INTRODUCTION

WHAT IF WE WERE TO TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT A QUIET, UNASSUMING GUY WITH BLACK HAIR AND THICK GLASSES? WHAT IF WE SAID HE'S AN IMMIGRANT, WHO'S DONE HIS BEST TO FIT INTO A LAND VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF HIS BIRTH. HE'S GOT A HIDDEN SIDE THAT HE CAN'T BRING HIMSELF TO SHOW, NOT EVEN TO THE POPULAR GIRL. HE'S GOT A HUGE CRUSH ON, WHO MAKES HIM BLUSH AND STAMMER WITH THE SLIGHTEST GLANCE. IF ONLY SHE KNEW WHO HE REALLY WAS, HE THINKS, SHE'D BE AMAZED. IF ONLY EVERYONE KNEW...


WE REALIZE THAT FOR THE IMAGINATIVE AND SOCIALLY AWKWARD OF ALL BACKGROUNDS, COMIC BOOKS HAVE SERVED AS A WAY TO ESCAPE THE EVERYDAY WORLD. BUT WE BELIEVE THAT FOR ASIAN AMERICANS, THEY'VE MEANT EVEN MORE. SUPERHERO STORIES ARE ABOUT GEEKS TURNING INTO GODS, THEY'RE ABOUT ALIENS MAINSTREAMING INTO AMERICAN CULTURE...OR SOARING HIGH ABOVE IT. THEY'RE ABOUT THE ULTIMATE MODEL MINORITY: A SUBSET OF SOCIETY WITH ABILITIES BEYOND MORTAL UNDERSTANDING, WHO FACE RESENTMENT, THE BURDEN OF EXAGGERATED EXPECTATIONS—AND OCCASIONALLY, HATRED OR FEAR—AS A RESULT.

WHICH HELPS TO EXPLAIN WHY, CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, ASIAN AMERICANS HAVE SUCH A DEEP CONNECTION WITH THE SUPERHERO COMIC GENRE. AND WHY SO MANY ASIAN AMERICANS TODAY ARE COMIC ARTISTS AND WRITERS. IN FACT, ONE COULD SAY THAT WE'RE IN THE THROES OF AN ASIAN AMERICAN COMICS RENAISSANCE.

SURPRISINGLY, DESPITE ALL THIS BUBBLING COMICS BRILLIANCE IN OUR COMMUNITY, ASIAN SUPERHEROES ARE STILL RARE...AND WE THINK THEY SHOULDN'T BE. WE WANT TO SEE A THOUSAND ASIAN AMERICAN HEROES, INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY, AND REPRESENTING THE FULL BREADTH OF OUR DIVERSITY AND EXTENT OF OUR HISTORY.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE DOING THIS BOOK: "SECRET IDENTITIES," THE FIRST-EVER ASIAN AMERICAN SUPERHERO ANTHOLOGY. IT'S AN EXPLORATION OF AN UNUSUAL AND OVERLOOKED CULTURAL CONNECTION: A SHOWCASE FOR A UNIQUE COLLECTION OF TALENT WORKING WITHIN ONE OF THE 21ST CENTURY'S MOST DYNAMIC MEDIUMS OF EXPRESSION, BUT MOST OF ALL, IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO UNLEASH A BUMPER CROP OF SUPERMEN AND WONDER WOMEN WHO LOOK, THINK, AND LIVE LIKE US, POISED TO LEAP INTO ACTION...FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE ASIAN AMERICAN WAY. SO CHECK OUT THIS PREVIEW, AND LET US KNOW IF YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED.

JEFF YANG, EDITOR IN CHIEF

KEITH CHOW, SENIOR EDITOR / EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR

PARRY SHEN, MANAGING EDITOR

JERRY MA, ART DIRECTOR
IN THE BEGINNING...

WRITTEN BY: JEFF YANG
PENCILS, INK, AND LETTERING: JEF CASTRO

YOU LOOK VERY HANDSOME IN YOUR NEW SHIRT, HONEY.

I LOOK LIKE A TOTAL DORK.

HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT? AUNTIE BOUGHT IT FOR YOU SPECIAL FROM TAIWAN!

VERY HANDSOME.

...STUDY HARD TODAY!

IT'S A GIRL'S SHIRT, MOM.

HAHA HAHA
...and that's how we find the length of a side of a polygon similar to a known polygon. Any questions?

Okay, the game is superheres. I call Batman!

Whizz! I clobber you with my batarang!

I'm Spiderman. I dodge your batarang with my spidey sense!

I'm Superman... blast you both with my searing heat vision!

Hold it! You can't be Superman... you're Shang-Chi, master of kung fu.

I don't want to be Shang-Chi. Shang-Chi sucks.

Karate kid?

No.

Iron fist?

No.

Okay, then you're magical princess kitty!

Watch out, guys. She's gonna tickle you with her smiling gumdrop wand!

Haha ha ha!
WHERE'S YOUR NEW SHIRT?

I VOMITED ON IT.

YOU WRITE A LETTER TO AUNTIE THANKING HER FOR YOUR NEW SHIRT.

AND DON'T YOU COME DOWN UNTIL DINNER!

Wotta revoltin' development this is.

ARE YOU COMING TO BED, HON?

IN A MINUTE...

--I'M DOING AN INTERVIEW...

HELLO?

HEJ, KEITH?

THIS IS JEFF...

SURE--

--SHOOT.

SO... WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH HOLLYWOOD'S CURRENT FASCINATION WITH SUPERHEROES?

AND I EMAILED YOU ABOUT AN INTERVIEW.

WELL, I THINK IT'S BECAUSE SUPERHEROES ARE SO INGRAINED INTO POPULAR CULTURE.

THAT WHEN A SUPERMAN OR X-MEN MOVIE COMES OUT, EVEN PEOPLE WHO'VE NEVER READ A COMIC BOOK IN THEIR LIVES ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH THEM.

THEY'RE NOT JUST CARTOON CHARACTERS...

--THEY'RE MODERN AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY.

SO THEY'RE THE NEW GREEK MYTHS?

GREEK KIDS COULDN'T DREAM OF GROWING UP TO BE HERCULES.

BUT LOOK AT SPIDERMAN!

--HE'S THIS ORDINARY GEEKY KID WHO GETS BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER.

YEAH, ONLY MORE PERSONAL.
AND THE X-MEN—THEY'VE GOTTEN THESE INCREDIBLE POWERS, BUT THEY'RE STILL OUTCASTS.

RIGHT. THAT'S WHY COMICS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A REFUGE FOR KIDS WHO ARE SHY OR SOCIALLY AWKWARD.

YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER, YOU DON'T FIT IN, BUT THEN YOU GO TO SCHOOL AND MEET OTHER PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF.

YOU DISCOVER YOUR SECRET HERITAGE: THE THING INSIDE YOU THAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL.

DO YOU THINK THAT'S WHY SO MUCH OF THE COMICS FANBASE IS ASIAN AMERICAN?

SURE GO TO A COMIC BOOK CONVENTION, A QUARTER OF THE KIDS ARE ASIAN.

A LOT OF THE TOP ARTISTS ARE ASIAN AMERICAN, TOO.

JIM LEE

JAEE LEE

SEAN CHEN

ISUMERST PERIL

I EVEN HAVE THIS GREAT IDEA FOR A SUPERHERO:

HE'S THE SON OF A RESEARCH SCIENTIST WHO'S BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED OF BETRAYING THE U.S.

YOU SHOULD.

I TOTALLY SHOULD, RIGHT? OKAY, THANKS, MAN.

See, I think that's cool...

I'D LOVE TO GET A BUNCH OF WRITERS AND ARTISTS TOGETHER AND JUST CREATE AN ANTHOLOGY OF ASIAN AMERICAN SUPERHERO COMICS.

YOU KNOW WHAT. I'M TOTALLY INTO THAT.

I DON'T KNOW MAN I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO WRITE AN ASIAN AMERICAN SUPERHERO COMIC.

SO WHY AREN'T THERE MORE ASIAN SUPERHEROES?

I EVEN HAVE THIS GREAT IDEA FOR A SUPERHERO:

HE'S THE SON OF A RESEARCH SCIENTIST WHO'S BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED OF BETRAYING THE U.S.

Yeah, only with high-tech combat/armor (not nuclear secrets). Kinds of based on the WEN HO LEE STORY?

ARE YOU DONE TALKING TO YOUR FRIENDS YET?

I'M NOT "TALKING WITH MY FRIENDS," I'M WORKING! I GET PAID FOR THIS!

BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOOTH.
Hey, man, it's Jerry.

I think we met before.

I'm a graphic artist.

I've got an indie comics studio. Epic proportions.

Hey Jerry.

I ran into Jerry the other day, and he's totally into the idea too.

Okay, I'm game. Let's get together this weekend and discuss what it would take.

Hey, are you awake? Man, it's Keith Chow.

You know that idea you had.

About doing an Asian American superhero anthology?

Sure.

We should do it.

I'm in.

Yeah, you, me, and Jerry. I have Jerry on the other line.

Can I conference him in?

Yeah, go for it.

Hey, man. It's Chinese.

The "Ultimates." Wasp is still Asian.

What's with all the shrinking characters turning Asian? Is shrinking like the new martial arts?

Well, well. At least walk you downtown. This is a pretty seamy neighborhood at night.

Dudes, I don't like this.

Okay, so we're set. I'll talk to the publishers.

Keith will do some research on the industry, and Jerry, you start contacting some artists.

I'm (hic). Pschhhh. Whoa. It's getting pretty late.

I've gotta take the bus back down to DC.

You're taking the Chinatown bus this late? After midnight, that's like, the crackhead express.

Yeah, this is potentially ass-kick central.

I am the man without fear.
WHAT HAVE WE HERE? F##KING CHINESE DUDES HAVING A GIRL'S NIGHT OUT?

NAW, IT'S MAGICAL PRINCESS KITTY AND HER PALS.

HELLO, KITTY, GOT SOME SPARE CHANGE FOR US, KITTY?

SOME DAMN NINJA SHIT GOING ON HERE.

SCREW THIS, DUDE, I'M OUT.

I APOLOGIZE FOR EVER CALLING MARTIAL ARTS DUDES LAME.

YEAH, I'M KIND OF DIGGING ON SHANG-CHI THESE DAYS.

YOU KNOW, I THINK I'VE GOT TIME FOR ONE MORE DRINK, GUYS.

YOU CAN CRASH ON MY SOFA.....HEATHER WON'T MIND. YOU LIKE DOGS?

AND SO, IT BEGINS...
A little over two months later and I'm surrounded by the very same people I thought had accepted me... Even though I was just a Nisei kid flying by the seat of his pants.

I was proud when the others started to accept me as one of their own.

I know I can take a beating, but I'm afraid of what a fight will do to others that look like me.

I thought that I didn't matter when we were when our masks were off.

I thought I proved where my loyalties lay when I consistently put myself in harm's way.

These are pages from "9066," a story submitted by Jonathan Tsuei. It's about a Nisei superhero who finds himself facing internment during World War II—despite his powers and status as a hero. Many of the best story ideas we're getting are like this one—reimaginings of our history...with a super-powered twist.
MORE "SHADOW HISTORY": THESE ARE SCRIPT PAGES FROM TWO STORIES I'M WORKING ON: "16 MILES," A STORY ABOUT A FATHER WHO MAKES A STAGGERING SACRIFICE TO KEEP HIS FAMILY ALIVE, AND "THE HIBAKUSHA," ABOUT THE STRANGE SIDE EFFECTS EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN OF THE HIROSHIMA SURVIVORS.

SUPERHERO STORIES ARE A GREAT WAY TO EXPLORE PARTS OF HISTORY THAT PEOPLE DON'T TEACH, OR TALK ABOUT.

AND HERE ARE SOME SKETCHES BY JEF CASTRO OF A STORY I'M WORKING ON CALLED "PERIL," ABOUT THE SON OF AN UNJUSTLY ACCUSED CHINESE AMERICAN SCIENTIST, WHO USES HIS DAD'S INVENTIONS TO CLEAR HIS NAME.

LIKE PARRY SAID, WE'RE NOT JUST TRYING TO HAVE FUN AND TELL COOL STORIES HERE. WE ALSO WANT TO GIVE KIDS A WAY TO TALK ABOUT HISTORY, COMMUNITY ISSUES, AND CURRENT EVENTS. WE'RE WORKING ON A TEACHER'S GUIDE AND CURRICULUM FOR THE BOOK, TOO.

BUT THE STORIES STILL HAVE TO BE COOL.
SO, ANYWAY, "SECRET IDENTITIES" IS SCOUTING FOR CONTRIBUTORS NOW. IF YOU'RE AN ASIAN AMERICAN WRITER—

—OR ARTIST, OR COMICS CREATOR... OR ALWAYS WANTED TO BE ONE... WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR FUN, SUBVERSIVE, ILLUMINATING, AND IMAGINATIVE STORIES THAT LIVE IN OR COMMENT ON THE SUPERHERO WORLD, WHILE EXPLORING THE IDEA OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SIDE OF ORDINARY ASIAN AMERICANS.

AND WHEN WE SAY SUPERHERO STORIES, WE MEAN STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE WITH ABILITIES FAR ABOVE THOSE OF "NORMAL" HUMANS; STORIES THAT EXPLORE DEALING WITH BEING DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE, AND ABOUT THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMES WITH GREAT POWER.

WE'RE OPEN TO SATIRE, COMMENTARY, AND OTHER KINDS OF WORK, TOO, SO LONG AS THE STORY IS THEMED AROUND THE IDEA OF SUPERHEROES.

AND IT'S GOT TO BE COOL.

SOME AWESOME, INCREDIBLY TALENTED PEOPLE ARE ALREADY ON BOARD—

LIKE WRITERS GREG PAK ("HULK") AND J. TORRES ("BATMAN STRIKES") AND ARTISTS SEAN CHEN ("IRON MAN", "NOVA") AND CLIFF CHIANG ("HUMAN TARGET"). NON-COMICS PEOPLE TOO: AUTHORS, PERFORMERS, DIRECTORS.

THE BOOK WILL BE PUBLISHED BY THE NEW PRESS IN FALL 2008, SO IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, CONTACT US NOW AT INFO@SECRETIDENTITIES.ORG, OR VISIT WWW.SECRETIDENTITIES.ORG FOR FURTHER DETAILS AND FULL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES!