

# Black

# Representation Matters:

An intersectional study of the confluence of playwrighting, casting practices, and progressive productions as they relate to diversity and inclusion in theatre.

Created for the students of the McLennan College Theatre Department

Kathleen Laundry, Professor of Costume Design

# Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the friends and colleagues who served as my peer-review committee:

- Darlisha Blaylock, MCC alum, Waco, TX.
- Whitney Coulter, Company Member at Jubilee Theatre Ft. Worth, TX.
- Dr. Bronwen Forbay, Professor of Music at McLennan College Waco, TX.
- Dom Jefferson, KWTX Waco, TX.
- Dr. Malcom Morgan, Professor of Theatre at St. John's College—Santa Fe, NM.
- Glenn Price, Theatre Teacher at University High School Waco, TX.
- Markanthony Sterling, Managing Artistic Director of Brazos Valley Theatre Troupe Bryan, TX.

# Why do we need to know this?

American theatre, film, and television have a long and problematic history with systemic racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and ableism:

Although BIPOC make up 70% of the world's population (and 67% of the world's non-Christians), white performers held 76% of the roles during the decade between 2006-2016 on Broadway. Of the 24% of the roles that went to minority actors (which includes all non-whites plus actors with disabilities) only 10.7% of those were non-traditionally cast. In other words, roles that could have been filled by a performer of any ethnic background, nearly always went to a white actor. White actors also earn higher wages than BIPOC actors.

**Specifically Black Americans comprise 13.4% of our national population, yet Black actors comprise only 9% of our total film roles. On the positive side, Black actors comprise 20.6% of TV roles.**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we should know better and do better. We hope through education and deliberate action toward inclusivity in our productions as well as our classes, to increase the representation of these under-represented groups in both our student population and the plays we produce.

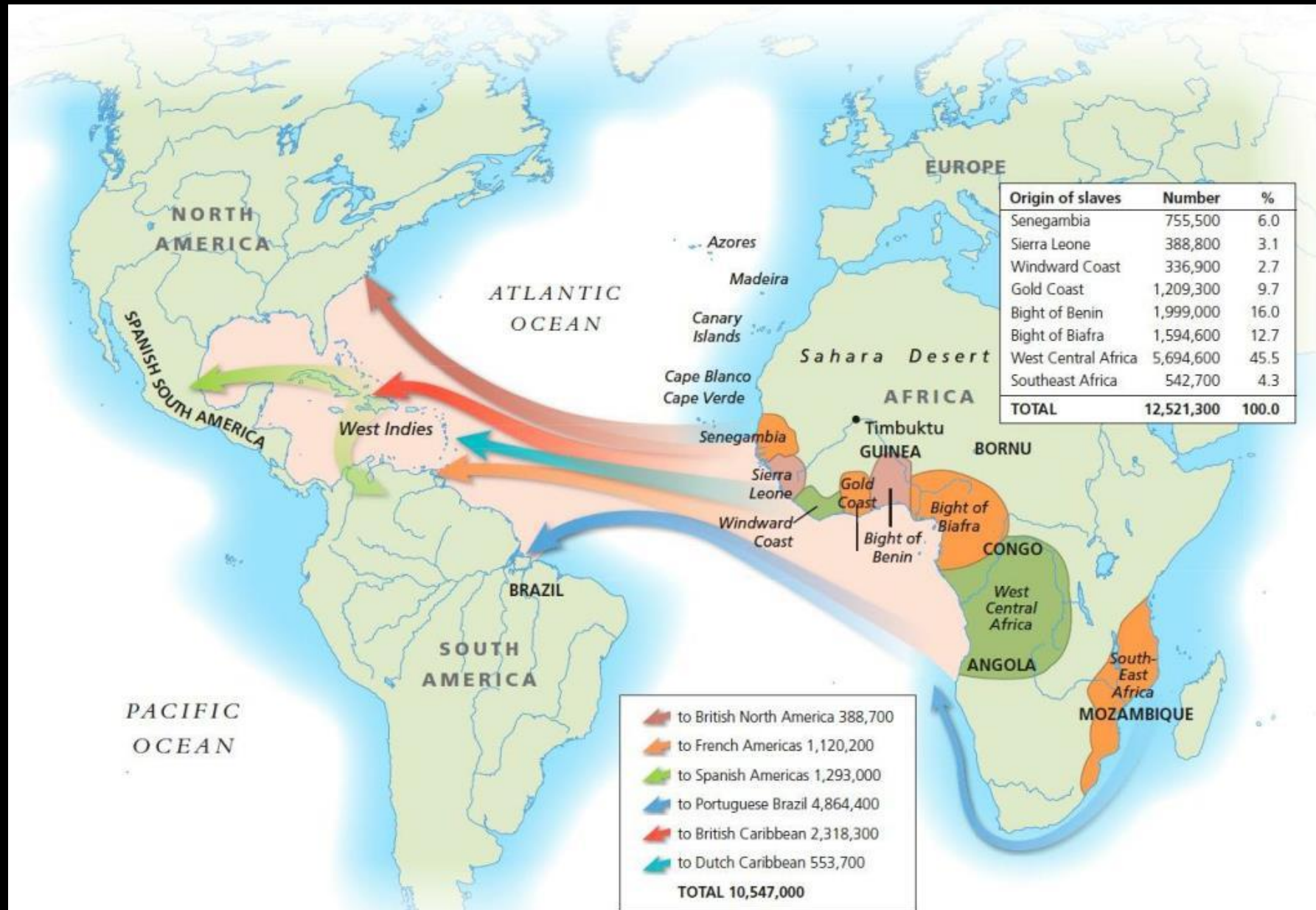
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<https://variety.com/2016/film/news/movie-tv-diversity-study-hollywood-straight-white-male-1201711586/>

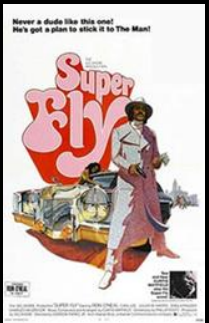
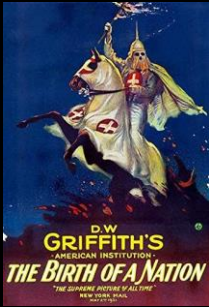
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<https://allarts.org/2019/03/study-finds-decrease-in-broadway-diversity-following-a-record-breaking-year/>

Between 1650-1860 12.5 million enslaved people were transported from western Africa to the Americas.



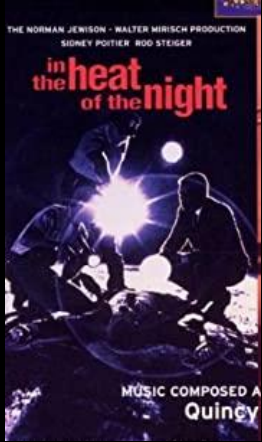
# Black Character Tropes



- **Savage Animal:** starting with the 1915 film *Birth of a Nation*, Black people are presented as a threat to the white way of life and especially to the purity of white women. *King Kong* is a metaphor for Black savagery and sexuality. All the natives in *Tarzan* movies are savage headhunters. The gorillas in *Planet of the Apes*, Disney's King Louie in *Jungle Book*. This trope is turned on its head in Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles* where the good Black sheriff asks, "Where are all the white women at?"
- **Enslavement:** Beginning with *Gone with the Wind*, many films depicted enslavement in a romanticized way, where enslaved people were treated kindly and were happy to serve their white masters. This persisted until the advent of the *Roots* TV miniseries, which showed a much more truthful version, and ignited another slew of slavery/civil war movies, culminating in a *Roots* reboot.
- **Mammy:** This trope began with Julia from *Coquette*, a silent film starring Claudette Colbert. Louise Beavers played Julia the maid. Mammy from *Gone With the Wind* is the character that popularized it. Although Mammy was enslaved, this trope extends to non-enslaved house maids who are happy to raise white children and have no other lives outside of the family they work for. *Beulah*, originated on the radio, but was so popular it moved to TV and ran for years. Beulah was the maid and the star of the show. She was also the originator of the Sassy Black Woman trope, although Florence from *The Jeffersons* is the one who popularized this trope. *Maude* was the first show that had a maid Florida Evans, who did not take care of white children, who then got her own show, *Good Times* where she was shown with her family and neighbors. Florence from *The Jeffersons* was the first maid to work for a black family.
- **Blaxploitation Films:** *Shaft* and *Cleopatra Jones* made this trope popular throughout the 1970's in mainstream culture; featured black characters, typically set in urban environments in which black people could be both heroes and villains. They employed a lot of black talent however, the characters were often one dimensional stereotypes of criminals, drug dealers, pimps, and hos. The Black Power movement used these films to highlight black socioeconomic struggles. Many of the film's heroes were able to overcome oppression to achieve success.

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BlackIndex>





# Black Character Tropes



- **Angry Black Man:** Not to be confused with Scary Black Man, who is only scary to white people because of his appearance and size, Angry Black Man is angry at the white man for reasons, he sees injustice everywhere. He is working within a broken system and he can see behind the curtain and knows he'll never get a fair shake. Samuel L. Jackson plays this character a lot.
- **Sassy Black Woman:** Like the ABM, SBW is also angry it just comes out as humor. She speaks her mind and will tell you off, but it's usually played for laughs. She's defined by her vivaciousness, humor, and joie de vivre. She is a sexually liberated woman who can have sex without being shamed for it. Sassy catchphrases include, "Oh snap!" "Talk to the Hand" "Bye Felicia" or "Oh, no you di-in't!"
- **Magical Negros:** These characters are spiritual guides to white people. They can be either male or female; This character is usually disabled, frequently blind, and often a janitor or prisoner. The character often has no past but simply appears one day to help the white protagonist. The first example in film is *The Defiant Ones* in 1958. In the pilot episode of *Community*, Jeff poses a question at a random black cafeteria worker, who in response gives him a blank look. Jeff says, "Oh jeez, I'm sorry. I was raised on TV, and I was conditioned to believe that every black woman over 50 is a cosmic mentor." Gynin in *Star Trek Next Gen*, Gloria in *Because of Winn Dixie* is both blind and a recovering alcoholic. Al in *Deadpool* who is also blind makes fun of this trope.

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BlackIndex>

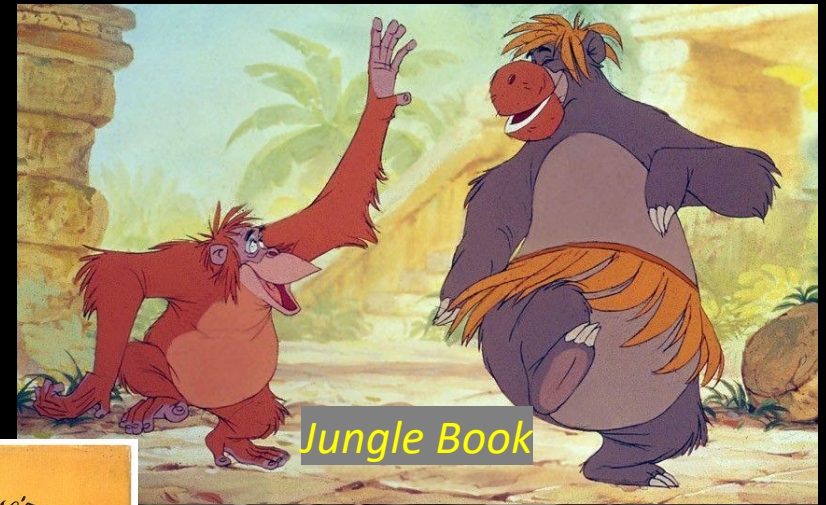




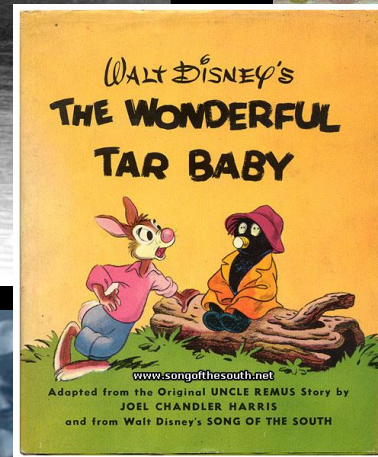
King Kong



King Kong



Jungle Book



Planet of the Apes



Tarzan



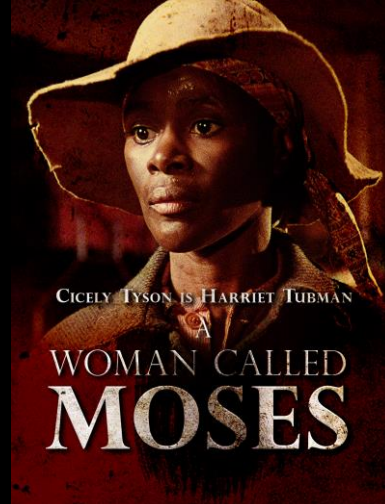
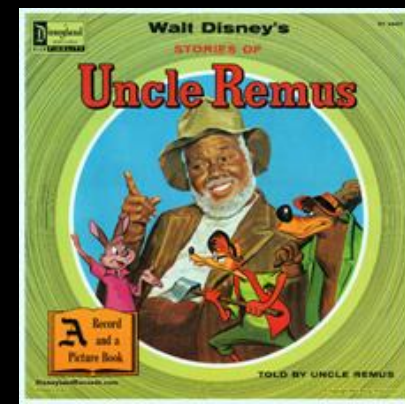
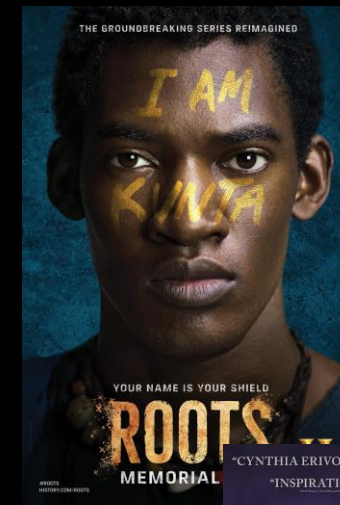
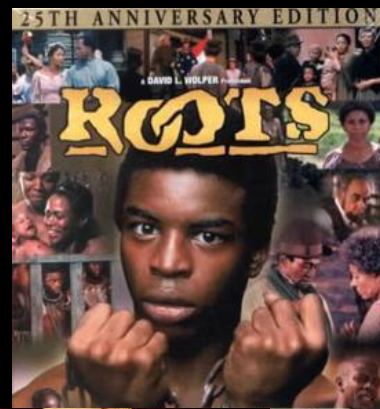
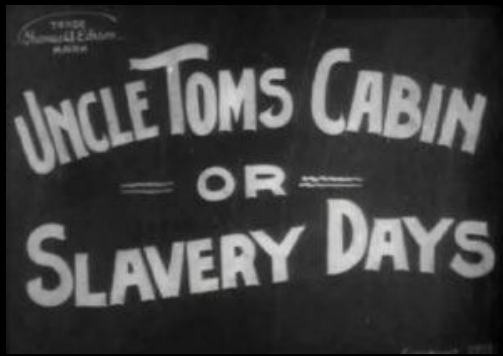
Tarzan



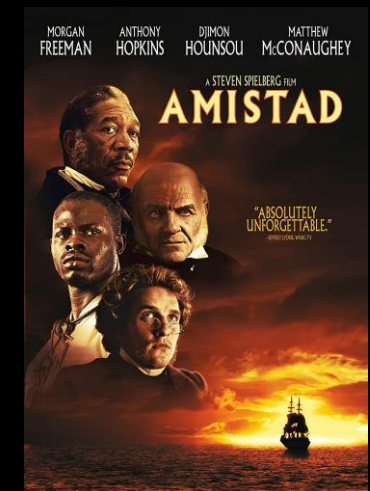
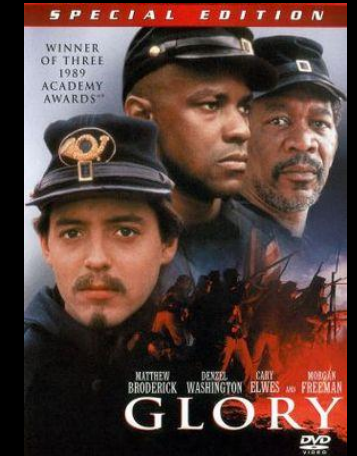
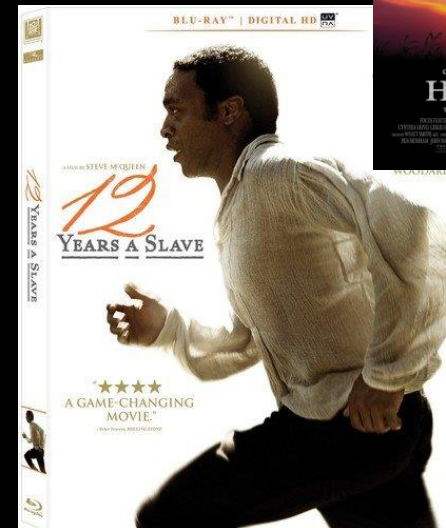
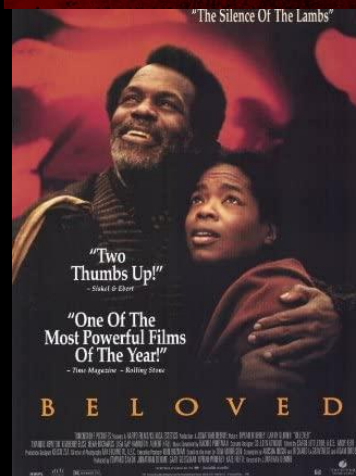
WHERE THE WHITE WOMEN AT

Blazing Saddles





# Enslavement







Julia Coquette



Mammy GWTW



Prissy GWTW



Beulah



Calpurnia To Kill a Mockingbird

# Mammy



Florida Maude



Florence The Jeffersons



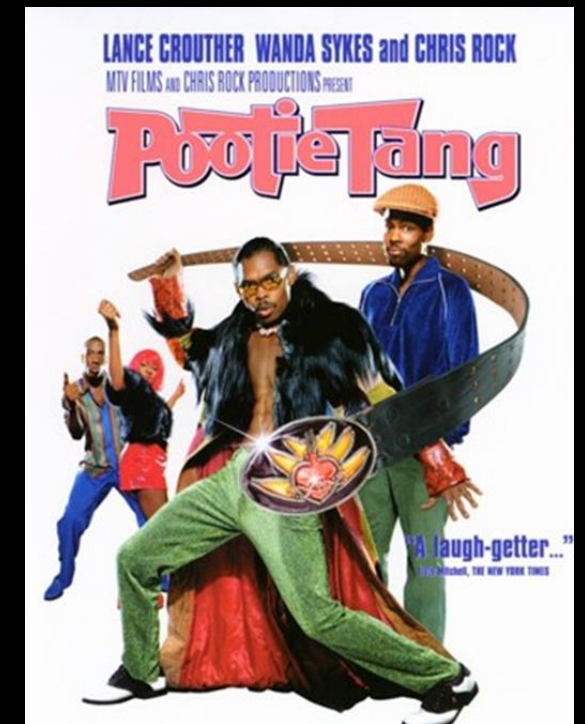
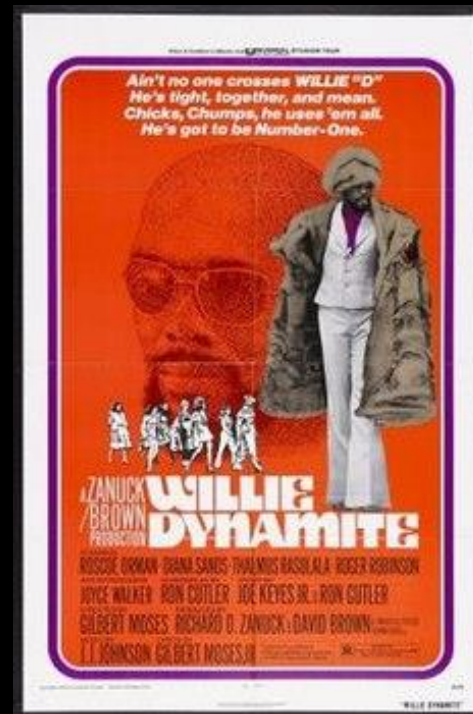
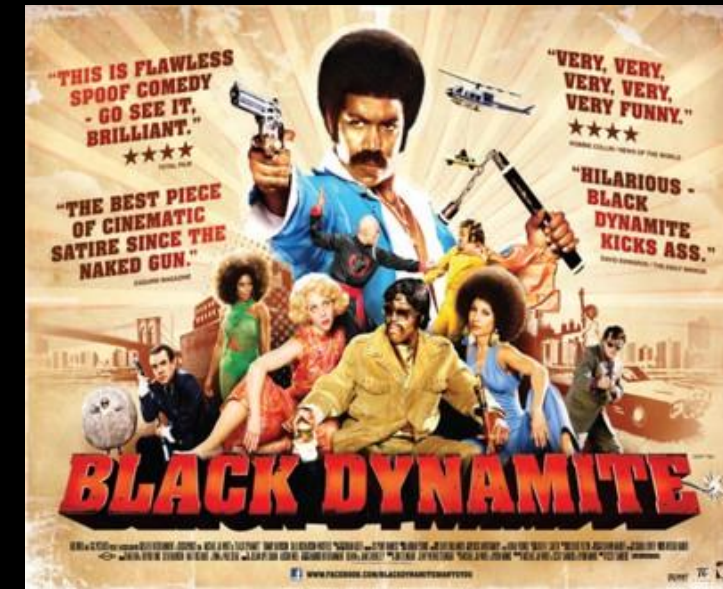
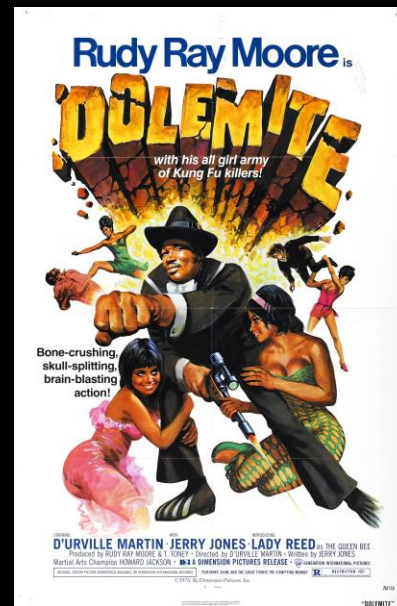
Minnie, Abilene The Help



Carla Mad Men



# Blaxploitation

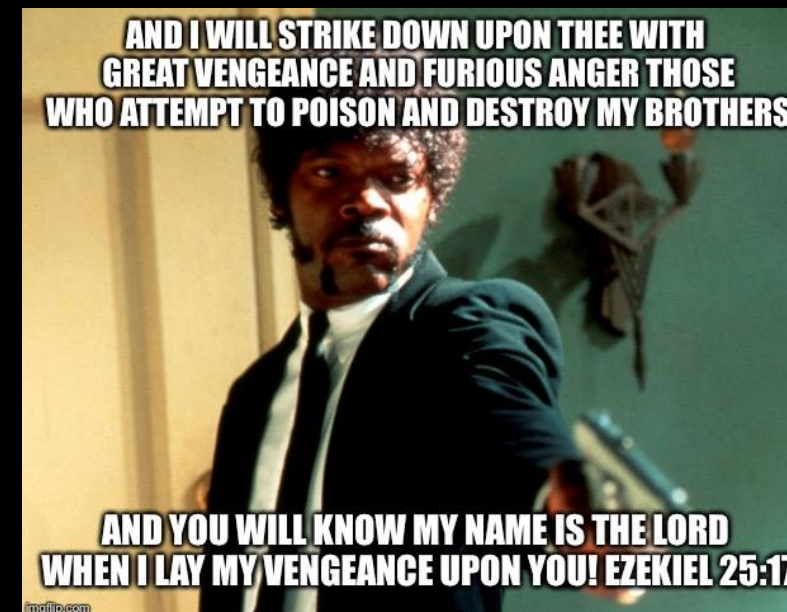
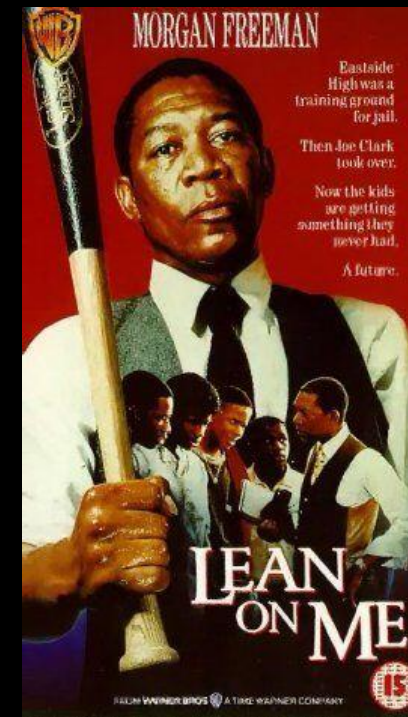
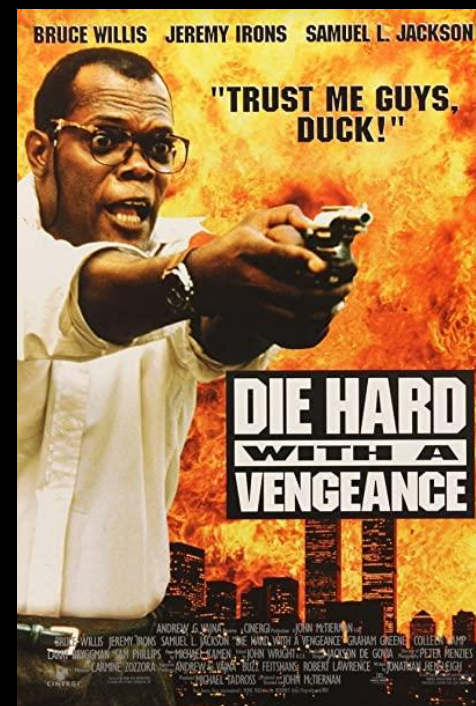
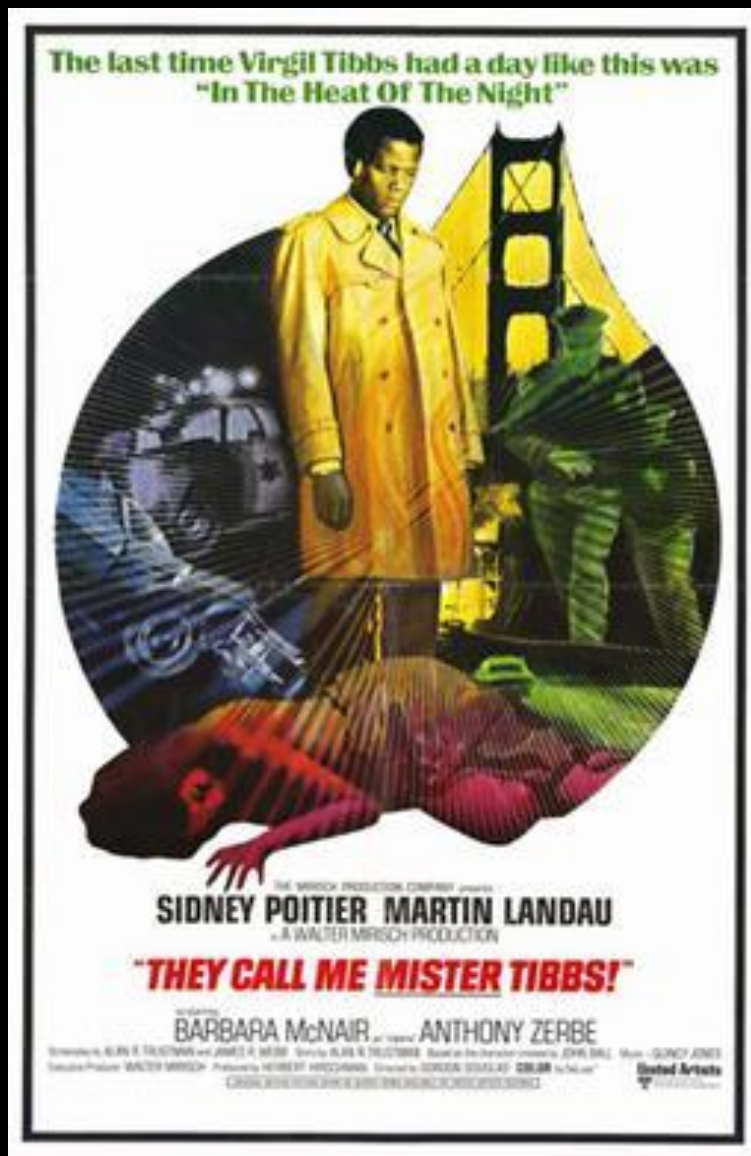








# Angry Black Man

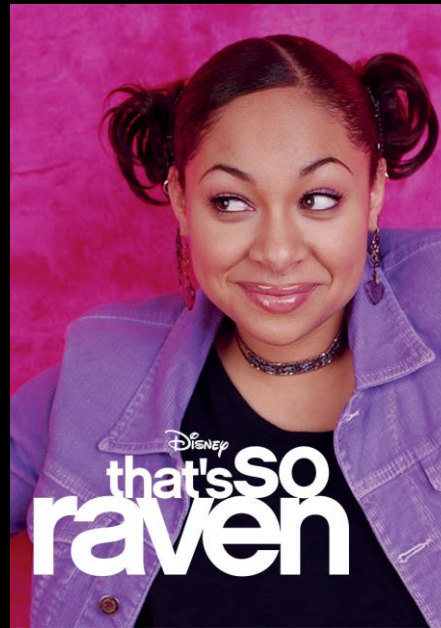




# Sassy Black Woman



Sister Act



Glee



Ghostbusters



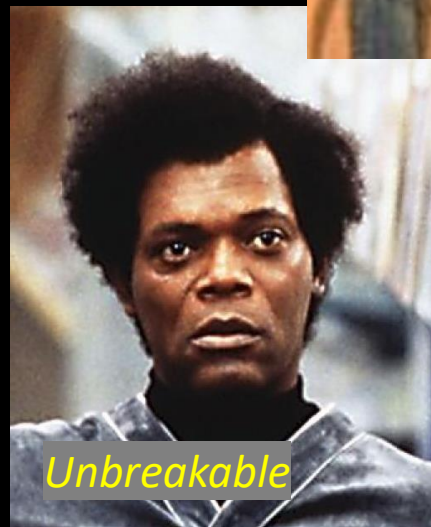
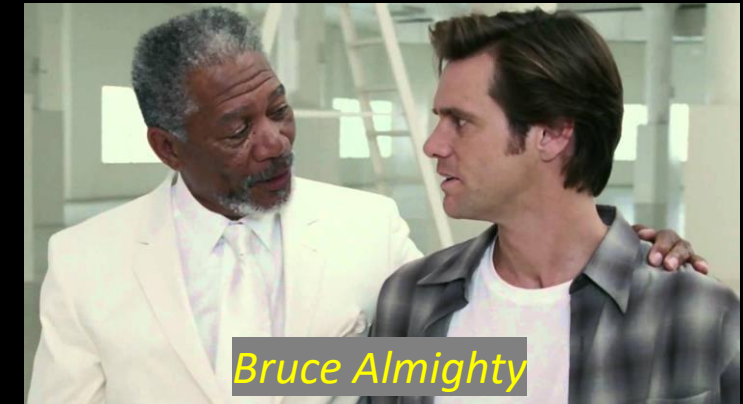
Shirley Community



Madea

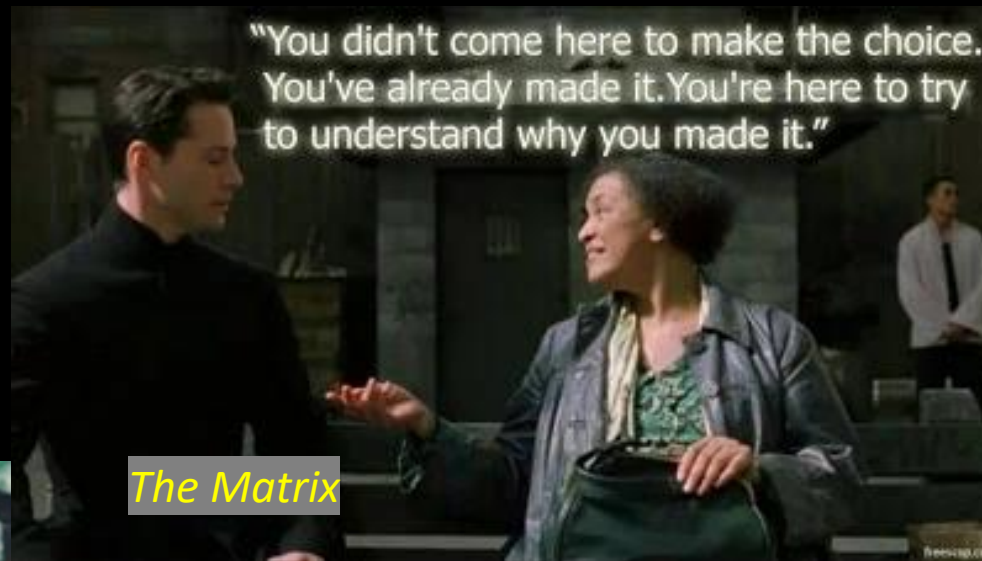


# Magical Negro





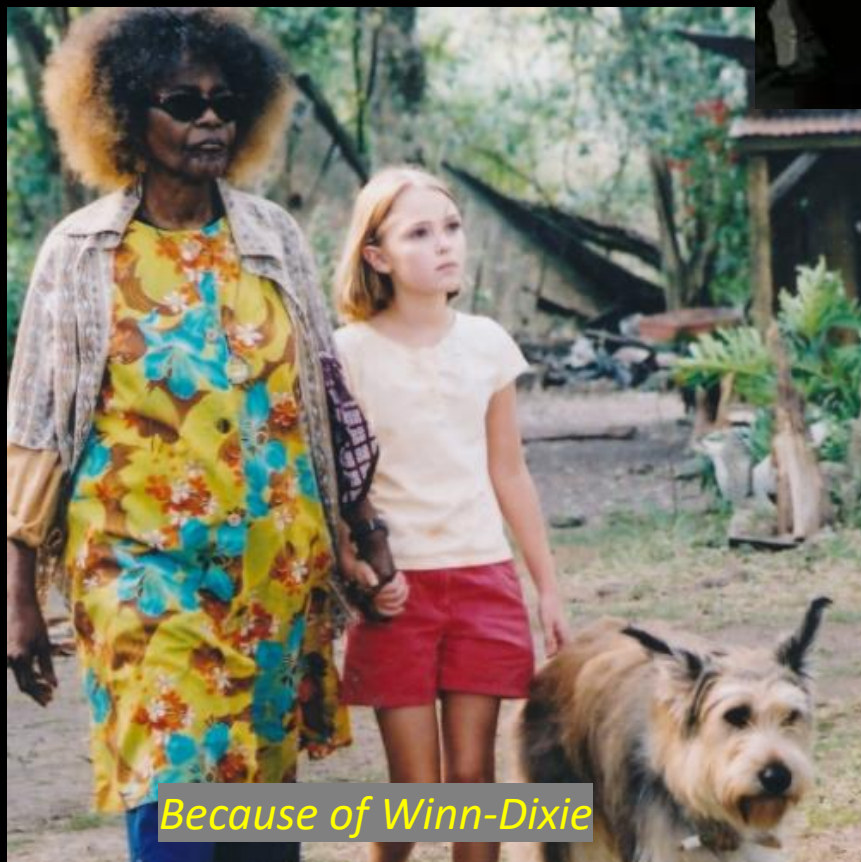
# Magical Negro



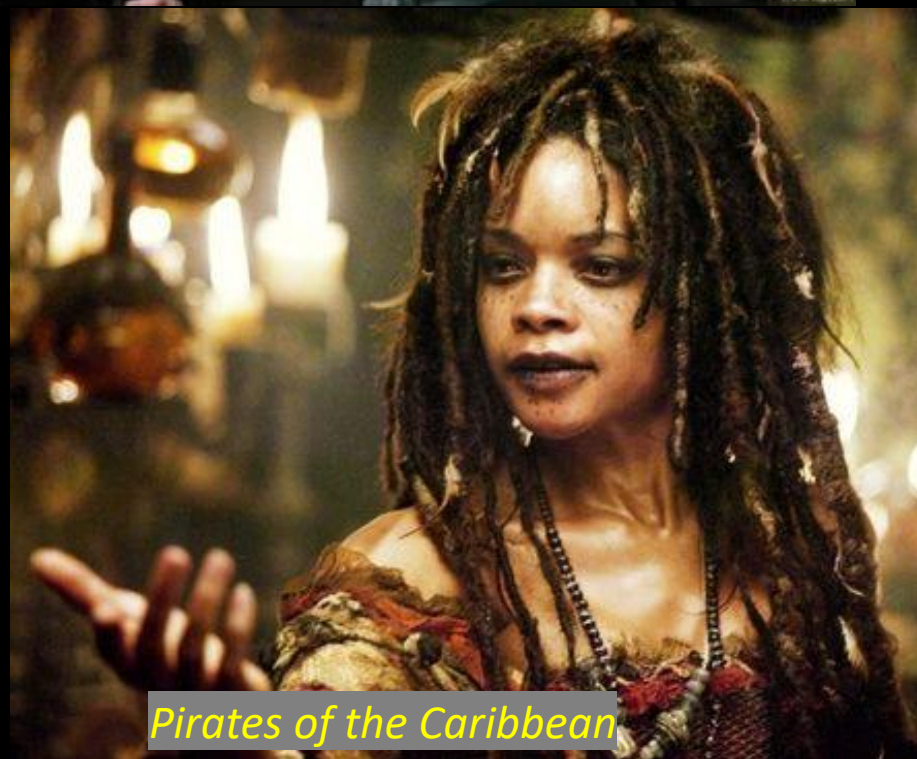
*The Matrix*



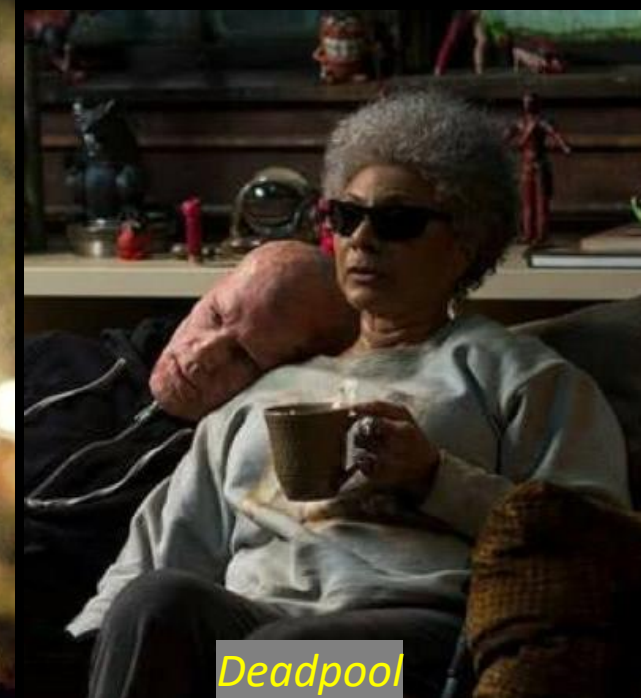
*Star Trek Next Gen*



*Because of Winn-Dixie*



*Pirates of the Caribbean*



*Deadpool*

# What now?

Without bringing attention to the mistreatment of Black characters, it makes it difficult for writers to change how they write these characters. By learning about stereotypes, we grow to appreciate quality storytelling. We always have to ask ourselves certain questions: Are these stereotypes damaging? How should show-runners and writers improve their storytelling when it comes to Black characters? Can we like certain pieces of media while simultaneously recognizing their mistreatment of Black characters?



# Othello: A Case Study

*Othello* may be the first play that included a character that was “The Other”.

The Other is defined as the state of being opposite from, or non-conforming to societal norms and places them at the margins of society, which includes disenfranchisement from socio-political power.

Othello is described as a Moor which contemporary audiences would have interpreted to mean a Black man from Africa, Spain, or the Middle East, whose religion was Islam. Othello was completely opposite of Shakespeare’s audience—White, English, and Christian—thus “The Other”. Rather than being fearful of Othello’s Otherness, Desdemona is attracted to him and he wins her by wooing her with his tales and deeds, as well as his looks, not by “spells or magicks”, as the white characters assert.

Richard Burbage originated the role in 1604 and continued to play Othello until 1619. Desdemona would have been played by a boy, as no women were allowed on stage at this time. There are no portraits of Burbage as Othello, so it is unknown if he used makeup to darken his skin. For the next 200 years all other Othellos would be played by white actors in dark makeup, most recently by Orson Welles, Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, and Anthony Hopkins in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/richardburbage.html>



Richard Burbage



# The First Black Othello: Ira Aldridge, 1825

American actor, Ira Aldridge, was born in 1807 in New York to a father who escaped slavery. He acted there with an all black theatre company, where he'd done many of Shakespeare's plays including *Othello*. When his theatre burned down, a fellow actor helped him get to the UK to start over.

He began touring his *Othello* in 1825 around the continent, and it was quite popular. He became the manager of Coventry Theatre before he turned 21. In 1833, when Edmund Kean died in the role, he replaced him at Covent Garden.

He continued to perform Othello as well as other Shakespearean roles in Europe and was considering a return to America after the Civil War ended, but died in 1867, on tour in Poland, before he could make the journey. He was 60 years old.

It would be another 100 years until the next black actor would play Othello.

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/ira-alldridge-actor-activist>

[https://www.chicagoshakes.com/education/teaching\\_resources/teacher\\_handbooks/red\\_velvet/ira\\_alldridge](https://www.chicagoshakes.com/education/teaching_resources/teacher_handbooks/red_velvet/ira_alldridge)

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/alldridge-ira-1807-1867/>





# The Next Black Othello: Paul Robeson, 1930

American actor, Paul Robeson, was born in 1898 in New Jersey to a father who had escaped slavery. In high school he played sports and did theatre, graduated as Valedictorian, and won a scholarship to Rutgers. He was the third Black man to ever be enrolled there and was the first black player on the all white football team. He sang in the Glee Club and graduated Valedictorian. He went on to earn a law degree from Columbia, while playing professional football and acting. His performance of Old Man River set the standard for all other actors in *Show Boat*.

He went to Britain to do *Othello* and was the first Black actor to play Othello there since Ira Aldridge. He appeared in numerous films and had a recording contract with Victor records. He was the first actor to play Othello on Broadway, with Jose Ferrer as Iago, and he smashed all records. This revival was the longest running Shakespeare play on Broadway and Robeson got 12 curtain calls on opening night. He continued to play Othello for years. The last production was with the RSC in Stratford in 1959. There would not be another black actor to play Othello until 1982.

He was a political activist and civil rights leader. He refused to play to segregated audiences. He famously stated, "The artist must take sides. He must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative." He toured around the world promoting civil rights everywhere he went, taking up the plight of Australian Aborigines, New Zealand's Maoris, the Chinese in their subjugation by Japan, India's independence from England, Spanish anti-fascists, and getting Colonial powers out of Africa. In the U.S. he fought for the Civil Rights movement with his good friend WEB DuBois. He died in 1977 when he was 79 years old.

<https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126876.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-49176524>





# The Third Black Othello: James Earl Jones, 1982

James Earl Jones was born in Mississippi in 1931. His mother was a teacher, his father a boxer. His family moved to Michigan where he developed a stutter at the age of five and refused to speak for 8 years until an English teacher helped him overcome it in high school. He enrolled as a theatre major at University of Michigan where he joined the ROTC. Upon graduation he expected to be deployed to fight in the Korean War, but was instead sent to Ranger school and was promoted to First Lieutenant.

He moved to New York and became a successful actor. This production of *Othello* was first staged at Central Park, then revived Off-Broadway, then moved to Broadway, then later revived again on Broadway in 1982.

James Earl Jones went on to do a one man show as Paul Robeson on Broadway in 1978 which was made into a TV movie in 1979. His most famous voice roles were Darth Vader and Mufasa. He has won 3 Tonys, 2 Emmys, an Oscar, and a Grammy.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1964/07/15/archives/theater-othello-in-park-james-earl-jones-is-cast-as-the-moor.html>



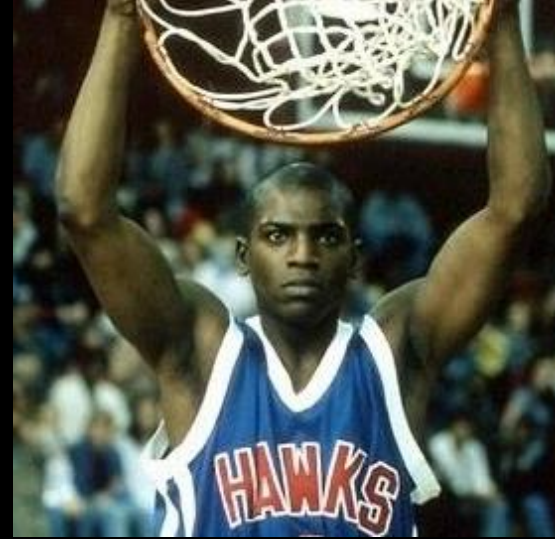
# Black Othello is the Norm Now



Laurence Fishburne  
1995 film



Chiwetel Ejiofor  
Bloomsbury UK, 1997



Mekhi Phifer  
2001 film O



Cyril Nri  
2007 film



Lenny Henry, 2009  
Northern Broadsides, UK



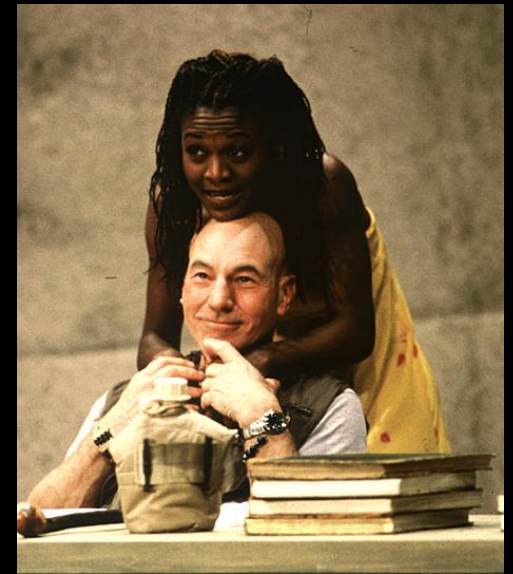
Hugh Quarshie  
RSC, UK 2015



# *Othello*: Patrick Stewart Shakespeare Theatre, D.C. 1997

Directed by Judith Kelly, Patrick Stewart came up with this “photo negative” version of *Othello* to challenge audience’s preconceptions and shatter stereotypes by making white audiences “experience some of the feelings of isolation and discomfort that black people experience all the time”. <http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/pdf/asides/97-98/97-98%20Othello.pdf>

Another goal of this production was to highlight the theme of abuse against women by making it a major issue in Iago and Emilia’s dysfunctional marriage, as well as the obvious murder of Desdemona due to her husband’s jealous rage. This is a personal issue for Stewart as he and his mother suffered her husband’s abuse for years and he has since used his money and fame to support Refuge, the English national domestic violence charity. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/nov/27/patrick-stewart-domestic-violence>



Patrice Johnson, Patrick Stewart



Ron Canada , Patrick Stewart

# Cleopatra: A Case Study

Cleopatra was the Queen of Egypt. In Shakespeare's day, she was thought of as African, and thus "Other" like Othello. Unlike Othello, her otherness was desirable rather than something to be feared. Shakespeare uses these words "age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety". She was basically the most desirable women in the world at that time and all men were entranced by her beauty. She also was highly intelligent, spoke a dozen languages and was clever enough to have herself rolled up in a carpet and smuggled in to meet Caesar. She instantly became his mistress and bore him a son. She was 28 years old when she met Marc Antony when she arrived on a golden barge with purple sails and silver oars, dressed as the Goddess Aphrodite, while her servants, dressed as Cupids, fanned her.

In the 1607 original production her role was played by a boy whose name has been lost to time. Like Richard Burbage, we do not know if he used dark makeup or not. Of all the plays Shakespeare wrote only 12% of the available roles were female. Young boys were cast as women who were inexperienced and would be "trained" by the older members of the Lord Chamberlain's men until they grew up, got better, and thus earned bigger roles. Women would not be allowed on the English stage until 1660, when Charles II was restored to the throne.

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/cleopatra>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-was-cleopatra-151356013/>

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/antony-and-cleopatra/plot>

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/cleopatra/full.html>



# The First Female Cleopatra: Elizabeth Barry, 1678

The first female to play Cleopatra was a white woman, Elizabeth Barry in 1678. She was one of the highest paid actresses of her time, and the first to be granted an annual stipend by James II.

None of the white actresses who played Cleopatra used dark makeup. Perhaps since acting as a profession for women was considered basically prostitution, female actors couldn't afford the societal double whammy of representing an African on stage, while male actors playing Othello at this time were unaffected.

It would be 300 years before a Black woman played Cleopatra. Michelle Shay was the first to play the part in a summer production in Massachusetts in 1986. Many more Black Cleopatras would soon follow.



<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/501489/pdf>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265754975> The Famous Mrs Barry Elizabeth Barry and Restoration Celebrity

# Hattie McDaniel: The First Black American Actress

Born in 1893 to parents who had been freed from enslavement, Hattie won a medal for dramatic art at 15 and went on the road with her oldest brother doing tent shows for Black audiences in small towns across the Midwest. She moved from Wichita, Kansas to Milwaukee during the depression and while working as a ladies' room attendant at Sam Pick's Suburban Inn, an all white club, managed to become the star of the floor show by singing "St. Louis Blues" for the manager. She was the first non-white entertainer to be hired there. The patrons kept telling her she should go to Hollywood, so she packed her bags and went.



She was one of the first Black women to sing on the radio in 1924 on the program "The Optimistic Do-Nuts" in Los Angeles. She got an agent at Central Casting. She took every bit part she was offered. She rose in the ranks, playing bigger roles until David O. Selznick noticed her and offered her the part of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*. The rest is history. Hattie McDaniel was the first ever Black person to win an Oscar. She said, "My own people were especially happy. They felt that in honoring me, Hollywood had honored the entire race. I wanted this occasion to prove an inspiration to Negro youth for many years to come." She had at least 97 credits (in reality many more than that due to doing uncredited work early in her career) over a 22 year career. Although 75 of those roles were maids, she portrayed them un-stereotypically, winning praise from the NAACP. In 1947 she wrote an op-ed piece for *The Hollywood Reporter* in which she details the history of increasing gains for Black artists in Hollywood, saying "I have never apologized for the roles I play".

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mcdaniel-wins-oscar>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hattie-mcdaniel-defies-critics-1947-774493>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/oscars-first-black-winner-accepted-774335>



# Black Cleopatra is the Norm Now

Michelle Shay, 1986  
Lennox, Massachusetts



Rosalind Cash, 1987  
Los Angeles, CA



Franchelle Dorn, 1988  
Washington, DC.



Pauline Black, 1989  
Lyric Studio, UK



Gina Torres, 1997  
Xena: Warrior Princess  
"The King of Assassins"



Yanna McIntosh, 2014  
Stratford, Canada



Josette Simon, 2017  
RSC, UK

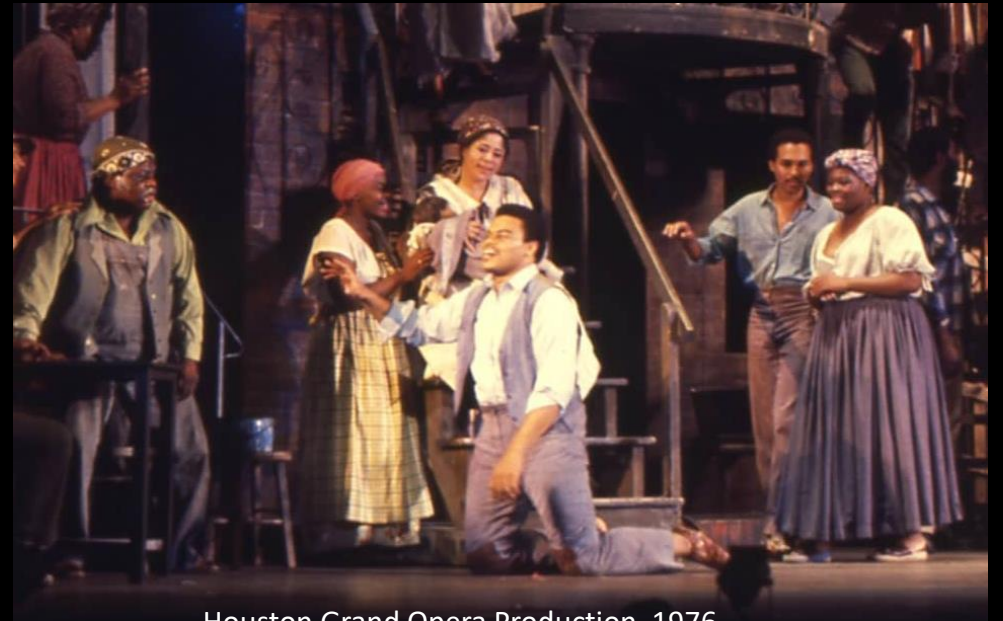


Sophie Okonedo, 2018  
National Theatre, UK



# *Porgy and Bess, 1935*

George and Ira Gershwin's opera, based on DuBose Heyward's novel. Premiered on Broadway in 1935 with an entirely black cast of classically trained singers. The Gershwins stipulated that it must be performed with an all black cast or not at all. The touring version wouldn't play to segregated audiences and helped to change those laws in Washington DC.



Houston Grand Opera Production, 1976

The play takes place on Catfish Row, a large tenement on the waterfront in Charleston South Carolina. The action surrounds the murder of a man named Robbins, by a man named Crown, who flees the scene but leaves his girlfriend Bess behind. Sportin' Life is a drug dealer and gives Bess cocaine. Bess is taken in by Porgy, a disabled beggar. Crown reappears to reclaim Bess, but is killed by Porgy, who is taken to jail. Sportin' Life uses the opportunity to force more coke on Bess to get her to run away with him. When Porgy gets out of jail, he realizes Bess is gone.

Black people at the time considered it racist in its depiction of black people as poor, violent, drug users who have sex out of wedlock and kill each other. The initial production did not do well. A movie version was filmed in 1959, but was plagued with problems as much of the music was cut, the orchestrations were changed, the sets burned down, and most of the actors had to have their singing dubbed. The Gershwin estate was very disappointed with it. It was rarely performed in the 1960's and 70's due to its perceived racism until the Houston Grand Opera produced it in 1976, restoring its original music and orchestrations. It was so successful that it transferred to Broadway in 1978 and won a Tony—the only opera ever to receive one— and a Grammy for Best Opera Recording.

<https://www.wrti.org/post/story-behind-gershwins-porgy-and-bess-first-great-american-opera>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/arts/music/porgy-bess-gershwin-metropolitan-opera.html>



# Imitation of Life, 1934

Based on the 1933 book by Fannie Hurst, *Imitation of Life* tells the story of two widowed moms with daughters, one white family, one black. Beatrice hires Delilah to help her run the house and take care of her daughter so she can continue selling syrup door to door to make enough money to pay off her debts. Delilah and her light-skinned daughter Peola move in with Bea and Jessie.

As the years go by they all become close friends, but once Jessie tells Peola that she's Black, Peola refuses to acknowledge her heritage and starts passing as white outside the home, even to the point of denying to her friends that Delilah is her mother. The moms open a restaurant together, sell Delilah's pancake flower to supermarkets, and are able to pay off all their debts and buy a big house in the city. Even though Peola has everything she wants and is attending a HBC, she is still ashamed of being black and runs away to work in a whites only diner. This breaks Delilah's heart and ultimately leads to her early death. When Peola comes back for the funeral, she is grief stricken.

Critics praised Louise Beavers' performance as Delilah as well as newcomer Fredi Washington as Peola. Washington was bi-racial. She received a great deal of mail from young black women thanking her for having expressed their intimate concerns and contradictions so well. It was nominated for 3 Oscars including Best Picture. Many reviewers expressed disappointment that Louise Beavers could not be nominated because she was Black. Due to the outrage over this, 3 years later Hattie McDaniel was able to be nominated for Best Supporting Actress in GWTW, and won!

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025301/>



"IMITATION OF LIFE" starring Claudette Colbert with Louise Beavers, Rochelle Hudson, Warren Williams, Fredi Washington, Ned Sparks, Henry Armetta, Alan Hale and Franklyn Pangborn. A Realart re-release.

R 49

# Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, 1967

This was the first movie to depict an interracial marriage in a positive light. It starred Sidney Poitier, Spencer Tracy, and Katherine Hepburn. At the time of filming interracial marriage was still illegal in 17 states. The principal actors believed so strongly in the film's positive message that they signed on before even reading the script. Two weeks after filming had concluded, anti-miscegenation laws were struck down by the Supreme court in *Loving vs Virginia*, six months before the film's release.

The story involves a white woman, Joanna who becomes engaged to a Black man, John, that she met on vacation in Hawaii and has only known for 10 days. When she tells her parents about the engagement, John is invited to dinner where he is introduced to her parents for the first time. Although Joanna's parents are liberal-minded, they are taken aback when they meet John only to find out he's a Black man. The entire dinner is spent discussing racism as uninvited guests show up to comment on the engagement. John and Joanna eventually win her parents over and the wedding is allowed to proceed as planned.

The film was a box office success including in the Southern states where it was assumed that it would do little business. Nominated for 10 Oscars, including Best Picture, and won 2.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061735/>





# *The Wiz*, 1975

All Black version of *The Wizard of Oz*

Produced by Ken Harper

Book by William Brown

Music and lyrics by Charlie Smalls

Won seven Tonys:

Best Musical

Score--Charlie Smalls

Choreography--George Faison

Direction--Geoffrey Holder

Costume Design—Geoffrey Holder

Actress—Stephanie Mills

Supporting Actor--Hinton Battle

Ran for four years on Broadway

Went on a National Tour,

Four revivals

1978 Adapted into a film

2015 *The Wiz Live!*

<http://www.thewizthemusical.com/productions/original-broadway-production-1975>



From left to right: Hinton Battles as Scarecrow, Ted Ross as Lion, Stephanie Mills as Dorothy, and Tiger Haynes as Tin Man.

# *Dreamgirls*, 1981

Based on Diana Ross and The Supremes

Music by Henry Krieger

Lyrics and book by Tom Eyrn

Directed by Michael Bennett

Nominated for 13 Tonys, won 6:

Book of a Musical—Tom Eyrn

Lead Actor—Ben Harney

Lead Actress—Jennifer Holliday

Featured Actor—Cleavant Derricks

Choreography—Michael Bennett, Michael Peters

Lighting Design—Tharon Musser

Grammy Win Best Cast Album

Grammy Win Best Vocal Performance “And I Am Telling You I’m Not Going”  
Jennifer Holliday

Ran for four years

Two National Tours

2006 Film starring Jennifer Hudson, Beyonce

<http://broadwaymusicalhome.com/shows/dreamgirls.htm>



Deborah Burrell, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Loretta Devine



# *Fences* by August Wilson, 1987

Pulitzer Prize for Drama

Won 4 Tony Awards:

Best Play

Direction—Kenny Leon

Lead Actor—James Earl Jones

Lead Actress—Mary Alice

Revived in 2010—won 3 Tony Awards:

Best Revival

Lead Actor—Denzel Washington

Lead Actress—Viola Davis

<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/fences-4446>



James Earl Jones as Troy and Mary Alice as Rose

# Do the Right Thing, 1989

Directed by Spike Lee. On the hottest day of the year on a street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, everyone's hate and bigotry smolders and builds until it explodes into violence. It starred Giancarlo Esposito, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Spike Lee, Samuel L. Jackson, Rosie Perez, and Martin Lawrence. Spike Lee was nominated for an Oscar for Best Screenplay, and nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay. It won four Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Music, and Best Supporting Actor, and was nominated for Best Screenplay. The New York Film Critics Circle Awards nominated it for Best Picture and Best Screenplay.

*Do the Right Thing* marked the beginning of Lee's ongoing tenure as a controversial public figure. Lee positioned himself as one of Hollywood's most outspoken and polarizing opinionators on the issue of race relations, with subsequent interviews and public feuds cultivating a popular image of him having no love lost for white folks. A notorious 1992 *Esquire* cover story announced the widespread perception, then and now, in the plainest language imaginable: "Spike Lee Hates Your Cracker Ass." It's an image that persists today.

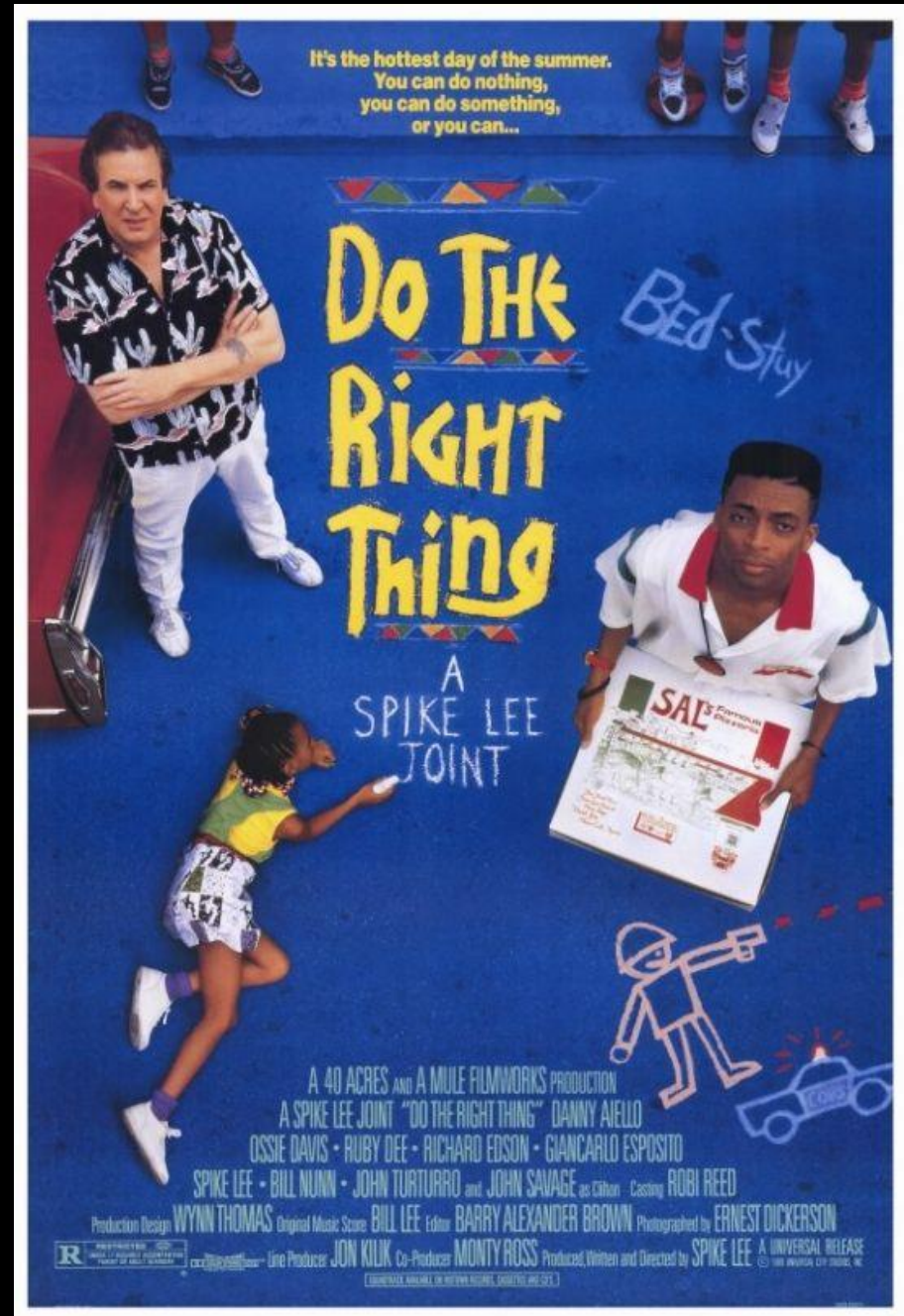
Roger Ebert wrote "Lee does not ask us to forgive them, or even to understand everything they do, but he wants us to identify with their fears and frustrations. *Do The Right Thing* doesn't ask its audiences to choose sides; it is scrupulously fair to both sides, in a story where it is our society itself that is not fair." It was deemed "culturally significant" by the Library of Congress, and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097216/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/08/when-spike-lee-became-scary/261434/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/movies/do-the-right-thing-spike-lee.html>

<https://www.vulture.com/2020/06/read-how-critics-responded-to-do-the-right-thing-in-1989.html>





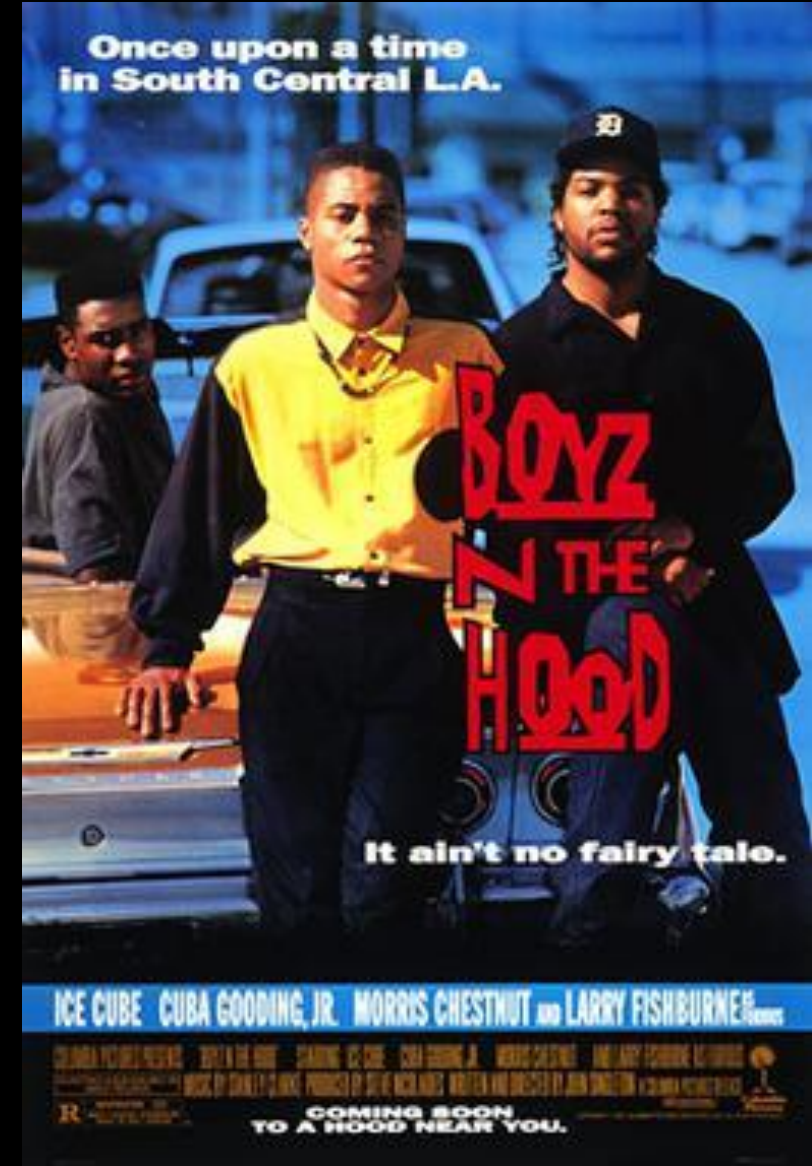
# Boyz N the Hood, 1991

Directed by John Singleton, it starred Cuba Gooding Jr, Angela Bassett, Laurence Fishburne, Ice Cube, Morris Chestnut, Nia Long, and Tyra Ferrell. Singleton was nominated for Best Director and was the first and youngest Black Director to ever be nominated for an Academy Award.

“The film is now considered one of the centerpieces of modern black cinema for its realistic portrayal of life in the inner city. *Boyz n the Hood* also introduced a national conversation about inner-city gang violence, a subject that until then had been mostly a local urban issue... The message of *Boyz in the Hood* was explicitly anti-violence. Yet gunfire erupted in some movie houses on opening night. In Los Angeles's Universal City, moviegoers were still in line to get popcorn before the movie started when shooting began. According to news reports, rival gangs apparently showed up in the same place at the same time to see a movie of common interest and ended up in a territorial confrontation.”

“*Boyz N the Hood* is now a part of the canon of American cinema. The coming-of-age story it tells is timeless; the view of a hurting South Central L.A. is unnerving, not to mention heart-breaking; and its stance on violence, unlike many other films documenting inner-city struggles, is unapologetic—the words “Increase the Peace” appear on the screen at the close of the film.”

“For reasons more complicated than a screenplay, since *Boyz n the Hood* was released, the homicide rate in South Central L.A. has decreased 75 percent. Maybe some took the final line of the film to heart.”



[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101507/?ref=nm\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101507/?ref=nm_sr_srgs_0)

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2011-jul-26-la-et-boyz-anniv-20110726-story.html>

[https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/08/boyz-n-the-hood-20-years-later-the-making-of-a-movie-that-did-race-right/244317/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4f35BRDBARIsAPePBHxU2kLYPnGDZuqpM7TGWIRHmDhQG0EONNwgCgiepTudn0pGkj132j8aAhqbEALw\\_wcB](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/08/boyz-n-the-hood-20-years-later-the-making-of-a-movie-that-did-race-right/244317/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4f35BRDBARIsAPePBHxU2kLYPnGDZuqpM7TGWIRHmDhQG0EONNwgCgiepTudn0pGkj132j8aAhqbEALw_wcB)

# *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk, 1996*

Musical Review that tells, through tap dance, the history of black men in America.

Story conceived by George C. Wolfe

Music by Daryl Waters, Zane Mark, Ann Duquesnay

Book and Lyrics by Reg E. Gaines

Nominated for 9 Tony Awards, won 4:

Direction—George C. Wolfe

Choreography—Savion Glover

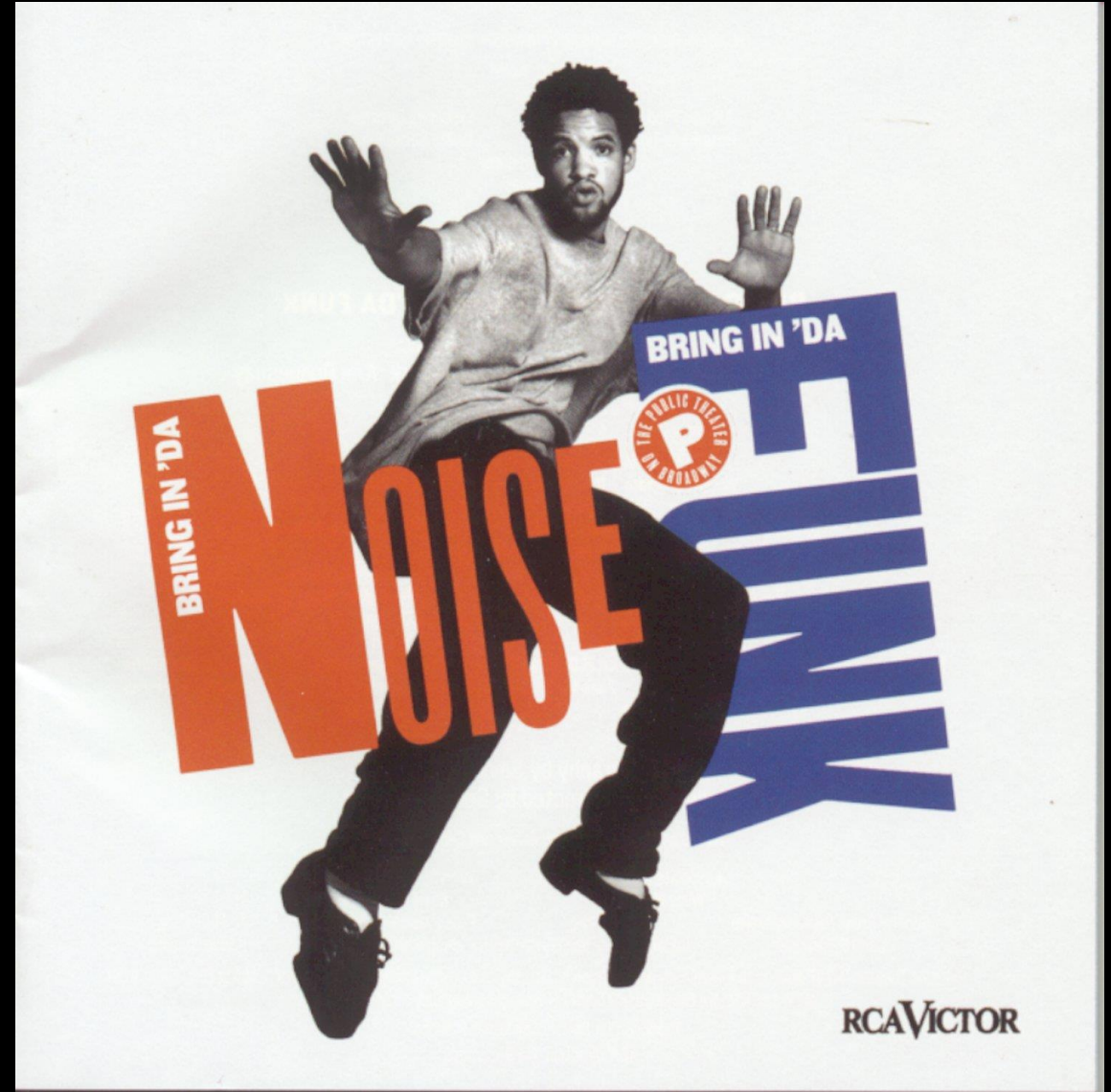
Lighting Design—Jules Fisher, Peggy Eisenhauer

Featured Actress—Ann Duquesnay

Show ran for 3 years

National tour

<https://masterworksbroadway.com/music/bring-in-da-noise-bring-in-da-funk-1996/>





# Lion King, 1997

Based on the animated Disney film, it was adapted for stage by director Julie Taymor. She felt it was very important for the cast to reflect the African setting and have all of the company members be Black actors, except for Zazu, who was played by a British actor. *Lion King* relies heavily on African themes, masks, puppets and tribal dances, choreographed by Jamaican Garth Fagan. All the animals in the Prideland are brought to life by dancers/puppeteers. In order to add more female roles, Rafiki was played by a female. It was nominated for 11 Tony awards, won 6 including best musical, direction, choreography, costume, scenery and lighting design. It was the third longest running show in Broadway history and has had three North American tours, and been produced in 14 other countries. The current international tour was suspended due to Covid. <https://www.lionking.com/tickets>



Geoff Hoyle as Zazu, Heather Headley as Nala, Samuel Wright as Mufasa, John Vickery as Scar, Jason Raize as Simba, Tsidii Le Loka as Rafiki

# *Da Kink in My Hair, 2001*

*Da Kink in My Hair* is a play by Trey Anthony, which debuted at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2001. The play's central character is Novelette, the Caribbean Canadian owner of Letty's, a Toronto hair salon. "If you want to know a black woman, you touch her hair," says Novelette, as she delves into the tresses and stresses of her clients to reveal their hidden stories. In the salon of their West Indian stylist, hurried women congregate to have their hair done for dates, jobs and upkeep. They leave with not just a new hairdo, but a lifted soul and a lightened heart. This remarkable musical tells their incredible, uncensored, unforgettable tales through dance, song and stories that will move, inspire, and delight!

*Da Kink in My Hair* honors the importance of hair for Black Women. Director Junene K. states "What am I gonna do with this hair?" It's not just a cosmetic question, it is a life direction question. Hair is a crown, it is a symbol of identity, an unweighted accessory that carries so much weight. Our hair goes with us through many of life's journeys. It grows, it falls out, we color it, we straighten it, we manipulate it and it becomes the silent voice to our story."

*Da Kink in My Hair* also celebrates the salon as a place for community. Junene K. continues: "What resonated with me when I first read this script is what black women experience every time we go to the salon; it is healing, it is an escape, it is a confirmation and an affirmation of identity. There is something magical about being transformed from who you used to be into who you never thought you could be or better yet having the beauty that was always there fashioned in a way that you can now see it clearly. This story takes us inside of that transformation. It addresses all of the hopes, disappointment and inhibitions that we are experiencing in this current climate."

*Da Kink in My Hair* is the first fully-digital production from Jubilee Theatre, the show was built and rehearsed with streaming video in mind. Jubilee Theatre in Fort Worth is streaming this musical from now till August 30, 2020. Tickets are \$20 and the link is good for 48 hours.

<http://www.jubileetheatre.org/s/Da-Kink-in-My-Hair-Streaming/40>





# *The Color Purple*, 2005

Based on the 1982 book by Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* was the first hit Broadway musical that had a lesbian character as a romantic lead. The play goes into much more detail about Celia and Shug's relationship than the earlier 1985 film adaptation. The stage version was produced by Oprah Winfrey who played Sofia in the film. Directed by Gary Griffin with choreography Donald Byrd. It was nominated for 11 Tony Awards and won 1 for Best Actress: Ronda LaChanze.

It ran for 3 years with 3 National Tours and had 1 Revival in 2015-17. It won two Tony Awards for Best Revival and Best Actress: Cynthia Erivo.



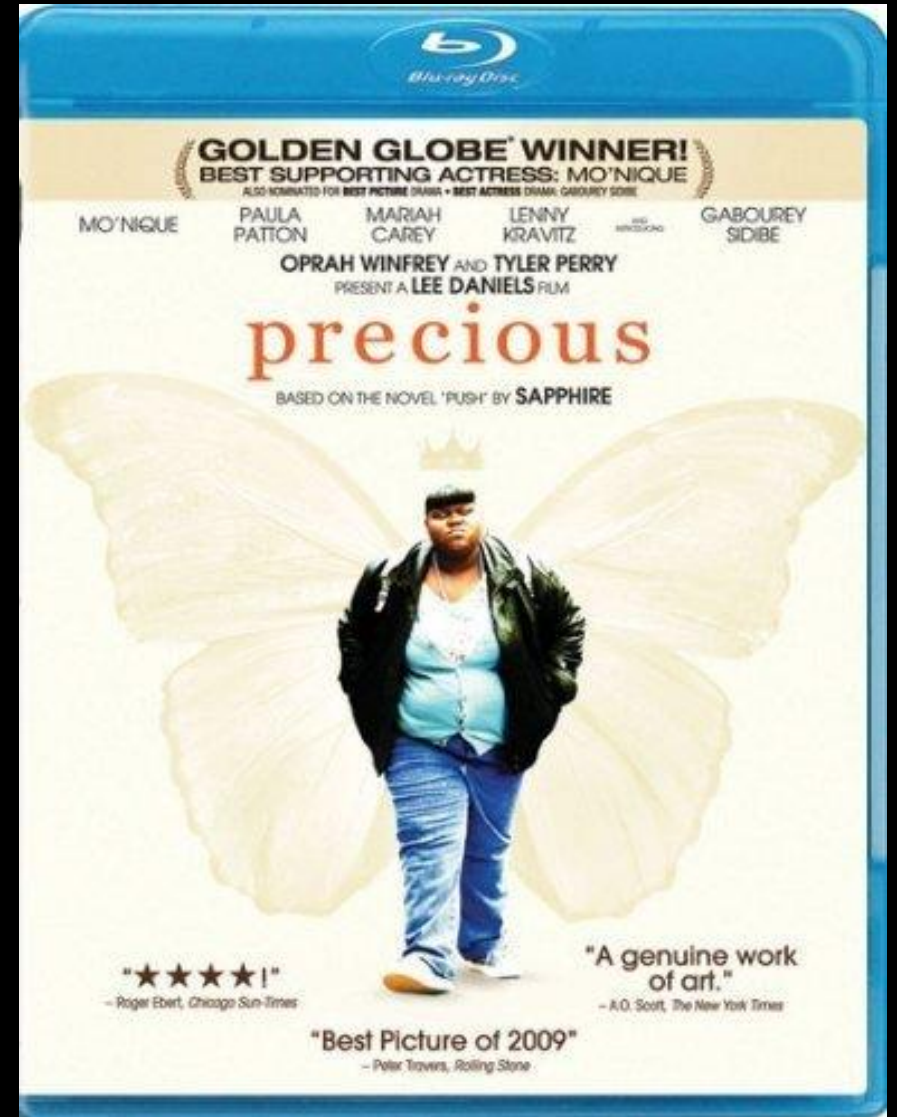
Zipporah Gatling, Ronda LaChanze, Leon Thomas III, Renee Elise Goldsberry

# Precious, 2009

Directed by Lee Daniels, and starred Gabourey Sidibe, Mo'Nique, Paula Patton, Mariah Carey, Sherri Shepherd, and Lenny Kravitz. In New York City's Harlem circa 1987, an overweight, abused, illiterate teen who is pregnant with her second child is invited to enroll in an alternative school in hopes that her life can head in a new direction. It was nominated for six Oscars, including for Best Director, and it won two Oscars for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress.

In a New York Times interview Daniels stated, "As African-Americans, we are in an interesting place. Obama's the president, and we want to aspire to that. But part of aspiring is disassociating from the face of Precious. To be honest, I was embarrassed to show this movie at Cannes. I didn't want to exploit black people. And I wasn't sure I wanted white French people to see our world. But because of Obama, it's now O.K. to be black. I can share that voice. I don't have to lie. I'm proud of where I come from. And I wear it like a shield. *Precious* is part of that." Owen Gleiberman of *Entertainment Weekly* is more impressed. "Precious captures how a lost girl rouses herself from the dead, and Daniels shows unflinching courage as a filmmaker by going this deep into the pathologies that may still linger in the closets of some impoverished inner-city lives."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/25/magazine/25precious-t.html>  
[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0929632/?ref=nm\\_sr\\_srsrg\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0929632/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_0)  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Movies/11/06/review.precious/>  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2009/11/problems-with-precious/347636/>





# *The Princess and the Frog, 2009*

Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. It was based on “The Frog Prince”, a Grimm Fairy Tale but relocated to 1920’s New Orleans. Tiana became the first Black Disney Princess character. It starred Anika Noni Rose as Tiana, Bruno Campos, Keith David, Oprah Winfrey, Michael-Leon Wooley, Jennifer Lewis, and Terrence Howard. Disney went back to hand-drawn animation for this film.

*The Princess and the Frog* is the story of a beautiful girl who kisses a prince who’s been turned into a frog only to turn into a frog herself. It presents themes about believing love even in tough circumstances, the struggle of moving up from one’s social standing, and the idea of beauty being skin deep. These are all great lessons to be taught by Disney’s first Black Princess.

The only controversy surrounding the film was the use of Voodoo as a plot device. Christians objected to the use of Voodoo altogether, citing the scenes with Dr. Facilier and his friends were too close to horror and would frighten children, while non-Christians objected to the misrepresentation of Voodoo as magic rather than religion. Nevertheless, it was a box-office success.

It was nominated for three Oscars including Best Animated Feature Film, and Best Original Song for two different songs “Almost There” and “Down in New Orleans” both written by Randy Newman, a jazz composer from New Orleans. It was also nominated for eight Annie awards winning three.

<https://www.essence.com/news/critics-dispute-princess-and-the-frog/>

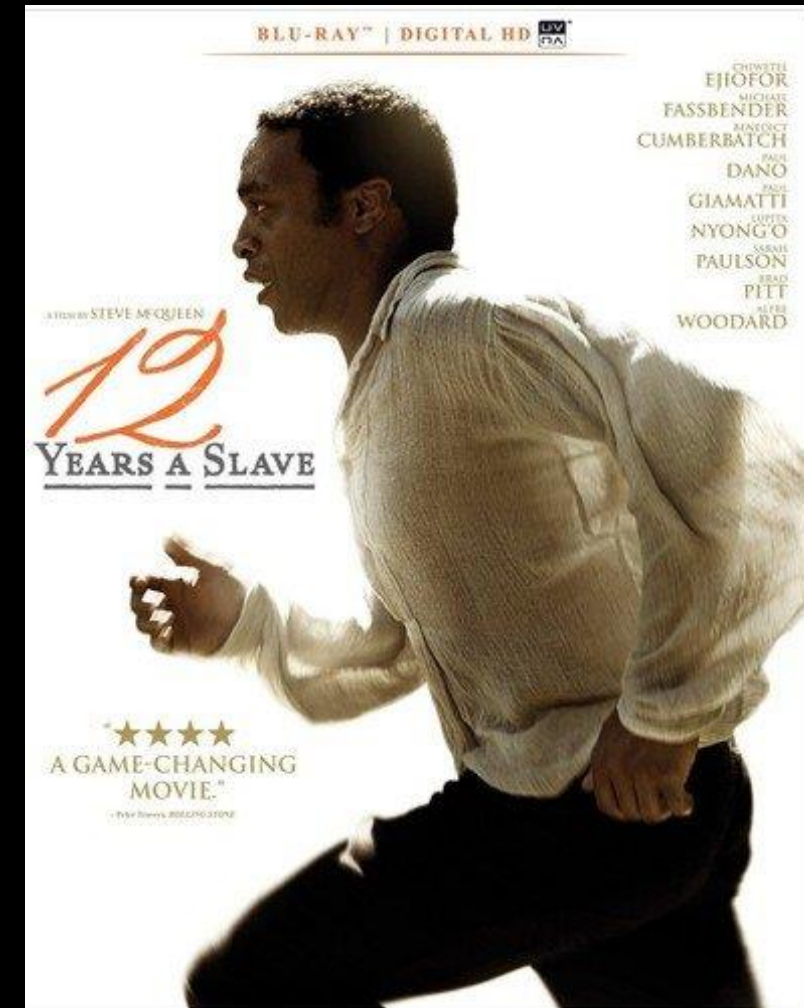


<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0780521/>

# 12 Years a Slave, 2013

Directed by Black British filmmaker, Steve McQueen, it starred Chiwetel Ejiofor and Lupita Nyong'o. Based on the autobiography of Solomon Northrup, it tells the incredible true story of one man's fight for survival and freedom in the pre-Civil War United States. Solomon Northup, a free black man from upstate New York, is abducted and sold into slavery. Facing cruelty personified by a malevolent slave owner, as well as unexpected kindnesses, Solomon struggles not only to stay alive, but to retain his dignity. In the twelfth year of his unforgettable odyssey, a Canadian abolitionist is able to secure his freedom and Solomon is allowed to return home to his family. Nominated for nine Oscars including Best Director, and won three including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay.

Writing for The Atlantic, Noah Berlatsky stated, "Outright lies about slavery and its aftermath, from *Birth of a Nation* to *Gone With the Wind*, have defaced American cinema for a long time. To go forward more honestly, we need accounts of our past that, like the slave narratives themselves, use accuracy and art in the interest of being more true. That's what McQueen, Ejiofor, and the rest of the cast and crew are trying to do in *12 Years a Slave*. Pointing out the complexity of the task is not meant to belittle their attempt, but to honor it."



<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2024544/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/10/how-em-12-years-a-slave-em-gets-history-right-by-getting-it-wrong/280911/>



# Dear White People, 2014

*Dear White People* was written, directed and co-produced by Justin Simien. It focuses on a group of black students at a fictional Ivy League University. Starring Tyler James Williams, Tessa Thompson, Teyonah Parris, Brandon P. Bell, and Marque Richardson. 91% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes. It won the US Dramatic Special Jury Award for Breakthrough Talent at Sundance Film Festival. Justin Chang, in his review for *Variety*, said that the film "provokes admiration for having bothered to ask some of the hard questions without pretending to know any of the answers".



# *Black-ish*, 2014-2020

- Follows a black man, Andre Johnson, and his family as they navigate personal and political issues while living in an upper- middle class white neighborhood. The show addresses issues of racism, homophobia, police brutality, and the election of Trump.
- Created by Kenya Barris. Starring Anthony Anderson, Tracee Ellis Ross, Yara Shahidi, Marcus Scribner, Miles Brown, Marsai Martin, and Jenifer Lewis. Six seasons so far, it's been renewed for a seventh season.
- Golden Globe and Emmy nominations for Outstanding Comedy series.
- Two spin-off series: *Grown-ish* follows Zoey off to college; *Mixed-ish* a prequel series about Bow and her bi-racial family.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3487356/>



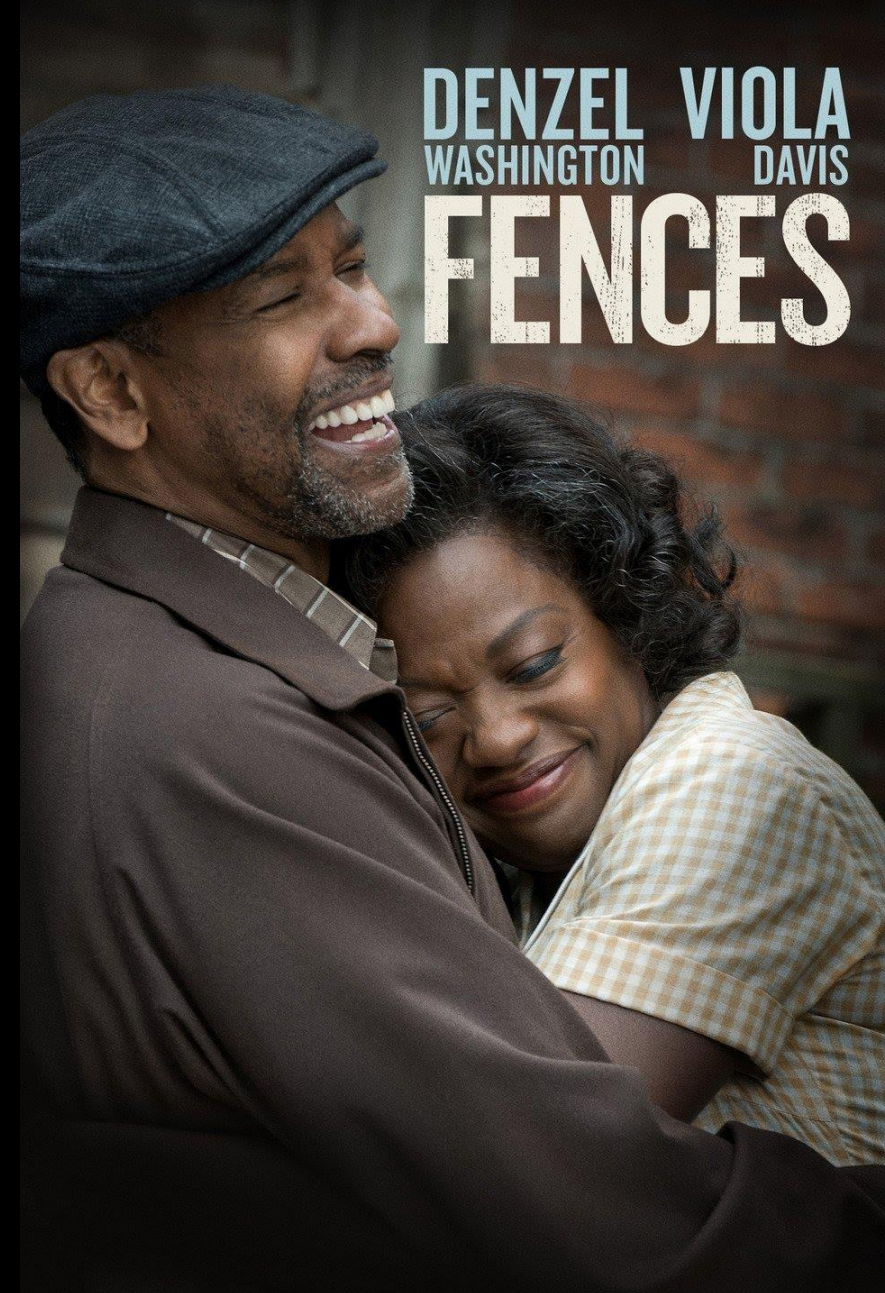


# *Fences*, 2016

Denzel Washington produced, directed, and starred in the film adaptation. The rest of the cast included Viola Davis, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Jovan Adepo, Russell Hornsby, Mykelti Williamson, and Saniyya Sidney. It was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Actor.

It won the Oscar for Best Actress—Viola Davis—who in an unprecedented sweep also won another 28 acting awards for playing that role including: the Golden Globe award, The BAFTA award, The SAG award, the Alliance of Women Film Journalists award, the Austin Film Critics Association Award, The Awards Circuit Community Award, the Black Film Critics Circle Award, the Black Reel Award, the Broadcast Film Critics Association Award, the Dallas-Ft. Worth Film Critics Association Award, the Denver Film Critics Society Award, The Detroit Film Critics Society Award, the GALECA Award, the Gold Derby Award, the Hawaii Film Critics Society Award, the Houston Film Critics Society Award, the Image award, the International Online Cinema Award, the Iowa Film Critics Award, the New York Film Critics Award, the North Carolina Film Critics Association Award, the Phoenix Film Critics Society Award, the San Francisco Film Critics Award, the Seattle Film Critics Award, The Southeastern Film Critics Association Award, the St. Louis Film Critics Association award, the Utah Film Critics Association Award, and the Washington DC Area Film Critics Association Award.

92% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes, "From its reunited Broadway stars to its screenplay, the solidly crafted *Fences* finds its Pulitzer-winning source material fundamentally unchanged — and still just as powerful."





# Dear White People

## TV series, 2017-2020

- Netflix 4 seasons so far
- Reprising their roles from the film are Brandon P. Bell, Marque Richardson, and Ashley Blaine Featherson. Tessa Thompson is replaced by Logan Browning as Sam, and Teyonah Parris is replaced by Antoinette Robertson as Coco.
- Continues the premise from the film.
- 98% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes.
- *The New York Times* praised the show's examination of concerns such as cultural misappropriation, assimilation, and conflict.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/27/arts/television/dear-white-people-netflix-review.html? r=0>





# Hamilton, 2015

Lin Manuel Miranda wrote a brilliantly progressive musical about our nation's history and then told the story with the diversity that is America today. "Immigrants, we get the job done!" *Hamilton* was nominated for sixteen Tony awards and won eleven. It also won a Grammy for Best Musical Theatre Album. The contract specifies that all professional companies that produce *Hamilton* will do it with a diverse cast, "It is essential to the storytelling of *Hamilton* that the principal roles, which were written for non-white characters (excepting King George), be performed by non-white actors" A condition which in today's post Trump world is vitally important.



David Diggs, Okieriete Onaodowan, Lin Manuel Miranda, Anthony Ramos, and Phillipa Soo, Renee Elise Goldsberry, Jasmine Cephas Jones  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/03/hamilton-casting/476247/>

# Hidden Figures, 2016



[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/hidden-figures-and-the-diversity-conversation-we-arent-having\\_n\\_58adc9bee4b0d0a6ef470492](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/hidden-figures-and-the-diversity-conversation-we-arent-having_n_58adc9bee4b0d0a6ef470492)

Based on the book by Margot Lee Shetterly about the Black female mathematicians who worked at NASA and calculated flight trajectories for Project Mercury. Produced and directed by Black filmmaker Theodore Melfi, it starred Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, and Janelle Monáe. It was nominated for 3 Oscars including Best Picture, 3 BET awards winning 2, 6 Black Reel awards winning 1, 2 Golden Globes, 4 NAACP Image awards, 2 SAG awards winning 2, 2 Saturn awards, winning 1, and 9 Women's Film Critic Circle awards, winning 6. 93% Fresh on Rotten Tomatoes. It grossed \$236 million worldwide, making it the highest grossing Best Picture Nominee.

There was pushback against the historical accuracy of some scenes. Dorothy Vaughn had been promoted to supervisor of West Computing in 1949 and NASA had been desegregated 3 years before the events in the film take place. Katherine did not have to run across to East campus to use the bathroom because she had been using the unlabeled whites only bathroom for years. Mary didn't have to get a court order to take night classes at the white's only school.. Katherine was allowed in to watch the launch. The white writer/director Theodore Melfi felt these scenes were necessary to understand climate of the south during the Pre-Civil rights era. Zeba Blay of *Huffington Post* said, "The inclusion of the bathroom scene doesn't make Melfi a bad filmmaker, or a bad person, or a racist. But his suggestion that a feel-good scene like that was needed for the marketability and overall appeal of the film speaks to the fact that Hollywood at large still has a long way to go in telling black stories, no matter how many strides have been made"



# Moonlight, 2016

Directed by Barry Jenkins, starring Mahershala Ali, Sharrif Earp, Janelle Monae, and Naomie Harris. The coming of age story of a young Black boy growing up poor in drug-afflicted Miami, as he struggles with his emerging homosexuality and the bullying he suffers because of it. Jenkins was nominated for seven Oscars, including for Best Director; it won three Oscars for Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Adapted Screenplay.

Reviewer Evanston Dad on IMDB said, "I can't think of a movie in recent memory that puts loneliness and anguish on screen more effectively than *Moonlight*. It's a movie that asks us to see life from the perspective of a very specific individual but then draws universal conclusions from it that makes the superficial differences between him and the viewer (I'm not black, I'm not gay, I didn't grow up in a poor urban environment) melt away until you feel deep compassion and sympathy for a fellow human being who is doing what we all are -- navigating the complexities of living on this world and making the best of it we can."

In a highly embarrassing fiasco, *La La Land* was mistakenly announced as the Best Picture Winner at the Academy Awards that year and the mistake was not corrected for two minutes and 23 seconds while the *La La Land* Producers were giving their acceptance speeches. The announcers Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway were given the wrong envelope which happened to be from the previous category for Best Actress, which went to Emma Stone for *La La Land*, so that's the title that Faye Dunaway announced.

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4975722/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4975722/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/they-got-wrong-envelope-oral-history-oscars-epic-best-picture-fiasco-1087829>



# American Gods, 2017

Based on Neil Gaiman's 2001 book. *American Gods* tells the story of what happened to the Old World gods when their worshippers emigrate to America. Mr. Nancy, played by Orlando Jones, is Anansi the Spider, the Ghanaian trickster god. Anansi made his way to America on a Dutch slave ship. When his worshippers were crying out for help, Anansi manifested and said: "Angry is good. Angry gets shit done. You shed tears for Compé Anansi and here he is telling you you are staring down the barrel of 300 years of subjugation, racist bullshit, and heart disease. He is telling you there isn't one goddamn reason you shouldn't go up there right now and slit the throats of every last one of these Dutch motherfuckers and set fire to this ship! You already dead, asshole. At least die a sacrifice for something worthwhile. Let the motherfucker burn! Let it all burn!"

Showrunners Bryan Fuller and Michael Green were fired over arguments over huge budget cuts and creative differences during pre-production on Season 2. Then, after Season 2 dropped, Orlando Jones stated that he had been fired from the show because new showrunner, Charles Eglee, decided that his character, Mr. Nancy, sends "the wrong message for black America". In response, a spokesperson for the series stated that Jones' contract was not renewed because Mr. Nancy is not included in the book on which the season 3 episodes are based. Although Season 3 has been green-lit for more than a year, there's no release date yet as of June, 2020.





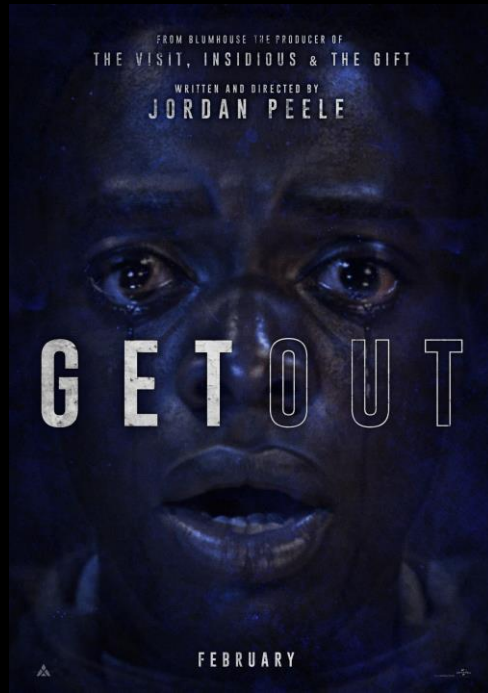
# Loving, 2016

*Loving* tells the true story of Richard and Mildred Loving, the plaintiffs in the 1967 US Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia*, which invalidated anti-miscegenation laws (state laws prohibiting interracial marriage).

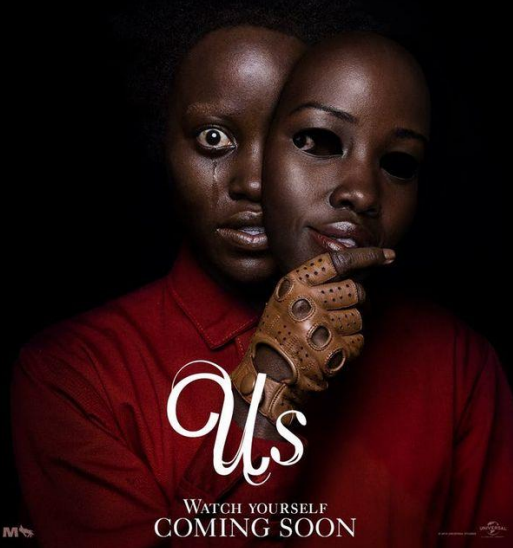
Richard was a white man who married a Mildred, a Black woman in Washington DC, where there were no laws prohibiting mixed marriages. However, when they went home to Virginia to set up house-keeping, they were immediately arrested and told that their marriage license was not valid in Virginia. They pled guilty and were sentenced to one year in prison, however, the judge suspended their sentence on the condition that they left Virginia and didn't return. They movee to Washington, but when Mildred was ready to deliver her first baby, they returned to Virginia so that Richard's mother, who was a midwife, can attend the birth. They were arrested again. They were referred to the ACLU by the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. As their case moved through the court system, it gained national attention, eventually going all the way to the Supreme Court where anti-miscegenation laws were ruled unconstitutional.

It was based on the documentary *The Loving Story*, 2011, by Nancy Buirski which followed the Lovings and their landmark case. It starred Joel Edgerton and Ruth Negga. Negga was nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe for Best Actress. [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6614928/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6614928/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)





A NEW NIGHTMARE FROM THE MIND OF ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER  
**JORDAN PEELE**  
 WRITER/DIRECTOR OF *GET OUT*



# Jordan Peele's horror films

## *Get Out*, 2017

- Nominated for 11 Black Reel Awards and won 6 for Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Score.
- Won 4 AAFCA Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay.
- Nominated for 4 Oscars: Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director, and won for Best Original Screenplay.
- Nominated for a SAG award for Best Actor for Daniel Kaluuya.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5052448/>

## *Us*, 2019

- Nominated for 8 Saturn Awards, including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Writing and won for Best Director.
- Won 4 Black Reel Awards for Best Actress, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Score.
- Won 3 AAFCA Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress.
- Nominated for SAG award for Lupita Nyong'o for Best Actress.

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6857112/?ref =nv\\_sr\\_srsg\\_6](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6857112/?ref =nv_sr_srsg_6)



# Blackkklansman, 2018

- Based on the autobiographical book by Ron Stallworth, a black police officer who successfully managed to infiltrate the KKK in Colorado, with the help of a fellow Jewish officer, Flip Zimmerman.
- Produced by Jordan Peele, Spike Lee, and others.
- Screenwriter Charlie Wachtel, David Rabinowitz, Kevin Willmott, and Spike Lee.
- Directed by Spike Lee.
- Starring John David Washington, Adam Driver, and Laura Harrier.
- Grossed \$93 million worldwide.
- Rotten Tomatoes 96% fresh.
- Nominated for 6 Oscars including Best Picture and Best Director, won 1 for Best Adapted Screenplay.
- *The New York Times* saw the film as both political and provocative in opening up discussion on timely subject matter following Charlottesville. Critic A.O. Scott wrote, "Maybe not everyone who is white is racist, but racism is what makes us white."

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7349662/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_srs\\_g\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7349662/?ref_=nv_sr_srs_g_0)





## *Black Panther, 2018*

*Black Panther* is a comic book character originally written for Marvel Comics by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1966 during the Civil Rights Movement. Eventually Black Panther was written by a Black writer, Christopher Priest in 1998 and later by Reginald Hudlin. In 2016 Ta-Naheisi Coates began writing a new series and continues to be head writer today. In 2017 Black female writer Nnedi Okorafor, did a one-off series called *Black Panther: Long Live the King*.

Written and directed by Black Americans Joe Robert Cole and Ryan Coogler, and starring American actor Chadwick Boseman, the film features a cast of Wakandans being played by Black actors from all over the world. It was nominated for 7 Oscars including Best Picture, and won 2 for Production Design by Hannah Beachler, the first ever Black person to be nominated in that category, and Costume Design, by Ruth Carter, the first ever Black woman to be nominated in that category.

Ruth Carter's "Futuristic Afrocentric" concept was based on actual African tribal design aesthetics. Somali artist Waris Duale made a visual guide to educate non-Africans about Ruth Carter's design inspirations which you can read here:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/fashion/black-panther-costumes-history-african-cultures-5068789/>



# *Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse, 2018*

Miles Morales is a Black/Puerto Rican teenager who after the death of Peter Parker, takes on the mantle of Spider-man. Created by a team of black creatives-- Saladin Ahmed, Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey—and starred Shameik Moore as Miles Morales, Brian Tyree Henry as Mile's Dad, Luna Lauren Velez as Mile's Mom, Mahershala Ali as Uncle Aaron, and Zoe Kravitz as Mary Jane. The soundtrack also features all black artists. Aaron Williams, writing for Uproxx, said, "the film understands its cultural relevance, the moment it speaks to, and the world it must represent, and does so, making it one of the best hip-hop-oriented film soundtracks ever created."

Won an Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film as well as a Golden Globe and a Critic's Choice. Director Peter Ramsey states: "Hey, it's a story about people. Which is, to me, a statement in and of itself when it comes with dealing with characters of color. That's all audiences of color want. We want to see stories about real people that have the depth and the power and the subtlety of any other story you'd see in the mainstream."

Grossed \$375 Million worldwide. Rotten Tomatoes 97% fresh

<https://uproxx.com/music/spider-man-into-the-spider-verse-soundtrack-review/>

<https://www.vulture.com/2018/12/miles-morales-of-into-the-spider-verse-the-race-problem.html>





# Hair Love

## *Hair Love, 2019*

Written and Directed by Matthew Cherry and co-produced with Karen Toliver. This film was made possible by a kick-starter campaign. Starring Issa Rae as the voice of the mother. The story is about a black father who has to fix his daughter's hair. Won an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film. Adapted into a children's book.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNw8V\\_Fkw28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNw8V_Fkw28)



# Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre

Alvin Ailey was born in Rogers, Texas in 1931 at the height of the great depression and in the violently racist and segregated south to a single mother who picked cotton and cleaned houses to provide for her family. They moved to LA when he was 12 where he began to study dance with Lester Horton, one of the first racially integrated dance studios in the US. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre began in 1958 as a group of young black modern dancers. It was Ailey's vision to honor Black culture through dance. The company has gone on to perform for an estimated 25 million people across the US and in 71 countries on 6 continents, although Ailey himself died of AIDS in 1989. In 2008, under Obama, it was designated as a "vital American cultural ambassador to the world" that celebrates the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage."

[https://www.alvinailey.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4f35BRDBARIsAPePBHyVvgcij7zI58DahpYdNoFdAfAJ\\_MVjI\\_Oklu7xhavLUUsICE50rdUaAoNEEALw\\_wcB](https://www.alvinailey.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4f35BRDBARIsAPePBHyVvgcij7zI58DahpYdNoFdAfAJ_MVjI_Oklu7xhavLUUsICE50rdUaAoNEEALw_wcB)



# Dallas Black Dance Theatre

- Founded in 1976 by Ann Williams, DBDT is the oldest continuously operating professional dance company in Dallas.
- Artistic Director Melissa M. Young.
- 12 professional full time dancers performing a mixed repertory of modern, ballet, jazz, and ethnic works.
- Dallas Black Dance Academy is the official school of the Theatre and offers classes for beginner thru advanced students. Classes are available in Ballet, Jazz, Modern, Tap, Hip Hop, and African.

<https://dbdt.com/>





# Texas Black Theatre Companies

## D/FW

- African American Repertory Theatre <http://www.aareptheater.com/>
- The Black Academy of Arts and Letters, Inc. <https://www.tbaal.org/>
- Jubilee Theatre <http://www.jubileetheatre.org/>
- Soul Rep Theatre Company <http://www.soulrep.org/>

## Austin

- Spectrum Theatre Company <https://www.spectrumatx.org/>
- The Mahogany Project <https://www.themahoganyproject.com/> gay black men only

## Houston

- The Ensemble Theatre <https://ensemblehouston.com/>
- Encore Theatre <https://www.encoretheatrelive.com/>
- Houston Ebony Opera Guild <http://www.houstonebonymusic.org/>

## San Antonio:

- Carver Community Cultural Center <https://thecarver.org/>

<https://blacktheatreintexas.com/overview/>  
<https://blacktheatrematters.org/black-theatre-companies/>  
[https://ctxlivetheatre.com/local\\_theatres/](https://ctxlivetheatre.com/local_theatres/)

# Jubilee Theatre, Waco, TX

- Founded by Mission Waco in 1995, renovated in 2010
- Artistic Director Angela Everett
- Mission is to create work that is family friendly, Christ-centered, and social justice oriented.

<http://www.jubileetheatre-waco.org/>





# Tony Award winning Black Actors

- Harry Belafonte, *John Murray Anderson's Almanac*, 1954
- James Earl Jones, *The Great White Hope*, 1969
- Cleavon Little, *Purlie*, 1970
- Ben Vereen, *Pippin*, 1973
- Ted Ross, *The Wiz*, 1975
- Hinton Battle, *Sophisticated Ladies*, 1981
- Ben Harney, *Dreamgirls*, 1982
- Cleavant Derricks, *Dreamgirls*, 1982
- Zakes Mokae, *Master Harold and the Boys*, 1982
- Hinton Battle, *The Tap Dance Kid*, 1984
- Ron Richardson, *Big River*, 1985
- James Earl Jones, *Fences*, 1987
- Hinton Battle, *Miss Saigon*, 1991
- Gregory Hines, *Jelly's Last Jam*, 1992
- Laurence Fishburne, *Two Trains Running*, 1992
- Jeffrey Wright, *Angels in America*, 1994
- Ruben Santiago-Hudson, *Seven Guitars*, 1996
- Chuck Cooper, *The Life*, 1997
- Brian Stokes Mitchell, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 2000
- Roger Robinson, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*
- Denzel Washington, *Fences*, 2010
- Billy Porter, *Kinky Boots*, 2013
- Courtney B. Vance, *Lucky Guy*, 2013
- James Monroe Iglehart, *Alladin* 2014
- Leslie Odom Jr. *Hamilton*, 2016
- Daveed Diggs, *Hamilton*, 2016

# The First Black Actress to...

- Star in a feature film-- Josephine Baker *Zouzou*, 1934.
- Be nominated for and win a Best Supporting Actress Oscar—Hattie McDaniel *Gone with the Wind*, 1939.
- Starred in a radio show—Hattie McDaniel *Beulah*, 1947.
- Be nominated for a Best Actress Oscar --Dorothy Dandridge *Carmen Jones*, 1954.
- Be on the cover of *Life Magazine*-- Dorothy Dandridge, 1954
- Be nominated for an Emmy-- Ethel Waters *Route 66*, 1962.
- Star in her own TV series—Diahann Carroll *Julia*, 1968
- Win a Golden Globe for Best Actress—Diahann Carroll *Julia*, 1968.
- Be a Bond Girl—Trina Parks *Diamonds are Forever*, 1971.
- Assistant Choreograph a Tony winning Broadway musical –Trina Parks, *The Wiz*, 1974.
- Win an Emmy for Lead Actress—Cicely Tyson for *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman*, 1974.
- Play Cinderella on TV-- Brandy *Cinderella*, 1997.
- Win an Oscar for Best Actress-- Halle Berry *Monster's Ball*, 2002.
- Win Tony award for Best Actress in a Play—Phylicia Rashad *A Raisin in the Sun*, 2004.
- Voice a Black Disney Princess—Anika Noni Rose *The Princess and the Frog*, 2009.
- Oldest to win a Tony for Best Actress—Cicely Tyson *The Trip to the Bountiful*, 2013.
- Play Cinderella on Broadway—Keke Palmer *Cinderella*, 2014.
- Youngest to host a TV Talk Show—Keke Palmer, BET's Just Keke, 2014
- Play Annie in a film—Quevenzhe Wallis, 2014
- Youngest to be nominated for an Oscar for Best Actress—Quevenzhe Wallis, 2014



# Tony Award Winning Black Actresses

- Juanita Hall *South Pacific*, 1950
- Diahann Carroll *No Strings*, 1962
- Leslie Uggams *Hallelujah, Baby!*, 1968
- Lillian Hayman *Hallelujah, Baby!*, 1968
- Melba Moore *Purlie*, 1970
- Linda Hopkins *Inner City*, 1972
- Virginia Capers *Raisin*, 1974
- Dee Dee Bridgewater *The Wiz*, 1975
- Delores Hall, *Your Arms too Short to Box with God*, 1977
- Trazana Beverley *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*, 1977
- Nell Carter *Ain't Misbehavin'*, 1978
- Jennifer Holliday *Dreamgirls*, 1982
- Leilani Jones *Grind*, 1985
- Mary Alice Fences, 1987
- L. Scott Caldwell *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, 1988
- Ruth Brown *Black and Blue*, 1989
- Tonya Pinkins *Jelly's Last Jam*, 1992
- Audra McDonald *Carousel*, 1994
- Gretha Boston *Show Boat*, 1995
- Ann Duquesnay *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in da Funk*, 1996

# Tony Award Winning Black Actresses

- Audra McDonald, *Master Class*, 1996
- Lillias White *The Life*, 1997
- Lynne Thigpen *An American Daughter*, 1997
- Audra McDonald *Ragtime*, 1998
- Heather Headley *Aida*, 2000
- Viola Davis *King Hedley II*, 2001
- Phylicia Rashad *A Raisin in the Sun*, 2004
- Audra McDonald *A Raisin in the Sun*, 2004
- Anika Noni Rose *Caroline or Change*, 2004
- Adriane Lenox *Doubt*, 2005
- Rhonda LaChanze *The Color Purple*, 2006
- Viola Davis *Fences*, 2010
- Nikki M. James *The Book of Mormon*, 2011
- Audra McDonald *Porgy and Bess*, 2012
- Patina Miller *Pippin*, 2013
- Cicely Tyson *The Trip to Bountiful*, 2013
- Audra McDonald *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, 2014
- Sophie Okonedo *A Raisin in the Sun*, 2014
- Cynthia Erivo *The Color Purple*, 2016
- Renee Elise Goldsberry *Hamilton*, 2016

Black Girl Magic! Did you notice there are twice as many Black women that have won Tony Awards for Acting as there are Black men?



# More Black Tony Award Winners

- Lloyd Richards Best Director *Fences*, 1987
- Cholly Atkins, Henry LeTang, Frankie Manning, Fayard Nicholas Best Choreography *Black and Blue*, 1989
- George C. Wolf Best Direction of a Play *Angels in America*, 1993
- Bill T. Jones Best Choreography for *Spring Awakening*, 2007
- Tamara Tunie Best Musical *Spring Awakening*, 2007
- Mark Stewart's Best Book of a Musical *Passing Strange*, 2008
- Bill T. Jones Best Choreography for *Fela!*, 2010
- Daryl Walters Best Orchestrations *Memphis*, 2010
- Kenny Leon Best Director *Raisin in the Sun*, 2014
- Ron Simons *A Gentlemen's Guide to Love and Murder*, 2014
- Paul Tazewell Best Costume Design *Hamilton*, 2016

# Game Changing Black Directors

- Ryan Coogler: *Fruitvale Station, Creed, Black Panther*
- Ava DuVernay: *Middle of Nowhere, Selma, Wrinkle in Time, When They See Us*
- F. Gary Gray: *Straight Outta Compton*
- Barry Jenkins: *Moonlight, If Beale Street Could Talk*
- Malcom D. Lee: *Best Man, Girls Trip*
- Spike Lee: 22 films. *She's Gotta Have it, School Daze, 4 Little Girls, Crooklyn, Do the Right Thing, Malcolm X, Mo' Better Blues, When the Levees Broke, Miracle at St. Anna, Bamboozled, Blackkklansman, Da 5 Bloods*
- Steve McQueen: *12 years a Slave, Widows*
- Jordan Peele: *Get Out, Us*
- Tyler Perry: *Madea* series 11 films, 11 plays, 1 animated film, and a book
- John Singleton: *Boyz n the Hood, Shaft, Poetic Justice, 2 Fast 2 Furious*

Did you know that only FIVE of these directors has ever been nominated for an Oscar and that NONE of them have ever won their category? Would you guess that Spike Lee has NEVER been nominated for a Best Director Oscar?

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/race-barriers-battling-nerves-a-candid-conversation-oscars-4-african-american-directing-nominees-90-1087644>



# Black Oscar Winners in Writing and Film-Making Categories

- Geoffrey Fletcher Best Adapted Screenplay *Precious*, 2010
- Roger Ross Williams Best Documentary Short Subject *Music by Prudence*, 2010
- TJ Martin Best Documentary *Undefeated*, 2012
- Steve McQueen Best Picture *Twelve Years a Slave*, 2014
- John Ridley Best Screenwriter, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 2014
- Ezra Feldman Best Documentary *OJ: Made in America*, 2017
- Barry Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney Best Adapted Screenplay *Moonlight*, 2017
- Kobe Bryant Best Animated Short Film *Dear Basketball*, 2017
- Peter Ramsey Best Animated Feature *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, 2018
- Matthew A. Cherry, Karen Rupert Toliver Best Animated Short Film *Hair Love*, 2019

# Oscar Winning Black Actors

## Best Supporting Actor

- Louis Gossett, Jr. *An Officer and a Gentleman*, 1982
- Denzel Washington *Glory*, 1989
- Cuba Gooding Jr. *Jerry Maguire*, 1996
- Morgan Freeman *Million Dollar Baby*, 2004
- Mahershala Ali *Moonlight*, 2016
- Mahershala Ali *Green Book*, 2018

## Best Actor

- Sidney Poitier *Lilies of the Field*, 1963
- Denzel Washington *Training Day*, 2001
- Jamie Foxx *Ray*, 2004
- Forest Whitaker *The Last King of Scotland*, 2006

## Best Supporting Actress

- Hattie McDaniel *Gone with the Wind*, 1939
- Whoopi Goldberg *Ghost*, 1990
- Jennifer Hudson *Dreamgirls*, 2006
- Mo'Nique *Precious*, 2009
- Octavia Spencer *The Help*, 2011
- Lupita Nyong'o *Twelve Years a Slave*, 2014
- Viola Davis *Fences*, 2017
- Regina King *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 2018

## Best Actress

- Halle Berry *Monster's Ball*, 2001



# Black Oscar Winners in Audio Categories

- Isaac Hayes Best Song “Theme from Shaft” *Shaft* 1972
- Irene Cara Best Song “What a Feeling” *Flashdance*, 1984
- Prince Best Score *Purple Rain*, 1985
- Stevie Wonder Best Song “I Just Called to Say I Love You” *The Woman in Red*, 1985
- Lionel Richie Best Song “Say You Say Me” *White Nights*, 1986
- Herbie Hancock ‘*Round Midnight*, 1987
- Willie D. Burton Best Sound Design *Bird* 1989
- Russell Williams II Best Sound Design *Glory*, 1990
- Russell Williams II Best Sound Design *Dances with Wolves*, 1990
- Frayser Boy, Juicy J, DJ Paul Best Song “It’s Hard Out Here for a Pimp” *Hustle and Flow*, 2006
- Willie D. Burton Best Sound Mixing *Dreamgirls*, 2007
- Common and John Legend Best Song “Glory” *Selma*, 2015