

THE
PERFORMING
ARTS

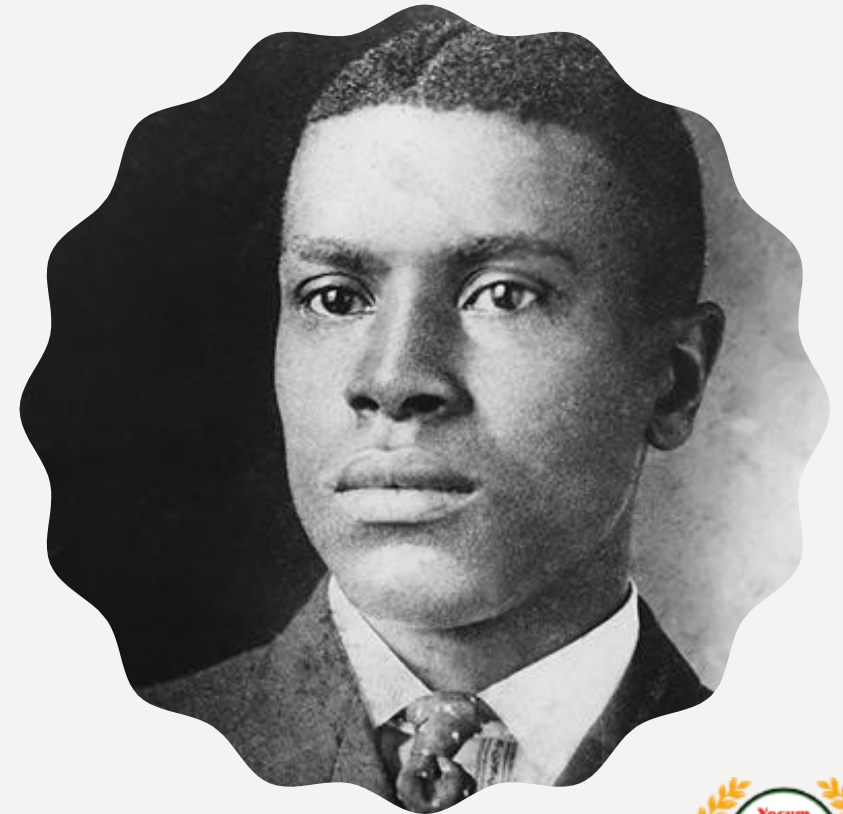
PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP

FROM THE 20TH AND 21ST
CENTURIES



INTRODUCTION TO BLACK PERFORMING ARTISTS AND OSCAR MICHEAUX'S RACE FILMS

- The first depictions of blacks in films began with the silent movie *Something Good Negro Kiss*, released in 1898. In 1915, D. W. Griffith created the three-hour-long *Birth of a Nation* that celebrated the Ku Klux Klan and used white actors in black face. Acclaimed and prolific black filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux, created 44 silent and talking films in his career. His first silent film, *The Homesteader*, in 1919, is considered the first African American feature film. Micheaux's silent film *Within Our Gates* was released in 1920, during the Jim Crow era; the movie was made by blacks for black audiences using a black cast.
- Some Hollywood films have marginalized the roles that blacks played or perpetuated stereotypes. Other films challenged stereotypes, told great stories, created great laughs, or focused on social and political movements to entertain us.
- Here are some of the Academy Award black actors and actresses from 1939 to 2019.



HATTIE MCDANIEL

1895-1952

1939, *GONE WITH THE WIND*

Hattie was an actress, singer-songwriter, and comedian who won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in the racially charged movie, *Gone With the Wind*.

In the movie, slaves were portrayed as enjoying their lot in life, or superficial or ignorant.

In the 1930s, she played the role of a happy southern servant in nearly 40 films and was often criticized by the black community for the stereotypical roles that she created.

In *Alice Adams* (1935), Hattie gave a brilliant performance of a grumbling, far from submissive maid, in a memorable dinner scene.

By the end of World War II, the NAACP lobbied Hollywood to end stereotypical roles for blacks.



JUANITA MOORE, (1914-2014)

1959, *THE IMITATION OF LIFE*

Juanita was an American film, television, and stage actress who was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *The Imitation of Life*.

She was the fifth black actor to be nominated in the Academy history.

The movie was based on Fannie Hurst's novel about the issue of passing for white to escape racial prejudices.

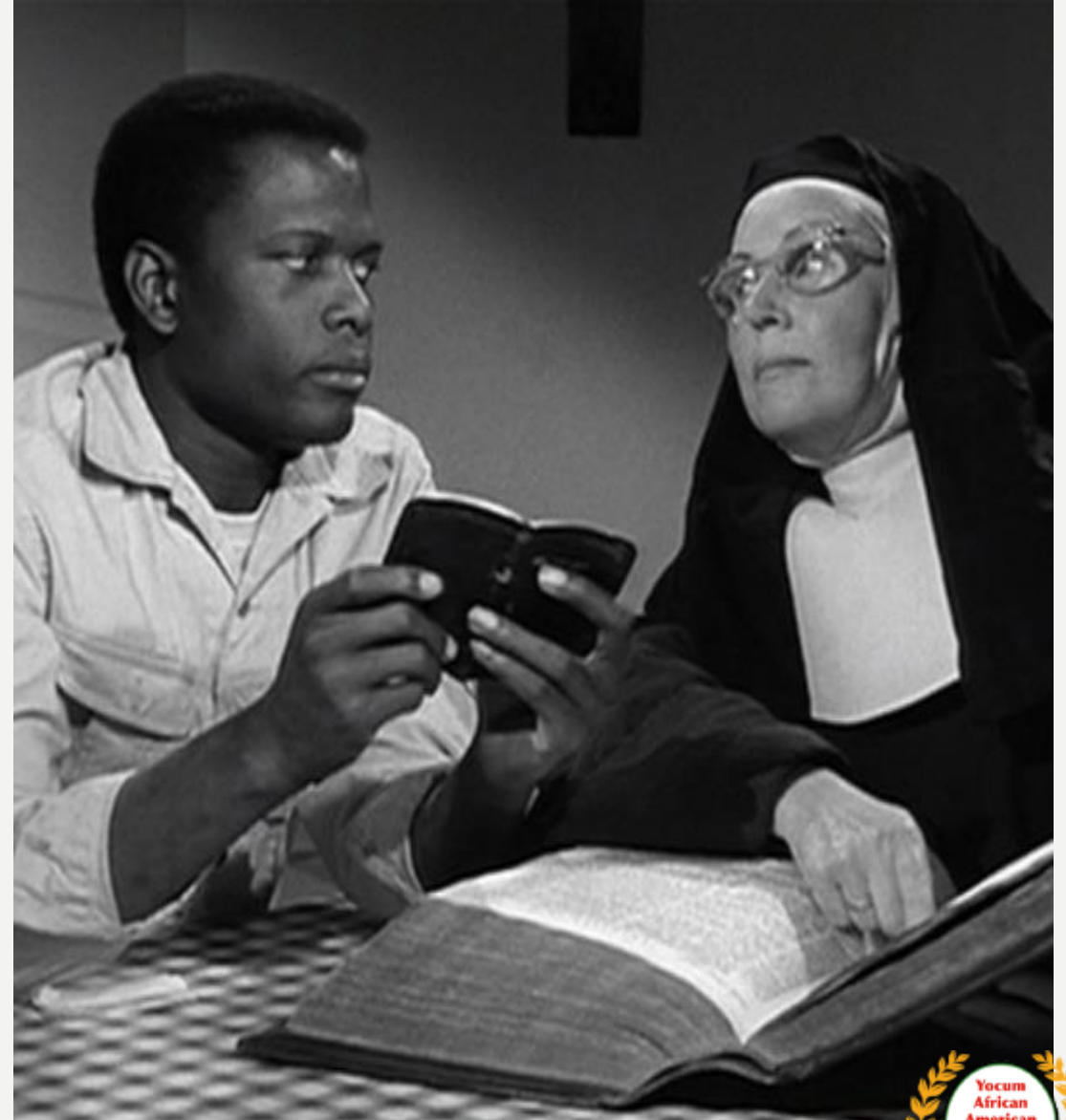
The social issues of the movie were so important that *The Imitation of Life* was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in 2015.



SIDNEY POITIER

1963, *LILIES OF THE FIELD*

- Sidney was the youngest black actor to win an Academy Award in 1963 for his role as Homer Smith, a traveling handyman who is the answer to the prayers of German nuns who want to build a chapel.
- *Lilies of the Field* is considered to be one of fifteen films that changed American cinema.
- In 2020, this film was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress for being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.”





BEAU RICHARDS

1920-2000

1967, *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*

Beau Richards was an off-Broadway actress, a playwright, and had a remarkable range of acting abilities.

She was nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role as the supportive mother of Sidney Poitier (John Prentice).

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner explored the issues of racism, prejudice, and interracial marriage prevalence in the 1960s.





JAMES EARL JONES

1970, THE GREAT WHITE HOPE

The movie was loosely based on the life of Jack Johnson; first black heavyweight boxing champion.

Jack Johnson was convicted of the Mann Act that was used against Johnson for an interracial relationship.

The movie reflects the racism and segregation of the era.

James Earl Jones was nominated for Best Actor for his performance.



DENZEL WASHINGTON

1989, *GLORY*

Glory is one of the best Civil War movies ever made.

Black soldiers fought with the Union Army for the possibility of freedom.

Denzel Washington was awarded Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of an infantry soldier in the all-black 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

He is one of the most successful and versatile actors of the 21st Century.

Among black actors, Denzel has received the most nominations for his acting, receiving an impressive six.





MORGAN FREEMAN

1989, *DRIVING MISS DAISY*

Morgan was nominated for Best Supporting Actor for this role.

The movie contains outdated stereotypes between a Jewish Atlanta widow and her driver.

Freeman's dignified warmth as Hoke Colburn develops a heartwarming bond between Daisy Werthan that improves over the years.

Morgan Freeman also won Best Supporting actor for *Million Dollar Baby* plus three additional nominations.





WHOOPI GOLDBERG

1990, *GHOST*

Whoopi Goldberg won Best Supporting Actress for playing the psychic Oda Mae Brown in *Ghost*.

This is a blended comedy, tragedy, and thriller with plenty of squabbles between Sam Wheat and Oda Mae Brown with a big dose of the supernatural.

Goldberg was the first black woman to win an Oscar since Hattie McDaniel in 1939.



CUBA GOODING JR.

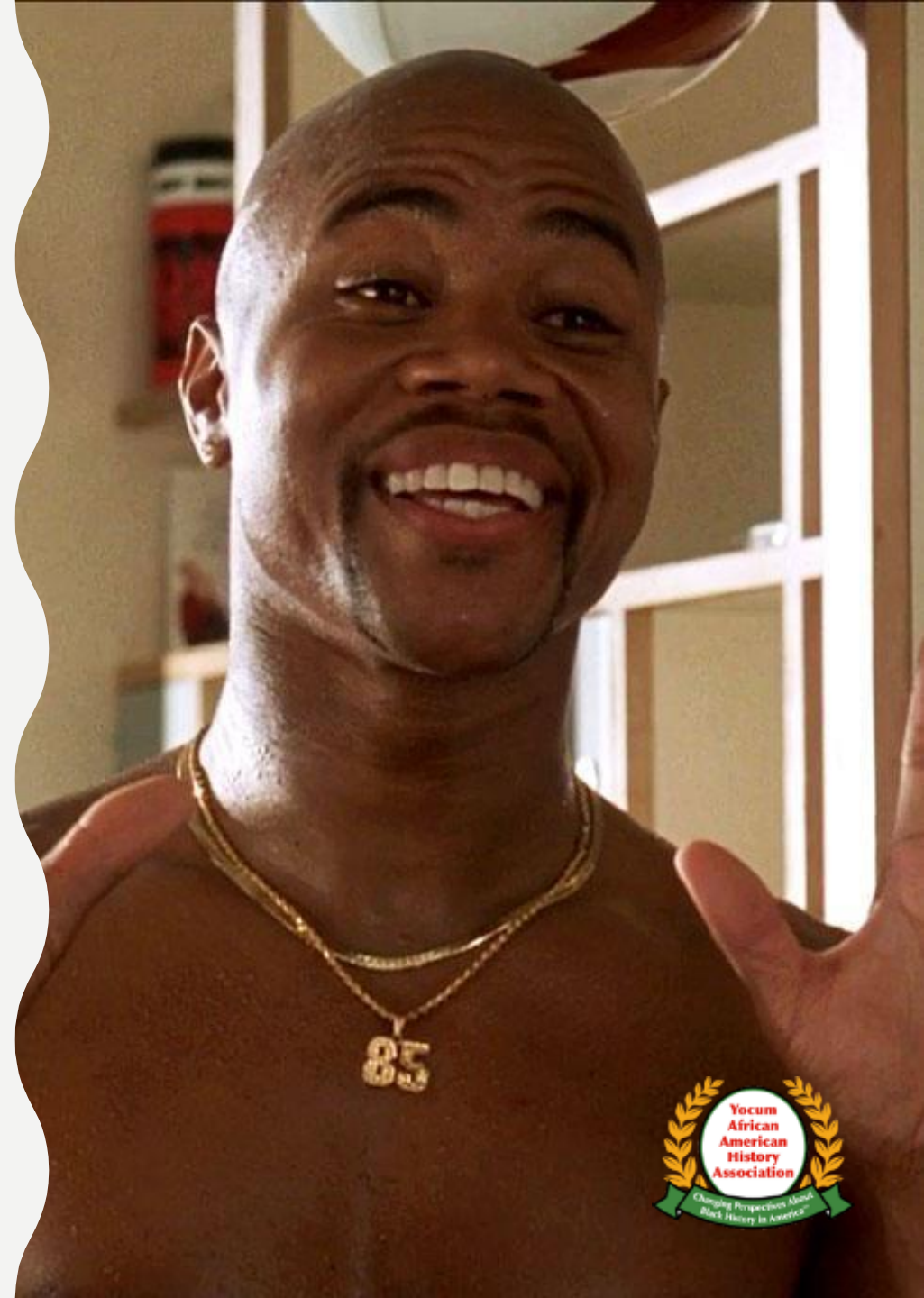
1996, *JERRY MCGUIRE*

Cuba Gooding received Best Supporting Actor for *Jerry McGuire* for his portrayal of Rob Tidwell a professional football player who plays with his head but not his heart.

The iconic, “show me the money” is one of the memorable lines in the movie delivered by Tidwell.

The relationship between Jerry McGuire and Rod Tidwell develops as a close business and personal friendship.

Jerry McGuire was nominated for five Academy Awards.



ADDITIONAL ACADEMY AWARD BLACK ACTORS

- Louis Gossett, Jr. - 1982, Best Supporting Actor, *An Officer and a Gentleman*
- Denzel Washington - 2001, Best Supporting Actor, *Training Day*
- Halle Berry - 2001, Best Actress, *Monster's Ball*
- Jamie Foxx - 2004, Best Actor, *Ray*
- Morgan Freeman - 2004, Best Supporting Actor, *Million Dollar Baby*
- Forest Whitaker - 2004, Best Actor, *The Last King of Scotland*
- Jennifer Hudson - 2006, Best Supporting Actress, *Dreamgirls*
- Mo'Nique - 2009, Best Supporting Actress, *Precious*
- Mashershalá Ali – 2017, Best Supporting Actor, *Moonlight*
- Mashershalá Ali – 2018, Best Supporting Actor, *Greenbook*
- Regina King – 2019, Best Actress, *If Beale Street Could Talk*





OCTAVIA SPENCER 2011, *THE HELP*

Octavia won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in her role as Minnie, the outspoken maid in *The Help*.

This movie not only was about civil rights but also about finding a voice and friendships.

The outstanding female cast includes another black actress, Viola Davis, who was also nominated for Best Supporting Actress in her role of Aibileen.





LUPITA NYONG'O
2014, *TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE*

Twelve Years a Slave is a biographical period-drama about the life of Solomon Northup's memoir by the same name.

Lupita Nyong'o received Best Supporting Actress for her role as a brutalized slave.

Chiwetel Ejiofor was nominated for Best Actor in *Twelve Years a Slave* for his role as Solomon Northup.



OCTAVIA SPENCER

2016, *HIDDEN FIGURES*

Octavia was nominated for Best Supporting Actress in *Hidden Figures* which was loosely based on the black women who were known as the “human computers” at NASA.

In the beginning, the NASA workforce was segregated, and these women were kept in the background.

This team of NASA mathematicians were involved in the space race between Russia and the United States.

They were responsible for calculating the momentous launch of Col. John Glenn and returning him home. The real-life American heroes were Katherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson.





VIOLA DAVIS

2016, *FENCES*

Viola received a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award for her role as Rose Maxson in *Fences*.

Troy Maxson, Denzel Washington, is a flawed man who does not realize that he is destroying his family.

Davis's performance is not a woman who is downtrodden, but one of strength in her journey.

The movie is from one of the greatest playwrights in American history, August Wilson (1945-2005).



SUMMARY

- The early 19th Century produced influential gifted black performers such as Flora Batson (1864-1906), who captivated the listener's heart; or Henrietta Vinton Davis (1860-1941), who was the most outstanding black performer on the dramatic stage during her era.
- In the 20th Century, the first Academy Award ceremony took place on May 16, 1929, at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles, California. The first black to win an Academy Award that year was Hattie McDaniel for Best Supporting Actress Award for ***Gone With the Wind***. The role was criticized as perpetuating stereotypes.
- Hollywood was often criticized for marginalizing blacks in the movies. Many movies dealt with the changes in civil rights, social changes, and connections. The absolute best films that have been made concentrate on experiences that are not just for African American audiences but also for films that touch our souls and humanity regardless of race.

