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INTERVIEW

Brotherman, Family, and Legacies: Recognizing the Contributions of African American Independent Comic Book Writers and Artists

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African Americans produced many comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels during the twentieth century but their works were rarely recognized in reviews of mainstream and independently published comics until recently. These efforts to acknowledge Black comics creatives and their contributions to the industry must continue. This article participates in the ongoing effort to capture and share the experiences of African American creatives in the independent comic book publishing industry by placing a spotlight on the author and co-creator of the *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline* (1990–1996) comic book series, Guy A. Sims. The *Brotherman* brand is part of a long legacy of inspirational media from independent Black producers. Guy's early experiences provided him with tangible examples of successful Black-owned media companies that were creating content for Black audiences. His most important influence was his father, Dr. Edward Sims, Jr. Edward introduced young Guy to the works of Richard Wright for inspiration. He also engaged his son in questions that further inspired his creativity. *Brotherman* now serves as a source of inspiration to multiple generations of new comic book artists and writers.

Keywords: Black Comics Characters; Black Comix; Culturally Relevant Media; Indie Comic Books; Underground Comics

Introduction

African Americans produced many comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels during the twentieth century but their works were rarely recognized in reviews of mainstream and independently published comics until recently. Twentieth century history texts about comics, such as Sabin's (1996) reference book, often omitted a

large swath of work from African American comics authors and artists. Sabin praised the works of George Herriman (possibly the only person of recent African descent discussed in the book); remarked that he is one of three artists (Windsor McKay, Lyonel Feininger, and George Herriman) from the early twentieth century to be identified as 'particularly outstanding' by historians; explained that Herriman was dubbed 'comics laureate'; and argued that he may have been more talented than McKay and Feininger (1996: 20–22). However, Herriman's Black ancestry was never mentioned in Sabin's (1996) text. Herriman hid his lineage and never corrected biographers who referred to him as Greek but individuals were aware of his mixed-race heritage (Amiran 2000). Robinson wrote, 'With a few exceptions, notably E. Simms Campbell, Morrie Turner, Ted Shearer, and Brumsic Brandon, the contributions of African American cartoonists to American culture have been generally unacknowledged' (2011: 352). Fortunately, there are a growing number of information resources about Black comics creators and their works. Robinson's (2011) history textbook on comic strip art offers readers several pages of information about the works of Oliver Wendell 'Ollie' Harrington, Ray Billingsley, Jackie Ormes, and several other Black comic strip pioneers. Fraser (2020), Howard (2017), Strömberg (2003), the Museum of Uncut Funk (2011), and the New York Public Library's (2020) Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture dedicate entire books, museum exhibits, and websites to the official cataloguing of Black comics characters and creators. Jackson (2016), Nama (2011), and Howard and Jackson, II (2013) provide book-length historical analyses of Black comics and superheroes. Brown's (2001) book focuses on the history of Milestone Media (a Black-owned comic book company published through DC Comics) while also discussing several Black-owned independent comic book publishers, such as ANIA and Omega 7 Comics. Several books focus on the lives and experiences of specific Black creators, such as Jackie Ormes (Goldstein 2008), Matt Baker (Nolen-Weathington and Amash 2012) and Kyle Baker (Nolen-Weathington 2009). These efforts to recognize Black comics creatives and their contributions to the industry must continue.

This article participates in the ongoing effort to capture and share the experiences of African American creatives in the independent comic book publishing industry by placing a spotlight on the author and co-creator of the *Brotherman*:

Dictator of Discipline (1990–1996) (**Figure 1**), Guy A. Sims. *Brotherman* is a source of inspiration for many comic book creatives. Roberts writes:

Long regarded as the comic that ignited the Black Independent comic movement, [*Brotherman*] is credited as the comic that showed a generation of ... black comic book fans and soon to be artist and writers that we can and should be represented in the comic book industry, and we can do it telling

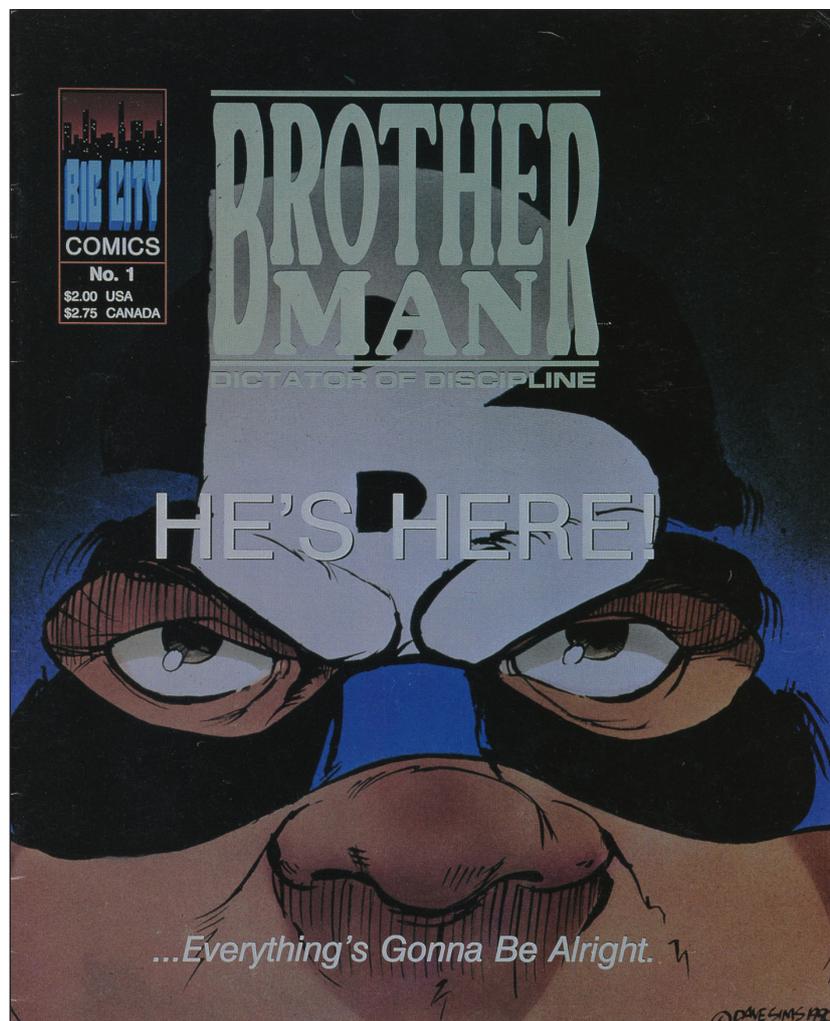


Figure 1: Cover of Sims J, Sims D, and Sims G (1990a) *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline #1* (East Orange, NJ) © Big City Entertainment, Inc.

our own stories, and we can do it on our own. The success of comic companies like Milestone, Ania, and Kamite Comics, and of comics like Tribe, Icon, and Purge can be attributed to the impact this comic book made on not only the comic book world, but African American culture as a whole. (2018: para. 3)

Guy, along with his brothers Dawud Anyabwile (co-creator and illustrator, formerly known as David J. A. Sims) and Jason E. Sims (production manager), sold over 750,000 copies of the 11 issues from the series. Copies of the books, script pages, related artwork, and memorabilia are archived at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture (Washington, DC), Auburn Avenue Research Library (Atlanta, GA), Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (Clark Atlanta University, GA), and Langston Hughes Memorial Library's Special Collections (Lincoln University, PA). Recently, an Instagram hashtag art challenge (#heruary) was organized during February 2020 for Black History month and *Brotherman* was the first prompt on its list of 29 independently produced Black characters for artists to draw each day of the month.

Guy A. Sims has a dual career as a higher education administration leader and as a lifelong author of multiple comic books, novels, graphic novels, short stories, and poems. He is currently the Dean of Students at Bluefield State College, a Historically Black College in West Virginia. Prior to serving as the Dean, he held other titles during his six years at the college (e.g. Assistant to the President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Title IX Coordinator; Director of Title III; and Director of the Office of the Student Life). He has also held positions at Virginia Tech and the University of Northern Iowa. Guy received a bachelor's degree in Human Services from Lincoln University, a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Arcadia University, a second master's degree in Human Behavior from National University, and a doctoral degree in educational leadership from the University of Northern Iowa. As of this writing, Guy has authored 8 novels, 11 comic books, 3 graphic novels (including an adaptation of the New York Times Bestselling Novel *Monster* [2015]), a children's book about Kwanzaa, and a Kwanzaa handbook.

Methods

This interview was conducted during a larger ongoing study about the experiences of artists, producers, and other professionals in the media industry. Purposeful and network sampling (McMillan 2008) were employed to recruit the research participants who shared details about their upbringing, educational experiences, media consumption habits, and media production experiences. Participants were recruited via several channels (e.g. visits to educational art programs and labs, media arts studios and exhibits, arts festivals, educational media conferences, comic book conventions, and recommendations from participants). This interview was conducted over Skype, audio recorded on a Sony digital voice recorder, and transcribed for qualitative coding and analysis.

Brotherman, a collective family effort: An interview with Guy A. Sims

Darnel Degand (DD): *Thank you for making time to speak with me. I enjoyed rereading Brotherman while I was preparing for this interview. I also read and watched many of your past interviews before sitting down with you now, so you may find me saying, 'I read about this or I heard about that ...'*

Guy A. Sims (GS): It's my pleasure. I know what it takes to put together a paper and stuff like that, so I said, 'Let me jump on it so you're not trying to chase people down.' I was doing that when I was working on my dissertation and other projects.

DD: *Please tell us a bit about your family and life before Brotherman.*

GS: Both of my parents are from [Jersey City, New Jersey]. They first went to [Boston, Massachusetts], had my older brother [Michael], while my father was going to Boston College ... And then they dropped down to [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] after that ... We lived at the edge of Mount Airy, going into Chestnut Hill. And once you leave Chestnut Hill, you're leaving Philadelphia. You're going into [Montgomery County, Pennsylvania].

That neighborhood [Mount Airy] was a very racially mixed, upper middle class community. My wife teases me about it. She calls it 'Sesame Street' because I went to school with Matt Robinson's kids [Matt Robinson was one of the first producers of

Sesame Street (1969-ongoing) and the first to portray the character, Gordon Robinson (Greene 2019; IMDb 2020a)].

DD: *Wow, when was this? Is this while he was working on the show?*

GS: This is before, [in 1967]. We were in first grade at [Henry H. Houston elementary school] together, me and Matt Robinson [the son]. His daughter is Holly Robinson [Holly Robinson-Peete (IMDb 2020b)]. She was younger. They were in Mount Airy... on the east side.

Matt Robinson [the father] had a TV show in Philadelphia. That was during the days of local programming. I was on his TV show, once. Sherman Hemsley, George Jefferson from *The Jeffersons* (1975–1985), he was a cohost on the show because he's from Philly. Cleavon Little, Sheriff Bart from *Blazing Saddles* (1974), he came on the show. He's from Philly too. The show was called *Black Book* ... and they talked about Black issues (Encyclopedia.com n.d.). One day, somebody was doing a poem about stars. And [Matt Robinson] told his son, 'Hey son, get some friends from school. Come on down to channel 6, and you guys are going to be the stars.' And there was one little lost star, and I got to be the little lost star.

The mother [Dolores Robinson] went to Los Angeles ... became a talent agent. And her first client was Levar Burton. She got him the job on *Roots* (The HistoryMakers n.d).

And my wife says [to me]: 'You grew up on Sesame Street,' because it was a multi-ethnic neighborhood too. The Jewish center was right down the street from my house. Blacks, Italians, Polish, Irish, Jewish, Hispanic, Polynesian... Two doors up from me was the family of one of the former mayors of Philadelphia. Jazz great, Grover Washington, Jr. lived a ways down the street. Baseball great, Richie Ashburn, down and around ... Georgie Woods, the guy on the radio, lived over there ... it was a real mix...

DD: *In previous interviews, I've heard you and Dawud speak about your father's influence on your lives and your work. Please tell us more.*

GS: My dad ... he intimidated me with his intellect. He had [a library of books on] sociology, psychology, languages... religion. He was an ordained minister. Scholarly,

always working on a project, always in a community, on a steering committee, a tri-lateral this or a community that... And so he's always working on something. And he always asked questions: 'What are you doing? What is that about? Why are you doing it that way?' And then, also: 'What do you think about this?' My friends said,

'Whenever we used to come to your house, your dad would always ask us: "What are we doing? What do we want to do in life?" Man, [we] just didn't want to come to your house because [we] didn't have answers!'

[We both laugh]

GS: I said [to them]: 'What do you think? I'm in the house, man! I can't run!'

[More laughter]

GS: And he [worked] at Montgomery County Community College in Bluebell, Pennsylvania, which is about 20 minutes outside of Philly ... He was a Director of Financial Aid. And he taught some sociology classes ... He was always looking up words in the Hebrew to English dictionary, the Latin to English dictionary, you know, all these different dictionaries. He was very stern ... not a mean stern ... He always had time for us. And if you liked certain things that he liked, then there was your nexus of being able to just hang out.

He didn't like people with idle time ... If he came in the living room and said, 'Guy, what are you doing?', and I knew I was doing nothing, I could say, 'Oh, I'm about to work on a story I'm writing,' and he'd leave you alone. If you said, 'Nothing.' He would say, 'Oh okay, well, go clean out the garage.' ... He would give you something to do with that idle time... You turn on the TV. He walks in. He would say, 'You've been watching TV all day.' You can't say, 'I've only been watching TV for five minutes!'

[We both laugh]

You've been watching TV all day, in his linear time.

[More laughter]

Yeah. But ... he'd watched *Star Trek* (1966–1969). He'd watch *The Wild Wild West* (1965–1969). He'd watched *Hawaii Five-O* (1968–1980). So you could plop down and it was cool, you know?

He enjoyed the arts as well. He enjoyed it as, as a consumer ... [He would say]: 'Hey, *The Sound of Music* (1965) is on. Everybody, come on we're going to watch this.' 'Hey, *West Side Story* (1961) is on.' I know that movie by heart. I know *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963) by heart. All because every time they came on, [Dad would say]: 'come on, come on, come on, we're gonna watch this.' Back in the day when you could see Muhammad Ali fight on TV for free... he would watch that. You could be out there watching that with him.

I think I was intimidated by him only because ... my oldest brother, Michael, was tracked into the math and sciences. And why not? That's where he really did shine, even though he was artistic... Art, music, film, all that stuff ... story writing ... you name it, he did it. Michael was like the fountain. All that stuff came out of him and we just copied it. But you know how school does: 'Don't worry about that stuff. Engineering is the way to go.'

[I'm the next oldest]. Then you get to Jason who was into film ... And then, you get to Dawud [who is into art]. Now those things were out of my father's wheelhouse.

But I was in his wheelhouse! Writing ... sociology ... all that good stuff. And so, of course, his engagement with me was a little bit different. He could ask me more questions!

[We both laugh]

GS: He would say, 'Well, Guy, have you read this yet?' 'And, so, I see you're doing this, what do you think about ...?' and I'm like, 'What about the other guys?!'

[More laughter]

DD: *I enjoyed listening to the Hayashi interview on YouTube where you explain your first memories, in relation to becoming a writer. Here's a snippet:*

I've always been a writer from as far back to second grade ... Right before I started ... putting words on paper. I was a storyteller. But... I was a disruptive talker in class... [My teacher's] way of controlling me was, she [would say]: 'on Fridays, if [you are] well-behaved during the week, [you can] stand in front of the class and tell jokes and stories...'

And, that was the last two minutes of class... But, the turning point was [when] a couple of kids would ask me to repeat something I said from the week before... I clearly couldn't remember it... And that's when she said to me, 'You know what you need to do? Write it down.' And I'll say that was probably ... the moment of enlightenment ... I started with short stories, poems, and things like that. I don't think I ever stopped. (2016: 00:02:48)

GS: Ah, yes! I remember that! Yeah, it was a matter of encouragement and control. Because I was chatty.

DD: *I also appreciated listening to you explain your father's role in your development as an author:*

[My second grade teacher] lit the fire and my father helped to shape it ... the types of things I wrote, it was a hodgepodge. I tried to write about real life stories ... I really tried to copy styles of things I saw on TV ... *The Twilight Zone* (1959–1964), *The Outer Limits* (1963–1965)-type shows, because those are real story-telling shows... I tried my hand at writing plays, so I read a lot of Shakespearean plays ... I tried a lot of different genres... But it came to a head when I was in 7th grade. My father brought the book—no he brought the record, *Black Boy*, home, by Richard Wright... And so, [my dad said], 'Hey, listen to this person. Because I think you can write like him.' At the end of that record, I said, 'That's the dude that I want to write like.' So, I started reading all of his novels and then really started honing my work into trying to capture my life through the stylizing of Richard Wright. (Hayashi 2016: 00:05:44)

GS: That was the first book I ever heard in an audio format. [My dad] said, 'Listen to this, if you want to be a great writer, you gotta read the greats ... listen to this one.' Man, I was hooked.

My father was the first person I ever saw making his own books ... He created Black Family Rituals Publications... And he had developed a series of books of rituals for the Black family. For what happens if somebody passes... gets married... comes of age... naming [ceremonies]. He [created] the Umoja Karamu (Anyike 1991; Salzman, Smith, West 1996), which is the [African American] Unity feast... You do it around Thanksgiving. And he wrote [about these rituals]. Back then, he just went to a Kinko's-type place ... He comes home, he has a box of books ... Next thing you know, he has me and my brothers, we go to these Black events, and we're selling. So, all the stuff that we did, my dad already did it. And not only did he do it, he had us doing it too. He had us participating. We worked tables and we collected the money. There's no internet. No advertising. You just show up to some Black festival. So it wasn't alien to us. What became alien to us was ... how do you go from the Kinko's-made book to the more professionally-made-looking book? How do you make the comic book?

DD: *When did you first start writing comic books? How long did it take?*

GS: When we first got the idea [for *Brotherman*], the three of us [Jason, Dawud, and Guy] were against the clock because we were trying to get ready for the New York Black Expo [A large event for Black-owned businesses to showcase their work and sell products]. We had a month and a half to get it done. I was living in Newark, Delaware and they were living in East Orange, New Jersey. I came up to see them.

On my drive home, I'm trying to think: 'what is this story going to be?' ... Dawud had asked me: 'how long is it going to take you to write a story? Not the script part, just the story part.'

Because if I give [Dawud] the story, he can start plotting: 'Okay, if he [Guy] says it's going to take place in an ice cream shop, I [Dawud] can start designing that.'

[Dawud] could pull out elements to start the designs (**Figure 2**). He doesn't have to have anything actual ... If there's talk about cars, he can start designing cars.

And so I said, 'Well, why don't you give me two weeks.' I didn't know if it was going to take me a weekend or two weeks. But I felt two weeks was a good enough buffer ... And I think I might have had it already done in my head by the time I got back to Delaware, which is about a two-hour drive. Intellectually, I kinda knew what



Figure 2: Excerpt from Dawud Anyabwile Sketchbook © Big City Entertainment, Inc.

I was going to do. Then probably during the course of the week I was working on it. That was 1989. By that time, I was married. I was working at Montgomery County Community College. I was wrapping up my masters. I was working on my thesis paper.

So at lunch, I work on the *Brotherman* story. After work, I go to class. It's an hour and a half drive home. I get home, I'm not working on anything. I'm tired. Then on the weekend, I commit half of Saturday to school work, half of Saturday to *Brotherman*. Same for Sunday ... So, I think, in a week, I had the story written out and I wrote out issues one and two because I already knew, we gotta have a cliffhanger. I had bought a comic book on my way home. I just grabbed the first one off the shelf. I wasn't even reading it to read it. I was looking at it like, 'Okay, one-two-three-four-five-six panels on the page. Oh, here's one big panel on the page... Cliffhanger at the end. Got it. Okay.' I'll say it took me about a week to get that story back to him.

And then [Dawud asked me]: 'How long is it going to take you to write the script?' And, I leaned on my interest in theater. And I said, 'Well, I will write it like I would have written a play.' I looked at the comic, I said, 'Well, you know, within the box, it has narration, bubbles for talking, and I gotta give him direction. I have to tell him what's happening, because now he has to draw it.'

Now I'm writing the script ... I [didn't] know how other people do it. But, I know how I want Dawud to see it. And if he understands it, that's all that matters ... I think it's fortunate that we did so many things together as kids. Understanding each other's humor because it comes from the same wellspring. Understanding how we describe things ... We tell each other stories and we know each other's patterns of storytelling ... Having shared experiences of: 'Hey, we're all going downtown' and we all jump on the train... jump on the bus. Shared experiences during our walks, and the kinds of foods we ate... I don't have to give [Dawud] much direction. I might say, 'Hey, remember [Random Name]? Yeah? Well, dude [character] looks like him.' 'Hey, you remember that time we were downtown? And that dude was doing this crazy thing? Put some guys like him in it.'

Or, Dawud will draw some people and he'll say, 'Guy, I drew this picture. Dudes look like they're just standing outside of Germantown.'

We both know Germantown. We don't have to go the extra step of, 'Okay, it's several young men. They've got on big coats. They're standing by a railed fence' ... So that was a bonus. And that might have helped the process be that much faster ... I think the script might have taken me about two weeks.

DD: *The books and the panels have so much energy in them. It makes sense that your Brotherman stories are set in a place called 'Big City.' Is 'Big City' based on a real city?*

GS: That was one of the biggest questions that people would ask when we first came out with the book. 'Where is this story taking place? Is it New York? Is it Philadelphia? Is it Dallas?' They wanted it grounded in some sense of reality ... I think that was challenging because a lot of our customers were not comic book people ... And we would say 'No, no, it's just made up ... it's fictitious.' Big city is [based on] our experiences. The municipal center, where Antonio Valor [Brotherman's alter ego] works, does look like the City Hall in downtown Philly. But then again, it also doesn't ... you can see the fictional founders of Big City on the top of City Hall.

My father invited many people to the house and he would take us to meet different people throughout Philly ... a swirl of a lot of Black intellectuals ... well-connected

Whites ... and then, people who weren't connected, just regular old folks. So, it was a real mix of experiences and that's what I draw from. So when Dawud and I created *Brotherman*, you can tell the characters, the external characters [and] the main characters, are never just monolithic or faceless ... We bring all those different types of characterizations to light.

DD: *Where did your inspirations for Antonio Valor a.k.a. Brotherman and the other characters come from? What type of preparation did you do for the lawyer-related story content?*

GS: The concepts [are] influenced by Chester Gould and Chester Himes. When I think of characterizations... like, when I'm naming people, I was inspired by Chester Gould, who did *Dick Tracy* (1931–1977) comics. And if you look up *Dick Tracy* and you see the names of his characters, their characters fit their names (Gould, 2006). And so I like doing that as well ... that's fun ... The other influence is Chester Himes. [He] wrote those Harlem detective series back in the 40s and he got several movies out of it: *A Rage in Harlem* (1991), *Cotton comes to Harlem* (1970), and *Come Back, Charleston Blue* (1972).

When we created Antonio Valor, we were thinking, 'What kind of career do I give him?' 'What kind of world do they exist in?' It goes back to my experiences working in student affairs. I've had to work with lawyers. If we have problem students ... I'm dealing with police ... This kid's going to court ... you might have to go too... I've had speeding tickets and had to go to court, you know, those kinds of things. And then, the law shows on TV. I'm not one who sits down and actively watches but I've seen them. So it makes me question, 'Can I do that?' And thank goodness now, I can talk to attorney friends, and I know plenty. Or, [I] can Google it. So I might think of the problem and I'll say, 'I wonder if I can just do this?' Then I'll throw it by a friend and ask, 'If I did this, could I get away with it?' ... And then I think in terms of the story. If I can't get away with it in real life, how can I get away with it in a story about a place like Big City. I don't have *Black's Law* book sitting on my desk or anything like that.

One example, during Antonio's conversation with Dr. Chémico (**Figure 3**) ... when she's trying to explain the properties of the perfume used by the villain, The Seductress... I took a similar approach. I'm not a scientist, but I said, 'Okay, it's an



Figure 3: Excerpt from Sims J, Sims D, and Sims G (1990b) *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline #2* (East Orange, NJ) © Big City Entertainment, Inc.

aerosol.' So, I'm going to my understanding of science. But then I need to at least think about ... bonding, pheromones. I read up on pheromones. I'm not reading [academic] journals. I'm just reading some basic [information] for a general understanding and then I say, 'Okay, I can use that.'

DD: *I'm also curious about the famous 'Eruption' double page spread from Issue #5 (Figure 4). I saw that it's part of the Smithsonian collection. It's a great image. So much is going on in it. It reminds me a bit of MAD magazine. Did you request for that image to be a double page spread? You stated earlier that you were directing a lot of the layouts and details on the pages. Was that your decision too?*

GS: Leading up to issue five, I knew the police would be protesting. So, I wanted to build up to that page. The story was building up to that moment, the eruption ... I said I wanted a lot of cops, protest signs, and stuff like that. Because we've seen that. I mean, we've seen it at home. We've been parts of it. And I think Dawud liked it, because—you mentioned *MAD* magazine, right?—I mean, how many times have you read *MAD* magazine, and they had [a large spread], and someone over here has a little sign that says, 'Don't Read'? 'Don't turn the page'? Something silly. That's what I wanted ... I have one sign that says 'Since when do police **police** police?' And another sign responding that says 'When **cops** cop a **capricious** sense of duty!' So,

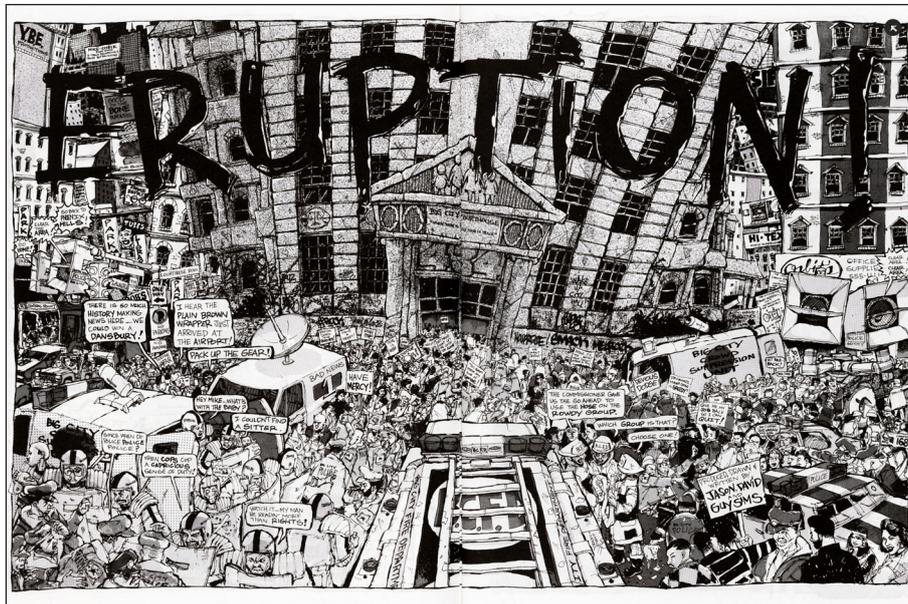


Figure 4: Excerpt from Sims J, Sims D, and Sims G (1992a) *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline #5* (East Orange, NJ) © Big City Entertainment, Inc.

for Dawud, I think he loved doing it, you know. And, we have been to and witnessed a lot of these big flashpoint protests. So, I said, if we're going to do it, [let's do it big].

Further Reflections

After the New York Expo, Guy and his brothers were no longer constrained by a one and half month deadline. They began experimenting with the comics medium in later issues. Guy states:

Issues one and two were 'by the book.' ... Issues three, four, and five, were, in my mind, our coming to the understanding that we can do this the way we want to ... I can incorporate anything into this. I can put poems, I can write a song ... that scene with Melody ... from issue six ... was a song I wrote (**Figure 5**) ... we're not bound.

More examples of this change are visible. For example, in the first two issues, Guy introduces fans to a costumed supervillain, The Seductress. In the next three issues, he chooses not to dress his antagonist in costumes. Instead, fan favorites Block and his henchmen, the Twin Terrors (Derek and Eric), are dressed in hip hop-styled



Figure 5: Excerpt from Sims J, Sims D, and Sims G (1992b) *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline #6* (East Orange, NJ) © Big City Entertainment, Inc.

clothing. Likewise, Donald Urbane, the villain in later issues, is impeccably dressed in formal suits, turtlenecks, and vests.

The trio continued publishing issues of *Brotherman* until they suffered the unfortunate passing of their parents. Shortly afterward, they dissolved their company, Big City Comics, Incorporated. Eventually, after a long hiatus, *Brotherman* returned with several ongoing projects. In 2013, Guy began publishing *The Cold Hard Cases of Duke Denim* (2013-ongoing). The *Duke Denim* novels are a detective series set in Big City several decades before the stories in *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline*. Guy and Dawud partnered with a new collaborator, Brian McGee, to answer fans' requests for more illustrated stories from Big City. The new trio published the full color graphic novel, *Brotherman: Revelation* (2016). *Revelation* is part one in a trilogy about the origins of Brotherman and his parents, Leonard Valor and Carmen Best-Valor. The inspiration for young Antonio Valor's parents are Guy and Dawud's parents, Dr. Edward Sims, Jr. and Mrs. Deanna Jones-Sims. Furthermore, the *Brotherman* team have a partnership with Emory University to create virtual reality scenes from the Big City universe.

The *Brotherman* brand is part of a long legacy of inspirational media from independent Black producers. Guy's early firsthand experiences with individuals, such as Matt Robinson, provided him with tangible examples of successful Black-owned media companies that were creating content for Black audiences. Fortunately, he also had a second grade teacher who was able to channel his creativity toward a less-disruptive outlet. Nonetheless, his most important influence was his father, Dr. Edward Sims, Jr. Edward introduced young Guy to the works of Richard Wright for inspiration. He also engaged his son in questions and invited him and the rest of the family to partake in mainstream media consumption experiences that further inspired their creativity. Edward published books about holidays and family rituals that continue to be recognized and practiced in the African American community. Furthermore, Guy and his brothers were apprenticed into the 'family' business of producing culturally relevant media for African Americans. During an era when the internet was not available for advertising and marketing to large numbers of potential customers, their father taught them how to bring their products directly to their

audience. In turn, Guy and his brothers carried on their father's legacy of introducing the African American community to new cultural experiences, but this time, it was in the comic book format. *Brotherman* now serves as a source of inspiration to multiple generations of new comic book artists and writers.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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