

File 8 p. 88 • BlacKkKlansman

This is the incredible true story of an American hero. It's the early 1970s, and Ron Stallworth (John David Washington) is the first African-American detective to serve in the Colorado Springs Police Department. He bravely sets out on a dangerous mission: infiltrate and expose the Ku Klux Klan.

The young detective soon recruits a more experienced colleague, Flip Zimmerman, into the undercover investigation of a lifetime. Together, they team up to take down the extremist hate group.

rottentomatoes.com, 2018

File 8 p. 89 • The soul of civil rights

Aretha Franklin, dubbed “the Queen of Soul”, was one of the most influential musicians in the U.S. charts.

She won 18 Grammy awards but also made a massive contribution to the civil rights movement: her songs would become their anthems¹.

Aretha Franklin grew up in the 1950s in Detroit, where her father was a popular Baptist minister² with a large congregation of African Americans who had escaped segregation in the Southern states. Reverend Franklin was an early leader of the civil-rights movement for racial equality and worked closely with Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Aretha started singing gospel music in her father’s church, then she moved over to R&B, singing a string of hits. The fame would soon come, but she was determined not to forget her sense of activism: she made sure her contract in the 1960s included the clause that she would never perform for a segregated audience.

Franklin used her fame to fundraise for the civil rights movement and in 1968 recorded “Think”, an anthem for equality with the catchy chorus, “Give me some freedom, oh, freedom, right now!” She sang both at Martin Luther King’s funeral in 1968 and at the inauguration of the U.S.A.’s first African-American president, Barack Obama, in 2009.

MLK’s daughter, Dr Bernice King, said of Franklin, “She was a shining example of how to utilise the arts to support and promote nonviolent social change. As a daughter of the movement, she not only used her voice to entertain but to uplift³ and inspire generations through songs that have become anthems”.

In August 2018, when she died, Barack Obama said of Aretha, “Aretha helped define the American experience. In her voice, we could feel our history, all of it and in every shade—our power and our pain, our darkness and our light, our quest for redemption and our hardwon respect.”

1. *hymnes*

2. *pasteur*

3. *encourage*

File 8 p. 90 • Toni Morrison wins Nobel Prize

Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize in Literature yesterday, the first American woman to win it in 55 years and the first African American ever. The author of six novels was saluted by the Swedish Academy for work “characterized by visionary force and poetic import [that] gives life to an essential aspect of American reality.” [...]

“I feel good about this, really good,” Morrison said “Part of the pleasure is the fact that it was wholly unexpected... It’s not a narrow, personal, subjective delight¹. I feel it on a very large scale.” One can delight in her unique narrative technique, varying from book to book and developed independently, even though its roots stem² from Faulkner³ and American writers from further south. The lasting impression is nevertheless sympathy, humanity, of the kind which is always based on profound humor.

Morrison learned of the prize when a Princeton colleague heard the announcement on the “Today” show and called her. She initially didn’t believe it, thinking at best that her name had shown up on a list of finalists. [...]

Yesterday, one of the 48 signatories, Alice Walker, said: “No one writes more beautifully than Toni Morrison. She has consistently explored issues of true complexity and terror and love in the lives of African Americans. Harsh criticism has not dissuaded her. Prizes have not trapped her. She is a writer who well deserves this honor.”

David Streitfeld, *The Washington Post*, 1993

1. happiness 2. emerge

3. famous American writer who won the Nobel Prize in 1949.

File 8 p. 91 • A cultural moment in American history

As a cultural moment, when I look back on Black history, and consider some of the most important turning points, some of the most important breakthroughs, some of the most essential moments, 4-5 events come to mind.

Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery.

Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

The birth of hip hop.

Michael Jackson's "Thriller" becoming the best-selling album of all-time.

The election of Barack Obama as our first black President.

I put *Black Panther* in that space. I'm not kidding. Culturally, I really do think it's that important. It means that much.

Give me a moment to explain myself. [...]

Nothing like it has ever been done before. Not just with a black superhero, but with several black superheroes. *Black Panther* had a whole cast of beautiful black brilliance. Black scientists. Black Presidents. The style. The technology. The color. But it's even deeper than that. There is a movement we call Afro-Futurism, where we imagine a black way of life free of white supremacy and bigotry¹. *Black Panther*, I think, is the first blockbuster film centered in the ethos² of Afro-Futurism, where the writers, and directors, and make-up and wardrobe team all imagined a beautiful, thriving³ black Africa without colonialism. Wakanda⁴ showed us our families in one piece. No war on drugs. No mass incarceration. No KKK. No lynching. No racial profiling. No police brutality.

Our traditions and culture have not been destroyed. We have beautiful rituals and rites of passage. And even though it's 2018, and we're all getting older, nothing like this has ever been done before in this country — nothing. I found myself fighting back tears several times throughout the film and

moments that I don't think were even supposed to be emotional. It was just so damn beautiful.

Listen, go see it again. I'm going to go once just with my wife and even go back again with my whole family. Let's make this moment last.

Shaun King, *medium.com*, 2018

1. intolerance
2. philosophy
3. *prospère*
4. the name of the kingdom in the movie

File 8 p. 97 • Black Boy

“Do you know what this means?” the man asked me.

“Gee, I don’t know,” I confessed.

“Did you ever hear of the Ku Klux Klan?” he asked me softly.

“Sure. Why?”

“Do you know what the Ku Kluxers do to colored people?”

“They kill us. They keep us from voting and getting good jobs,” I said.

“Well, the paper you’re selling preaches the Ku Klux Klan doctrines,” he said.

“Oh, no!” I exclaimed.

“Son, you’re holding it in your hands,” he said.

“I read the magazine, but I never read the paper,” I said vaguely, thoroughly¹ rattled².

“Listen, son,” he said. “Listen. You’re a black boy and you’re trying to make a few pennies. All right. I don’t want to stop you from selling these papers, if you want to sell ’em. But I’ve read these papers now for two months and I know what they’re trying to do. If you sell ’em, you’re just helping white people to kill you.”

“But these papers come from Chicago,” I protested naively, feeling unsure of the entire world now, feeling that racial propaganda surely could not be published in Chicago, the city to which Negroes were fleeing by the thousands.

“I don’t care where the paper comes from,” he said. “Just you listen to this.”

He read aloud a long article in which lynching was passionately advocated as a solution for the problem of the Negro. Even though I heard him reading it, I could not believe it.

“Let me see that,” I said.

I took the paper from him and sat on the edge of the steps; in the paling light I turned the pages and read articles so brutally anti-Negro that goose pimples³ broke out over my skin. [...]

“Are you going to sell those papers now?”

“No, sir. Never again.”

Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, 1945

1. deeply

2. shaken

3. *la chair de poule*