workers, American history to construct a usable past for labor’s post-war program, defined the enemies of labored brotherhood, and visually and rhetorically articulated the future of brotherhood.

#### LABORING AMERICAN HISTORY

In August 1945, three hundred CIO and AFL union newspapers, with a combined circulation of over twelve million, published the first six-panel comic strip of *The Story of Labor*.<sup>244</sup> A year later, the NLS published a collection of forty-five *The Story of Labor* comic strips. Close to 300,000 copies of this comic book were

<sup>241</sup> “National Labor Service Helps Unions Combat Prejudice,” *Committee Reporter*, Aug. 1945, National Labor Service (NLS hereafter), AJCA, accessed May 17, 2012, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/NLS20.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/NLS20.PDF); NLS, *Working for Labor: the Story of the National Labor Service* (National Labor Service: New York, n. d. [1946]), NLS, AJCA, accessed May 17, 2012, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/NLS19.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/NLS19.PDF).

<sup>242</sup> William Gorham Rice, Jr., “The Wisconsin Labor Relations Act in 1937,” *Wisconsin Law Review* 2 (March 1938): 229.

<sup>243</sup> NLS, *Working for Labor*, NLS, AJCA.

<sup>244</sup> “National Labor Service Helps Unions Combat Prejudice,” NLS, AJCA.



Figure 4.1. National Labor Service, “Workers reading *Joe Worker and the Story of Labor*,” detail from *Working for Labor: the Story of the National Labor Service*, 9. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/NLS19.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/NLS19.PDF).

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

distributed to individuals, organizations, and labor unions including the Washington chapter of the CIO, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees of Madison, Wisconsin, and the United Auto Workers-CIO Fair Practices.<sup>245</sup> *The Story of Labor* educated its readers on the history of labor's struggle in America. In the comics, the protagonist and personification of labor, Joe Worker, appears through the ages to explain the gains and losses of organized labor, to present important figures and organizations in the labor movement, and to articulate the threat of racial and religious prejudice to the economic security of workers. More importantly, in the context of labor unrest in the immediate post-war period, *The Story of Labor* developed a long labor movement that linked organized labor's post-war program to a historical fight for freedom.

From 1946 to 1948 the NLS published over one hundred *Joe Worker* comic strips where Joe was a union organizer who fought for labor's rights against Nazis, racists, and anti-labor demagogues.<sup>246</sup> Nat Schachner, who had worked with the AJC on other comics, wrote both *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker*. Alderman, who had created *Three Pals*, drew the images in *The Story of Labor* and the first twenty *Joe Worker* comic strips. Two cartoonists, David Berg and Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff, who later worked with Stan Lee on *Batman*, illustrated the rest often anonymously. At the time, these were artists known enough by their contemporaries to be recruited by the NLS for the job of imagining and visualizing labored brotherhood and post-war Americanism.

*The Story of Labor* labored pivotal events in U.S. history to construct a usable past for labor's post-war fight. The comics claimed the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the Second World War as significant events in the history of American workers' fight for racial and religious brotherhood. The Revolutionary War defined the U.S. as an independent country free from what the Colonists dubbed the tyranny of Great Britain's Stamp Act of 1765. *The Story of Labor* tied this independence to

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<sup>245</sup> "Joe Worker and the Story of Labor [list of unions and union newspapers receiving *Joe Worker* and *the Story of Labor* comic strips]," n. d., AJCA. Copy of list, provided by the AJCA Director Charlotte Bonelli, in author's possession. These copies have resulted in confusion over the origins of the comic book in Martin, "Anti-Conspiracy and Anti-Propaganda Rhetoric in *Joe Worker* and the Story of Labor."

<sup>246</sup> Nat Schachner, Jack Alderman, David Berg, and Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff, *Joe Worker* (New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946-1948]), NLS, AJCA, accessed May 12, 2012, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3400>.

workers' rights. In the introduction to the story, Joe explains that the workers backed the Revolutionary War and "fought for their inalienable rights – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>247</sup> The first panel of the story establishes that workers led the fight for freedom [fig. 4.2]. In a tavern in 1775, Joe rallies labor: "Fellow mechanics of New York! Sons of Liberty! British soldiers killed Americans at Lexington! Who's for fighting!"<sup>248</sup> The third panel, set at Valley Forge, where the Continental army spent the winter of 1777-1778, presents the brotherhood of soldiers fighting for independence: Patrick Sullivan, a tailor, Hyman Levy, a printer, and Joe Worker, a "plain laborer."<sup>249</sup> The names of the soldiers pointed to their background as immigrants, a Catholic and a Jew, wearing the same uniform in the fight against tyranny. The image showed to readers that soldiers and workers were interchangeable and that the brotherhood of workers was responsible for defeating the tyranny of Great Britain. The one-page story labored the Revolutionary War and constructed a visual and ideological link from the Revolution to the Second World War, where a united brotherhood of Catholics, Jews, Protestants, native, and foreign-born Americans fought against the totalitarianism of the Axis powers.

The Civil War also became a part of the long labor movement where the interests of workers were synonymous with the ideas of brotherhood. *The Story of Labor* presents the Civil War as a struggle over the future form of labor in the U.S. It explains to readers that the Union's victory radically changed the country to depend only on paid labor. Joe explains that organized labor was opposed to slavery and "fought on the side of freedom" because "workers saw the connection between human slavery and 'wage' slavery" [Fig. 4.3].<sup>250</sup> They recognized that black slave labor undercut the cost of white wage labor: "the white man can never be free while the black man is a slave," explains Joe.<sup>251</sup> The language portrays workers who fought for the Union in the Civil War as individuals who understood that slavery and racial prejudice undermine the economic freedom of all Americans.

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<sup>247</sup> Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, *The Story of Labor* (New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]), 6, Internet Archive (hereafter IA), accessed Oct. 3, 2011, <http://archive.org/details/joeworkerstoryof00scha>.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 6/1.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 6/3.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.



Figure 4.2. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "Revolutionary War," *The Story of Labor*, 6. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: IA, <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/21/items/joeworkerstoryof00scha/joeworkerstoryof00scha.pdf>.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.





Figure 4.3. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "Slave labor," *The Story of Labor*, 11. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: IA, <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/21/items/joeworkerstoryof00scha/joeworkerstoryof00scha.pdf>.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

In further three panels, a runaway slave escaping to Canada asks a white worker for help. The worker responds: “I dunno’ if you blacks get free, you’ll take our jobs away!”<sup>252</sup> Joe, with a friendly hand on the workers’ shoulder easily convinces him: “That’s what your employer wants you to think. You’re competing now! Can a free worker get \$2 a day when slave labor costs his master only 10 cents!”<sup>253</sup> With this simple explanation of the link between racial prejudice and economic exploitation, Joe Worker labored the Civil War and exposed to readers the long history of employers using racial prejudice to drive down wages. Once again, the laboring of a definitive moment in American history linked the struggle for economic freedom to the struggle for racial equality. Joe explains: “We must fight on until no man is denied his rights because he’s black or white, Jew or Christian, native or foreign-born!”<sup>254</sup> His rhetoric claimed the Civil War as a usable past for the brotherhood of workers and soldiers who had won the Second World War and were participating in the mass post-war strike wave. The narrative also partook in the formation of a national historical memory to remind these workers of the importance of racial brotherhood in the national workplace where bosses had and could use prejudice to prevent unionization and to keep labor costs down. The Second World War and the impulse towards consensus and Americanism during the early years of the Cold War popularized U.S. military history.<sup>255</sup> For the NLS, this laboring of military history was a political claim for organized labor on American historical memory. It popularized a long labor movement dating to the Revolution and defined the post-war labor struggles as natural progressions of the historical fight for liberty and freedom.

The laboring of American history in *The Story of Labor* provided readers with what the comics describes as “pride in the history of the American worker and his fight for better conditions;” it also defined labor as an integral part of Americanism.<sup>256</sup> In wartime, labor leaders failed to stop work stoppages. In 1945 and 1946, with popular support on both local and national level, a national strike wave engulfed the country.<sup>257</sup> Communities understood the striking workers, not the companies or local authorities, as

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 11/2.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 11/3.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 11/6.

<sup>255</sup> Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961 – 1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 2-4, 17.

<sup>256</sup> Schachner and Alderman, *The Story of Labor*, 2, 1A.

<sup>257</sup> See: Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step*, 405-452.

the “responsible public party” that had the larger society’s interests at heart.<sup>258</sup> Labor unions presented themselves as a responsible public party and the rhetoric of the AJC comics presented the national strike as a continuation of the historical fight for freedom and democracy at home and abroad.

*The Story of Labor* framed past strikes as labor’s legitimate political leverage in the struggle for better social and economic conditions: the 1786 Philadelphia printers’ strike and the 1791 Philadelphia carpenters’ strike were natural progressions of the Revolutionary War and the workers’ fight against tyranny. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 was a natural progression of labor’s fight in the Civil War. In both strikes, workers were the responsible public party fighting against tyrannical business owners. In a panel from the Great Railroad strike, Joe squares up to a stockholder in the foreground, while in the background a soldier shoots a child participating in the strike [fig. 4.4]. The facial expressions of Joe and the businessman reflect their respective attitudes to the scene in the background: Joe is angry at the unprovoked death and the position of the businessman’s hat and eye-line are fixed on the firing bayonet. The image visualized the labor movement as the responsible public party that remembered the long history of business owners using anti-labor and prejudiced rhetoric against workers. After the war, it was labor’s responsibility to resist these uses of prejudice.

The laboring of American history and of civic responsibility in *The Story of Labor* engaged in the larger national ideological struggle between labor and manufacturers for symbolic and real leadership in the social and economic betterment of the country.<sup>259</sup> Since the mid-1930s, the National Association of Manufacturers, an advocacy group for large industrialists, engaged in mass advertising campaigns equating big business with societal betterment and economic prosperity.<sup>260</sup> For labor unions, and in the NLS comics, workers stood firmly as the historical leaders of wartime prosperity and production. By laboring American history and civic responsibility, the NLS positioned labor as responsible for a fair and stable economic system that would ensure racial and religious brotherhood, national economic stability, and global peace.

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<sup>258</sup> Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 99-119, 112.

<sup>259</sup> For a historical overview see: Philip Dray, *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

<sup>260</sup> Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs*, 32-76. Also see: Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: Norton, 2009).



Figure 4.4. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "The 1877 Railroad Union strike," *The Story of Labor*, 12. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: IA, <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/21/items/joeworkerstoryof00scha/joeworkerstoryof00scha.pdf>.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

## THE ENEMIES OF LABORED BROTHERHOOD

The penultimate page of *The Story of Labor* presents organized labor's program for the post-war world: "full employment;" "full production to feed, clothe, and house all people properly;" "wages that give real purchasing power;" "a 30-hour working week for adequate leisure;" "a democratic way of life;" and "an end to racial and religious hates and prejudices." [Fig. 4.5].<sup>261</sup> To achieve these goals, the comics explained, "workers must be united."<sup>262</sup> The final panel of the page displays a labored brotherhood capable of fighting for these goals: workers of different races, and probably religions, stand united, wearing the same white shirts with rolled up sleeves, testifying to their image as the image of labor. But *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker* also visually and rhetorically constructed those who opposed labor's post-war goals as the enemies of labored brotherhood. The real enemies of labor in *The Story of Labor* were Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo, the KKK, and the big business owners. They were just as important as the fictional enemies of labor in *Joe Worker*: Morton Gates, Diana Dale, their party of hate, the American Eagles, later renamed Condors, Josiah Willett, the high-school teacher of hate, and Hassler, an escaped Nazi criminal who had taken over several businesses in the town of Galesburg. The comics consistently visualize all these enemies through wartime anti-Nazi iconography.

War propaganda campaigns by the OWI helped to popularize anti-Nazi feelings among Americans at home and on the front by producing images that defined Nazism, Hitler, and the Axis powers as bestial and un-American.<sup>263</sup> Relying on the memories of soldiers and workers, the NLS developed an association between the readers' wartime anti-Nazi feelings and post-war anti-brotherhood and anti-labor rhetoric. The resulting definition of the enemies of labored brotherhood participated in the early Cold War national political debate over who would be America's post-war enemy. While Senator Joseph McCarthy defined the nation's enemy as communism and homosexuality, the NLS comics outlined the enemy as Nazism and fascism, which threatened national and

<sup>261</sup> Schachner and Alderman, *The Story of Labor*, 46, 1A.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 46/5.

<sup>263</sup> For examples of the visual bestiality of the Axis powers see: Rhodes, *Propaganda the Art of Persuasion*, esp. posters "Buy the New Victory Bonds," "Again," "Stop Him and the Job's Done," "Stop this monster that stops at nothing ... produce to the Limit!"





Figure 4.5. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "Labor's program for the post-war world," *The Story of Labor*, 46. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: IA, <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/21/items/joeworkerstoryof00scha/joeworkerstoryof00scha.pdf>.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

global peace, labor's fight for economic security, and America's racial and religious minorities.<sup>264</sup>

*Joe Worker* and *The Story of Labor* repeatedly presented the enemies of labored brotherhood as Nazi agents or Americans under their economic or ideological influence. In *Joe Worker* the fictional American Condor Party is the primary villain that epitomizes the intersection of anti-labor ideology and racial and religious prejudice. The party has strong visual links to Nazism: a placard carrying the Party's logo appears throughout *Joe Worker* in the background of Morton Gates and Diana Dale's hideout and at the Condors' meetings. The image changed from its first appearance in *Joe Worker* #7 as an eagle on a tree branch, into the swastika-like eagle in *Joe Worker* #14 [fig. 4.6]. By using the eagle, a traditional symbol of the U.S. government, the party claims political legitimacy and symbolic power. Clearly, the artist Alderman saw the potential of adapting the eagle into a Nazi swastika, in order to alter the cultural meaning of the party. The swastika eagle then visually links the tactics employed by the Condor Party, their attitudes to labor, and their hatred of brotherhood to Nazism. This association process connected anti-labor, anti-Semitic, and racist rhetoric to the threat of what the comics constructed as foreign-born un-American political beliefs and ideologies.

One of the comic strips' characters, Hassler, embodies the threat of Nazism to the country after the war. He is an escaped Nazi criminal who resides in Galesburg under the name Smith, and controls a factory and a real estate business. Hassler refuses unionization and the FEPC hiring standards in his factory, Smith's Iron Works while his housing company, Better Homes Co., only sells to white Protestants. The comic strip explicitly defines his prejudice as a sign of Nazism. Dave Epstein and *Joe Worker* describe him as "a guy who pays the lowest wages in the industry and fires anyone who joins a union," "refuses decent Americans a place to live because he doesn't like their race or religion," and as "a Nazi."<sup>265</sup> Ignoring the U.S. history of restrictive housing and discrimination in employment, the comic strip defines Hassler's discriminatory

<sup>264</sup> For homosexuality and communism in the Cold War see: Kyle A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005), esp. 1-36.

<sup>265</sup> Schachner and Berg, *Joe Worker* #69/3-4, NLS, AJCA.





Figure 4.6. Nat Schachner, Jack Alderman, David Berg, and Sheldon “Shelly” Moldoff, “Swastika eagle,” details from *Joe Worker* #7, #14, #52, and #80. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946-1948]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3400>.

Images courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



Figure 4.7. Nat Schachner and David Berg, “Better Homes Co.,” *Joe Worker* #68. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1947]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

practices as “Nazi.” In *Joe Worker* #68, Joe explains that restricted housing is a betrayal of the soldiers who had fought to protect America in the war [fig. 4.7]. Standing up to the clerk in charge of housing applications at Better Homes Co., Joe exclaims:

Just as soon as I read your application, I knew this outfit smelled! Why the blazes should you be interested in a man’s color, religion or nationality? [...] We didn’t ask any questions like that when we wanted men to fight for us. Why should you when a man wants to buy one of your houses at three times its real worth?<sup>266</sup>

Joe takes on the role of American labor fearlessly confronting bigotry in the fight for brotherhood and societal betterment. The storyline reiterated to readers that, after victory abroad, the fight against bigotry continued at home.

*Joe Worker* #68 and #69 presented low wages, anti-unionism, restricted housing, and gangsterism as un-American, Nazi activities that contradicted the promise of freedom and democracy that American soldiers had fought for in the war. But, once again, the bigotry of the clerk is an affront to Hassler’s Nazism. It was Hassler, the company’s owner that demanded prospective buyers be “desirable” white Protestants and fill out a form to determine their “color, religion, nationality.”<sup>267</sup> This articulation located anti-unionism and bigotry in the hands of an escaped Nazi, who had infiltrated American society intending to subvert democracy and labored brotherhood.<sup>268</sup> The focus on Nazism as the leading reason for anti-unionism and bigotry reflected the AJC and Rothschild’s wartime understanding that the majority of Americans hated Nazism and the Committee’s desire to keep the post-war enemy easily recognizable for millions of Americans.<sup>269</sup> The NLS expected that readers would merge their existing anti-Nazi feelings with a dislike of what the comic strips defined as foreign infiltration and “Nazi” anti-labor and anti-brotherhood practices. But the real enemies of labor were born and bred Americans such as the KKK and Mississippi Senator Theodore G. Bilbo.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., #68/5-6.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., #66/2.

<sup>268</sup> The threat of escaped Nazis prisoners infiltrating American society was present even in 1944 when the *Farm Labor News* reported that cotton planters in the Mississippi delta used Nazi prisoners of war in order to drive down the wages of American agricultural labor. “Nazi War Prisoners In the Cotton Fields,” *Farm Labor News*, July 1944, Reel 58, Microfilm Edition of the Papers of the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union.

<sup>269</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, “Memorandum on Defense Against Specific Attacks,” SC, AJCA; Rothschild, “Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?,” SC, AJCA.

In *The Story of Labor*, a storyline about the operations of the KKK in Georgia labored their divide and conquer technique and exposed their racial and religious hate as a profitable anti-labor business. A scene set in a mill town in the 1930s, closely resembles the CIO drive to unionize plants in Georgia in 1946 [fig. 4.8]. Joe explains to a crowd of white men and women, and a lone black male worker: “The reason your pay is low and your hours long is because you’re not unionized!”<sup>270</sup> The following panel connects racial hate to low economic conditions. In the office of William J. Simmons, the Grand Wizard of the KKK, a spy warns: “We’re ruined if this union guy organizes the mill workers. They’ll work together instead of paying us dues to make them hate each other!”<sup>271</sup> The comics exposed the Klan’s white supremacist ideology as a profitable racket reliant on keeping workers divided along racial lines. With \$10 initiation fees and robes sold at “fancy prices,” the Klan leaders made millions and supported politicians who would take orders to “blame everything on the foreigners and the labor unions,” the comics explains.<sup>272</sup> The two-page storyline defined the KKK as an enemy of labored brotherhood, as well as a threat to the economic security of the South and the country as a whole. The rhetoric of the storyline closely resembled the 1946 CIO drive to unionize plants in Georgia and to expand labor unionism in the southern states.<sup>273</sup>

The war had brought gains for unionism in the South and CIO membership among southerners was around 225,000 workers at its end.<sup>274</sup> In 1946, the CIO launched what became known as Operation Dixie, an initiative to expand its southern membership by unionizing low-wage workers, in order to secure national contract gains made by CIO affiliates and to transform the political climate in the region.<sup>275</sup> Treading the unstable ground of post-war racial politics, the CIO leadership diverted attention from racial matters by largely bypassing industries with significant numbers of black workers eager to join industrial unionism.<sup>276</sup> The campaign failed. But by defining the KKK as a threat to national economic stability as well as world peace, *The Story of*

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<sup>270</sup> Schachner and Alderman, *The Story of Labor*, 25/1, 1A.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 25/2.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 24, 24/4-5.

<sup>273</sup> For an overview of the CIO in the South see: Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), esp. 117-144.

<sup>274</sup> Zieger, *The CIO*, 229.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 227; Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, 214-244.

<sup>276</sup> Zieger, *The CIO*, 227, 234.



Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

*Labor* made labored brotherhood in the south possible to its readers. To the union members in northern and western industries who read *The Story of Labor*, the KKK storyline legitimized their own financial investment in Operation Dixie and support for civil rights campaigns in the south. To southern workers, the comic book spoke with a national rhetoric that unified economic and racial discrimination as labor concerns.<sup>277</sup> It re-imagined racial cooperation based on a shared labor struggle for economic stability and the betterment of southern society.

On a national political scale, *The Story of Labor* presented Senator Bilbo as labored brotherhood's biggest enemy. Bilbo had backed the New Deal pro-labor policies, but opposed the abolition of the poll tax, the anti-lynching campaigns, and the establishment of a permanent FEPC because of the CIO's post-war program in support of racial equality.<sup>278</sup> In 1945, he opposed the full employment bill, an unemployment compensation measure, and a minimum wage law.<sup>279</sup> A year later, he filibustered the FEPC, including its anti-poll tax and anti-lynching sections. Bilbo was an outspoken segregationist who made outrageous references to Italians, Jews, and those in support of civil rights. His 1946 Senate re-election campaign ran with a pro-lynching slogan: "the way to keep the nigger from the polls is to see him the night before."<sup>280</sup> In 1946 the CIO placed Bilbo on its "purge list."<sup>281</sup>

In *Joe Worker*, a fictionalized Bilbo by the name of Senator Bullhead threatens labor unionism and brotherhood. In an eleven-strip storyline, Joe and his friends, Dave Epstein, Sally Simms, and Jim Brown, infiltrate the factory Mammoth Mills to investigate discrimination in employment. Jewish Dave is hired only after changing his

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<sup>277</sup> "Paper receiving 'The Story of Labor' [list of newspapers publishing *The Story of Labor* comic strips]," n. d., AJCA. Copy of list, provided by the AJCA Director Charlotte Bonelli, in author's possession. *The Story of Labor* comic strips were published in the south in *Union News* (Jasper, AL), *Mobile Labor Journal* (Mobile, AL), *News Digest* (Atlanta, GA), *Augusta Labor Review* (Augusta, GA), *CIO Record* and *Kentucky Labor News* (Louisville, KY), the newspaper of Beacon Air Craft Lodge 1773 and *New Orleans News Digest* (New Orleans, LA), *Charlotte Labor Journal* (Charlotte, NC), *Labor World* (Chattanooga, TN), *Labor Advocate* (El Paso, TX), *International Oil Worker* and *Plane Facts* (Fort Worth, TX), and *Waco Farm and Labor Journal* (Waco, TX).

<sup>278</sup> Jill Watts, *God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 164.

<sup>279</sup> Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 251. Keith M. Finley, *Delaying the Dream: Southern Senators and the Fight against Civil Rights, 1938 – 1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 15-55, 56-96.

<sup>280</sup> Morgan, *Redneck Liberal*, 250.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-252;

family name to Eaps to make it sound more Protestant; Jim, an African-American toolmaker with twenty years of experience, is hired as a janitor, the only position open to him at the factory. During a Congressional Committee hearing at the mill to establish whether workers favor a permanent FEPC, Bullhead justifies discrimination in the employment of African-Americans: “They jest ain’t good for nuthin’ but being porters;” and supports the extra-legal practice of lynching: “Down my way we call a spade a spade. We know how to handle that kind – ” [fig. 4.9].<sup>282</sup> These comments combined anti-labor rhetoric with racial bigotry. They stressed the importance of brotherhood and anti-prejudice education. At a time when the CIO was pursuing full employment, a permanent FEPC, anti-poll tax laws, anti-lynching laws, and a civil rights agenda, the storyline justified Operation Dixie as a campaign by a responsible public party to rid the South of racial hate, anti-unionism, and poverty.

In *The Story of Labor*, the real Senator Bilbo appears three times: to filibuster a permanent FEPC bill, an anti-poll tax bill, and an anti-lynching bill. The final page of the collection links Bilbo to Nazism. Here, on a dark night in the summer of 1945, William J. Simmons, Theodore Bilbo, Adolph Hitler, and a corrupt business owner gather on the lawn of a white wooden shack in Georgia, uniting into a circle of hate [fig. 4.10]. The four figures visually articulate the intersection of racial and religious bigotry, anti-labor business, undemocratic politics, and Nazi totalitarianism. The next panel explains that such bigotry “sooner or later” leads to international warfare; soldiers lying dead on the battlefield conjure the recent memory of the war. The image communicated clearly to readers that those who supported Bilbo, the KKK, or their policies and tactics were un-American. Moreover, they defaced the memory of soldiers and workers who had fought for freedom in the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Second World War.

*Joe Worker* also defined labor as ideologically and politically responsible for fighting the enemies of national economic stability and global peace. In another panel, the Klansman, Bilbo, Hitler, and the industrialist are running away from Joe’s stern face and angry words: “Get out of here, you blasted breeders of hate! You fooled us before, but labor will see to it you don’t fool us again!”<sup>283</sup> The image articulates labored brotherhood as able to fight hate at home, and by backing the UN to extend “freedom

<sup>282</sup> Schachner and Berg, *Joe Worker* #50/5, #48/4, NLS, AJCA.

<sup>283</sup> Schachner and Alderman, *The Story of Labor*, 47/3, IA.







Figure 4.10. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "Will you let this happen again?," *The Story of Labor*, 47. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: IA, <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/21/items/joeworkerstoryof00scha/joeworkerstoryof00scha.pdf>.

Image courtesy of the Internet Archive and the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

and equality” to “every human being” abroad.<sup>284</sup> The comic book’s final image presents future global economic relations in three chronological layers: the smiling face of President Roosevelt representing the pro-labor policies of the New Deal, the storm clouds of war, and the new UN led by Joe, representing unionized labor. The image visualizes the UN as the labor-conscious future leader of global peace, and American unionized labor as the inheritor of the New Deal policies and defender of national economic stability.<sup>285</sup> Unchecked big business, the KKK, Senator Bilbo, and their anti-labor, undemocratic, and bigoted practices were a threat to both national economic security and global peace.

In hindsight, the NLS and the AJC overestimated the impact wartime anti-Nazi imagery and rhetoric would have in the post-war conditions. Caught between the Jewish Holocaust and future disillusionment with Joseph Stalin’s repressive policies, the AJC and the NLS held on to the idea that Nazism, as a representation of totalitarian tyranny, would remain the enemy. The association process that linked in the readers’ minds Nazism, Bilbo, the KKK, and anti-labor rhetoric, made perfect intra-textual sense within the AJC’s educational comics campaign. But, linking Americans in support of racist or anti-labor organizations to un-Americanism and Nazism divested political groups and individuals from a bigoted, but American, ideology rooted in their own historical memory. Moreover, with the help of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, the conservative political and cultural powers defined communism as the internal and external enemy. The last panel of *The Story of Labor* shows the flags of the U.S. and the USSR flying side by side and therefore fails to anticipate the changing political enemy [see fig. 4.10]. Even in 1946, the panel fit better within early wartime imagery when the U.S. and USSR were allies, not into the increasing anti-communism of the early Cold War. The AJC’s failure to grasp the growing importance of anti-communism mirrored Henry Wallace’s disastrous 1948 presidential campaign, where Wallace repeatedly expressed the necessity of a cultural and economic allegiance between the U.S. and the USSR.<sup>286</sup> The USSR flag gave strong communist overtones to the panel, the page, the comic book, and the AJC educational campaign as a whole. The simple suggestion for this cooperation gave fuel to the enemies of labored brotherhood to attack labor unionism

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 47/5.

<sup>285</sup> For an intellectual argument for U.S. leadership of the world and the politics of the center see: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

<sup>286</sup> Zieger, *The CIO*, 258; Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step*, 506-515.

and the southern drive for civil rights, and to define them as foreign, communist, and un-American.<sup>287</sup>

#### THE FUTURE OF BROTHERHOOD

In *Joe Worker*, the NLS constructed the future of brotherhood as American youths who had come of age at the end of the war. Their parents and relatives had defended democracy on the front or supported the war effort at home in unionized factories. The Secret Four, a fictional group of friends, were a microcosm of the future of American democracy and the natural inheritors of the fight for national unity. Their adventures anticipated the look of conformity in the early Cold War and stressed the importance of democratic education for all American youngsters. More importantly, the storylines they participated in were underlined by a sense that democracy was a fragile political system that could be easily infiltrated by undemocratic forces.

In *Joe Worker*, the future of American brotherhood is a wholesome, class-conscious youth movement. Jewish Sammy Epstein, Catholic Mike Reilly, Protestant Tommy Jones, and African-American Georgie Brown, are “just the kind of combination that Morton Gates [the leader of the American Condor party] doesn’t like,” explains Joe: they are the literal visualization of racial and religious brotherhood [fig. 4.11]. The four youths swear an oath to defend the fictional Galesburg from hate-peddling troublemakers:

The Secret Four, united brothers in blood, do swear (1) to fight one fer all an’ all fer one; (2) never to hate no one ‘cause his religion, color or race is different; (3) to track down mal-e-fac-tors in crime!<sup>288</sup>

The oath exemplifies an idealized version of U.S. post-war foreign and domestic policy. On an international scale, the reasoning of the pledge affirms that fighting racial and religious prejudice is the responsibility of each citizen and every state. On a domestic scale, the oath expects each and every American to defend his or her fellow citizens.

<sup>287</sup> Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 87. In the mid 1950s, rather than attacking the House Un-American Activities Committee, the AJC convinced Congressmen to link racial and religious bigotry to un-Americanism and investigate far-right, neo-fascist, and hate groups.

<sup>288</sup> Schachner and Alderman, *Joe Worker* #13/7, NLS, AJCA.





Figure 4.11. Nat Schachner and Jack Alderman, "The Secret Four," *Joe Worker* #13. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1946]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

Moreover, by identifying the enemies of brotherhood as malefactors, the comic strip branded anti-labor and anti-brotherhood rhetoric as a criminal act against American democracy, against the workers who had won the war, and against the future generations. By taking the oath, the Secret Four, as the future of brotherhood, assume the responsibility to fight for democracy at home and abroad. Although the AJC's Scientific Research Committee had proved that changing prejudiced adults' minds with anti-prejudice propaganda was difficult, the idealistic young seemed to be the ideal base to instill brotherhood into American society.

The artist Moldoff, especially, developed the image of the four youths from supporting actors in Joe's fight against bigotry in the beginning of the comic strip, into independent youngsters ready to continue the fight on their own. The drawings depicting Georgie Brown evolved from Alderman's awkward black and white shadows and David Berg's childlike features, into Moldoff's sophisticated and masculine young man drawn through a dotting coloring technique [see fig. 4.11, fig. 4.12, and fig. 4.13].<sup>289</sup> The use of dotting allowed Moldoff to effectively use shadows and light on darker skin tones in both the original copy and the newspaper reprints, without falling into the blotched mess of Alderman's Georgie, who seemed awkwardly drawn and inked in comparison to his friends in the same strips.

Developments in drawing techniques play an important role in constructing each member of the Secret Four as an important character in his own right with equal importance in the fight against malefactors. Sammy Epstein, the leader of the Secret Four is the visualization of the AJC's policy of representing Jews in the mass media. He was drawn as an American youth, whose religion was only defined by his family name. During the war, the AJC used the same approach in comics dealing with Jewish patriotism at home and on the front. After the war, with his signature chinos and striped t-shirt, Sammy symbolizes wholesome American youth eager to promote democracy and fight prejudice. Similar to his father, Dave Epstein, who used to box and on several occasions uses his killer right hook against bigots, Sammy can handle a baseball bat and defends Jim Brown, Georgie's father, from a lynch mob. Moldoff refined the images of the four youths and Sammy became a democratic ideal for Jewish youngsters reading

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<sup>289</sup> For a contemporary visualization of African-American faces in black and white comics see Matt Johnson and Warren Pleece, *Incognegro* (New York: DC Comics, 2008).





Figure 4.12. Nat Schachner and David Berg, "Georgie Brown," *Joe Worker* #33. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1947]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



Figure 4.13. Nat Schachner and Sheldon “Shelly” Moldoff, “Georgie Brown and Sammy Epstein,” *Joe Worker* #121. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1948]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

the comic strips.<sup>290</sup> Proudly carrying the Epstein name, Sammy symbolized Jews as equal members of the American melting pot and as eager defenders of democracy. Moreover, he was an archetype for the larger mass media's potential representation of Jews as simply Americans ready to defend democracy at home and abroad.

*Joe Worker* also articulates the working-middle-class neighborhood as a cradle of patriotic citizenship in the late 1940s. In *Joe Worker* #90, Morton Gates' gang kidnaps Sammy and Georgie from a "dead-end alley" [fig. 4.14].<sup>291</sup> In the second panel, the caption "pretty bad neighborhood" is allocated to an urban environment of what appear to be tenement houses with washing lines stretched between them, dark alleyways, and tough-faced men standing on street corners. Here, Sammy and Georgie witness the murder of one "dead-end" kid by another, Killer Martin. Holding a cigarette, Killer and his gang of "toughs" are older than the Secret Four and poorly dressed. The gang signified juvenile delinquency in the late 1940s in opposition to the wholesome Americanism and brotherhood of the Secret Four.<sup>292</sup> Just as the bad neighborhood, the rich part of town also fails to recognize the importance of brotherhood. In *Joe Worker* #113, Tommy and Mike try to find members for the Galesburg Youth Council on "Nob Hill, where the wealthy live" [fig. 4.15].<sup>293</sup> The neighborhood's large houses and tall fences speak to the bigotry and isolation of the wealthy from the experiences of wholesome American brotherhood and the fight against prejudice. The well-dressed youth they approach is snobbish and refuses to talk with Mike, calling him a "shanty Irish."<sup>294</sup> Mike uses his right hook against this bigotry and the possibility of brotherhood seems to be over. Both the bad and the rich neighborhood fail to recognize the dangers of prejudice. Instead, the middle part of Galesburg, replaces the reality of restricted covenants and housing segregation around the country. In this idealized American existence, African-Americans, Jews, Protestants, and Catholics, union members, and the comic strips' protagonists live together and the gates of the white picket fences are

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<sup>290</sup> Sammy was a better role model for young American Jews than popular New York gangsters such as Meyer Lansky, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Jacob "Gurrah" Shapiro, and Louis "Lepke" Buchalter. See: Neil Kleid and Jake Allen, *Brownsville* (New York: NBM, 2006).

<sup>291</sup> Schachner and Moldoff, *Joe Worker* #96, NLS, AJCA.

<sup>292</sup> In 1943 Los Angeles, the zoot suit became a dress code for juvenile delinquency, lack of wartime patriotism, and defiance of strict rationing regulations, argues Eduardo O. Pagan in *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2006), 159.

<sup>293</sup> Schachner and Moldoff, *Joe Worker* #113/1, NLS, AJCA.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, #113/5





Figure 4.14. Nat Schachner and Sheldon “Shelly” Moldoff, “Dead-end neighbourhood,” *Joe Worker* #90. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1948]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.



Figure 4.15. Nat Schachner and Sheldon “Shelly” Moldoff, “On Nob Hill, where the wealthy live,” *Joe Worker* #113. New York: National Labor Service, n. d. [1948]. Print. American Jewish Committee Archives, New York. Source: NLS, AJCA, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=3400>.

Image courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

always open to the four friends. Here, the children are happy to join the friends' Youth Council. The comic strip overlooked the realities of housing segregation to visually develop class-consciousness and solidarity between working Americans.

At the same time, following the evaluation of the intelligence test results in Benedict and Weltfish's *The Races of Mankind*, discussed in the previous chapter, the comic strip linked anti-prejudice behavior in children to their larger surroundings including the family, the community, and the economic and political system. *Joe Worker* advised every town to establish a Youth Council so that the young could learn about democracy, brotherhood, and the common heritage of all Americans. The Galesburg Youth Council storyline also exposed the underlying fragility of the democratic system and engaged in the national debate over the future of democracy. The Council is formed after a fight breaks out between two groups of youths from different parts of town. Joe explains: "One dead-end kid killed another because he was - different."<sup>295</sup> The Council has an important job to do, continues Joe:

This country has no place for name-calling of other Americans whose skin color or religion is different [...] You should have learnt that at home, at school. If you didn't, then this youth council is the place to learn it.<sup>296</sup>

In the context of segregation in education and the possibility of prejudiced parents, the Youth Council gives children "a proper chance" to become American citizens devoid of prejudice – a brotherhood.<sup>297</sup> It allows young people to experience participatory democracy by voting for a president, formulating plans to assist the community, and contributing to local politics.<sup>298</sup>

Freedom of speech allows Killer's gang to quickly infiltrate the Council. Killer sabotages it from within by name-calling Georgie and blackmailing Sammy, and even uses the Council to collect money for the Condor Party. The storyline fitted well within

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., #113.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., #131/5-6.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., #114/5. Also see: Rothschild, "Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?," SC, AJCA.

<sup>298</sup> Youth Clubs were also advocated in the film *Make Way for Youth* (dir. Marvin Rothenberg, 1947), produced by the AJC and the National Social Welfare Assembly Youth Division, and narrated by the popular actor Melvyn Douglass. The full film is available at Historic Films and TV Shows, AJCA, accessed May 12, 2011, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?DocumentId=11740>.



the AJC and the NLS educational campaign: it propagated a democratic form of government, advocated brotherhood, and warned of internal anti-democratic forces threatening the democratic system. The narrative of infiltration of democracy by hate-mongers warned young readers of internal threats to the American political institutions. It also spoke of the anxieties the AJC experienced over the ability of participatory democracy to tolerate dissident forces, to sustain itself, and to protect racial and religious minorities and their civil liberties.

*Joe Worker* propagated anti-discriminatory practices and located the fight for brotherhood exclusively within the working-middle classes, or in the hands of their readers. These were the exact people that the segregationist and the anti-Communist political forces were trying to sway their own way. The comic strips spoke of a fragile and imperfect American democracy that struggled to eradicate prejudice and bigotry from the ranks of its citizens. *Joe Worker* revealed an underlying fear that the democratic political process could be used by subversive internal enemies, and so anticipated a harder stand against those that disrespected the economic and political system. The visualization of the Secret Four participated in the construction of the iconography of consensus culture in the early Cold War, where wholesome American youth defended democracy against internal and foreign enemies.

In the mid- to late 1940s, for the NLS and the AJC the enemy within and without was Nazism and prejudice; simultaneously, the nation's leaders began articulating communism as the threat to American democratic institutions. The Alien Registration Act of 1940 had made a criminal offence to propagate the overthrow of the U.S. government. Throughout the decade, many members of the CPUSA were prosecuted and imprisoned under the act. The passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 required union leaders to sign non-communist affidavits and so effectively expelled scores of communists and radicals from the nations' labor unions.<sup>299</sup> Anti-communist hysteria gripped the nation and some Jews actively participated in the defense of Americanism from communist infiltration.<sup>300</sup> To defend the country's democratic

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<sup>299</sup> See: Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, 484-505, 516-525; Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, 145-173.

<sup>300</sup> Magazines such as *Commentary*, *Public Interest*, *Encounter*, *New Leader*, and *Partisan Review* would become the stage where Jewish intellectuals would debate and participate in the defense of democracy and discuss the new American Jewish identity. See: Nathan Abrams, *Commentary*

institutions, the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act allowed the government to deport immigrants and naturalized citizens for engaging in subversive activities. Ironically, in order to preserve American freedom and democracy, the Communist Control Act of 1954 finally took away from members of the CPUSA the constitutional rights and freedoms accorded to all American citizens. In the same year, the AJC rejoiced that the Supreme Court cited the Committee's anti-prejudice research when declaring unconstitutional the segregation of public schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision.<sup>301</sup> As the courts finally granted the democratic promise to some citizens, they also forfeited the constitutional rights and the benefits of American citizenship from others.

## CONCLUSION

The NLS used the comic book *The Story of Labor* and the comic strips *Joe Worker* to labor the AJC's educational campaign for racial and religious brotherhood. Working with the CIO, the AFL, and their affiliates, the NLS comics reached millions of American workers and their families. *The Story of Labor* labored the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and Second World War and rooted the post-war labor struggles within a long tradition of American workers' fight for social and economic betterment. It also legitimized the post-war strike wave as a continuation of the fight against tyranny. Since labor, as soldiers and workers, had won the peace, it was also their civic responsibility to ensure that the national and global political and economic security lasted. To ensure the permanence of peace, the NLS defined its enemies and exposed their tactics of breeding racial and religious hates for profit. Senator Bilbo and the KKK threatened labor's goal of economic and political security, and their tactics defined them as un-American Nazi criminals. In *Joe Worker*, American brotherhood had to fight prejudice and rabble-rousers through the channels of the democratic system, respecting the fundamental American freedoms and the civil liberties of every individual, even

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*Magazine 1945–59: 'A Journal of Significant Opinion'* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 47-49, 105-107; Larry Ceplair, *Anti-Communism in Twentieth-Century America: A Critical History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2011), esp. 118-120.

<sup>301</sup> AJC Press Release on *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* decision, May 18, 1954, *Brown v Board of Education*, AJCA, accessed May 11, 2011, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/525.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/525.PDF).

those opposed to democracy.<sup>302</sup> The comic strip then placed the torch of democracy in the hands of the new generation, Sammy Epstein, Georgie Brown, Mike Reilly, and Tommy Jones, a true brotherhood. *Joe Worker* advocated racial and religious brotherhood, respect for the democratic political process, and the need for labor unionism within American capitalism.

The iconography of the comics defined American capitalist democracy as the only system capable of protecting minorities.<sup>303</sup> For the AJC, labor unions played an important role in the stability of the economic and political system. As a political power, workers could help elect officials in support of organized labor's post-war campaigns to provide full employment, to end lynching, and to repeal the poll tax. Labor held the political power to oppose business owners who had historically used racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices to increase competition between workers, to drive down wages, and, according to the NLS comics, to destabilize the economic and political security of American workers and the world. Through the production of these comics, the AJC saw itself and labor unions as responsible public parties with the power to change social conditions and, through education, finally achieve racial and religious brotherhood.

For the AJC, education had always played a vital role in the protection of Jews, especially in combating misconceptions about Jews in America and around the world.<sup>304</sup> With *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker*, the AJC and the NLS expressed the belief that comics were capable of educating workers, soldiers, and their children into understanding the need for brotherhood and for a stable economic and political system. By employing comics, the AJC helped construct a visual vocabulary of labor unionism and post-war consensus culture, where the enemies and defenders of Americanism were clearly defined, and labored brotherhood had the political power to defend American capitalist democracy.

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<sup>302</sup> The AJC continued educating Americans on the meaning and the importance of American fundamental freedoms, civil liberties, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights by creating a Mass Media Education Committee in 1955. "The American Jewish Committee Mass Media Education Committee Some Current American Jewish Committee Projects with Mass Media Education Implications," Jan. 20, 1956, Memoranda and Statements, 1955-1960, SF Mass Media, AJCA, accessed April 4, 2011, <http://ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/DigitalArchive.aspx?panes=2>.

<sup>303</sup> "Who We Are," AJC online.

<sup>304</sup> Memorandum by Rothschild, "Combating Anti-Semitism in a War Atmosphere," SC, AJCA.

The AJC comics engaged in national debates over their place within the education system and the mass media and the uses of comics in national education campaigns. The Committee's educational campaign recognized the place of labor unions within national political and popular culture, defined Jewish organizations as national and global supporters of American capitalist democracy, and stressed the role minority organizations could play as civic and political interest groups. Moreover, the iconography and the rhetoric of the educational campaign defined how race, religion, class, and politics intersected to shape post-war Americanism as a force for national and global peace.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

This thesis discussed the development and representation of brotherhood using comics published and sponsored by the AJC between the years 1941 and 1948. Did the AJC's campaign to promote racial and religious brotherhood among Americans succeed? Did it impact on the way Americans thought about racial and religious minorities, supported labor unions, or believed in the power of American capitalist democracy? Indeed, the AJC asked themselves similar questions in the late 1940s. The Department of Scientific Research tested the usefulness of the *Mr. Biggott* cartoons to find that humor and ridicule failed to combat prejudice and bigotry. Test subjects found ways to ridicule the images of bigotry and at the same time, rationalized and maintained their own prejudiced beliefs. Yet these results tell only part of the story. The findings also showed that brotherhood propaganda could strengthen the resolve of those already opposed to bigotry.

The messages in the AJC comics were popular propaganda and a part of a changing mass culture. They simultaneously projected and reflected the country's shifting attitudes. The second most popular radio show after *Amos 'n' Andy*, was *The Rise of the Goldbergs*, later shortened to *The Goldbergs*, which ran from 1929 to 1946. It focused on an immigrant working-class Jewish family from the Bronx and their struggles to become American. *The Goldbergs* rarely commented on politics, making only passing references to extended family members trying to flee Europe in the wake of the Second World War. With the end of the war, the Goldberg family followed the process of Americanization by moving to the newly built suburbs. The struggles of the family to assimilate into the American melting pot established the presence of Jews in mainstream culture, promoted cultural homogeneity, and placed immigrant Jews on the track to whiteness.<sup>305</sup>

*The Goldbergs* seldom focused on racial and religious bigotry, but discussions of anti-Semitism were taking place within popular culture. The novels *Focus* (1945) by

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<sup>305</sup> For a discussion of *The Rise of the Goldbergs* see: Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922 – 1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2-5, 94.

Arthur Miller and *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) by Laura Z. Hobson, both dealt with anti-Semitism. In *Focus*, the protagonist Lawrence Newman is mistaken for Jewish because of his new glasses. He then experiences the bigotry of co-workers and neighbors, and the violence of the Christian Front. In *Gentleman's Agreement*, Philip Green, a New York journalist, passes as Jewish to write a truthful article about American anti-Semitism. The book reached number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list in April 1947 and was adapted into a film starring Gregory Peck and John Garfield. The film was one of Fox's highest grossing movies for 1947, winning three Academy Awards: best director, best supporting actress, and best picture. The same year, a film about anti-Semitism in the military, *Crossfire*, was also nominated for best picture. *Crossfire* was based on *The Brick Foxhole*, a 1945 novel by Richard Brooks. Filmmakers adapted Brook's homosexual protagonist into a Jewish soldier to avoid controversy and to address the popular subject of anti-Semitism. In a country that prided itself on democracy, these films and novels exposed that prejudice and discrimination were often institutionalized. They also underlined that Jews were racially identical to Gentile Americans: after all, Lawrence is mistaken for Jewish and Philip passes as one. Even their names sounded Gentile. Jewishness was becoming harder to spot in the white American melting pot. The visibility of Jewish characters in the media contributed to the development of an ethnic consciousness as well as a new understanding of American ethnicity, culture, and politics. In the context of national segregation and with the overwhelming benefit of the GI Bill to first and second-generation European immigrants, Jews were absorbed into American whiteness.

The AJC comics developed through the course of the war and the post-war years, re-defining Jewish national identity, shaping representations of patriotism, and developing ideas of American capitalist democracy. Over twelve million Americans read these comics and followed their ideas about U.S. politics, economics, and American identity. *Three Pals* and *Extra Effort*, discussed in Chapter 2, claimed a place for Jewish men within American patriotic citizenship as both soldiers and workers. At the same time, the two comics affirmed to readers that, with the help of racial and religious brotherhood, the U.S. would be the only country capable of victory. *They Got the Blame* and *There Are No Master Races!*, discussed in Chapter 3, employed research from the fields of anthropology, sociology, biology, psychology, and psychiatry to root the fight for brotherhood in modern science. The two comics affirmed the psychological



stability of Americans who supported brotherhood and asserted that American capitalist democracy would be the rational winner of the war. Victory signified to millions of Americans that capitalism and democracy had secured global peace. *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker*, discussed in Chapter 4, labored the fight for racial and religious brotherhood. The two comics argued for a domestic and foreign policy that emphasized union-made economic stability as essential for sustained peace and the continual security of all Americans. By 1948, the *Joe Worker* comic strips displayed an understanding of American capitalist democracy as the only system capable of stabilizing the national economy, sustaining global peace, and ensuring brotherhood. The comics' defense of democracy was underlined by a fear of its fragility and a concern over its ability to withstand the exact democratic practices that it protected.

Whose ideas did the comics present and who had ultimate control over representation? It is uncertain how much input writers, artists, and colorists had when producing the AJC comics, whether they agreed with the messages they were creating, or simply illustrated scripts written by Rothschild, Schachner, or other AJC members. When possible, particular artists have been duly noted. Comic book artist Tom Christopher speculates that artists employed by Malcolm Ater Productions drew *The Story of Labor*. Set up in 1946 by Malcolm Ater Sr., the company published educational comic books for political campaigns, government agencies, and private companies. In 1947, the company produced its first comic book, *The History of Gas*, for the American Gas Association. For the 1948 election, it produced the comic book *The Story of Harry S. Truman* in support of the President. By 1950 Ater had changed the company's name to Commercial Comics Inc. and was publishing comic books for political campaigns, indiscriminate of political parties. In 1960, for example, Commercial Comics produced a pro-segregationist comic book in support of George Wallace's bid for governor of Alabama, entitled *Alabama Needs the Little Judge, George Wallace for the Big Job*.<sup>306</sup> Clearly, Commercial Comics was indifferent to politics, but valued profit. Since the company's attitudes were standard for the industry, then the AJC comics represented the

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<sup>306</sup> Tom Christopher, "Malcolm Ater and the Commercial Comics Company," accessed Feb. 11, 2011, <http://www.tomchristopher.com/index.php?op=home/Comic%20History/Malcom%20Ater%20and%20the%20Commercial%20Comics%20Company>; Tom Christopher, "Labor Day," accessed Feb. 11, 2011, <http://www.tomchristopher.com/index.php?op=home/Comic%20History/Labor%20Day%20and%20Labor-Related%20Comics>; *Alabama Needs the Little Judge, George Wallace for the Big Job* is available from Ethan Persoff, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.ep.tc/georgewallace/17.html>.

views and ideas of those who commissioned them. Artists may have commanded the visual depictions, however, the final comics still had to be accepted by the paying organization.

The iconography and rhetoric of the AJC comics reveal the Committee's larger underlying beliefs about the role of the state, its people, the economic, and the political systems. The AJC comics are dominated by a special brand of American capitalist democracy wherein the economic and the political system are in a reciprocal relationship. Therefore, the country could ensure economic stability and achieve national and global peace through capitalism. In the 1940s, the AJC comics captured a political rhetoric and cultural iconography where democracy could only exist within capitalism, and capitalism could only exist within democracy. Amidst economic problems facing veterans and laid off workers, the AJC comics articulated that the organization and its supporters, instead of devising a new economic and political system, were set on improving the existing system of capitalism in order to achieve the democratic promise. *The Story of Labor* and *Joe Worker* thus employed an approach rooted in the CIO's changing platform that understood labor unionism as an essential part of the capitalist system, and racial and religious equality as the realization of the democratic promise. The AJC comics simultaneously bridged and accentuated the gap between belief in American capitalist democracy and fear of its failure. On the surface, the comics presented an unfaltering confidence in the power of American capitalist democracy. Beneath that surface, the comics articulated policies and views marked by a paranoid and fatalistic view of the system they protected.

The AJC comics projected values imbedded in wartime liberalism including support for President Roosevelt and the New Deal, strong state regulation of business, and social advancement policies. The wartime labor unions supported by the AJC comics, demanded full employment for all Americans in order to stave off a return to the conditions of the Great Depression. For these labor unions, as well as for working Americans and returning soldiers, federally ensured full employment would relieve the tensions of inflation, provide a stable income, and ensure full production. Racial and religious minorities, included in the call for full employment, would also benefit from full production and a stable income. In the rhetoric of the AJC comics, federally assured economic stability would create a society of true American brotherhood.

This logic presupposed that racial and religious bigotry were results of economic conditions where blaming a minority for society's ills managed an unfavorable economic climate, classism, and the exploitation of the poor. It also ignored that for many Americans and Europeans any form of prejudice, including anti-Semitism, was deeply ingrained in culture, religion, and politics. The anti-union stand of southern segregationists, such as Senator Bilbo, and the calls from big business for limited government control fuelled the national anxiety over the ability of American capitalist democracy to provide the economic conditions necessary for domestic political stability and peace. Ultimately, federal inability to fully control business, balance its drive for profit, and stabilize the economic system would lead to economic downturns and further internal strife.

The dissemination of the AJC comics anticipated the inability of the state to protect its citizens, deliver social equality, and ensure economic stability and political security. After all, if the state was capable of doing so, then it would be unnecessary to affirm Jewish wartime patriotism, fear a return of the Great Depression, or dread the possibility of undemocratic forces abusing the system. If unchecked, capitalism could deliver economic security and peace, then it would be pointless for the NLS to support the nation's unions and their fight to balance big business. Thus, the AJC educational comics aimed to streamline the functioning of capitalism and to eliminate socially constructed bigotry in order to achieve the ideal state of democracy.

American democracy, free elections, and freedom of speech held the promise of actual political participation based solely on citizenship. The reality was different: violent disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the south and the poll tax prevented millions of American citizens from voting and participating in local and national politics. Moreover, freedom of speech posed a threat.<sup>307</sup> In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the AJC supported freedom of speech for all, even anti-Semites, as essential for the preservation of democracy and civil liberties. According to Rothschild's 1940 advice pamphlet on how to deal with anti-Semitic attacks, taking away the right of speech, even to protect Jews, would make martyrs of anti-Semites and give further

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<sup>307</sup> One recent example is in Palestine where Hamas, a party opposed to democratic government, was elected to power through a democratic process.

attention to their cause.<sup>308</sup> The problem of free speech and democratic elections is best seen in the infiltration of the Galesburg Youth Council elections in Chapter 4. Democracy could not protect itself and needed an active and eternally vigilant defense.<sup>309</sup> The Committee's apparent trust in the power of democracy was combined with a sense that the country's democratic institutions could easily be exploited. The hastily composed Communist Control Act of 1954 took away the basic rights and privileges of citizens, including the right to cast a ballot for an organization that opposed democracy. The AJC's support of the act signified a change in attitudes to the rights and privileges of those who opposed democracy. With communism becoming the domestic and international enemy, defending democracy became more important than its actual practice.

For the nation's labor organizations, and within the rhetoric of the AJC comics, bigots who exploited the democratic system had already subverted the U.S. government and had laid a claim on Americanism. The KKK, the White Citizen's Council, the America First Committee, Senator Bilbo's opposition to civil rights, and the dissent of the Dixiecrats from the Democratic Party in 1948 in opposition to the President's Committee on Civil Rights, were all attempts to define Americanism. Even the visual culture of Americanism was under threat. During the war, Rothschild explained that both the German-American Bund and Father Coughlin "wrap themselves in the American flag as the defenders of what they call 'true Americanism'."<sup>310</sup> Groups and individuals set on subverting democracy could easily appropriate traditional symbols, such as the American flag or the bald eagle, for political legitimacy, which was exemplified by the swastika eagle of the fictional Condor Party in *Joe Worker*.<sup>311</sup> This manipulation of the symbols of democracy underlined the fragility and pliability of the iconography of Americanism. At the same time, the ability of pro-democratic organizations, such as the AJC, to navigate this iconography expanded and re-defined Americanism.

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<sup>308</sup> Rothschild, "Report on the Work of the Survey Committee in the Year 1940," 1940, SC, AJCA, accessed May 3, 2011, [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS-19.PDF](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS-19.PDF).

<sup>309</sup> For how these issues lead to the development of neoconservative thought see: Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>310</sup> Rothschild, "Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?," 12, SC, AJCA.

<sup>311</sup> See: Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 135, 319.

American capitalist democracy required staunch protection from external enemies. The anti-fascism and anti-Nazism of the war years in *Extra Effort* and *There are No Master Races!* continued in the immediate post-war years in *Joe Worker*. During the war, the anti-Nazi stance was patriotic, but after the war, especially in the context of leading labor union leaders having to sign non-communist affidavits, it seemed that the country had moved on. The final page of *The Story of Labor* presented the nations of the world, including the USSR, marching together towards a new united future. The image captured the idealism of the wartime liberals, echoing the previous cooperation of the two nations. Yet the fear of communism was increasing. To defend social and economic progress against foreign threats, wartime anti-fascists became staunch anti-communists.<sup>312</sup> America's aggressive interventionist foreign policy towards communism after the Second World War, and especially during the Cold War, appeared as a form of compensation for the failure to deal with domestic problems. Violent opposition to civil rights and support of segregation embarrassed the country, especially when the barbarity of American capitalist democracy made its way into Soviet children's cartoons.

With the end of the war, and the establishment of the UN, the U.S. branded itself as the responsible global leader, capable of policing the world and providing economic and social betterment. These ideas were underscored by the ability of interest groups to influence public opinion, the federal government, and even foreign policy. Just as, in 1941, A. Philip Randolph's and Bayard Rustin's March on Washington Movement influenced public opinion and persuaded President Roosevelt to establish a protection against discrimination in defense employment, the AJC could influence public opinion as well as domestic and foreign policy. Rothschild and Schachner participated in the propaganda activities of the Office of Inter-American Affairs in Latin America and the AJC lobbied the government to change immigration quotas. Minority groups that sought presence in national politics began to emerge as powerful voting blocks that had to be acknowledged.

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<sup>312</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 6; Jean-François Drolet, *American Neoconservatism: The Politics and Culture of a Reactionary Idealism* (London: Hurst, 2011), 20. For the anti-Stalinist left see: Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

The expansion of American whiteness and patriotic citizenship to include Jews, coupled with the GI Bill's favoritism of white ethnic immigrants, altered the social identity of American Jews and led them on a perilous post-war journey. Becoming white led many Jews to re-claim an ethnic and religious identity and preserve traditions.<sup>313</sup> It is possible that Rothschild, Schachner, and the comics' artists continued with their brotherhood work. As for comics, their Golden Age would soon be over.<sup>314</sup> With the formation of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency in 1953 and the publication of Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954, comics were blamed for increases in juvenile delinquency. Even the AJC transferred their attention from comics to television.<sup>315</sup> Continuing this tradition of exploiting the most popular and current media for their ends, recently, the AJC has moved onto using the Internet and social media.

This thesis has opened a door towards a so-far overlooked national media campaign to promote racial and religious brotherhood. It has shown that the AJC comics are a rich cultural artifact that bridged the gap between various national minority, religious, and labor organizations. The comics projected and reflected the changing attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies of the Second World War and the early Cold War. Most importantly, they were a part of a national expansion of Americanism to include Jews and a re-definition of American capitalist democracy as essential for national stability and global peace. In his memoirs, Rothschild recalled that, "comic books certainly did a job for America in the war."<sup>316</sup> This thesis has shown that the AJC comics in particular, certainly did the job for racial and religious brotherhood.

<sup>313</sup> For an overview see: Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997); Clayborne Carson, "Black-Jewish Universalism in the Era of Identity Politics," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black – Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 177-196.

<sup>314</sup> For the post-war comics controversy see: Amy Kiste Nyberg, "Comic Book Censorship in the United States," in *Pulp Demons: International Dimensions of the Postwar Anti-Comics Campaign*, ed. John A. Lent (Madison, NJ: Fairlight Dickinson University Press, 1999), 42-68; Amy Kiste Nyberg, "No Harm in Horror': Ethical Dimensions of the Postwar Comic Book Controversy," in *Comics as Philosophy*, ed. Jeff McLaughlin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 27-45. At the same time, comics were also used for political satire. See: Nathan Abrams, "From Madness to Dysentery: *Mad's* Other New York Intellectuals," *Journal of American Studies* 37 (2003): 435-451.

<sup>315</sup> See: Historic Films and TV Shows, AJCA, accessed May 10, 2012, <http://ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=30>.

<sup>316</sup> Rothschild, "World War II," n. d., SC, AJCA, accessed May 23, 2012, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/RS12A.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/RS12A.PDF).



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## Transcripts

The following doggerels are reproduced from Richard C. Rothschild, "Memorandum on Group Conflicts in the Army," December 29, 1943, Memoranda on anti-Semitism in the American Military, Survey Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives, available at: <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=3310>.

### AMERICA'S FIGHTING JEW

- 1           A poet wrote a tribute to our country's "Fighting Jew:"  
               So let's join our friend the poet and drink to that Jew too.  
               But where are all his other pals? I mean Saul, Abe and Moe.  
               They're making tailored uniforms for those who have to go.
- 5           Their patriotic brethren remain at home to buy  
               Their country's stamps and war Bonds, financed by those who die.  
               Remember Jake and Sydney? How bravely did they talk,  
               Of how we should get Hitler and bring him to New York.  
               But Jake is now ensconced in ease in charge of immigration;
- 10          Deploing on the radio his race's segregation.  
               While Sydney aids in getting funds to care for refugees,  
               That swarm within our border, with jingoistic pleas.
- Don't overlook another Jew that's always in the fight  
               He's fearless, brave and dauntless in showing us the light.
- 15          He holds a rank of prestige within our Naval force;  
               He's heard each Sunday evening, engaging in discourse.  
               No other man could take his place nor fill this hero's shoes;  
               in World War I he earned his fame, while wearing Navy blues.
- An Admiral's receptionist, he bravely carried on  
               Arranging date and schedules, from night to early dawn.
- 20          His voice comes booming o'er the air with cunning, sly invective  
               Attacking men of proven worth, it seems is his objective.  
               This cunning super-patriot I think you all know well;  
               Our famous Naval hero -- Commander Walter Winchell.
- 25          Go onward, Christian soldiers, and fight for Freedom's right;  
               They'll stay home and help to buy the guns with which to fight,  
               They'll sell your Ma a trinket to honor you while gone;  
               To wear upon your girl's lapel - a flag, a gun or horn.  
               They'll make your shoes and raincoats to wear out in the fight;

30           That's if the contract's worthy, or if the price is right.  
               They'll stand upon the sidewalks and wave Old Glory high  
               As all the Gentile soldiers go marching proudly by.  
               A case of forging War Stamps - the first to be disclosed.  
               Quite justly falls to Israel - the first to be exposed.  
 35           In setting up black markets in steel or hoarded food,  
               You're sure to find a Burnstein or other of his brood.  
  
               In practices lascivious they seem to have no fear;  
               As panderers of lust and vice, they have no worthy peer.  
               Let one expose a member of this Godless, craven race,  
 40           And he's labeled "Anti-Semite", and no longer holds in grace.  
               To fool us simple Christians another mane they coin  
               A Burkowitz becomes Burke, while Cohen's name is Coyne.  
               These famous champs of tolerance don't practice what they preach  
               We give them all fair warning - in their great anticipation  
 45           Of post-war nations to control with monied domination.  
               That after Johnny Doughboy has Hitler on the run  
               He's coming home to get the Jew - And then we'll see some fun.

In Boston, a local angle was injected by the inclusion of the following paragraph referring to local personalities currently in the news.

Where is Doc Sagansky. In jail where he belongs.  
 Where is Barney Welansky. He will soon be there too.  
 Rottenberg, the black meat king, is now on trial,  
 Goldenberg, the murderer, on trial too,  
 Hurrah: for America's Fighting Jew.

## MARINES HYMN

1           From the shores of Coney Island  
           Looking eastward to the sea,  
           Stands a Kosher Air Warden,  
           Wearing "V" for Victory.

5           And the gentle breezes fill the air,  
           With hot dogs from Nathan's Stand,  
           Only Christian buys are drafted,  
           From Coney Island's sands.

10          Oh! We Jews are not afraid to say,  
           We'll stay at home and give first aid  
           Let the Christian saps go fight the Japs,  
           In the uniforms we made.

15          If the Army and the Navy,  
           Ever gaze on Heaven's scenes,  
           They will find us Jews selling  
           Boots and shoes to the United States Marines.

20          So it's onward into battle,  
           Let us send the Christian slobs,  
           When the war is done and victory won,  
           All the Jews will have their jobs.

          If your son is drafted don't complain,  
           When he goes across the Pond,  
           For us Jews have made it possible,  
           All of us have bought a Bond.

25          So when Peace have come to us again,  
           And we lick Hitler, the louse, you fill find  
           A Jew is ruling you,  
           In WASHINGTON'S GREAT WHITE HOUSE.