

# THE Skanner®

Challenging People to Shape  
a Better Future Now

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Updated daily.



# Opinion

## Was Erik Killmonger Right?

This commentary contains major spoilers.

Marvel's big screen adaptation of "Black Panther" has surpassed all initial expectations of its debut and topped \$700 million after its second weekend.

"In terms of raw dollars, it is the second-biggest second weekend gross of all time between Universal/Comcast Corp.'s Jurassic World (\$106.5m) and Lucasfilm's The Force Awakens (\$149m)," Forbes.com reported. "It has now earned \$400m in ten days of release, which makes it the third-fastest grosser of all time (for now) behind only Jurassic World (\$404m) and The Force Awakens (\$540m)."

If anything, the success of "Black Panther" and "Girl's Trip," last year, has proven to the world that representation and inclusion is profitable.

When I went to see Black Panther during the opening weekend, the excitement from the crowd radiated throughout the theater's lobby. The joy I inhaled while standing in line to enter the theater took me higher than a preacher's Sunday sermon.

The drums and opening verse to Kendrick Lamar's "Black Panther" echoed in my head:

*King of my city, king of  
my country, king of my  
homeland*

*King of the filthy, king of the  
fallen, we livin' again*

*King of the shooters, looters,  
boosters, and ghettos poppin'*

*King of the past, present,  
future, my ancestors watchin*

I loved the film, but all of us should remember that



Lynette  
Monroe  
NNPA Guest  
Columnist

Wakanda is a figment of imagination. More accurately, Wakanda is a creation of White imagination. Killmonger is "our" reality.

A fictional Wakanda is convenient for the consciousness of the colonizer. A fictional, technologically advanced, African utopia lightens the weight of oppression by using the singular case of Black excellence, embodied in Wakanda, as the benchmark instead of a beautiful, aspirational anomaly. It then places the responsibility of reconciliation on the backs of the oppressed.

Champions of truth must not only embrace the triumphs of our history, but also the painful, complicated facts of our past.

Erik Killmonger represents an uncomfortable truth. He is the Black Panther's kryptonite. The pain of Killmonger's conflicted reality disrupts T'Challa's idealistic, progressive world. The ultimate victory of Black Panther is only secured through a cinematic miracle. Even then, the Black Panther cannot find it in himself to end the life of Killmonger; it is Killmonger himself who chooses his own end after his final battle with T'Challa.

"Bury me in the ocean with my ancestors who jumped from ships, because they knew death was better than bondage," Killmonger said in his final scene as he watched the sunset on Wakanda.

Centuries of resilience isn't some kind of honor; it is simply survival.

Although we would all like for Wakanda to exist, today, it doesn't. The painful truth is that Black people were forcefully dispersed throughout the globe; isolated from our culture, countries and families. The painful truth is that the campaign of carnage that White people have lead

**“Centuries of resilience isn't some kind of honor; it is simply survival**

across the globe cannot be reconciled through broad aid and well-intentioned community centers.

Partnership and collaboration, two of the many underlying themes of the film, prove elusive for Killmonger. The love between Okoye and W'Kabi ended civil war. The connection between the spiritual world and technology is the lifeline of the nation. The cooperation of M'Baku and Ramonda brought hope back to life. And, the love between Nakia and the T'Challa is slated to save the world.

Killmonger was not bestowed the privilege of partnership.

My knowledge of comic book adaptations is limited to Superman and the X-Men; in both movie franchises, characters faced deep moral decisions. These decisions are most often a test of character or weight of priority. These films, set in city centers, often display massive property damaged and presumed loss

of innocent life. However, the central internal conflict in Black Panther centered upon killing the radical pursuit of freedom.

Killmonger is a villain of White culture; the worst nightmare of the ruling class. Killmonger is the rage of a millions of people who were displaced, disregarded, and discarded. "The Black Panther" is a fictional depiction of the moral consciousness of Black people; the hope for both the oppressed and the oppressor. He is the grace of God to a people undeserving.

Mainstream dialogue on race relations in the United States naively suggests that White people simply refuse to acknowledge that the crimes of American slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade continue to fuel significant disparities across the planet. I would argue that they are fully aware of their crimes, but interpret them through a filtered lens of conquest. I would argue that White people's conscious relegation of persons of color is reduced to collateral damage necessary to maintain power, wealth, and leadership.

As Killmonger fell, I longed for a Black Panther/Killmonger partnership. The partnership of rage and compassion, of power and responsibility, of justice and reconciliation deserves exploration. Resolving the conflict between the Black Panther and Killmonger is the precarious tight rope that Black folks must walk to freedom.

Killmonger's death is also a figment of White people's imagination; his conflicted fight for freedom lives on in the hearts of Black people across the globe.

## NFL Season Marred by Controversy

This season, however, I took a complete break from watching the NFL and, as a result, missed the game entirely.

While the coup de grace was the exiling of quarterback Colin Kaepernick by the NFL owners, I have to confess that this break has been coming for a while. In 2013, when it was announced that Heisman Trophy winner and former Dallas Cowboys and Denver Broncos player Tony Dorsett had been diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy (a brain disease afflicting many former football players) I took it very personally. Dorsett and I are the same age and there were ways that I felt as if we were old friends, despite never having met. Watching him on television, year after year, it almost felt as if we had grown up together.

Dorsett's diagnosis brought



Bill  
Fletcher Jr.  
The Global  
African

home the catastrophic side of football, a side that I had both acknowledged and denied for years. But when it afflicted someone with whom I identified, it became very real. It

**“Are football players—and other athletes—supposed to be mindless performers who are not entitled to express their views**

led me to question my choices, including, had I had a son, would I have supported or opposed their playing college and/or professional football?

Of course, the 2017 NFL sea-

son confronted an additional crisis with the apparent blacklisting of Colin Kaepernick as a response to his protests against police brutality and injustice in the Black community. This blacklisting touched a raw nerve for much of Black America. My mother, who can outdo about anyone when it comes to being a football fan, refused to watch any football this season. I was stunned, to be honest, though I knew that she was a staunch

supporter of Kaepernick. As far as she was concerned, enough was enough.

I get the feeling that the NFL is standing on the edge of a major crisis. The combi-

nation of the injuries—and how the NFL has addressed them—and the protests, into which Donald Trump has intervened, have raised questions about the future of professional football.

Are football players to be our so-called gladiators, used up and spit out by a system flowing in money? Are football players—and other athletes—supposed to be mindless performers who are not entitled to express their views, even when such an expression does not infringe on the rights of others? These seem to me to be the questions confronting the owners; the National Football League Players Association (the union that represents the players); and the fans. And it is the fans who, unfortunately, regularly tune out on any of the truly burning issues confronting the players on any given Sunday.