

NAACP Honors Black Stuntmen's Association At the 43rd Annual Image Awards

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Now-treasured Hollywood greats, Sidney Poitier, and Harry Belafonte, who were the first African-Americans to star as superheroes, cowboys, and special agents, in now-classic films like *Uptown Saturday Night*, and although they went on to become household names, there was an unknown team shattering barriers from the sidelines, as their gun-slinging, death-defying stuntmen.

Before the 43rd annual NAACP Image Awards, 99 percent of the population didn't know that the Black Stuntmen's Association even existed. But the BSA has been a force in Hollywood since 1967, and fought tirelessly for the equal pay and protection on set that were afforded their white counterparts. Before the organization's inception, African-American stuntmen often lost film opportunities to white stuntmen, who would paint on dark complexions to double as African-American stars. They would also suffer life-

threatening injury without any crew support. Through protests and a tireless display of their undeniable talent and skill, members of the BSA were able to reverse many unjust practices in the film industry.

Thankfully, the BSA is finally getting the recognition they deserved for decades. Poitier and Belafonte presented the BSA's founding members with the President's Award during the NAACP telecast. The NAACP President and CEO, Benjamin Todd, praised the stuntmen's' efforts **in a statement**:

"I am proud to honor the men and women of the Black Stuntmen's Association with the NAACP President's Award. The efforts of these pioneers helped to chip away at the racial barriers that divided not only stuntmen, but the entire entertainment/media industry".

In addition to the award, the BSA's contributions to cinema will be commemorated in an upcoming exhibit at The Smithsonian Institute in 2016.