

GREAT IMMIGRANTS GREAT AMERICANS

FEATURING JIM LEE

A KEY CONCEPT WITH SUPERHEROES IS THAT THEY HAVE SECRET LIVES.

AS AN IMMIGRANT KID GROWING UP IN MISSOURI IN THE '70S, I COULD IDENTIFY.

CONCEPT AND SCRIPT BY JONGMINA O'NEILL
ILLUSTRATED BY CHUAN MING ONG

THERE WAS ME AT HOME, EATING DIFFERENT FOODS AND SPEAKING A MIX OF KOREAN AND ENGLISH.

AND THEN THERE WAS ME AT SCHOOL, HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS AND TRYING TO FIT IN.



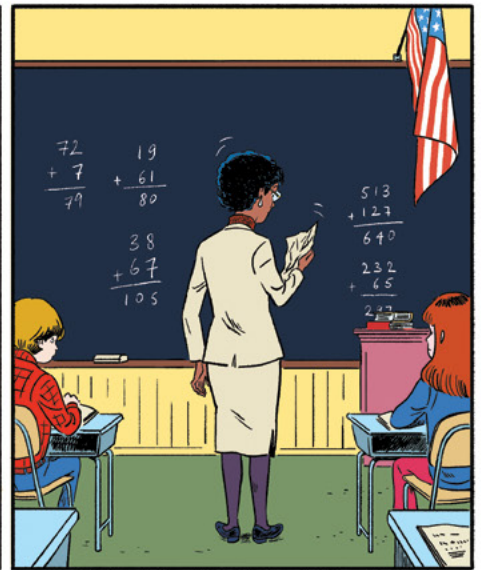
THIS IS A MATH LESSON ...



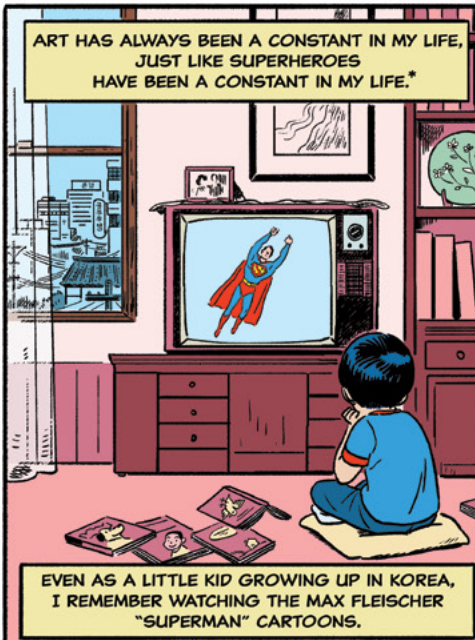
... NOT AN ART CLASS.



IF YOU INSIST ON MAKING PICTURES OF ...



WHERE DID YOU LEARN HOW TO DRAW LIKE THIS?



ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONSTANT IN MY LIFE, JUST LIKE SUPERHEROES HAVE BEEN A CONSTANT IN MY LIFE.*

EVEN AS A LITTLE KID GROWING UP IN KOREA, I REMEMBER WATCHING THE MAX FLEISCHER "SUPERMAN" CARTOONS.



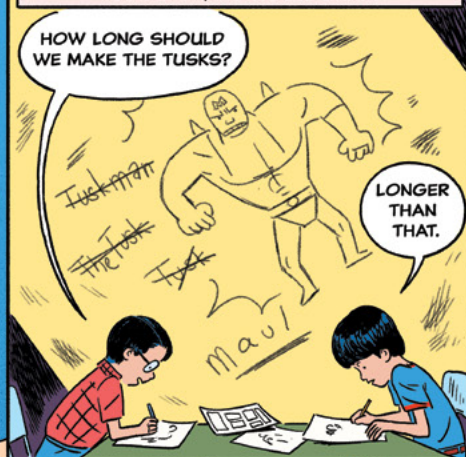
WHEN WE MOVED TO THE MIDWEST, IT WAS FOR MY FATHER'S JOB. THERE WAS A PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE IN THE U.S. AT THAT TIME, SO THE COUNTRY BROUGHT IN IMMIGRANT DOCTORS TO FILL THE GAP.

*FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS MAKE UP 13.1% OF ARTISTS AND RELATED WORKERS IN CREATIVE OCCUPATIONS. SOURCE: IMMIGRANTS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL, AUGUST 2019

MY PARENTS WANTED ME TO BE A DOCTOR AND FOLLOW MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS, BUT I WAS JUST CONSTANTLY DRAWING. IT WAS THE THING I LOVED AND FOUND SOLACE AND ESCAPE IN.



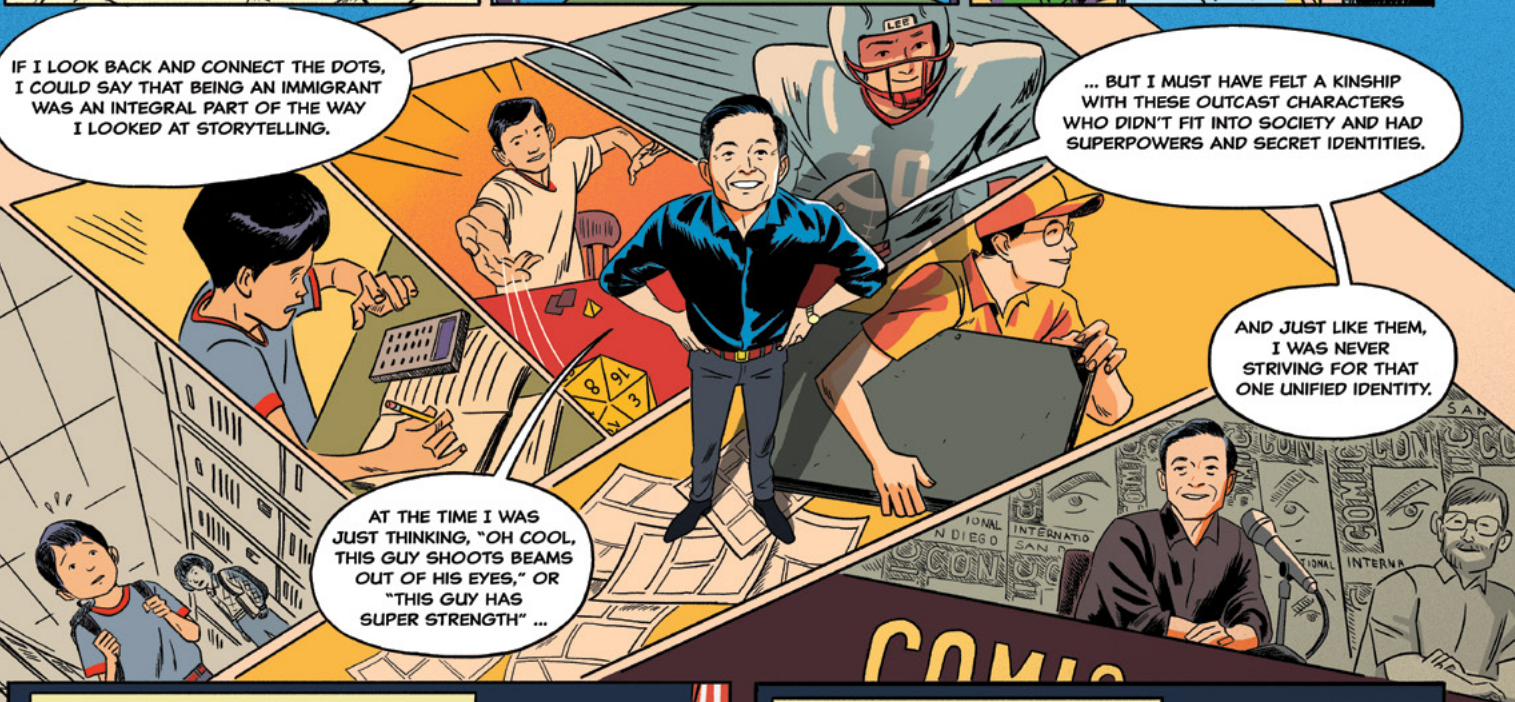
EVERY SUNDAY, I WOULD MEET UP WITH MY FRIEND BRANDON CHOI AT CHURCH, AND IN THE HOUR AFTER SUNDAY SCHOOL ENDED, WHEN THE ADULTS' SERMON WAS STILL GOING ON, WE WOULD DRAW.



WHEN I FORMED IMAGE COMICS IN THE '90S, SOME OF THE CHARACTERS WE CREATED IN THOSE SESSIONS ACTUALLY ENDED UP BECOMING CHARACTERS IN OUR COMIC BOOKS.



IF I LOOK BACK AND CONNECT THE DOTS, I COULD SAY THAT BEING AN IMMIGRANT WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WAY I LOOKED AT STORYTELLING.

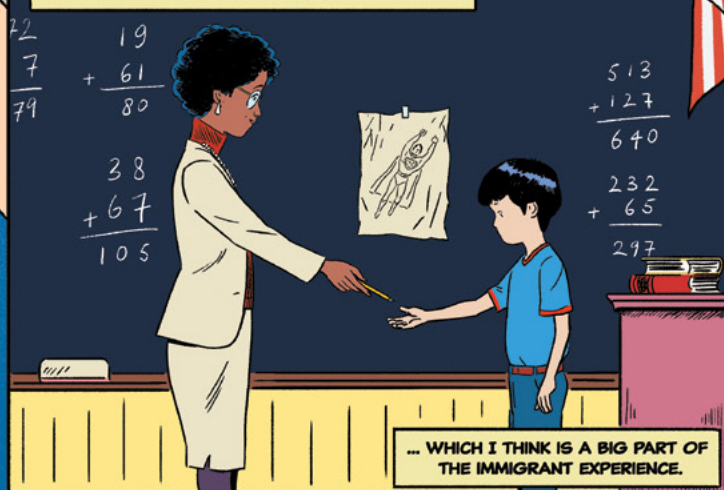


... BUT I MUST HAVE FELT A KINSHIP WITH THESE OUTCAST CHARACTERS WHO DIDN'T FIT INTO SOCIETY AND HAD SUPERPOWERS AND SECRET IDENTITIES.

AND JUST LIKE THEM, I WAS NEVER STRIVING FOR THAT ONE UNIFIED IDENTITY.

AT THE TIME I WAS JUST THINKING, "OH COOL, THIS GUY SHOOTS BEAMS OUT OF HIS EYES," OR "THIS GUY HAS SUPER STRENGTH" ...

I FELT MORE COMFORTABLE BEING ABLE TO HAVE DIFFERENT SIDES TO MYSELF AND ASSIMILATING WHEN NEEDED ...



... WHICH I THINK IS A BIG PART OF THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE.

IT'S JUST LIKE IN THE COMICS: WE CAN BE CLARK KENT AND SUPERMAN.



JIM LEE IS THE PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER, AND CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER OF DC. HE IS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMIC ARTISTS AND WRITERS OF ALL TIME. HE HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS ACCOLADES, INCLUDING A HARVEY AND MORE. HIS FUNDRAISING HAS SUPPORTED COMIC BOOK STORES, HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE, AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH. READ MORE GREAT IMMIGRANT STORIES AT CARNEGIE.ORG/IMMIGRANTSTORIES