

One of the common themes across social media is the commenting white male. He jumps in on threads about the importance of Black Panther and writes, “I don’t get what the big deal is, we’ve already had comic book movies about black heroes. Then they list off things like Steel; Blade; Men in Black; Spawn; Hancock, etc. Yes, there have certainly been representations of popular Black heroes in the past, there are a few reasons why this one is different.

1. Almost every iteration of the character has been written/drawn/filmed by white people. Now this is true of Black Panther as well, but there has been a shift at Marvel Comics that creates an environment for Black creators to tell the story. And no, it doesn’t go far enough, more on that later.
2. Modern superhero films differ greatly from those of the past. They are more widely accepted and part of the mainstream culture. That wasn’t true when those other properties made the jump to film. With that acceptance comes money. The writing, acting, special effects, attention to detail and source material are all better now.
3. Race is part of the story. In the past, many heroes of color were pretty run-of-the-mill, bland archetypes and they just happened to be black. If the only thing different about them was the fact that a colorist gave them a different shade then they’re not really honored as having a different experience. There’s not really anything they were drawing from a cultural perspective that wasn’t surface level or stereotypical.

There is more to say on that and we should continue the conversation, but I really want to talk about [Black Panther](#). This isn’t meant to be a deep dive into the character but is meant to shine a light on his existence and why you might want to check it out for more than just entertainment.

[Ta-Nehisi Coates](#) and [Brian Stelfreeze](#) helped to revive the character’s comic popularity in 2016. Roxane Gay wrote a series about his female bodyguards, *World of Wakanda*.

Take a moment and read this from TIME Magazine: [The Revolutionary Power Of Black Panther](#), oh, and this: [Black Panther: An Allegory of the World Wanting Blackness but Not Black People](#) which sums up some of the goals for the film; and definitely take some time and read as many of these as you can if you really want to feel the importance of this film...[#WhatBlackPantherMeansToMe](#). Most of them are inspiring and uplifting, some highlight the importance of why we still need things like this (even if they don’t mean to).

One of the saddest parts of all of this is that the comic books continue to struggle. It’s a tough business and unless it’s X-Men, Batman or some other hero who has maintained popularity over the last 60 years, none of them are really safe. There will be new series, specials come and go, and there are always graphic novels, but the bottom line is that if we want to see more characters like this then we need to support them with our dollars.