



“Black Panther” movie produces two Oscar firsts for African-Americans

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Ruth E. Carter holds her award for best costume design for “Black Panther” at the Oscars on February 24, 2019, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, California. Photo by: Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

LOS ANGELES, California — The 91st Academy Awards happened February 24. It was a historic night for two women. Both worked on the film “Black Panther.”

Ruth E. Carter won the award for best costume design. Hannah Beachler was recognized for best production design. Each became the first African-American to win in these categories.

“I dreamed and prayed for this night,” said Carter. She laughed while accepting her trophy. She dedicated the award to her 97-year-old mother. Carter also thanked the director, Spike Lee. He helped her get her start in the 1998 film “School Daze.”

In response, Lee rose from his seat. He pumped his fist into the air.

Beachler cried during her speech. She was joined by fellow design awardee Jay R. Hart. Beachler said she “stands here stronger than she did yesterday.” She helped create the world of Wakanda. It was the fictional homeland of Black Panther’s main character. The film was based on a comic by Marvel.

BEACHLER HAD WORKED WITH DIRECTOR BEFORE

“Black Panther” was directed by Ryan Coogler. Beachler had worked with Coogler on other films. She thanked him. Beachler said he “made me a better designer, a better storyteller, a better person.”

Beachler said her success was because of Coogler, who gave her a better understanding of life. She added, “I’m stronger because Marvel gave me a chance.”

Beachler and Carter were important parts of “Black Panther.” It became a hugely popular film worldwide.

Both said they wanted to show the pride of the African diaspora in the film. The diaspora is the worldwide collection of communities from Africa.

CARTER’S COSTUMES TURNED BLACK PANTHER INTO AFRICAN KING

Marvel Comics created Black Panther, Carter noted. He was the first black superhero. “But through costume design, we turned him into an African king,” said Carter. The film’s colorful clothing was inspired by her travels to Africa. Carter spoke with people there. She wanted to understand the history of each item. She wanted to make sure the different characteristics were shown correctly in the film.

The costumes have become popular. Many people wear Black Panther-themed costumes to theaters. They come from all age groups and backgrounds. Some even dressed in Wakanda wear at a pre-Oscar event.

“We wanted to bring the world of Africa to life,” Beachler said.

Carter said she hopes their Oscar wins can open more doors for other African-Americans. Maybe they will want to follow in her and Beachler’s footsteps.

She said she hopes to help such people follow their dreams.