

1. Black Panther: lessons in Hollywood diversity and black pride



→ He director of the film

Directed by Ryan Coogler ("Fruitvale Station" and "Creed"), "Black Panther" is also about to become the highest-grossing film made by an African American.

→ The movie's release comes after a long history of overtly white representation in the nominees and winners at the Oscars. And the movie has precipitated a movement within the African American community as moviegoers adorn themselves with indigenous African clothing, celebrate the movie's characters, and even register people to vote before and after screenings.

→ The fictional superhero Black Panther, or T'Challa, is a king and ruler of the imagined "Wakanda," an African country, whose land is rich with extraordinary resources like the metal Vibranium and the heart-shaped herb responsible for his enhanced powers. Created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby for Marvel Comics in 1966, T'Challa is proficient in science, has rigorous physical abilities, and has amassed access to wealth and advanced technology to take down* his enemies. Without presenting any spoilers, the latest Black Panther storyline dives into topics of race, addresses the cultural heterogeneity among people of African descent*, and highlights the strengths of black women, who are depicted as queens, warriors, and scientists in the film. With a predominantly black cast, the movie also deconstructs stereotypes of men of color, families, and communities, deviating from* what is often depicted in mainstream* media. [...]

→ "Black Panther" has unequivocally become one of many recent inflection points for the African American community, especially following the success of extraordinary black voter turnout* in tough southern elections. It could be argued that since the end of the historic and groundbreaking Obama presidency, black people have been searching for a superhero, or a "yes we can" leader like T'Challa. For two hours, he becomes more than a comic-book superhero. He transforms into a symbol of hope for African Americans, much like President Obama was during the previous eight years. [...]

→ For black moviegoers, "Black Panther" offers an imagined reality free of the constraints* and horrors of white supremacy. While some may push back on the resurgence of black pride and consciousness as an appropriate response to current circumstances, it is clear that the symbolic representation emerging from the film is helping African Americans reimagine what was historically possible. [...]

→ Clearly, this is not your traditional Marvel film. It has demonstrated the strong economic power of diversity and inclusion on screen, and restarted nostalgic conversations on the potential of black power. What Hollywood and African Americans decide to do next is undetermined. But, if the movie winds up as a moment rather than a movement, it will still be recognized as one of "the firsts" that deserves a place on the mantle of* achievements* recognized during Black History.

By Nicol Turner Lee, Brookings (2018)

Tool Box: to take down = to destroy, descent (descendance), to deviate from (s'éloigner de), mainstream = ordinary, turnout = numbers, constraint (contrainte), on the mantle of = [in this context] next to, achievement = success

STEP 1 – Read the article. Take notes about: the cast and the director, the moviegoers, the representation of black people in the film and its importance for the African American community.

STEP 2 – Read the article again and explain the quote "this is not your traditional Marvel film" l.26. What makes this film so different in terms of "Diversity and inclusion"?

STEP 3 – Debate: According to you, do black artists get enough recognition in today's American society?

Tool Box to help you express yourselves: groundbreaking = revolutionary, recognition (une prise de conscience), to allow (permettre), to celebrate one's identity (affirmer son identité), to create a sense of community, to deconstruct stereotypes, to depict = to portray, to deserve a place (mériter une place), to reimagine one's future