Marvel’s editor-in-chief apologizes for pretending to be a Japanese man

Marvel’s current editor-in-chief C.B. Cebulski apologized today for writing Marvel comic books in 2005 and 2006 while pretending to be a Japanese man named Akira Yoshida. “I’m truly sorry for the pain, anger, and disappointment I caused over my poor choice of pseudonym,” he told *The Atlantic* today.

Cebulski first started pitching to comic book companies as Yoshida in 2003, when he was already an editor at Marvel and thus not allowed to write comics there. When another Marvel editor, unaware of his real identity saw “Yoshida’s” work on comics like *Conan* and asked him for pitches, Cebulski nonetheless accepted — in character.

He would go on to script several Marvel miniseries that included numerous Japanese characters and themes. Marvel championed “Yoshida” at the time, noting how rare it was that a person from a non-English speaking country could succeed in telling American stories. Cebulski even gave interviews to comic book websites like *Newsarama* and *Comic Book Resources* while posing as Yoshida; he claimed to have grown up in Japan and learned English through American comics, TV and movies. In one interview, a writer describes the prevalence of ninjas and samurais in his work, declaring that “few comics writers could effectively handle such a foreign cast of characters and exotic themes.”

The revelations that Cebulski had posed as Yoshida for a year came to light in November, when he confessed to the hoax in an interview with *Bleeding Cool*. The timing of his confession was dramatic: It was his first day as Marvel’s new editor-in-chief. In his confession, Cebulski characterized his younger

self as “young and naive” and said the previously unrevealed hoax was nonetheless “old news that has been dealt with.”

Cebulski’s seeming nonchalance about adopting a Japanese identity to further his writing career angered many fans on social media, especially in light of the checkered history around representation at Marvel and the comic book industry at large. The main concern for many was that by posing as Yoshida, Cebulski may have taken jobs away from other writers of color.

“Not only was an Asian denied a probable job, but a culture was entirely misrepresented,” wrote @jmarquiso on Twitter, “Unless Japanese culture is all samurai and anime.”

> *I’m sorry but what @CBCebulski did was bad. He is white and He pretended to be a Japanese writer to get work at his publisher in violation of the rules. Other POC pitched those books and didn’t get the work. Sorry dude you fucked up and you should resign.*
>
> *— DC Women Kicking Ass (@dcwomenkicknass) November 30, 2017*

In the new statement released today, Cebulski sounds more contrite about the issues of representation and appropriation raised by his behavior.

> *I’m truly sorry for the pain, anger, and disappointment I caused over my poor choice of pseudonym. That was never my intention. Throughout my career in anime, manga, and comics, I’ve made it a point to listen and learn from my mistakes, which is exactly what I’ve been trying to do with this misstep. Building honest relationships with creators has always been important to me, and I’ve continued to do that in my new position. I’ve spoken with talent close to this issue, and have had candid and productive conversations about how we can improve the industry and build better stories, while being mindful of the voices behind them. My passion has*

> *always been about bringing the best talent from across the world to work on the best stories in the world, and I'm hopeful that fans and creators alike will join us in that continued mission.*

Although Cebulski, who is fluent in Japanese and has lived in Japan, helped hire Asian creators in the past and wants to add more diverse voices to Marvel, it's still hard for some to wash off the distaste of his pretending to be a Japanese man.

> *I talked with CBC's Q about the "Akira Yoshida" controversy, how Marvel's CB Cebulski went from awkwardly exploiting diversity to championing it, and why we can't just sweep it under the rug when allies do creepy things https://t.co/9Nj3r4bkXU*
>
> *— Jeff Yang (@originalspin) December 6, 2017*

https://www.theverge.com/2017/12/18/16792070/marvel-editor-in-chief-akira-yoshida-cebulski-cultural-appropriation