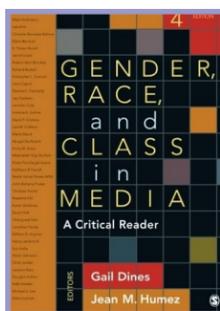




The Monthly Rag

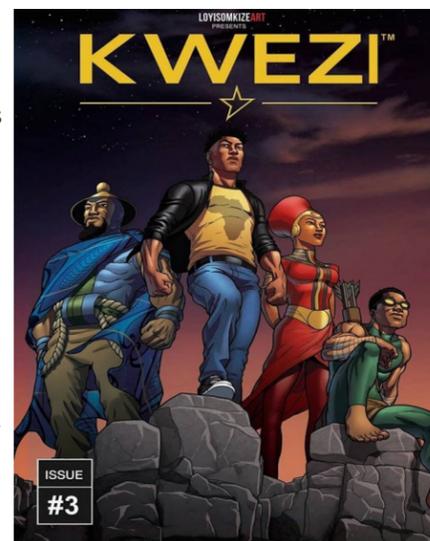
Brought to You by the Feminist & Gender Studies Student Advisory Council and Edited by Kadesha Caradine (FGS '16)

Editor's Note: The articles in this issue were written by students in FG212/RM212/FM205 Critical Media Studies, taught by Professor Heidi R. Lewis during Block 5 this year. Theorizing hegemonic mass media as one of the most important "information-diffusing socializing agencies" in the U.S., this course teaches the competencies necessary for analyzing media codes and conventions and interpreting the myriad meanings and ideologies generated by media texts. It also explores how gender, race, class, and other social, cultural, and political markers are constructed in media, including the multidimensional impetuses for and implications of these constructions. Additionally, since counter-hegemonic texts, as well as audience interpretations, have the potential to "challenge central political positions and



The Growth of South African Comics ('18) By Mari Young

In recent years, the U.S. comics industry has generated increased critical, scholarly, and popular attention. The sheer strength, volume, and range of the comics produced, as well as the enthusiasm of fan culture, renders the industry a powerful ideology-producing tool. Although other publishers have experienced growth since the industry was conceived post-WWII, Marvel and DC Comics still comprise more than half the industry. What's more, their success continues to grow as a result of the development of more accessible retail outlets for the medium: the Internet and cinema. In "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," Douglas Kellner explores how media—including radio, television, film, popular music, the Internet, and social networking sites—provide a cohesive text from which we "forge our very identities" (7). In many ways, he claims, the media shapes our "view of the world," our "deepest values" (7), and even our morality. It is important, therefore, to consider whose perspective gets left out of—and often misrepresented by—the dominant narratives circulating mass media. So, what are the social and political implications of the conglomeration of Marvel and DC?



To begin with, alternative media voices are left out of the equation and unable to question "fundamental social arrangements under the which the media owners are doing quite well" (37), as David P. Croteau, William D. Hoynes, and Stefania Milan point out in "The Economics of the Media Industry." This, in turn, supports Western cultural imperialism, further marginalizing a myriad of other cultural narratives. One response to this lack of diversity in the media environment—and specifically in the world of comics—is the growth of the African superhero universe. One prominent South African illustrator, Loyiso Mkize, says that he was first inspired by American superheroes, as American comics were the most widely available during his childhood. Mkize told *Buzzfeed News*, "Growing up, comic books had a huge interest for me. It wasn't just the visuals—but the strong superheroes. I wanted to emulate them." However, the template he was provided with was conspicuously lacking characters with whom he could identify. He continues, "I was thinking, where are the heroes that look like me, speak like me, and share the same environment as me? I realized that we don't have it—it came as a big shock." Thus, the comic *Kwezi* was born.

For more of Mari's analysis of *Kwezi*, click the QRC code or visit our website at www.femgeniuses.com!



Dress Codes in the Senate? By Josie Stern ('19)

This month, Senator Mitch Holmes (R-Kansas) imposed a strict dress code on female legislators who testify in front of his committee. Holmes issued the dress code to deter women from distracting the committee by wearing clothing he deemed "revealing." Holmes claims, "Put it out there and let people know we're really looking for you to be addressing the issue rather than trying to distract or bring eyes to yourself." Specifically, the Senator's dress code for women prohibits those who are testifying on bills from wearing low-cut necklines and miniskirts. However, he did not specify what was considered a low-cut blouse or miniskirt. Reports indicate that Holmes considered issuing another dress code specific to male testifiers, but decided that men were able to dress themselves without guidance. Female senators, his own colleagues, were rightfully outraged at Holmes' guidelines. Senator Carolyn McGinn (R-Kansas) claims, "I am more interested in what they have to say about the direction our state should go than what they're wearing that day." Subsequently, Holmes apologized for his demeaning language, saying, "My failure to clearly specify that all conferees, regardless of gender, should strive to present themselves professionally is unacceptable." However, it is unacceptable on probably more levels than he had intended.

For more of Josie's analysis, click the QRC code or visit our website at www.femgeniuses.com!



White Terrorism? By Nathan Makela ('18)

On January 2, 150 armed militants, almost exclusively made up of white men, took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon, motivated by disputes with federal officials over land use. While the militants have had little success in garnering support, the takeover inspires another important discussion about how main-

stream media operates and constructs race. In "Hegemony," James Lull defines hegemony as "the power or dominance that one social group holds over others" (39). When considering the white, hegemonic powers controlling the media, it is clear the white militants have been granted particular privilege in their media portrayal.

First, the media has almost completely ignored the people who have original rights to this land in the first place—Native Americans. Prior to European settlement, the land being disputed was occupied by the Paiute tribe, which still exists. The media is focused only on the concerns of the white men currently occupying the land, ignoring the objections of those native to this land. Carla Teeman, a Social Services Assistant at the Paiute tribe, claims, "As a Native, if we were to go out there and fight back like they were, we would have been dead by now." In "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," Stuart Hall explains the media is full of stereotypical portrayals of Natives as "cheating and cunning [...] savagery and barbarism [...] likely to appear at any moment out of the darkness to decapitate the beautiful heroine," while "against them is always counterposed the isolated white figure [...] confronting his Destiny [...] exerting mastery over the rebellious natives" (107). This explains Teeman's fear and belief that her tribe would not enjoy the same luxuries that the white militants have enjoyed.

Teeman highlights the disparities surrounding the portrayal of race in the media today. Specifically, when comparing Oregon militant with other situations of gun violence, shouldn't these gunmen in Oregon be labeled by the media as terrorists? Wouldn't they certainly be referred to as terrorists if they were Muslim? *The Washington Post* referred to them as "occupiers," the *New York Times* as "armed activists," and the *Associated Press* as a "family previously involved in a show-down with the federal government." While the Oregon militia men are allowed weeks to protest, peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters are lucky to get hours. In "Big Talkers: Rush Limbaugh, Conservative Talk Radio, and the Defiant Reassertion of White Male Authority," Jackson Katz asserts, "White supremacy is still intact, even if they've (sometimes) cleaned up the cruder rhetorical expressions of sexism and racism" (157). Taking into account the degrading language used in the media to describe people of color involved in violence, compared to the description of this white militia, racism in the media is difficult to ignore.

On January 26, after more than three weeks of occupation, the armed group's leader and five of his followers were arrested in a shoot off with the FBI. They now face federal felony charges. The arrests resulted in one death and one injury, but the conclusion of this occupation generates more questions than it answers. Although Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon, initially called for the militia to stand down on January 3, it took repeated public statements and a personal letter to President Obama for the FBI to intervene. Brown claims the militia's occupation of the wildlife refuge cost the state over half a million dollars. Why was this occupation allowed to continue for so long? Why has the media utilized such a wide array of creative terminology to describe the gun toting militia, yet continually neglected to label them as terrorists? James Lull argues, "Hegemony requires renewal and modification through the assertion and reassertion of power" (41). White hegemony must be reinforced for it to continue, so the way the media and

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