

Missing in Action: Latinx Representation in the Comic Industry

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Abstract

This qualitative study and literary analysis examined Latinx Representation within the mainstream comic industry. Participants included thirteen creators within the comic industry with various lived experiences from all across the nation. The literature analysis and interviews expose trends of how the lack of and mishandling of the Latinx diaspora in comics is a cycle for continued stereotypes and poor representation of the community as a whole. Conclusions and implications are discussed.

Introduction

In the 1890s the first comic strips began to appear, and the Golden Age of comics came about in the 1930s. Popular comics from well-known comic enterprises such as Marvel and D.C. Comics have permeated the United States mainstream media. In the comic industry, Latinx people have been behind the scenes for as long as comics have been around. One of the first illustrators of Captain America was a Latino-American, he was Puerto Rican. Nonetheless, Latinos are still invisible in today's mainstream comics. In both Marvel and D.C. comics combined, there are roughly 30,000 characters, and of these, only 3% are Latinx characters (La Jeunesse, 2019). However, when we consider how many of these characters portray positive, multi-dimensional representations of the Latinx diaspora, this number falls to less than 1%. The need for Latinx superheroes in mainstream comics has always been great, as there is an astounding amount of erasure and invisibility of this group in the world of comics. This research examines how increased representation of Latinos in mainstream comics, specifically Marvel and D.C., can not only serve to deconstruct bias, but can also generate positive societal change.

Methodology

The approach for this examination included a literary analysis of primary comics texts and secondary comics scholarship through racial and cultural lenses. The research was particularly focused on works by and about Latinx people. Furthermore, qualitative data and oral testimony were collected through the interviewing of 13 influential comic creators to understand and highlight their lived experiences. Additionally, data was collected during interview panels hosted at the Latino Comic Arts Festival. The research is separated into major categories resulting from themes that emerged in the data.

Representation

The first Latino superheroes of D.C. and Marvel, Blue Beetle (1943) and White Tiger (1975) were created after the Golden Age of Comics. However, Latinos themselves have always been a part of the comic scene. They have been the artists and writers behind some of the most loved characters in both Marvel and D.C. From George Perez, who has worked on comics for both Marvel and D.C., to Fabian Nicieza, co-creator of Deadpool, Latinx creators have been around almost as long as comics have been popular. Unfortunately, the large number of Latinx readers and Latinx comics creators within the mainstream have not translated into the comics themselves. When Latino characters do make it into the mainstream, they are often heavily stereotyped and misrepresented.

Usually, these stereotypes are piled on top of one another to present one-dimensional, heavily stereotyped Latinx characters. The most common stereotypes come into play on strict gender lines, and Latino characters are portrayed as lazy or former gang members, whereas Latinas are heavily sexualized. Further, they are separated and exoticized through the creators' use of broken English and poorly written Spanglish. Many early comics played heavily into these stereotypes. In many comics, especially the older ones, a "white-savior narrative" appears in which the "poor, unthinking 'brown' Latinos" must need the leadership of an Anglo to uplift themselves (Aldama, 2017). All of these stereotypes come together in various ways to form one-dimensional characters of low standing in both Marvel and D.C. comics.

When Latinx characters are created, there tends to be a sense of "otherness" about them. As Frederick Luis Aldama puts it, Latinos are "othered" in the sense that they are not the norm in a society where white is the standard (Aldama, 2017) (Chambliss, 2022). This presents Latinos, being something "other" than white as uncommon and even unnatural, which can create a divide in the mind of readers. The lack of Latinx people in comics stems from the idea that Latinos are uncommon or unseen, and therefore can be willfully omitted from comics as a whole.

In the few Latinx characters present in comics, many have portrayed negative stereotypes. One of the most flagrant abuses of stereotypes can be seen in the D.C. character Vibe, prior to his recreation. Vibe was loud, flamboyant, and lazy (Aldama, 2017). In addition to being Latinx, Vibe was also a queer character, which furthered his stereotyping. Vibe also presented white characteristics and coloring. Not only was Vibe incredibly laid-back and irresponsible, but he was also formally part of a gang, falling into the reformed gang member stereotype. Further, Vibe met his early end like most Latinx characters. The way in which Vibe died, however, "killed two birds with one stone" in that the villain Hemo-Goblin gave Vibe, a gay character, HIV/AIDS which he died from. Not only was this extremely offensive to the queer community, as AIDS was seen as a "gay disease" during the time the comic was published, but also it brought an end to one of the few Latinx characters present at the time. It is also important to note that Hemo-Goblin was a white supremacist villain, which can be interpreted as a Latino being killed as a result of nationalist values and racism (McGuire, 2022).

El Diablo is yet another Latinx character who lacks dimensionality and positive representation. Santana's story is filled with stereotypes as a former gang member, and he is decorated with extensive tattoos. Further, Santana has the stereotypical anger issues of a Latinx character. These anger issues lead him to a Herculean fit of rage which leads to the death of his family. The portrayal of Latinos as dangerous is detrimental to society. His story presents the idea that Latinos are dangerous criminals and murderers who would even go as far as killing their own families because they cannot control their emotions.

Although we continue to see historically poor representation of Latinos in mainstream comics, there has been some improvement. Characters like America Chavez, Araña, and La Borinqueña have all contributed to positive Latinx representation in recent years. Though America's comics often had a clunky use of Spanglish, they did present a strong Latina character with character growth. Additionally, the comics take time to explore the social and racial issues that poor, minority communities face. Though America tends to fall into the hyper-aggressive Latina stereotype, Chavez learns from her mistakes and takes time to think before acting in the future. One of the most important factors in this comic was the diversity of people portrayed. In both color and body type, the America comics portray a wide array of people in a natural manner, much in the same way that diversity naturally exists in the world.

Like Chavez, La Borinqueña is another step in the right direction toward positive Latinx representation. La Borinqueña's Latinx identity is the context of her character. Rather than her culture and race being an afterthought of her creators, it is central to her story and her powers. As with America Chavez comics, community is a central value and theme. In Ricanstruction, these themes shine through, as the comic not only focuses on La Borinqueña, but also the people of Puerto Rico as a place of hope and empowerment. Further, La Borinqueña is a source of pride for the people, embraced as a hero of the people rather than seen as a

vigilante in the comics. She is one of the many new Latinx characters coming out into the mainstream that provide positive portrayals of Latinx people and culture. La Borinqueña is also making strides for multiethnic and LGBTQ+ representation with the addition of La La Liu, a Chinese Dominican superhero, who is also her best friend. La Borinqueña is not a D.C. or Marvel character, as she was created by Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez under Somos Arte. However, much like the costume she wears, La Borinqueña is a representation of what the future of Latinos in comics could be. Diverse, multidimensional representation of Latinx people in mainstream comics is possible if only there is a creative effort and willful styling of the characters.

Although there are increased and more positive, accurate representations of the Latinx diaspora in comics, much ground is lost when it comes to film translations. One of the most prominent Latinx supervillains, Bane of D.C. comics, was completely stripped of his Latinx identity and backstory when translated into film. He was played by a white actor multiple times throughout his appearances on the big screen. In addition to the whitewashing of Latinx superheroes who have made it into film, there are still plenty who have not received this honor. There is still a large absence of Latinx superheroes in a market that is preening for diversity.

The Independents

Though there is slow progress, there is an increasing willingness to produce diverse characters and stories within the comic industry. Compared to mainstream comic creators who have limited freedoms in the stories they can tell and characters they can draw, independent creators only have the limit of their imaginations. Examples to consider are *Daze of the Dead* by Javier Hernandez and *Lowriders in Space* by Cathy Camper and Raúl the Third. *Daze of the Dead* is a prime example of a comic being tailored around Latinx culture. This comic deals with and provides a new perspective on Aztec mythology. Instead of placing the character in some exotic or distant land, the story centers around a young man who is trying to find his way in life in a modern setting. The character is made to be relatable to other lost souls while also taking an unexpected turn. This was a comic that did not over-stereotype Latinx characters or poorly portray them.

Lowriders in Space, though not a superhero comic, is a notable mention because of the positive portrayal of Latinx people. Though the writer, Cathy Camper, was not Latinx, she was careful to listen to the artist's opinions to avoid misrepresenting Latinx people through her story. Furthermore, she made the conscious choice to turn her characters into animals rather than people, so that she could provide commentary on stereotypes rather than purposely stereotype her characters. In doing so, she was able to provide commentary on and challenge stereotypes rather than portray them within her comics. When interviewing Camper, it was noticeable that she was conscious of stereotypes of Latinx people, but wanted to make her comics inclusive and to provide a positive story about an aspect of Latinx culture. Diversity and representation are important to Camper because she herself is not Anglo, and she wants her comics to provide representation not commonly seen in mainstream comics.

Overall, Latinos have an advantage when it comes to accurate writing and portrayal of Latinx characters because it is their culture that they are writing about. However, as seen with Camper, accurate and multidimensional portrayals of Latinos by non-Latinx people is possible with conscious effort. Furthermore, independent creators have more of an opportunity, and a willingness, to challenge biases and comment on stereotypes. The biggest difference between Latinx characters created by independent creators compared to mainstream creators is the creation of multi-dimensional characters and interesting stories. Oftentimes, mainstream creators struggle to create multi-dimensional Latinx characters, whether it be from barriers or simply a lack of willingness to develop the characters. When Latinx characters do get their own comics in the mainstream, there is also the question of story development. No one will read an uninteresting story. A creator must not only be willing to create a multi-dimensional character, but also create an interesting story.

More often than not, Latinx creators feel more of a responsibility to create accurate and positive portrayals of Latino superheroes in their comics. Interviewee Maxi Rodriguez, creator of the *Chronicles of a Chubby Bunny*, stated that she did not see body-positive representation of Latinx people, so she sought to create it herself.

Latinx creators, coming from a background of diversity, recognize the importance of seeing oneself in comics. Independent creators make diverse, cultural comics not only because they want to share their culture and make others in the Latinx community feel seen, but also because diversity simply exists in the real world. For many of the creators that I interviewed, representation simply existed in their comics because it existed in their lives. Though there is still a wide gap in diversity and Latinx representation as a whole in mainstream comics, the work of both independent and mainstream creators will continue to push diversity and positive representation out into the public.

Visibility

Latinos are the majority-minority in this country, with over 25% of the U.S. population being Latinos (Gluscock, 2004). However, when we look at their visibility in comics, it is few and far between, and usually as the stereotypes addressed above. As Aldama puts forth, the issue of representation is due to a willful and conscious omission of Latinx people by the mainstream (2017).

Latinos are everywhere in the country. They have been a part of the comic industry for as long as there have been comics. Yet, when it comes to their representation in comics, they have been intentionally forgotten. The whitewashing, brownface, and erasure of Latinx characters further this intentional omission of Latinx people in comics. Many early Latinx characters were Latino only in name. They tended to portray largely Anglo facial features and have light skin, and readers are given little to no indication that the characters are even Latinx. Another example of Latinx erasure is brownface, or the stealing of Latinx culture while using an Anglo character. As noted by Aldama, the D.C. superhero Aztek is a prime example of this. He is a white man who uses the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl as inspiration for his costume design (Aldama, 2017). Another issue that appears with erasure is the concept of turning Latinos into another race. This is largely seen in film adaptations of comics, such as having Afro-Latina Selina Kyle (Catwoman) being played by white actors. This erasure of Latinx characters can also be seen in multiracial characters such as Afro-Latino Miles Morales (Spiderman), in which the animated adaptations of his character are racialized in a way that largely erases the Latino part of his identity (Aldama, 2017).

One of the most notable erasures of Latinx identity comes in the form of the Marvel character Sunspot, who was slowly whitewashed throughout the years. With Sunspot's creation in 1982, readers were introduced to a curly-haired, darkly colored Afro-Latinx character. As he appeared through the years in various comics, however, Sunspot slowly began to adopt Anglo characteristics. His hair was straightened and his skin whitewashed. By 2016, the character is completely unrecognizable.

This leads to another factor that fits into the erasure of Latinx characters: the recognizable "Latinness" of the superheroes (Aldama, 2017). This includes how they are drawn and colored, their dialogue, the showcasing of their culture, and their character design. Sometimes, these factors can work in tangent with each other, such as how D.C. incorporated Mayan symbols into the character Ácrata's design while having the character speak mainly in Spanish since she is a character based in Mexico. Ácrata exemplifies how respectful portrayals of Latinx superheroes can be created. Unlike the character mentioned above, however, many Latinx superheroes often fall short of being seen as Latinx. It is often unknown that characters like Catwoman, Miles Morales, and Nova are Latinx. Though these characters have the potential for Latinos to be seen in another light, positive representation cannot happen if the characters are not visibly Latinx.

Though this examination is largely focused on mainstream superhero comics, it is important to note other types of comics regarding visibility. However, the further you venture from superhero comics found in the

mainstream, the less visibility and smaller audiences you will receive. Diversity is reflected more in less visible comics of all genres, though the horror genre still largely belongs to white protagonists (Chambliss, 2022). More often than not, independent creators who delve into comics tend to showcase more diversity than the mainstream. This is due to the willingness to recreate diversity in a comic world as it naturally exists in real life. Interviewee Claudia Ramos speaks to this. She decided to create diverse characters that represent the Latinx diaspora in some way because of her daughter, who is multiethnic. She wanted to give her daughter a place to see herself. Likewise, Rafael Navarro spoke of how comics are influenced by real life. He mentioned that inspiration was all around so of course diversity would be present in his stories.

So, how is it that the mainstream is so deeply lacking diversity when the comic industry as a whole is becoming increasingly diverse with each new story created? The problem starts at the beginning, with racism and stereotypes, and trickles down to the freedom of the creators who are a part of the mainstream. Historically, Latinos have not been in comics, which makes it difficult to break into the mainstream. Further, Latinx people have been misrepresented and negatively stereotyped in every way possible, which makes it more challenging for creators to have their stories and ideas picked up by mainstream companies (Aldama, 2017). It also makes mainstream comic companies less likely to take a chance on Latinx creators and stories in favor of safer, replayed stories largely centered around Anglo culture. So, while independent creators may be able to showcase more diversity through their comics, they sacrifice visibility for freedom. Likewise, mainstream comic creators may have large audiences, but it is difficult to change the long-standing system that willingly omits Latinx characters from stories.

However, comic festivals have been bringing visibility to creators and cultures not seen in the mainstream. Events and expos such as the Latinx Comic Arts Festival (LCAF) at Modesto Junior College bring increasing visibility to Latinx creators and comic heroes, both mainstream and independent. At the LCAF this year, there were comic creators, publishers, and reviewers present, all focused on highlighting diversity. These creators came from all across the nation. Events like the LCAF connect creators to communities and give people places where they can feel seen. Further, these events are examples of how comic art creators are coming together to show all of the possibilities of Latinx storytelling. Creator Gloria Toscano commented on how the LCAF exposes others to Latinx culture at a panel during the event (Latinx Artists and Transmedia Storytelling, 2023). Another creator saw it as a way to showcase culture while also welcoming others into the event. Toscano also noted the importance of being seen, and how events like the LCAF show that Latinx characters and creators do exist, it is just a matter of getting them into the mainstream. Small comic festivals are good, accessible ways to welcome everyone into a space focused on Latinx culture. Compared to large, expensive Comic Cons, having the LCAF free to the public allows for the deconstruction of wealth-based obstacles surrounding comics.

The communities that comic festivals build include more than just Latinos. For example, there were many non-Latinx creators present at the LCAF, including Christie Shinn, Don Nguyen, Cathy Camper, and Steven Prince. In a way, the Latinx comic community branches out and “adopts” creators who also seek to provide positive representation for marginalized communities. Fanbase Press, for instance, was present at the event. Though they were not Latinx, they were a part of the community and event because they too shared the mission of uplifting the community and providing a platform to as many and as diverse creators as possible. In the words of Barbra Dillon, editor-in-chief and co-founder, “There needs to be more of everything. We are just scratching the surface.” This “adoption” of non-Latino creators is also extended to creators who have respectful and responsible portrayals of Latinx characters. Steven Prince, writer and creator of *Monster Matador*, was invited to the LCAF because his main character, the Monster Matador, is Mexican. Prince ensured he had a diverse team in order to accurately portray his Latinx characters.

Another way that Latinx comics provide more accessibility, and therefore more visibility, to their comics is through glossaries and in-text translations. More often than not, Latinx creators navigate between Spanish and

English in their comics, choosing to use Spanglish when presenting dialogue. However, this can create in-groups and potentially deter non-Latinos or even Latinos who do not speak Spanish, from these comics. Thus comes the importance of glossaries and in-text translations. Glossaries, rather than just translating the words, provide context and education about the words and settings of comics. Paul Meyer incorporated these for both inclusion and context. He wanted non-Spanish speakers to understand the context of his stories also while including them as a part of his audience. He was able to represent his indigenous and Latinx culture while also not excluding anyone. When interviewed, Meyer said that his stories were not only for Latinos, that they were for anyone who wanted a good story. For him, he hoped that some readers could see themselves in the comics, but he also wished for others to learn about the culture of indigenous and Latinx people in New Mexico.

Overall, comic festivals and conventions are prime ways to connect Latinx comics and creators to the mainstream. As Latinx creators continue to be showcased along with their comics that incorporate their culture and experiences, they pave the way for more Latinx creators all while giving Latinx readers characters and stories to relate to. Further, Latinx creators seek to include diversity in their stories that extend far outside the Latinx community. Panelist Dustin Garcia described diversity as a need that will never be satisfied. "There will always be someone who needs to be brought to the table" (Bringing Comics to the Classroom, 2023). As more Latinx creators are being brought to "the table," or rather, out into the mainstream, they recognize that they are not the only ones in need of representation.

Impact

When a variety of people are positively represented in comics, it opens people up to reexamine their biases. As Hector Cantu describes in *Your Brain on Latino Comics*, comics have a way of "sneak[ing] in the message, and you realize a day later, 'Hey, that comic just challenged everything I believe in'" (Aldama, 2009). Comics have the potential to educate people without them even realizing it.

A common misconception of comics is that they are only meant for young adults. However, comic strips, comic books, and film adaptations of comics are enjoyed by people of all ages. Comics are understandable to even the youngest of children because their visual and textual blend allows for the story to be determined from just the pictures alone (Aldama, 2009). This is what makes comics prime tools for the generational education of comic readers, as they "can be a powerful way of understanding reality" (Aldama, 2009). However, when stereotypes are continuously used to portray Latinos, biases are reinforced and the opportunity for education is wasted. Studies have shown that "racial images packaged as entertainment can skew the way [we] understand and categorize people" (Wang Yuen, 2019). Poor portrayals of Latinx people in comics help to fuel racial misconceptions of the Latinx community in real life. Learned bias translates into real-world action and bias against Latinx people. These biases extend further than the comic industry. Though this bias does not stem only from the lack of positive Latinx representation in comics, representation can aid in the reshaping of biases and deconstruction of old, overused stereotypes. Comics that provide accurate and positive representations of Latinos allow older generations the opportunity to examine their biases about Latinos.

This education extends further, to teenagers who are just beginning to explore the world. *Ricanstruction* provides a good example of a comic that shows people of different ethnicities working together. On the cover, both a Latina and White character are portrayed. For young Latinos, these positive images of Latinos show that they too can be whatever they want to be. Characters like Bane show Latinos they too can be intelligent, and characters like Sunspot (in his earlier renditions) show young Latinx people that they too have the power to fight against racism and injustice.

Finally, it comes down to the youngest of children, who are just learning about biases. Children do not have to be able to read to understand the emotions portrayed in comics. Images of hypersexualized Latinas or the image of White Tiger being shot dead by a police officer sticks with a child. Negative portrayals and the

erasure of Latinx people lead to lower self-esteem in Latinx children. A study done on Hispanic Representation in literature notes that "valuing one's ethnicity allows one to value one's self, an important step in success anywhere" (Barry, 1998). The lack of Latinx visibility in comic books sends Latinx adolescents the message that their culture, and hence themselves, are not valued in society. This can impact a child's sense of self-worth and mental health in the long run as they continue to be fed these messages from different types of mainstream media, including comics and their film adaptations. However, when children are exposed to positive representations of themselves and when they see their culture reflected in the comics they read, they see that they too have a place in a universe where the sky's the limit. Further, the normalization of diversity better reflects the diversity that is all around us. When comics, such as *America: The Life and Times of America Chavez* show that diversity is something that naturally exists and normalizes that all people, no matter their skin tone or how they look, are to be treated with respect, they provide the potential to break the cycle of generational bias.

The concept of "otherness" proposed by Aldama has long been an obstacle for Latinx characters. For too long they have been "othered," placed in a separate category than their Anglo counterparts. However, normalizing diversity has the potential for people to examine their biases and misconceptions about Latinos. Aldama provides an example of this with the animated adaptation of Guatemalan twins Más y Menos who are used to show how the heroes were saying things in Spanish, but the Anglo characters were misunderstanding them (Aldama, 2017). Aldama uses this example because the twins were not the butt of the joke, instead, humor was used to show viewers that what they believe about Spanish-speaking Latinos is not always the truth. It shows the viewers that different does not mean bad. By breaking down stereotypes and creating Latinx characters that go against the norm, creators have the opportunity to reeducate their audience in a fun and subtle manner. Comics also have the potential to expose similarities in experience and culture. Just like Latino readers could relate to Anglo characters because of their background and experiences, Anglo readers would also be able to immerse themselves in Latinx experiences (Aldama, 2017). Well-written and drawn comics expose to Anglo readers that Latinos are not "other," but instead they are not that different from themselves.

Comics with diversity and Latinx representation can aid in fixing systemic issues in the educational system. Latinx students have the highest dropout rates in high schools all across America (Barry, 1998). They often "are forced to choose between the language and environment of either the home or the school," a situation which usually leads to the rejection of school (Barry, 1998). Comics provide a way to both engage Latinx students and provide teachers with tools to develop a student's critical thinking skills. Further, comics have been utilized as ways to explain and explore complex topics on a wide level quite easily. Panelists and educators Dustin Garcia and Jandro Gamboa both commented on how comics were easy and accessible teaching methods that work as a "shorthand" for teaching both heavy and complex subjects while utilizing and encouraging students' creativity (Bringing Comics to the Classroom, 2023). It is especially critical to note that students prefer and become more engaged in literature they can relate to their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds (Barry, 1998). Further, comics can provide an in-depth and engaging way for students to explore a variety of racial and sociocultural issues (Domyancich-Lee, 2022). Representational educational content has long been helpful with the retention of students, and comics are a way to provide this content while also heightening the engagement of all students.

Another benefit of using comics with Latinx characters in the classroom is cultural awareness. Not only will Latinos be able to learn about their culture, but students of other ethnicities will also be able to learn about a culture different from their own. Gaining cultural awareness will also bring students to respect other cultures and customs. Having this respect will aid them in interacting with people of different cultures in the future. In being culturally aware, students will learn a valuable skill of recognizing that there is great diversity in the world and not everyone is the same.

Presenting authentic Latinx representation in comics is vital to the empowerment and validation of Latinx readers. As panelist Gloria Toscano puts it, everyone wants (and needs) to feel valued. Comics, to her, create a safe place where Latinx readers can find a sense of value in themselves and the world around them (Latinx Artists and Transmedia Storytelling, 2023). For Latinx readers, this representation can increase connection to characters and enhance the reading experience. They can feel pride in themselves and their culture. *La Borinqueña* serves as an example of how ethnic pride can add to a story. By providing uplifting stories of superheroes and community, *La Borinqueña's* comics allow Latinx readers to feel seen and appreciated. Interviewee Lindsey Perez, a Tongva Gabrielleno artist, spoke of their experiences with having to unlearn toxic values taught to them by mainstream culture as a child. By looking into their family's history and multi-ethnic culture, they were able to learn about themselves and realized that "I really can have heroes from my own culture" (Perez, 2023). They believed that the fluidity of Latinx culture is empowering and healing when a wide expanse of Latinx people are present in the media. Just as Captain America is loved and seen as a source of national pride, Latinx readers should also be able to see the country's values along with their own cultures reflected in comics.

Although there are many positive benefits to providing positive Latinx representation, many mainstream comic companies are still hesitant to take a chance on Latinx creators. This has to do with profits. No matter how much comic companies may say they are interested in building a better world, they are way more interested in profit. So, when they produce poorly written and lazily stereotyped Latinx superheroes and readers do not take to them, companies see this as readers not wanting diversity rather than as something being wrong with the story itself (Aldama, 2017). Nonetheless, this leads to many series with Latinx characters being cut, diminishing the representation of the Latinx community in storytelling.

Conclusion

Characters like Vibe, Blue Beetle, and White Tiger are recreated, but there is not much increase in the actual quantity of Latinx superheroes in the mainstream. There has largely been uneven development in terms of the representation of Latinos in mainstream media as a whole (Nilsson, 2005). However, many creators, independent and mainstream alike, continue to work to change this matter. A single comic could not convey all of the complexities of the Latinx culture as an entire group, and there needs to be a greater movement towards increased respectful portrayals of Latinos (Nilsson, 2005). There is an increasing need for publishing companies to veer away from the "safe superheroes" and take chances on more independent creators (Barry, 1998). As seen in the creators interviewed and with events like the LCAF, Latinos are slowly claiming their own spaces within the comic industry. Mainstream creators are also working from within the industry to reform and recreate old, heavily stereotyped characters and give them conscious characterizations. Vibe, the once heavily stereotyped character, has undergone this change. With his reintroduction into comics, Vibe not only received a name change but also a more fleshed-out backstory and in-depth characterization.

As a whole, Latinos are the biggest group of moviegoers and the second largest group of comic consumers (NPR, 2021). Moreover, Latinos as a whole were reported to have a purchasing power of over \$1.9 trillion in 2020, according to a study done by the University of Georgia (2021). So, while there historically has been willful erasure of Latinx people within comic books, their growing presence in the U.S. as a whole is increasingly more difficult to ignore. In the words of Javier Hernandez, creator of *El Muerto*, "We create our own Latinx superheroes, at once inspired by those great mainstream comic books we all grew up with and that push the boundaries even more" (Aldama, 183). As there is a continued push for more inclusive comics by both creators and consumers alike, the diversity of everyday life will become better reflected in the comics being read.

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