[Biracial Identity For America's Web-Slinging Hero](https://www.npr.org/2011/08/11/139536090/biracial-identity-for-americas-web-slinging-hero)

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August 11, 201112:00 PM ET

ALLISON KEYES, host: Now we move from disturbing images of Asians in comics to what some see as a step towards diversity.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "SPIDER-MAN")

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: (Singing) Spider-Man. Spider-Man. Does whatever a spider can. Spins a web any size, catch a thief just like...

KEYES: Unless you live under a rock, you've likely seen one of the movies or cartoons featuring Marvel Comics' iconic character Spider-Man. The superhero's alter ego has been an orphaned white man given amazing powers after being bitten by a spider. But, in last month's issue of the comic "Ultimate Spider-Man," Peter Parker died and now he's been replaced by Miles Morales. He's 13 years old and he's half Latino and half African-American.

We wanted to find out more about the new Spidey. Axel Alonso is the editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics and he joins us now from our bureau in New York City. Welcome to the program.

AXEL ALONSO: Thanks.

KEYES: So I hear that this idea of an ethnically-diverse Spider-Man had been in the works for kind of a while. Tell us about it.

ALONSO: Yeah. We talked about this for some time. But we never had the story. My first memory of a conversation where we considered an African-American Spider-Man came several months before Obama was elected when we realized that we might be looking at a, the first African-American president in American history. Unfortunately, we didn't have the story at that time.

But more recently, when we were sculpting the story that became the death of Spider-Man, we realized we had an opportunity to redefine Spider-Man for the 21st century.