

# POWER RANGER SAID HE PLAYED A ROLE IN SUPERHERO HISTORY

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Walter Emanuel Jones has little doubt that he made a difference in the world as a Mighty Morphin Power Ranger, and not just by battling with evildoers like Rita Repulsa.

"I think I will be remembered as one of the first African-American superheroes," he said.

As the original Black Power Ranger on the popular children's television series, which featured a team of spandex-clad teens taking on extra-terrestrial goons, Jones suited up for more than 80 episodes beginning in the early 1990s.

The Detroit native said his work was about more than mere entertainment; it was about opening the audience's eyes to martial arts training and the importance of loyalty, integrity, and making friends with people outside of your race.



Walter Emanuel Jones was the Black Power Ranger on the popular children's television series.

"*Power Rangers* [is] kind of an earmark of a decade, and it made a big difference in a lot of people's lives," said Jones, who now lives in California.

Its influence is still apparent more than a decade later, as evidenced by the fact that Jones will be one of the distinguished guests at Youmacon 2008, the four-day anime convention in Dearborn, Mich., that is expected to draw thousands of enthusiasts beginning today.

Jones is scheduled to be joined by the likes of Wayne Grayson, of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and Caitlin Glass, of *Fullmetal Alchemist*. The event for fans of Japanese animation and comics also will feature a costume contest, 24-hour programming, and opportunities to purchase anime collectibles. It will be held at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn.

While *Power Rangers* targets kids as viewers - and remains popular with them - enough time has passed from the days when Jones appeared on the program that many of his fans are now in their 20s.

"A lot of those people are adults now," Jones said.

And at gatherings like this, they tend to have lots of questions. Tough ones.

"I get stumped regularly," he said. "A lot of the fans have actually seen those episodes a lot more than once. Sometimes I'm not as familiar with the show as they are so I get stumped from time to time."

For the record - you know you're wondering - Jones said he was told that it was a coincidence that he ended up as the Black Power Ranger. It was the producers' idea that his character combine martial arts and dance, though, a perfect fit for Jones, who is a past winner of the Mayan World Salsa competition.

"I also teach and I dance salsa now," he said.

Since Jones left the show around 1994 - "It was a nonunion show and things weren't really fair the way things worked," he said - he's had plenty to keep him busy. His credits include appearances on more mature series *The Shield* and *CSI*.

"Obviously I'm an adult. I want to be able to do adult work that interests a certain part of my brain," he said. But,

"I'm a big kid at heart."

There are probably plenty of fans out there who are just like him. He's met them all over the world, even as far away as Africa, where he traveled recently as part of a program to help increase tourism there.

"To have that kind of impact on children, a positive impact, that will be a good legacy to have," he said. "Even when I'm old and unable to get around, there will still be people telling their kids ... how they used to pretend they were the Black Power Ranger."

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