

“So, you’ve taken someone else’s Nostalgia”: Trauma, Nostalgia and American Hero Stories by Lindsay Hallam



Chapter number	
Chapter title	“So, you’ve taken someone else’s Nostalgia”: Trauma, Nostalgia and American Hero Stories
Chapter abstract <i>3–6 sentences, no more than 150 words.</i>	This chapter explores the many ways that <i>Watchmen</i> challenges nostalgia, its alternative history acting as a corrective to the nostalgic view of American history as one that is righteous and just, a narrative reinforced by the superhero narratives that are so currently in vogue (and so often present the superhero as almost exclusively white and male). Echoing <i>Watchmen</i> comic co-creator Alan Moore’s statement that the first superhero film was DW Griffith’s <i>Birth of a Nation</i> , the television series, just as the comic did before it, provides an alternative history (and present) that deconstructs the superhero narrative, revealing the trauma that is so often (literally) masked.
Chapter keywords <i>Please provide 5 keywords; type each keyword on its own line.</i>	Trauma Nostalgia Race Superhero Masks

In Episode 6 of *Watchmen*, titled “This Extraordinary Being”, protagonist Angela Abar is transported back in time after overdosing on a medication called Nostalgia. In these pills are the memories of Angela’s grandfather, Will Reeves, which she then experiences. Rather than a *Back to the Future* style trip back to the ‘good old days’, Angela experiences American history from the perspective of a Black man whose life is marked by a series of traumatic events. Will’s trauma is part of a wider, collective trauma, a direct result of having to live in a racist society that does not recognise or acknowledge its history of injustice and inequality.

I will explore how *Watchmen* challenges nostalgia, its alternative history acting as a corrective to the nostalgic view of American history as one that is righteous and just, a narrative reinforced by the superhero narratives that are so currently in vogue (and so often present the superhero as almost exclusively white and male). The television series, just as the

comic did before it, provides an alternative history and present that deconstructs the superhero narrative, revealing the trauma that is so often (literally) masked.

While there have been some who have perceived the series as having a pro-police stance,¹ as the show progresses this perspective becomes muddled. Kristen Warner asserts:

While I've read really persuasive analysis arguing that the show reinforces the power of the state, I would counter: it may, but I think the series finds itself much more comfortable in the space of ambivalence. It refuses to be simply about good and evil.²

As Warner attests, the series consistently resists the reinforcement of binaries, which is central to its deconstruction of superhero tropes. Many of the conventions of the superhero genre, from its iconography (particularly the mask) to its narrative structures (such as the origin story and the superhero's inciting trauma), are perpetually broken down, continuing the original graphic novel's subversion of the boundary separating heroes from villains.

“THIS IS MY ORIGIN STORY”: THE BIRTH OF A NATIONAL HERO

The opening scene of the series in many ways encapsulates the ideas and concerns to follow. We see what appears to be a very straightforward scenario, one that has played out in countless films, television series and comic books: a hero chases a villain, defeats him and saves the day. Yet, many of the well-worn tropes become complicated as the scene unfolds. Initially, we see a man in white on a horse, chased by a man dressed in a black hood and robes. Setting up the binary of black and white, and the connotations associated with each element of this binary, it at first appears that the one being pursued is the hero. The man in white uses a gun that he shoots at the man behind him, while the man in black wields a rope and lassoes the man in white so he falls off his horse. As he falls to the ground the man's white hat – a symbol demarcating the goodness of a hero in the Western genre – is seen in the foreground as a priest and the rest of his congregation come out of the nearby church. A mid shot reveals further that the man in white is wearing a Sheriff's badge, another symbol of goodness and justice. However, the man in black then tells the townsfolk that their Sheriff was stealing their cattle, and is in fact the villain. The man in black pulls back his hood revealing a Black man, also wearing a badge. A young boy recognizes him as Bass Reeves, “The Black Marshal of Oklahoma”. The townsfolk, realizing who he is, clap in grateful appreciation.

At this point the scene shifts from the screen to show a young Black boy in the audience, watching the film in awe and wonder. We then see the rest of the film from behind the boy's head, staring up at the screen with him. Bass Reeves refuses the people's calls to lynch the thief (it is notable that even though he uses a rope, he will not use it to perform this act), and the young boy reads out the words on the title screen: "There will be no mob justice today. TRUST IN THE LAW." As he speaks this last sentence there is a close-up of the boy, his face full of joy. There is then another cut, to behind the woman at the piano, the previously stable camerawork now shaky and handheld. The woman's piano playing falters, the sound of a siren and other unrest outside fades in. Reality intrudes into the theatre.

In the final episode of the series, this young boy, Will Reeves, as an old man remembers this moment: "the last thing I saw before my world ended was Bass Reeves." The film leaves a deep and indelible mark on the boy, influencing him throughout his life, directly leading him onto the path he takes as an adult. In this case a film has a positive effect, the boy looks at the image on screen and sees someone like him achieve greatness and respect. Unfortunately, the respect that Bass Reeves receives on screen from the all-white townsfolk does not exist in the real world, as just beyond the cinema's doors the massacre of African American people by white supremacists, which actually occurred in Tulsa in 1921, is taking place. Later, as an adult, Will encounters an instance when the filmed image is used for the opposite effect, as a means to harm, emblematic of cinema's long history of harmful depictions of people of color.

Further, this opening film-within-a-show sets up the tension that exists throughout the series in its interplay between real events and those that are clearly fictional and fantastical. The film Will watches does not exist, but the film's hero, Bass Reeves, was a real person – although he did not go around hiding his face in a black hood.³ The representation of the events in Tulsa are depicted in a way that clearly demonstrates that this was a violent racist attack, traumatizing an entire community. However, after young Will escapes by being concealed in a truck, he later finds everyone else he escaped with dead, except for a baby who he wraps in a blanket of with a red and white stripe pattern that recalls the design of the American flag. After the realism of the scene of massacre, this next moment visually references images from superhero origin stories, in particular the arrival of Superman on Earth, who as a baby is wrapped in the same blue and red that will become part of his costume (colors also referencing the American flag).

Will does indeed refer to this as “my origin story”, a key element of all superhero narratives. Series creator Damon Lindelof maintains that he is “obsessed” with origin stories – a factor that led to the extensive use of flashbacks in his previous series *Lost* – with origin stories provided for several of *Watchmen*’s main characters, such as Angela Abar and Wade Tillman.⁴ However, origin stories always come in two parts, as Lindelof explains, using Batman as an example: “Batman’s origin comes in two parts: origin part number one is the murder of the Waynes, and part two is the moment that he decides to become Batman, you know, as an adult.”⁵ With this as a model, the opening of the first episode is just part one of Will’s origin: “There’s a childhood trauma that doesn’t really become worked out until adulthood, and so we always knew that part two was going to involve this period when this little boy becomes Hooded Justice.”⁶ This model also applies to the origins of both Angela and Wade, with both sustaining childhood traumas (or in the case of Wade, in young adulthood, with the trauma coming at the same moment that he discovers his sexuality), and then an inciting incident in adulthood (the White Night) which leads them to put on a mask and assume a persona.

Thus, the mask that each of them wears becomes a visual representation of their trauma(s). Will is revealed to be Hooded Justice, a character from the original comic and the first superhero. In the graphic novel Hooded Justice is the only hero whose identity is not divulged, creating space for Lindelof and his writing team to integrate this character into the show’s exploration of America’s racist history. Lindelof speaks of the process of making this connection:

Hooded Justice is a character that never gets revealed to us, why? [...] what if this man was hiding, under the mask, another mask, it was multileveled. What if he was hiding his race? And why would a Black man hide his race in 1938, if he was a vigilante? Well, the reason is because if a Black man was fighting crime in 1938 New York, he’d be murdered.⁷

While the first part of Will’s origin story comes from a collective trauma, the second part arises from a personal, although still racially motivated, attack. Inspired by Bass Reeves to become a police officer, he is confronted with harsh realities that the movie hero never had to face as he is beaten by his fellow officers, hung by a rope and then cut down. Hooded Justice’s trademarks – a hood with a rope around his neck – are remnants, painful reminders, of this traumatic event.

Will performs his first act of vigilante justice immediately after this attack, still wearing the hood. In a moment lifted from many other superhero stories, Will hears a woman scream in an alleyway and runs to help. There is a well-dressed white couple – reminiscent of Batman’s parents Thomas and Martha Wayne – being robbed by a gang. In a moment of rage, Will beats them all, saving the couple. His identity still masked, the couple, like the townspeople in the Bass Reeves film, thank him unreservedly.

Despite achieving notoriety in the press who designate him as a hero, Will realizes that in order to continue his vigilantism he must don further masking. Underneath his hood he puts on makeup to conceal his dark skin and pass for white. As Lindelof stated earlier, the masking is “multileveled”. Further levels are introduced through the form in which Will’s traumas are displayed – his memories are experienced via his granddaughter, who takes Nostalgia pills which contain Will’s memories.

“SOMEONE ELSE’S NOSTALGIA”: POP CULTURE AS WHITE SUPREMACY

We see Will’s memories through his descendent, in a literal depiction of how trauma is passed through the generations. In his book *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* Gabriele Schwab argues: “Violent histories generate psychic deformations passed on from generation to generation... The damages of violent histories can hibernate in the unconscious, only to be transmitted to the next generation like an undetected disease.”⁸ The assumption of a persona and the donning of a mask thus becomes one of these “psychic deformations”. During her overdose on Nostalgia we see Angela at different points in Will’s place, most notably after the failed lynching, and then later when Angela is reflected in the mirror after Will puts the white makeup around his eyes – she, too, wears her grandfather’s mask. There are further reflections of Will in Angela’s costuming as Sister Night, as she also has a hood and makeup around her eyes – only now she darkens her skin rather than lightening it.

Angela’s journey to the past may be aided by Nostalgia, but it is not in any way a nostalgic trip back to ‘the good old days.’ Lindelof has spoken of a desire to “weaponize nostalgia”, expressing the danger of nostalgia as “a plot device rather than a theme.”⁹ There is also a reference here to the graphic novel, where Nostalgia is the name of a line of cosmetics sold by Veidt Enterprises. Lady Trieu has since purchased Veidt Enterprises and is later revealed as Veidt’s daughter, so her appropriation of the brand not only serves to capitalize on the

original product's aim to "conjure an idyllic picture of times past" (with its success "directly linked to the state of global uncertainty"), but also sets up further intergenerational links.¹⁰

The creation of the drug Nostalgia, which becomes a poison when used incorrectly, was initially designed by Lady Trieu to help those with dementia and Alzheimer's. It was soon abused, as people used it to relive their traumas, rather than as a means to work through them. This again circles back to the original form of Nostalgia, which was also designed as a retreat from reality, but for Laurie Blake the breaking of a bottle of the perfume triggers a series of memories building to the realization of her father's true identity and her mother's associated trauma. This leads to the key point that both the graphic novel and the show make about the effects of nostalgia: what at first appears as a harmless trip down memory lane is another form of a mask, hiding a past that for many is traumatic. Lindelof explains that: "If you were a white person, nostalgia means something much different to you than if you're a Jewish person or if you are a person of color in this country."¹¹ Remembering America's history is difficult for many people, as it brings up a lot of pain and anguish. To then represent the past as idyllic is to marginalize that pain.

Yet, this is often what occurs in popular culture. When asked in an interview about the current popularity of superhero films, *Watchmen* graphic novel author Alan Moore has stated his complete disdain for the genre. Recognizing not only the toxic nostalgia which keeps its mostly adult admirers in a state of arrested development, Moore also detects an underlying racism:

save for a smattering of non-white characters (and non-white creators) these books and these iconic characters are still very much white supremacist dreams of the master race. In fact, I think that a good argument can be made for D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* as the first American superhero movie, and the point of origin for all those capes and masks.¹²

Certainly, this is a sentiment that *Watchmen* directly extrapolates from: the origin story for superheroes on screen was one where heroes fight to maintain the supremacy of their race.¹³ The supposed 'heroes' in *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915) do indeed wear masks and capes, but they are the Ku Klux Klan who, in the context of the film, are depicted as righteous and just. In her article "How the Klan Got Its Hood", Alison Kinney explains that this film is in fact responsible for creating the standard white regalia that the KKK still wears to this day: "Among the variety of Klansman costumes in the film, there appeared a new one:

the one-piece, full-face-masking, pointed white hood with eyeholes, which would come to represent the modern Klan.”¹⁴ It is well-documented that *The Birth of a Nation* not only had an effect on the appearance of the KKK but that it also led to a revival at a time when its popularity was flagging. As historian John Hope Franklin asserts:

With an assist from *Birth of a Nation*, the new Ku Klux Klan, a ‘High Class order of men of Intelligence and Order’, was launched. It would spread all across the South and into the North and West in the 1920’s...¹⁵

Stephen Weinberger writes that while there was an increase in lynching the year of the film’s release,¹⁶ this number declined the following year with “little evidence of an increase in overt racism”.¹⁷ However, this film did signal the beginning of a long history of racist representations on screen, supporting a larger system of white supremacy.

Contemporary superhero films continue the trope established by *The Birth of a Nation*, with the majority of heroes still portrayed as white and male. Of the twenty-three films from The Marvel Cinematic Universe released to date, only one has had a Black lead (*Black Panther*, Ryan Coogler, 2018), and only one has centered on a woman (*Captain Marvel*, Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck, 2019). This lack of diversity also extends offscreen, with only two films directed by people of color (Coogler and Taika Waititi, director of *Thor: Ragnarok*, 2017) and one film directed by a woman (Boden). The *Watchmen* series thus bucks these trends on both counts, with both its Black female lead and seven of its nine episodes directed by women and people of color.¹⁸

At the beginning of “This Extraordinary Being”, in which Will is revealed as Hooded Justice, a clip from the television show *American Hero Story* also reveals the face of Hooded Justice: as a white man with chiseled good looks and piercing blue eyes. This whitewashing of history has links to other nostalgic revisions of the past, most famously in *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985) where white teenager Marty McFly seemingly gives African-American performer Chuck Berry the idea for his own song. For decades white characters on screen have appropriated the achievements of people of color while also simultaneously downplaying the systems of racism that have kept them oppressed.

In *Watchmen* the masking of police is a direct consequence of The White Night, an incident instigated by The Seventh Cavalry (an offshoot of the KKK) with this outcome in mind. Although many of the police wear masks out of fear and for protection, the idea behind it is an inherently fascistic one. Just as the KKK keep their identities secret so they can continue to

terrorize Black citizens, having the police similarly masked would most certainly lead to the same result. Of course, there are countless news stories proving that in reality this is already the case without masks, just as white supremacists have also begun to take off their hoods, replacing them with MAGA hats and tiki torches. But as Jonathan W. Gray contends: “*Watchmen* makes the connections between law enforcement and white supremacy explicit in ways seldom seen in popular culture.”¹⁹

At the beginning of the series Angela wears a mask and participates in acts of police brutality. Under the mentorship of Judd Crawford, the Chief of Police later revealed as a member of The Seventh Cavalry, Angela, as Sister Night, along with the other masked cops such as Looking Glass, Red Scare and Pirate Jenny, function essentially as henchmen and women. Albeit unknowingly, they are helping to put The Seventh Cavalry’s plans into fruition. The process of uncovering not only who Judd was, but more importantly discovering who she really is by learning of her heritage, leads Angela to take off her mask - she is not seen wearing it after the events of “This Extraordinary Being”. Angela is fundamentally changed, a point that Michael Boyce Gillespie believes complicates the arguments that the series presents a pro-establishment, and specifically pro-police, stance:

The cop critique suggests that Angela Abar essentially remains the same throughout. Is she really just a cop by the close of the series? How can a show that suggests that cops are historically in collusion with white supremacists be read as pro-cop?²⁰

Through the process of working through multiple traumas, by the end of the series Angela has moved from henchwoman to (potentially) a superhero with actual superpowers.

“WOUNDS NEED AIR”: UNMASKING TRAUMA

The change that Angela undergoes is a profoundly difficult one, and is one that not everyone can reach. The character of Wade Tillman, also known as Looking Glass, expresses the difficulty of moving on from trauma. At the beginning of episode five, titled “Little Fear of Lightning”, the origin of Looking Glass is revealed. As a young man in 1985 Wade was a devout Christian who went to Hoboken to spread the word of God. He meets a young woman who takes him to a Hall of Mirrors and entices him to take off his clothes, which she then runs away with. As he stands humiliated, the event which concluded the story of the graphic

novel, the giant squid attack of 11/2, occurs and he leaves the Hall of Mirrors, confronted by all of the death and carnage resulting from the incident.

In 2019 Wade has assumed the persona of Looking Glass, with the ability to tell when someone is lying or telling the truth. Looking Glass wears a mask made of “reflectitine”, a material that reflects like a mirror. After seeing the events of 1985, it becomes clear that his mask references the Hall of Mirrors, his ability stemming directly from this inciting trauma. In counterpoint to Will and Angela, whose traumas comment on America’s very real history of racial violence, Wade’s trauma comes from an event that is completely fictional.

Lindelof recognizes the fine line that the series treads by combining these elements:

...we’re talking about real trauma, real pain, real America, and also the ridiculousness of, and there’s a psychic squid, and there’s film projectors that are involving mesmerism. So how are these two things going to play well with one another? The challenge of that was extreme... If you get this stuff wrong, it can be harmful.²¹

While there have been many films and television shows that have represented actual traumatic events in a realistic way, there is a tradition within genre storytelling to use allegory as a way to work through trauma, both personal and collective. Adam Lowenstein remarks that there is a tendency for critics to “favor ‘realist’ representations over ‘allegorical’ ones,”²² but goes on to argue that there is space within a genre cinema context to disrupt established discourses surrounding historical trauma.

The rise in popularity of the superhero film began in the early 2000s, in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, a fact that has been commented on in several books and articles published since.²³ These texts posit that, through allegory, these genre films are vehicles for working through the trauma associated with this real event. As Dan A. Hassler-Forest attests: “by watching films that offer an indirect representation of the 9/11 attacks, it becomes possible for viewers to give meaning to events that were too sudden and traumatic to be understood as they occurred.”²⁴ The fantastical “ridiculousness” of the stories on screen, presented through action sequences and special effects, present an exciting spectacle that masks the underlying process of working through trauma. In the *Watchmen* series the squid attack is referred to as “11/2”, clearly referencing 9/11 – an event that appears not to have happened in this alternate timeline. In a sense, 11/2 has ‘replaced’ 9/11 as the most historically significant and traumatic event to occur on American soil within the past few decades (perhaps even preventing 9/11 from occurring). Echoing Lowenstein’s contention

that there is space through allegory to interrogate dominant discourse, Hassler-Forest adds that many superhero films contain subversive elements and “actually encourage a reading that runs counter to the current American administration’s policies”.²⁵

Similarly, the alternative 2019 of *Watchmen* also includes these critiques, exploring how America’s long history of racial injustice continues to traumatize subsequent generations. In her book *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* Janet Walker acknowledges that in representations of traumatic events and memories there is prevalence of “non-realist” strategies employed by filmmakers,

characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films’ narrative and stylistic regimes... drawing on innovative strategies for representing reality obliquely, by looking to mental processes for inspiration...”²⁶

For the experience of trauma to be more fully expressed, film and television style must reflect the shattering effects of trauma, which fragments and splinters memory and subjectivity. As mentioned previously, the motif of the mask, signaling the creation of a new identity, paradoxically visualizes the aspect of the self that the wearer wants to suppress. The non-linear structure of the series, with frequent shifts back and forth in time, echoes the mental process of compulsively returning to the site of trauma, while also expressing the continued reverberations from this moment, which can reach across generations.

Stephen Williams, the director of “This Extraordinary Being”, spoke of his process of visualizing the experiences of Angela as she relives Will’s traumatic memories:

I wanted to make sure that we invested in a visual grammar that was going to allow for as immersive and intensive an experience as possible...How to approach depicting memory and depicting all the sensory experiences pursuant to you having that kind of experience – that’s where we started. That led to a visual design that incorporated black and white, really long takes with few interrupted cuts, and also the insertion of specific splashes of color for accentuation.²⁷

The techniques that Williams highlights here – long takes, black and white, splashes of color – all work together to represent events in Will’s life in a way that is not realistic, but in a way that expresses how Will processed these moments mentally and emotionally. The long takes and masked edits create the feeling that all of these memories intertwine together, creating a direct and seamless connection between the two parts of Will’s origin story. The camera

floats weightlessly, at some points seemingly taking on Will's point-of-view, but then at other points interchanging Angela in Will's place. Will's assumption of the persona of Hooded Justice in adulthood (playing out in black and white), is inextricably linked to his initial trauma in Tulsa, 1921, symbolized by inserts of color images in the background of scenes, showing his mother playing the piano, and of lynched men being dragged behind a police car. Yet, intrusions from Angela's present also appear in color. Together, the techniques used in the sequence of Angela's overdose of Nostalgia express the series' overarching idea that the aftershocks of trauma reverberate outwards across time and generations.

And so, throughout the series the experience and aftermath of trauma is presented in a variety of ways. From its opening scene, conventions of the superhero genre are deconstructed through the interweaving of real historical events with fictional ones from the original graphic novel. The element of the origin story, vital to all superhero narratives, relies on an initial trauma, which in this series becomes inseparable from America's traumatic history of racist violence. Further tropes of the superhero genre are used to express the passing on of trauma from one generation to the next, particularly the central motif of the mask, a symbol of pain that is inescapable, tied to an unjust past that is still being worked through. Nostalgia for the past, once thought to be soothing, now becomes a poison, a compulsion to repeat previous traumas. The superhero story is thus revealed as one of popular culture's greatest lies, upholding a representation of an American ideal that is tied to patriarchal white supremacy. Just as the graphic novel did before it, the series unravels these representations and genre conventions, laying bare the traumas at the heart of American history.

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² Michael Boyce Gillespie, "Thinking About *Watchmen*: A Roundtable," *Film Quarterly*, June 26, 2020. https://filmquarterly.org/2020/06/26/thinking-about-watchmen-with-jonathan-w-gray-rebecca-a-wanzo-and-kristen-j-warner/?fbclid=IwAR0XadStBY0Q3KoAMUV_1ijMIHCnDAmCR2hB-0o_fIAiL6vAKIhn_oip2pM

³ There is some speculation that Bass Reeves inspired the creation of The Lone Ranger.

⁴ One aspect that has led to some criticism is the fact that we do not see an origin story for Lady Trieu. While we do see the circumstances of how she was conceived, the second part of her origin story is missing. That this is the case for the series' leading Vietnamese character has resulted in some critics questioning the lack of attention paid to the ongoing trauma inflicted on the Vietnamese people by American forces during the Vietnam War. For further discussion, see Viet Thanh Nguyen, "How *Watchmen*'s misunderstanding of Vietnam undercuts its vision of racism," *Washington Post*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/12/18/how-watchmens-misunderstanding-vietnam-undercuts-its-vision-racism/>

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⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.

⁹ HBO, *The Official Watchmen Podcast*.

¹⁰ Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (Burbank: DC Comics, 2019), 345.

¹¹ HBO, *The Official Watchmen Podcast*.

¹² Raphael Sasaki, "Moore on Jerusalem, Eternalism, Anarchy and Herbie!" *Alan Moore World*, November 18, 2019, <https://alanmooreworld.blogspot.com/2019/11/moore-on-jerusalem-eternalism-anarchy.html>

¹³ Moore had already made this connection between the Klan and superheroes explicit in *Watchmen*, in an article from the right-wing newspaper *The New Frontiersman*: "Nova Express makes sneering references to costumed heroes as direct descendants of the Ku Klux Klan, but might I point out that despite what some may view as their later excesses, the Klan originally came to being because decent people had perfectly reasonable fears". Moore & Gibbons, *Watchmen*, 276.

¹⁴ Alison Kinney, "How the Klan Got its Hood," *The New Republic*, January 8, 2016, <https://newrepublic.com/article/127242/klan-got-hood>

¹⁵ John Hope Franklin, "Birth of a Nation: Propaganda as History," *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 431.

¹⁶ In Spike Lee's 2018 film *BlacKkKlansman* a scene details the 1915 lynching of Jesse Washington, an act described as being directly inspired by the film.

¹⁷ Stephen Weinberger, "The Birth of a Nation and the Making of the NAACP," *Journal of American Studies* 45, no. 1 (February 2011): 92.

¹⁸ This diversity also extended to the writer's room, as director Nicole Kassell attests: "We knew that we were taking on race and eight out of the 12 writers in the room were not Caucasian." Charles Pulliam-Moore, *Watchmen Isn't Being Written by Just White People, Thank Goodness*, *Gizmodo*, November 11, 2019, <https://io9.gizmodo.com/watchmen-isnt-being-written-by-just-white-people-thank-1839777924>

¹⁹ Jonathan W. Gray, "Watchmen after the End of History: Race, Redemption, and the End of the World," *ASAP Journal*, February 3, 2020. <http://asapjournal.com/watchmen-after-the-end-of-history-race-redemption-and-the-end-of-the-world-jonathan-w-gray/>

²⁰ Gillespie, "Thinking About Watchmen".

²¹ HBO, *The Official Watchmen Podcast*.

²² Adam Lowenstein, "Allegorizing Hiroshima: Shindo Kaneto's *Onibaba* as Trauma Text" in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan & Ban Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 146.

²³; James M. Gilmore, "A Eulogy of the Urban Superhero: The Everyday Destruction of Space in the Superhero Film" in *Representing 9/11: Trauma, Ideology, and Nationalism in Literature, Film, and Television*, ed. Paul Petrovic, (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015); Tom Pollard, *Hollywood 9/11: Superheroes, Supervillains, and Super Disasters* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²⁴ Dan A. Hassler-Forest, "From Trauma Victim to Terrorist: Redefining Superheroes in Post 9/11 Hollywood" in *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*, eds. Jochen Ecke & Gideon Haberkorn, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 34.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

²⁷ Clarence Moye, "Director Stephen Williams On Directing Two Outstanding Hours of HBO's *Watchmen*," *Awards Daily*, July 28, 2020, <https://www.awardsdaily.com/2019/11/26/stephen-williams-watchmen-2019/>