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“A Poisonous ‘Black Panther’”

If a movie is a meal for the mind, then one must be especially careful of the movies that are consumed. The impact of watching a movie is considerably more long-lived than a food meal; potentially, a lifetime. In our view, the “Black Panther” is a particularly poisonous meal.

The movie has grossed over \$220 million and has attracted 20-plus million viewers. Therefore, we can present our analysis of the movie directly—without rehashing the plot—because you probably have consumed it.

In rapid succession, we present implicit and explicit images, meanings, and salient points that are conveyed by the movie:

- Wakanda’s *raison d’etre* is vibranium—an invaluable ore that fell to earth. In other words, the nation would have never existed except for this manna, this gift (Isipho), from heaven. The implication is that the African nation would not, and could not, ever arise through normal developmental processes. Therefore, it is too farfetched to be believable—much like the “Bill Cosby Show” of the 1990s. You could never expect to find a Black doctor and lawyer heading a household and the world discounted the notion. “Black people just don’t live like that.”
- While Black Americans play and are engrossed in basketball, technology is unfolding before our very eyes and advancing the world, while leaving Black America behind.
- To protect a Black nation, you need women warriors. In fact, Black women can defeat Black men in war. The implication is that the Black male is weak. This message is part of a continuous effort to reverse biological reality, make the Black male more effeminate, and reduce his warrior mentality.
- The African is a gentle-hearted creature who will go out of his way to save the European who colonized him, raped his women, and stole his human and natural resources. The African lacks the killer instinct to bring justice to the world.
- The European is always the hero, the true savior. Remember it is Agent Ross, who prevents Wakanda’s secret from escaping the nation’s border—allowing the nation to continue its splendid existence in protected isolation.
- Black people make the most important decision, (who will be king) by physical fighting. Even in the 21st century and in a post-modern nation, we have not evolved a more modern/intelligent scheme for making the most important decisions. Remember that,

while physical strength is important in controlling a nation of people, the most important controlling device is the mind: "Where the mind goes, the body follows."

- The Black American is a cold-blooded killer: He is a "Killmonger." The implication is that the world should never permit Black Americans to rise to power because we will destroy former oppressors indiscriminately. A message should never be transmitted that justice must be brought for the evil deeds wrought by Europeans in the world.
- Black Americans are ignorant of science. Remember "Burn it all down!" Why would a ruler destroy the very essence that gives him the power to rule? The "heart shaped herb" represents African science about which the Black American is ignorant.
- Cannot cousins collaborate? At the end of the movie when King T'Challa offers to save Killmonger's life, the latter refuses. Did Killmonger (the Black American) have no vision of coming to terms with his cousin and collaborating on finding a way forward? Killmonger chose death over a circumscribed life in lockup. The implication is that Black Americans who are incarcerated should choose death over the long road to remaking their lives. Our strategy should always be: "Retreat to fight another day." The choice should always be: "Life over death."
- Black Americans are pathetic. We cannot generate our own rise. Therefore, wealthy African nations like Wakanda should have pity on us and come to save us. This expectation of (hope for) an outside savior (like Jesus Christ) is debilitating. When will Black Americans find the courage to develop and implement a strategy of intelligent and persistent work to reverse the course of history?

These are the most perniciously wicked dishes served up in the "Black Panther" movie meal. If you left the movie thinking, "Why can't there be an African nation like Wakanda?" and "If there were a rich African nation like Wakanda, would it actually help Black America rise?" then you have been poisoned by the meal. Until Black people plan broadly and work effectively to generate our own rise, then our rise will never occur.

However, the "Black Panther" should be recognized for reinforcing two important points. First, Black Americans should allow Black experts to review movie media before we engage in mass consumption. I am certain that experts, such as Drs. Na'im Akbar and Alvin Poussaint, would have recognized these, and more, poisonous aspects of "Black Panther," and would have advised against mass consumption.

Second, we learned from the movie that Wakanda was successful in its development, in part, because it was shielded from the rest of the world. This should tell Black Americans that, with our knowledge, expertise, creativity, and with the correct leadership, we, too, can develop, if given an opportunity to perform this effort as a separate nation shielded from a racist America.

While you were probably poisoned by the "Black Panther" movie meal, we hope that this essay can play the role of antidote.

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03/10/18
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