

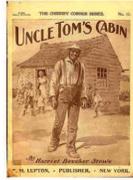
FROM MINSTREL

- TO -

MONARCH

by Robyn DeLeon, Asst. Social Justice Editor; Graphic by Kevin Chan | Loyolan

In light of Marvel's "Black Panther" the social justice section takes a look back on the history of black people in the entertainment and film industry. When did it start? What did black oriented film entail? What were their hurdles? And what finally got them from minstrelsy to monarchy?



via Hubpages

4. The First Step in the Wrong Direction

Black characters first appeared in general entertainment during the 1830s as "minstrels," a portrayal that spanned as far as the 1920s. "Minstrelsy ... was an exploitative form of musical theater that exaggerated real-life black circumstances and reinforced dangerous stereotypes during the 19th and 20th centuries," according to the University of San Francisco Library's description. Since minstrelsy was a popular form of entertainment for white audiences, these stereotypical characters and stories were adapted into films in the 20th century. A famous example of film minstrelsy was in the 1903 film adaptation of the novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The character of Tom was actually a white actor in blackface. This approach set a precedent for how the negative portrayal of black individuals would continue through film and Hollywood for decades.



via IMDB

3. Blaxploitation

"Blaxploitation" is a self-explanatory term coined by Junius Griffin which combined the words "black" and "exploitation" to describe a genre of films, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica. Many movies from the 1970s fall under this definition, including some notable ones like "Shaft" (1971), "Superfly" (1972), "Coffy" (1973) and "Foxy Brown" (1974). The general reception for these movies were positive because they finally presented a black driven story. However, many critics pointed out that these types of films harnessed stereotypes to propel their story. These stereotypes often harmed the image of the black community by portraying them to be hypersexual, violent, drug ridden, poor and uneducated people.



via Rotten Tomatoes

2. First Fairytale Fiction

In 2009, Disney finally set out to introduce their first black princess among the sea of white princesses such as Ariel, Cinderella, Aurora, etc. The general consensus over the film was positive, earning an 84 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes. However, critics revealed that this princess movie was not all sunshine and rainbows. The biggest criticism by the New York Times was the fact that while it was the first princess movie to present a black female lead, Disney failed to fairly represent her since she and the prince were frogs for the majority of the movie. This was a problem because it perpetuated the common animalistic comparison many black figures in literature, art and media are subjected to.



via IMDB

1. The Reign Over Hollywood

For decades, the fair representation of black people and black culture in film has been undermined and practically nonexistent compared to that of their white counterparts. Marvel's "Black Panther," the first big-budget superhero movie starring a predominantly black cast, earned more than \$426 million internationally as of Feb. 20. Many communities even raised money so that black children from low income families could attend a screening of the movie. Frederick Joseph, the founder of the nonprofit We Have Stories, was the catalyst to this movement, raising five times the amount that was posted on the GoFundMe; he then donated the money to the Boys and Girls Club in Harlem. The film, directed by Ryan Coogler, incorporated both African customs and the perspective of black Americans.

This is the opinion of Robyn De Leon, a freshman economics and English double major from Thousand Oaks, California. Tweet comments @LALoyolan, or email kaddoquaye@theloyolan.com