

# Why *Black Panther* is such a game-changer

By [Lerato Serumula](#) 19 Feb 2018

For a film industry enthusiast such as myself, I have never once come across a movie so intensely anticipated by folk outside of movie-going culture. I don't even think your cult classics such as the *Star Wars* franchise have sparked such interest in the general public across the globe.

I had no doubt that *Black Panther* would make history. Black people all over the world had for long boasted of the outfits they had prepared for the movie's cinema debuts. The pride coursing through black communities has been undeniable and captivating. In its opening weekend alone the movie is well into and past many of its projected feats.

“ I ran into these movie goers last night that planned their evening around the [#BlackPantherMovie](#) premiere with Wakanda-inspired outfits and all [pic.twitter.com/ptt8hDEjz6](https://pic.twitter.com/ptt8hDEjz6)— Asher (@ashers\_lens) [February 16, 2018](#) ”

Ryan Coogler has done well in introducing us to the advanced, uncolonised world of Wakanda. This is a technologically advanced African nation, all with its own infrastructure, resources and medium of exchange. Wakanda produces an ore called Vibranium which makes the all-black nation a leading weapons manufacturer. The past Kings of Wakanda have insisted on the nation being hidden from the rest of the world, so to protect itself from the ills of the world, especially colonisers and the many wars the many countries have found themselves partaking in.



A lot has been said about the movie since its debut this past weekend, but what I want to discuss here is some of the things that *Black Panther* has done exceptionally well to have become the satisfactory, awe-inspiring movie it is. Without a doubt this is a movie to demand placement in a lot of top 10 lists within or outside of the superhero genre from here forth.

## Coogler delivers

For all those who have seen the movie and are certain that it is one of the greatest film offerings they've seen, I'm here to help you delve deeper into why this movie is such a gamechanger; so that you may keep the conversation going with more insight while with friends and family.



For a movie to be as great as this, there has to be a disciplined, clear-cut and simple script serving as a guiding tool for the director. You can tell from Ryan Coogler's direction that there had been no misunderstandings between him and the writing team; it helps a whole lot that he was part of the scriptwriting panel for this movie. To be able to bring ideas on paper to life as grandly and effortlessly as this you'd have to have had a ceremonious, unstaggering script. Coogler has been afforded the rare chance to both work on and translate a story on screen, which is what has helped him seamlessly achieve this high standard direction; for a filmmaker with only just two other feature films (*Fruitvale Station*, *Creed*) under his belt.

The script had a clear-cut aim in mind and it achieved it. The care given to character development was apparent. The plot was clear. The dramatic arc was present. The motives for both the protagonist and antagonist were precise and unwavering. And finally, this movie was quite straightforward in spite of it being an origins story- which is often always more complicated than necessary. This is especially great because not everyone in the theatres has read the Black Panther comic books. This is a great origins film that does a good job in introducing us to its characters and the world of Wakanda without any overwhelming complexity.

Thematically, this movie is as daring and seasoned as a Disney/Marvel movie is not so very often allowed to be. Lupita Nyong'o herself has expressed how taken aback she was at how strong the core narrative of this story is. The film is peppered with conversation around African diaspora and the ills that have forever plagued the black community. It doesn't shy away from calling out white people and colonisers and the darkness they let rip upon black lives for many years. It touches on sore subjects such as the war against guns, black-on-black violence and poverty while also addressing betrayal and internal conflict. This is a movie that knows where it stands and so embraces its themes.



## Well-developed characters

The movie embraces all of its characters equally no matter how much screen-time they're afforded. Take M'baku (leader of the Jabari tribe) for instance, he's woven into the story with such care that the full extent of his charisma and dynamism is felt with as much intensity as the writers intended. Athandwa Kani's depiction of the young King T'Chaka is one of the most arresting performances on screen, regardless of the fact that his role is in the form of flashbacks. Supporting characters such as Shuri, Okoye, and Lupita's Nakia were as much crucial and at the heart of the story as Chadwick Boseman's T'Challa, the Black Panther himself. Their individual motivation and character traits were customised and spotlighted so much that it made us as the audience feel as though we've known them for way longer than the two hours the movie lasts. Shuri is an intelligent, go-to tech-genius who knows herself and her worth enough to know that she's much more forward-thinking than her brother. Nakia as the love interest is her own person with her own aspirations and isn't made to live in the shadows of T'Challa. Okoye is a self-confident, pure-hearted and brave warrior who doesn't succumb to pressure from anyone, and always stands her ground no matter who's at the opposite end.



In this movie, we get to experience a variety of different personalities, so much so, that we're afforded a completely new perspective of black people, outside of what we've been offered for many years in film; black people as slaves, black people as thugs, black people living in poverty, basically black people in pain. Fair representation really does matter, and with the



pride, this movie has embedded into a lot of black people's heart, black stories showing us all forms of blackness are direly needed.

## **Afrofuturism, Afrofeminism, and African pride at the fore**

Wakanda is a heart-stopping, glorious and down-right beautiful nation visually and internally. It inspires hope and African pride. It is a land that celebrates peace and boasts of the beauty thereof. The filmmakers have managed to depict all these enchanting aspects and then some. Coogler has truly made the movie a magical, once in a lifetime experience. You get in the groove of things almost instantly. You're made to feel that you're apart of that wonderful, bewitching land of ancestry customs and African rituals. From skyscrapers customised for Africa's glorious landscapes to majestic mountains and trees fitted by mother-nature herself, Wakanda is simply to die for. Aside from the visual aspect, the compelling atmosphere that lies embedded in the movie is undeniable and makes the movie that much more believable and thus emotionally compelling



Afrofuturism, Afrofeminism, and African pride are at the fore of *Black Panther*. We're afforded a movie that embraces all aspects of being black all over the globe without overwhelming itself. Technically, this is a visually and sonically enthralling cinematic offering that will for years be hailed as one of its kind; as an apt template for storytellers, especially for filmmakers of colour. Coogler doesn't leave for amateurism here, as this is just his third feature film, and instead marks himself as an auteur and a filmmaker worthy of a seat next to the greats. The movie is conscious and enchanting. Everyone who hasn't done so as yet should go watch this very important moment in history.

Sidenote: Disney better come through with that Wakanda theme park and resort somewhere in Africa real quick!

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