

November 22, 2022 (XLV:13)

Ava DuVernay: **SELMA** (2014, 128 min)

URL for Introduction Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/772879009>

URL for 7:00 Tuesday discussion zoom: <https://vimeo.com/748377120>



DIRECTOR Ava DuVernay

WRITING Paul Webb

PRODUCERS Christian Colson, Dede Gardner, Jeremy Jliener, and Oprah Winfrey, with executive producers Nik Bower, Ava DuVernay, Paul Barnes, Cameron McCracken, Diamuid McKeown, Nan Morales, and Brad Pitt

CINEMATOGRAPHY Bradford Young

EDITOR: Spencer Averick

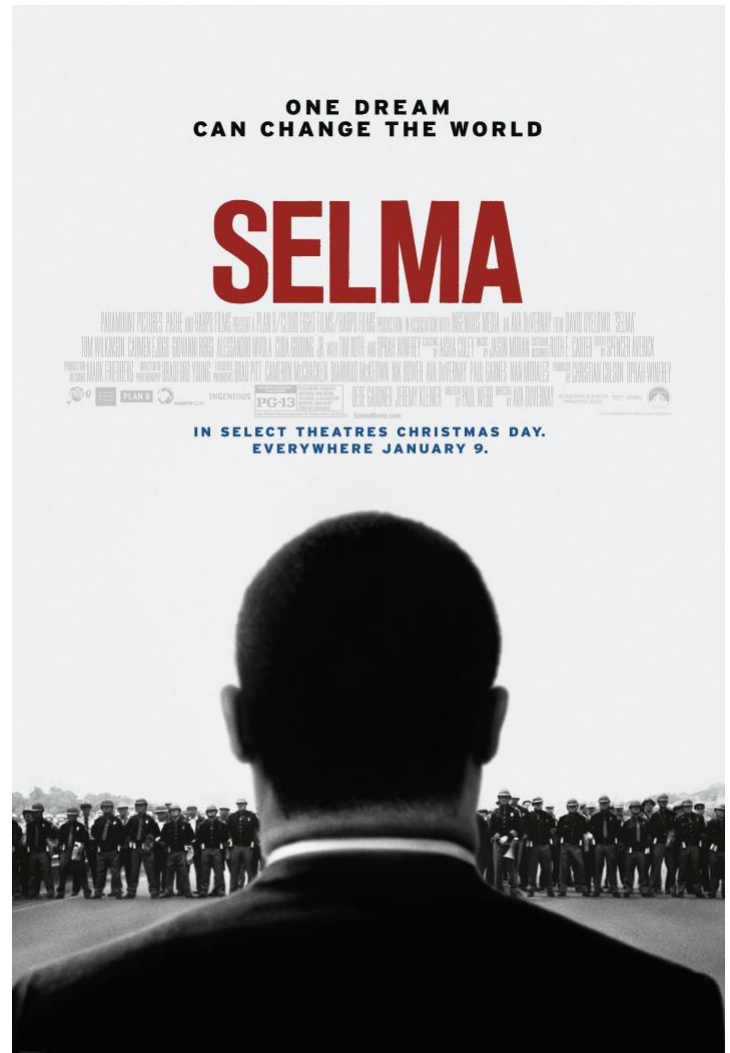
MUSIC Jason Moran

At the 2015 Academy Awards, *Selma* won Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures, Original Song for “Glory” by Common (as Lonnie Lynn) and John Legend (as John Stephens), a Golden Globe for Best Original Song - Motion Picture, and a Grammy for Best Song Written for Visual Media.

At the Academy Awards, the film was also a nominee for Best Motion Picture of the Year, (Christian Colson, Oprah Winfrey, Dede Gardner, and Jeremy Kleiner). It was nominated for three additional Golden Globes: Best Motion Picture - Drama, Best Director - Motion Picture (Ava DuVernay) and Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Drama (David Oyelowo). Its soundtrack was nominated for a Grammy: Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media.

CAST

David Oyelowo...Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Carmen Ejogo...Coretta Scott King



Jim France...Gunnar Jahn
Oprah Winfrey...Annie Lee Cooper
Clay Chappell...Registrar
Tom Wilkinson...President Lyndon B. Johnson
Giovanni Ribisi...Lee White
Haviland Stillwell...President's Secretary
André Holland...Andrew Young
Ruben Santiago-Hudson...Bayard Rustin
Colman Domingo...Ralph Abernathy
Omar J. Dorsey...James Orange
Tessa Thompson...Diane Nash
Common...James Bevel
Lorraine Toussaint...Amelia Boynton
David M. Morizot...Assaulting White Man
David Dwyer...Chief Wilson Baker

E. Roger Mitchell...Frederick Reese
 Dylan Baker...J. Edgar Hoover
 Ledisi...Mahalia Jackson
 Kent Faulcon...Sullivan Jackson
 Stormy Merriwether...Jackson's Daughter
 Niecy Nash...Richie Jean Jackson
 Corey Reynolds...Rev. C.T. Vivian
 Wendell Pierce...Rev. Hosea Williams
 John Lavelle...Roy Reed
 Stephan James...John Lewis
 Trai Byers...James Forman
 LaKeith Stanfield...Jimmie Lee Jackson
 Henry G. Sanders...Cager Lee
 Charity Jordan...Viola Lee Jackson
 Stan Houston...Sheriff Jim Clark
 Tim Roth...Gov. George Wallace
 Greg Maness...Aide (as Greg Chandler Maness)
 Nigél Thatcher...Malcolm X
 Stephen Root...Col. Al Lingo
 Michael Papajohn...Major Cloud
 Jeremy Strong...James Reeb
 Elizabeth Diane Wells...Marie Reeb
 Tara Ochs...Viola Liuzzo
 David Silverman...Anthony Liuzzo
 Charles Saunders...Gerry
 Dexter Tillis...Angry Marcher
 Cuba Gooding Jr....Fred Gray
 Alessandro Nivola...John Doar
 Michael Shikany...Archbishop Iakovos
 Brandon O'Dell...Reeb Companion



AVA DuVERNAY (b. August 24, 1972) is an American filmmaker, television producer, former film publicist, and former rapper. As a child, she often took trips to visit the childhood home of her stepfather,

close to Selma, Alabama. At the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), she earned a double BA in English literature and African-American studies. In the early 1990s, she was half of the hip hop duo Figures of Speech, performing at the legendary Good Life Cafe and appearing on the Project Blowed compilation alongside acts like Freestyle Fellowship. She would later chronicle this era of Los Angeles' alternative hip hop in her 2008 documentary *This is the Life*. However, she did not pick up a camera until she was 32, instead working as a junior publicist at companies like 20th Century Fox and Savoy Pictures after a short-lived stint in journalism. She opened her own public relations firm, The DuVernay Agency, in 1999, working on campaigns for television shows and movies such as *Spy Kids* (2001) and *Shrek 2* (2004). DuVernay made her first film in 2005 with a budget of \$6000. The short, *Saturday Night Life*, toured the festival circuit and was broadcast on February 6, 2007 as part of Showtime's *Black Filmmaker Showcase*. She then began making feature-length documentaries, starting with *This Is The Life* (2008). Others include *My Mic Sounds Nice: A Truth About Women and Hip Hop* (2010) and 2016's *13*, which examines the racial inequalities of America's prison systems. She released her first feature narrative film, *I Will Follow*, in 2010, followed by 2012's *Middle of Nowhere*, which won the Best Director Prize at the 2012 Sundance film festival. She was the first African-American woman to receive the award. Her next film, 2014's historical drama *Selma*, was about Martin Luther King Jr and the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights. The film was nominated for multiple Academy Awards but only won one—Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures, Original Song, for “Glory” by Common (as Lonnie Lynn) and John Legend (as John Stephens). Though Paul Webb was credited as writer, DuVernay has claimed that she, not Webb, was the principal writer, saying that her biggest regret as a filmmaker was allowing Paul Webb “to take credit for writing *Selma* when I wrote it.” She continues to work prolifically as a director, producer, and writer for both film and television. Some other films and shows she has directed, written for, produced, or created include *Queen Sugar* (TV Series, creator and director of 3 episodes, 2016-2022), *Cherish The Day* (TV Series, creator, writer, and producer, 2020-2022), *Naomi* (TV Series, creator and writer, 2022), *Home Sweet Home* (TV Series, creator, writer, and producer, 2021),

Colin in Black & White (TV Mini Series, creator and writer, director of one episode, 2021), *When They See Us* (TV Miniseries, creator, director, and writer, 2019), and the music video to “Family Feud” by Jay-Z featuring Beyoncé. She is a recipient of a Primetime Emmy Award, a NAACP Image Award, a BAFTA Film Award and a BAFTA TV Award, as well as a nominee of an Academy Award and Golden Globe.

PAUL WEBB (formerly known as Paul Corcoran, estimated birth year of 1948) is a British writer and enigma who has two confirmed credits on IMDb, both for writing: tonight’s film and 3 episodes of *Madiba*, a 2017 miniseries on the life of Nelson Mandela. Two other projects are listed as in development, without any other information: *No Ordinary Time*, a television series, and *Great Son of Africa*. Before turning to writing at the age of 50, he worked as a consultant in the British petrochemical industry for 15 years, changing careers because he was, to quote a glowing *Variety* profile of the writer, “bored with visiting construction sites in China.” His transition was immediately met with support from some of the top figures in Hollywood. His first play, *Four Knights in Knareborough*, was about the assassination of Archbishop Thomas a Becket in 1170. It was staged in London in 1999 and the film rights were swiftly acquired by Harvey Weinstein, who hired Webb to adapt the script, though nothing has ever materialized—it was reported to be in development in 2007. He was hired by Steven Spielberg to rewrite *Lincoln*, but the director was ultimately dissatisfied with the resulting script. However, through this experience, he met Dick Goodwin, who worked for the Lyndon B. Johnson administration and wrote that president’s 1965 voting acts speech. Goodwin’s stories of American history inspired Webb to write an early draft of *Selma*, which was reportedly slated to be directed by Spike Lee and Michael Mann before it was inherited by DuVernay, who has described Webb’s version as a “traditional biopic centered on King and LBJ and slanted more to LBJ,” finding it necessary to rewrite the majority of the script. She explained her decision to the *Boston Globe*: “I didn’t want to make ‘Mississippi Burning.’ It had its place; it was among the first that dealt with African-American-centered history and the only way to get people into the theaters then was to have a ‘white savior.’ But we’re past that point. If in 2014 we’re still making ‘white savior movies’ then it’s just lazy and

unfortunate. We’ve grown up as a country and cinema should be able to reflect what’s true. And what’s true is that black people are the center of their own lives and should tell their own stories from their own perspectives. That was my first order of business.” She continues: “It’s not called ‘King,’ it’s called ‘Selma [..]’ “Every filmmaker comes in and personalizes a project. For me, that personalization was bringing in the people of Selma.” Despite her extensive rewrites, DuVernay never received a writing credit. Webb, she told the *Globe*, “had a contract that said he doesn’t have to share credit if he doesn’t want to, and he doesn’t want to. . . . The collaboration with everyone else has been so beautiful. I can’t let one thing, one person who is making a choice, taint it.” After the release of *Selma*, Joseph Califano, a former aide to Lyndon B. Johnson, wrote a scathing op-ed in the *Washington Post*, claiming the film “fill[s] the screen with falsehoods” about the King-LBJ relationship. DuVernay herself has called this controversy “the largest, most bullshit controversy” of any movie in the year’s Oscars discussions. It is perhaps worth remembering that, in his 1968 book *Write Me In!*, released shortly after the assassination of King, Dick Gregory writes that Johnson “was unable to attend the funeral because he had to meet his generals and talk about killing people in Vietnam.” As for Webb, he has since remained quiet with the exception of the aforementioned *Madiba* of 2017. He lists Melville, Dickens, and Mailer as his influences.

JASON MORAN (b. January 21, 1975) is an American musician and educator best known for being one of the leading lights of contemporary jazz piano. He has recorded for esteemed labels Blue Note and ECM, and he has performed or recorded with musicians such as Milford Graves, Ron Miles, David Murray, Henry Threadgill, Andrew Cyrille, Bill Frisell, Mary Halvorson, Robert Glasper, Steve Coleman, Paul Motian, Cassandra Wilson, Charles Lloyd, Dave Holland, Lee Konitz, Christian McBride, Ralph Alessi, and many more. He has ten film soundtracks to his



name, including tonight's film and DuVernay's *13th* (2016).

DAVID OYELOWO (b. April 1st, 1976), also known as 'David O,' is a British actor, director, and producer, best known for his role as Martin Luther King Jr. in tonight's film. He graduated from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and received the "Scholarship for Excellence" from Nicholas Hytner in 1998. He began his stage career in 1999, playing various roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company, including an acclaimed performance as King Henry VI in Shakespeare's trilogy of plays about the king, collectively titled by the RSC as *This England: The Histories* (2000-2001). He has also acted for television, for which he is best known for playing MI5 officer Danny Hunter on the British drama series *Spooks* (known in North America as *MI-5*) from 2002 to 2004. In 2009, he directed his first short film, *Big Guy*. In 2012, he appeared in *Middle of Nowhere*, Ava DuVernay's second feature-length narrative work. The film premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival to critical raves. That same year, Oyelowo appeared in Lee Daniels' *The Paperboy*, which competed for the Palme d'Or at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival. He worked with DuVernay again for *Selma* (2014). In 2020, he directed his first feature film, *The Water Man*, in which he also starred. As an actor, he has a total of 85 credits. Some of these that have not already been mentioned include *A United Kingdom* (2016), *Nightingale* (2014), *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), *Who Do You Love* (2008), *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011), *The Help* (2011), *96 Minutes* (2011), *Lincoln* (2012), *Jack Reacher* (2012), *Interstellar* (2014), and *See How They Run* (2022).

CARMEN EJOGO (b. 22 October 1973) is a British actress and singer. She began her career as host of the *Saturday Disney* morning show from 1993 to 1995 before appearing in films such as *Metro* (1997), *I Want You* (1998), and *The Avengers* (1998). Ejogo has appeared as civil rights activist Coretta Scott King in two films: *Boycott* (2001) and *Selma* (2014). While preparing for her role in *Boycott*, she met with King and was given her blessing for the portrayal. She has a total of 45 acting credits, and some of her other films and television shows include *Perfume* (2001), *Noel* (2004), *Kidnapped* (TV Series, 2006-2007), *The Brave One* (2007), *Away We Go* (2009), *Sparkle* (2012), *Alex Cross* (2012), *The Purge: Anarchy* (2014), *Born to*

Blue (2015), *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016), *It Comes at Night* (2017), *Alien: Covenant* (2017), *True Detective* (TV Series, 2019), and *Your Honor* (TV Series, 2020-2021).

OPRAH WINFREY (b. January 29, 1954) is an American talk show host, television producer, actress, author, and public figure best known for *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which ran from 1986 to 2011. She began her media career as a teenager when she was hired to host the news part-time at WVOL, a black radio station based in the Nashville area. Afterwards, Winfrey was both the youngest news anchor and the first black female news anchor at Nashville's WLAC-TV. After a stint in Baltimore, she relocated to Chicago to host WLS-TV's low-rated half-hour morning talk show, *AM Chicago*, which under her watch skyrocketed to the highest-rated talk show in Chicago. At the insistence of Roger Ebert, she signed a syndication deal and subsequently renamed the program *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which grew into a media empire that took forms such as the show's wildly popular book club, the *Oxygen* television network, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. As an actress,



she has 34 credits, some of which include *The Color Purple* (1985), *Native Son* (1986), *Brewster Place* (TV Series, 1990), *Beloved* (1998), *Charlotte's Web* (2006), *Bee Movie* (2007), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), *The Butler* (2013), *Selma* (2014), *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (TV Movie, 2017), *Greenleaf* (TV Series, 2016-2017), and *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018).

TOM WILKINSON (b. 5 February 1948) is an English actor. Wilkinson graduated in English and American literature from the University of Kent at Canterbury, where he spent his time acting and

directing with the University of Kent Drama Society. After finishing his degree, Wilkinson attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, graduating in 1973. He made his screen debut in 1975 and worked on several British television series, most notably the mini-series *First Among Equals* (1986). He first gained critical acclaim with his appearance as Mr Pecksnif in the BBC's 1994 adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Though he mostly worked in television during this phase of his career, he appeared in 1995's *Sense and*



Sensibility as well as the following year's *The Ghost and the Darknes*. After becoming part of the ensemble cast of the comedy drama *The Full Monty* in 1997, a role which earned him a BAFTA, he began to take film roles more frequently, including supporting roles in *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997), *Wilde* (1997), *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), and *The Patriot* (2000). He also starred with Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker in the 1998 film *Rush Hour*. He has received various accolades throughout his career, including a British Academy Film Award, a Golden Globe, a Primetime Emmy Award and nominations for two Academy Awards. He has 130 acting credits, some of which include *In the Name of the Father* (1993), *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *The Full Monty* (1997), *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *Rush Hour* (1998), *The Patriot* (2000), *In the Bedroom* (2001), *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Batman Begins* (2005), *Michael Clayton* (2007), *RocknRolla* (2008), *Valkyrie* (2008), *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2011), *The Green Hornet* (2011), *Selma* (2014), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), *Denial* (2016), *Dead in a Week or Your Money Back* (2018), *Watership Down* (TV Series, 2018), *Dr. Bird's Advice for Sad Poets* (2021), and *SAS: Red Notice* (2021).

ANDRÉ HOLLAND (b. December 28, 1979) is an American actor. After studying at Florida State University for his undergraduate education and at New York University for his MFA, his first screen performance was in a 2006 episode of *Law & Order*.

During this time, he maintained a stage career; notably, he portrayed three characters in the 2006 play *Blue Door*. His first film role was for the 2008 sports drama *Sugar*. He has 32 acting credits, including *Miracle at*

St. Anna (2008), *Last Call* (2008), *Friends With Benefits* (TV Series, 2011), *1600 Penn* (TV Series, 2012-2013), *42* (2013), *Selma* (2014), *The Knick* (2014-2015), *Moonlight* (2016), *American Horror Story* (TV Series, 2016), *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018), *Castle Rock* (TV Series, 2018), *High Flying Bird* (2019), *The Eddy* (2020) *Passing* (2021), and *Bones*

and *All* (2022).

RUBEN SANTIAGO-HUDSON (b. Ruben Santiago Jr., November 24, 1956) is an American actor, playwright, and director who has won national awards for his work in all three categories. Born in Lackawanna, New York, he went to Lackawanna High School and earned his bachelor's degree from Binghamton University, his master's degree from Wayne State University, and his honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Buffalo State College and Wayne State University. After several small roles, including playing a street hustler in *Coming To America* (1988), he landed more consistent and substantial roles in both television and film, appearing in *Dear John* (TV Series, 1990-1992), *Another World* (TV Series, 1991-1993), *Blown Away* (1994), and *Bleeding Hearts* (1994). He wrote *Lackawanna Blues* (2001), an autobiographical play in which he portrayed himself as well as several different characters from his past; the play was produced in New York at the Joseph Papp Theatre in 2001 before being adapted into a highly-acclaimed HBO film of the same name (2005) that won the Humanitas Prize and earned Emmy and Writers Guild of America Award nominations. Some other films and series he appeared in include *Spawn* (TV Series, 1997-1999), *Shaft* (2000), *Mr. Brooks* (2007), *Honewdripper* (2007), *American Gangster* (2007), *Law and Order* (1990-2008), *The Invention of Lying* (2009), *Selma* (2014), *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (TV Movie, 2017), *The Quad* (TV

Series, 2017-2018), *Billions* (TV Series, 2016-2019), and *East New York* (TV Series, 2022).

COLEMAN JASON DOMINGO (b. November 28, 1969) is an American actor, writer, and director. Today, he is best known for his role as Ali in HBO's *Euphoria*, for which he won the Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series earlier this year. He gained acclaim for his performance as Mr. Bones in the Broadway musical *The Scottsboro Boys* (2011), for which he received a Tony Award nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Musical.



Domingo attended Overbrook High School and later Temple University, where he majored in journalism. Soon thereafter he moved to San Francisco, where he started acting, mainly on stage. He has a total of 54 acting credits, some of which include *Lincoln* (2012), *Newlyweds* (2013), *The Butler* (2013), *Selma* (2014), *Beautiful Something* (2015), *The Knick* (TV Series, 2015), *Horace and Pete* (TV Series, 2016), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018), *Lucy in the Sky* (2019), *Zola* (2020), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (2020), *Blackout* (TV Series, 2021), *Candyman* (2021), and *Fear of the Walking Dead* (TV Series, 2015-2023).

COMMON (b. Lonnie Rashid Lynn, March 13, 1972) is an American rapper and actor from Chicago. While still in high school, his teenage rap group, C.D.R., opened for N.W.A. and Big Daddy Kane. C.D.R. soon broke up, and Lynn pursued solo work under the name Common Sense, soon simplified to simply Common. Throughout the 90s, Common released a series of introspective and jazz-tinged albums now considered classics of “conscious” hip hop, including *Resurrection* and *One Day It'll All Make Sense*. In the late 1990s, he became a core member of the Soulquarians, a

collective of progressive hip hop and soul musicians who extensively collaborated on each other's albums, including Questlove, J Dilla, Erykah Badu, D'Angelo, Roy Hargrove, Bilal, and others. With the Soulquarians, he recorded *Like Water for Chocolate* (2000) to mass critical acclaim, as well as the ambitious and often-misunderstood *Electric Circus* (2002). Around this time, he started acting, appearing in minor roles throughout 2003 and 2004 before making his big-screen debut in 2006 with *Smokin' Aces* and never looking back. He has appeared in 44 films and 15 television series; some of his credits include *American Gangster* (2007), *Wanted* (2008), *Terminator Salvation* (2009), *Just Wright* (2010), *LUV* (2012), *Movie 43* (2013), *X/Y* (2014), *Selma* (2014), *Suicide Squad* (2016), *John Wick: Chapter 2* (2017), *Love Beats Rhymes* (2017), *The Hate U Give* (2018), *The Kitchen* (2019), *Avs* (2020), and *Alive* (2022).

DYLAN BAKER (b. October 7, 1959) is an American actor and audiobook narrator. Baker attended the College of William and Mary in Virginia and later graduated from Southern Methodist University in 1980, subsequently receiving a Master's in Fine Arts from the Yale School of Drama. He made his big screen debut with *Planes, Trains, & Automobiles* (1987), though he also maintained a career in Broadway, working in productions such as *La Bête* (1991), for which he was a Tony Award nominee. He has a total of 148 acting credits and is best known as a character actor. Some of his credits include *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), *Life with Mikey* (1993), *Murder One* (TV Series, 1995-1996), *Happiness* (1998), *Oxygen* (1999), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), *Strangers with Candy* (TV Series, 2000), *Along Came A Spider* (2001), *Spider-Man 2* (2004), *Hide and Seek* (2005), *Let's Go To Prison* (2006), *Spider Man 3* (2007), *Kings* (TV Series, 2009), *Selma* (2014), *The Americans* (TV Series, 2016), *Immortal* (2019), and *The Hot Sone* (TV Series, 2021).

LEDISI YOUNG (b. March 28, 1972), better known simply as Ledisi, is an American R&B and jazz recording artist, songwriter, music producer, author, and actress. As a teenager, she earned a scholarship to study opera and piano for five years at University of California Berkeley in their Young Musicians Program. After graduating from high school, she was nominated for a Shellie award for her performance in a

production of *The Wiz* (1990). Shortly after, she would begin her long-time stint as a cast member with the Beach Blanket Babylon, a San Francisco cabaret. In 1995, Ledisi formed a band called Anibade, which won acclaim in the Bay Area with a cult-like following of die-hard fans who referred to themselves as "Ledheads." During this time, Ledisi met keyboardist Sundra Manning and recorded her first album, *Soulsinger*, which she released independently on her label, LeSun Records, in 2000. In 2006, she signed with Verve, with whom she would release her breakthrough third album, *Lost & Found*, earning her two Grammy nominations, including one for Best New Artist. Ledisi landed her first film role in 2008, singing in the George Clooney-directed film *Leatherheads* (2008). In April 2014, Ledisi was cast to play Mahalia Jackson in the American historical drama film, *Selma*—a role she would reprise for this year's *Remember Me: The Mahalia Jackson Story*. She has 13 acting credits; some that have yet to be mentioned include *Leave It On The Floor* (2011), *American Soul* (TV Series, 2020), *Pose* (TV Series, 2021), *Twice Bitten* (2021), *B-Boy Blues* (2021), and *All Saints Christmas* (TV Movie, 2022).

STEPHAN JAMES (b. December 16, 1993) is a Canadian actor best known for his roles in *Race* (2016), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018) and *Selma* (2014). He got his start in television with a recurring role for two seasons on the long-running Canadian teen series *Degrassi* (2010-2012), leading to years of supporting television roles. 2012 marked his first major feature film role with *Home Again* (2012). He has 36 acting credits, some which include *Clue* (TV Series, 2011), *The L.A. Complex* (TV Series, 2012), *Perfect Sisters* (2014), *Pride of Lions* (2014), *Clue: A Movie Mystery Adventure* (TV Movie, 2014), *When The Game Stands Tall* (2014), *Across the Line* (2014), *Race* (2016), *Shots Fired* (TV Series, 2017), *21 Bridges* (2019), *Homecoming* (TV Series, 2018-2020),



National Champions (2021), *Surface* (TV Series, 2022), and *Delia's G*.

WENDELL PIERCE (b. December 8, 1963) is an American actor and businessman. In 1981, Pierce was named a Presidential Scholar of the Arts. He produced and hosted *Think About It*, a youth-themed talk show, for the local NBC station, and also hosted a weekly jazz show on WYLD-FM Radio called *Extensions from Congo Square*. He attended the Juilliard School's Drama Division from 1981 to 1985. Today, he is best known for his roles in the HBO dramas *The Wire* (2002-2008) and *Treme* (2010-2013). He has a total of 111 screen credits, including *The Money Pit* (1986), *Hackers* (1995), *Waiting To Exhale* (1995), *Moloney* (TV Series, 1996-1997), *The 24 Hour Woman* (1999), *Brown Sugar* (2002), *Ray* (2004), *I Think I Love My Wife* (2007), *Horrible Bosses* (2011), *Four* (2012), *Ray Donovan* (TV Series, 2014-2015), *The Odd Couple* (TV Series, 2015-2017), *Suits* (TV Series, 2013-2019), and *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* (TV Series, 2018-2022). *one* (2022).

STANLEY HOUSTON (unknown birthdate) is an American actor. After working for a US congressman in the 1990s, he began his acting career in 2008, appearing in *Savage*. He has 22 acting credits, including roles for *Eastbound and Down* (TV Series, 2012), *Devil's Knot* (2013), *A Free Bird* (2014), *Selma* (2014), *One Mississippi* (TV Series, 2015), *Looking For Alaska* (TV Series, 2019), *The Life Peddler* (2020), *Son of the South* (2020), and *Through the Glass Darkly* (2020).

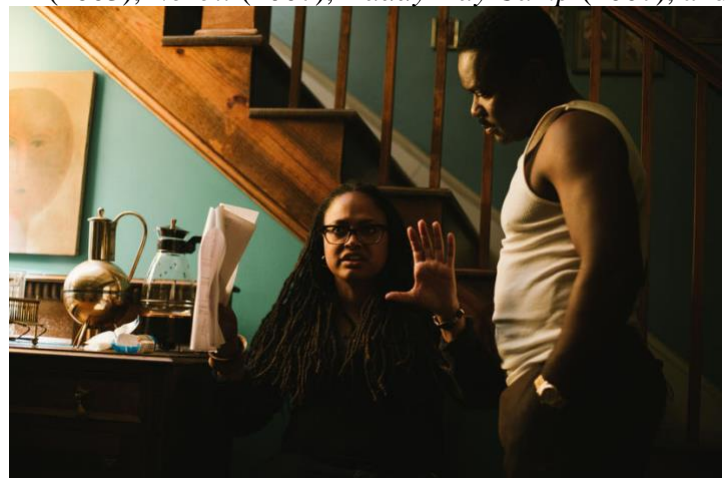
TIM ROTH (b. 14 May 1961) is an English actor and producer known for being part of the "Brit Pack," a group of prominent British actors in the 1980s. After studying sculpture at London's Camberwell College of Arts, he began a career in acting. His first big break was the British TV movie *Made in Britain* (1982). Soon after, he next worked with director Mike Leigh on *Meantime* (1983), which he has counted among his favorite projects. He debuted on the big screen when he filled in for Joe Strummer in the Stephen Frears neo-noir *The Hit* (1984). After moving to Los Angeles, he caught the eye of Quentin Tarantino, who subsequently cast Roth in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and the anthology film *Four Rooms* (1995). That same year, Roth won an Academy Award

nomination for the period piece *Rob Roy* (1995). He has continued to work in both art-house and mainstream cinema, having racked up 112 acting credits. Some of his films and series not already mentioned include *Gridlock'd* (1997), *Animals with the Tollkeeper* (1998), *Lucky Numbers* (2000), *Planet of the Apes* (2001), *Invincible* (2001), *The Beautiful Country* (2004), *Battle of the Brave* (2004), *Don't Come Knocking* (2005), *Funny Games* (2007), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Pete Smalls is Dead* (2010), *Lie To Me* (TV Series, 2009-2011), *Klondike* (TV Series, 2014), *Selma* (2014), *The Hateful Eight* (2015), *Twin Peaks* (TV Series, 2017), *Once Upon A Time In Hollywood* (2019), *Tin Star* (TV Series, 2017-2020), *Chang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* (2021), *Sundown* (2021), *Resurrection* (2022), *There Are No Saints* (2022), *Punch* (2022), and *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* (2022).

NIGÉL THATCH (b. August 8, 1976) is an American actor best known for playing Malcom X in tonight's movie as well as in the Epix television series *Godfather of Harlem* (2019-2021), a role for which he was nominated for a best supporting actor award at the 51st NAACP Image Awards. In the 1990s, he had several television roles, including, most notably, *The Parent 'Hood* (1996-1997). He has 20 other acting credits, including *Beverly Hills 90210* (TV Series, 1996), *7th Heaven* (TV Series, 1998), *Sister, Sister* (TV Series, 1999), *Moesha* (TV Series, 1996-1999), *NYPD Blue* (TV Series, 2000), *American Dreams* (TV Series, 2003), *L.A. Twister* (2004), and *Valor* (TV Series, 2017-2018).

CUBA GOODING JR (b. January 2, 1968) is an American actor. He is the recipient of an Academy Award, a Screen Actors Guild Award, and an Emmy nomination. He got his start in entertainment as a breakdancer, performing with singer Lionel Richie at the closing ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. After high school, Gooding studied Japanese martial arts for three years before turning his focus toward acting. After a string of small roles in the late 1980s, Gooding's first major role was in John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), and he followed that film's success with supporting roles in major films such as *A Few Good Men* (1992) and *Gladiator* (1992), *Judgment Night* (1993), *Lightning Jack* (1994), and *Outbreak* (1995). In 1996, Gooding reached a new

level of prominence when he was cast in *Jerry Maguire* (1996), a role that earned him an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. However, the glowing success was short-lived; after a string of unremarkable and unsuccessful films that make up the meat and potatoes of 4-foot-deep discount DVD bins at department stores across America, he almost exclusively made direct-to-DVD films from 2007 to 2012. In 2013, he appeared in *Machete Kills* and Lee Daniels' *The Butler*. The following year, he appeared in *Selma* as well as *Freedom*. 2018 saw the release of *Bayou Caviar*, a neo-noir that he not only stars in, but directed and co-wrote. In 2020, he appeared alongside Jaden Smith and Cara Delevingne in the drama *Life in a Year*. Some of his other films that have not been mentioned include *What Dreams May Come* (1998), *Men of Honor* (2000), *Pearl Harbor* (2001), *Rat Race* (2001), *Snow Dogs* (2002), *The Fighting Temptations* (2003), *Radio* (2003), *Norbit* (2007), *Daddy Day Camp* (2007), and



American Gangster (2007).

Kerri Lee Alexander: “Ava DuVernay 1972-“ (National Women’s History Museum)

Although she did not pick up a camera until she was thirty-two, Ava DuVernay has made history as a writer, director, and producer. She was the first African American woman to win Best Director at the Sundance Film Festival, be nominated for a Best Director Golden Globe, direct a film nominated for a Best Picture Oscar, and direct a film with a budget over \$100 million. Her work has made her the highest grossing Black woman director in American box office history. Her latest project, *When They See Us*, was nominated for 16 Emmy awards, making her and Beyoncé the first African American women in Primetime Emmy history

to receive multiple nominations in their careers for directing.

Ava DuVernay was born on August 24, 1972 in Long Beach, California. As a child, DuVernay's Aunt Denise encouraged her passion for art and creativity. Her aunt worked the night shift as a nurse so she could pursue her love for art, literature and theater during the day. She introduced DuVernay to the 1961 film *West Side Story*, and DuVernay fell in love with it. DuVernay learned by example that art could be a vehicle for activism. Similarly, DuVernay's mother was socially conscious and taught her to "say something through the arts." Although DuVernay grew up in Compton with her family, she spent every summer in Lowndes County, Alabama where her father's family lived for generations. DuVernay's father recalled watching the historic civil rights march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in the neighboring town of Selma, Alabama. The summers DuVernay spent there would later inspire her to direct a movie about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1990, DuVernay graduated from Saint Joseph High School in Lakewood, California. After graduating, she attended the University of California, Los Angeles where she earned degrees in English and African American studies. While she was still a student, DuVernay became interested in producing for broadcast journalism. She began as an intern for CBS News during the O.J. Simpson trial. DuVernay remembers being assigned to watch the home of one of the members of the jury and look through their trash. Her tasks left her disappointed with journalism, so she decided to move towards the publicity industry. DuVernay was hired right out of college as a junior publicist at a small studio. From this position, she started her own public relations company called The DuVernay Agency in 1999. In addition to PR, her agency also launched several lifestyle and promotional networks including; the Urban Beauty Collective, Urban Thought Collective, Urban Eye, and HelloBeautiful.

The DuVernay Agency also worked on campaigns for movies and television shows. While on film sets, DuVernay was able to observe prominent filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, Michael Mann, Clint Eastwood, Raoul Peck and Gurinder Chadha. She became interested in directing and started writing her first script in 2003. By 2006, DuVernay made her first

short film called *Saturday Night Life* based on her mother's experiences. The next year, she made her first documentary called *Compton in C Minor*. A more cost-effective style of film, DuVernay's next project was a documentary that she wrote, produced, and directed called *This Is the Life* about hip hop culture. In 2010, DuVernay released her first narrative feature film called *I Will Follow*. This film was released theatrically and became the official selection of the American Film Institute Fest, Pan-African Film Festival, and the Chicago International Film Festival. Her second feature film, *Middle of Nowhere*, premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and won the award for Best Direction.

DuVernay's career quickly took off following this film as she steadily became a household name. In addition to directing many TV shows, commercials, and music videos, DuVernay's films *Selma* and *13th* received critical acclaim and multiple awards for their portrayal of racial prejudice in the United States. She collaborated with Oprah Winfrey to create and direct the TV series *Queen Sugar* on the Oprah Winfrey Network, as well as the Disney live-action film, *A Wrinkle in Time*. In 2010, she started her own film distribution company called African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement (AFFRM) but rebranded the company in 2015 under the name ARRAY to focus on racial and gender inclusion in filmmaking. In 2019, DuVernay created, directed, and co-wrote the Netflix drama *When They See Us*. This five-part miniseries based on the 1989 Central Park jogger case quickly became Netflix's



number one most watched series daily in the U.S., with over 23 million viewers during its first month of release, and 16 Emmy nominations at the 71st Primetime Emmy Awards.

“Edmund Pettus Bridge” (National Park Service)

The Edmund Pettus bridge became a symbol of the momentous changes taking place in Alabama, America, and the world. It was here that voting rights marchers were violently confronted by law enforcement personnel on March 7, 1965. The day became known as Bloody Sunday.

The march resumed on Sunday March 21, with court protection through Federal District Court Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., who weighed the right of mobility against the right to march and ruled in favor of the demonstrators. "The law is clear that the right to petition one's government for the redress of grievances may be exercised in large groups..." said Judge Johnson, "and these rights may be exercised by marching, even along public highways."

This time, 3,200, versus the initial 600, marches headed east out of Selma, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and on to Montgomery. Marches walked 12 miles a day and slept in fields. By the time they reached the capitol on Thursday, March 25, they were 25,000-strong. Less than five months later, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 -- the best possible redress of grievances.

MLK's speeches in the film (Wikipedia)

In July 2013, it was said that [Ava DuVernay](#) had signed on to direct the film for Pathé UK and Plan B, and that she was revising the script with the original screenwriter, Paul Webb.^{[36][37]} DuVernay estimated that she re-wrote 90 percent of Webb's original script.^[38] Those revisions included rewriting King's speeches, because, in 2009, King's estate licensed them to [DreamWorks](#) and [Warner Bros.](#) for an untitled project to be produced by [Steven Spielberg](#). Subsequent negotiations between those companies and *Selma*'s producers did not lead to an agreement. DuVernay drafted alternative speeches that evoke the historic ones without violating the copyright. She recalled spending hours listening to King's words while

hiking the canyons of Los Angeles. While she did not think she would "get anywhere close to just the beauty and that nuance of his speech patterns", she did identify some of King's basic structure, such as a tendency to speak in triplets (saying one thing in three different ways).^{[39][40]} DuVernay did not receive a screenwriting credit on the finished film due to a stipulation within Webb's original contract that entitled him to the sole credit.^[37]

Historical accuracy (Wikipedia)

The historical accuracy of *Selma*'s story has been the subject of controversy about the degree to which [artistic license](#) should be used in [historical fiction](#).^{[81][82]} The film was criticized by some for its omission of various individuals and groups historically associated with the Selma marches, while others challenged how particular historical figures in the script were represented.

Most controversy in the media centered on the film's portrayal of President Johnson and his relationship with King. According to people such as LBJ Presidential Library director [Mark Updegrove](#)^[83] and [Joseph A. Califano Jr.](#), Johnson was a champion of civil rights legislation and a proactive partner of King, and they accused the film of falsely depicting Johnson as a reluctant, obstructionist political actor who had the FBI monitor and harass King.^{[84][85]} Having served as Johnson's top domestic policy assistant (including on issues of civil rights) and as [U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare](#), Califano questioned whether the writer and director felt "free to fill the screen with falsehoods, immune from any responsibility to the dead, just because they thought it made for a better story".^[86] Historian [David E. Kaiser](#) complained that the film's depiction of Johnson as obstructing Dr. King's civil rights efforts—when, in fact, he helped get important legislation passed—advances a false narrative that American whites are "hopelessly infected by racism and that black people could and should depend only on themselves".^[87]

[Andrew Young](#)—[SCLC](#) activist and official, and later U.S. congressman, ambassador to the United Nations, and mayor of Atlanta—told *The Washington Post* that the depiction of the relationship between Johnson and King "was the only thing I would question in the movie. Everything else, they got 100 percent right". According to Young, the two were always mutually respectful, and King respected Johnson's



political problems.^[88] On television, Young pointed out that it was US Attorney General [Robert F. Kennedy](#) who had signed the order that allowed the FBI to monitor King and other SCLC members and that it happened before Johnson took office.^[89]

Some Jews who marched with King at Selma wrote that the film omits any mention of the Jews who contributed significantly to the civil rights movement, effectively “airbrushing” Jews out of the film, particularly Rabbi [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#), who appeared in news photos at the front of the march with King.^{[90][91][92]} However, several men with [kippahs](#) can be seen in the scenes of the second march, in the front row and in the second row, near to King.

Director DuVernay and US Representative [John Lewis](#), who is portrayed in the film marching with King during the civil rights movement, responded separately that the film *Selma* is a work of art about the people of Selma, not a documentary. DuVernay said in an interview that she did not see herself as “a custodian of anyone’s legacy”.^[93] In response to criticisms that she rewrote history to portray her own agenda, DuVernay said that the movie is “not a documentary. I’m not a historian. I’m a storyteller.”^[94] Lewis wrote in an op-ed for *The Los Angeles Times*: “We do not demand completeness of other historical dramas, so why is it required of this film?”^[95]

In a scene-by-scene analysis of 18 films based on true stories, the visual blog [Information is Beautiful](#) gave *Selma* a score of 100%, indicating that every scene was evaluated as “True” or “True-ish”, noting: “This movie painstakingly recreates events as they happened, and takes care to include everybody who was involved”.^[96]



Peniel Smith: “‘Selma’ Backlash Misses the Point” (NPR Code Switch)

Ava DuVernay's *Selma* is a cinematic masterpiece that depicts one of the most important episodes in civil rights history. The film presents history as a kaleidoscope, documenting the roiling Selma-to-Montgomery demonstrations that turned Alabama into a national symbol of racial violence and injustice in 1965. Many movie critics have enthusiastically praised *Selma* for its complex and intelligent screenplay and direction. David Oyelowo's extraordinary performance as King anchors a movie of unusual depth and breadth.

But *Selma*'s [treatment of President Lyndon B. Johnson](#) has sparked a controversy that could threaten the film's legacy and, in the short term, its chances for prestigious awards. As portrayed by British actor Tom Wilkinson, LBJ is a beleaguered president and is — at times — exasperated with King on the issue of voting rights. Historically, LBJ and King formed an effective political relationship on the issue, although real tensions emerged between the two men when Johnson suggested that voting legislation be pursued later, rather than earlier, in the congressional session. Johnson feared that an immediate push for the black vote would undermine his ambitions for a “Great Society.” *Selma*'s script hews close to the historical record on this point. Still, the unsympathetic portrayal of Johnson suggests a president who was an antagonist on voting rights rather than a supporter.

The hyperbolic response from some critics includes the outrageous (and false) assertion that the Selma protests were actually Johnson's idea, and suggestions that the film's portrait of Johnson should disqualify it from awards (read Oscar) consideration.

A new line of criticism outlined in the [Jewish Daily Forward](#) argues that *Selma* disfigured the historical civil rights movement by “airbrushing” Jewish allies from the film. That's an argument that would carry more weight if DuVernay had focused on other moments in civil rights history, like Freedom Summer, when white and Jewish allies played a more prominent role. The events depicted in *Selma* were driven largely by the African-American activists portrayed in the film.

Many prestigious movies take dramatic license with historical events. Films are not scholarly books. For example, [Steven Spielberg's acclaimed film Lincoln](#) erases the [iconic abolitionist Frederick](#)

[Douglass](#) from the story, even though Douglass met with President Lincoln three times, including once during the period the film chronicles. Screenwriter Tony Kushner and director Spielberg made the hard creative choice, something that did not prevent that film from being considered an artistic achievement and worthy of awards.

So what exactly is at work here?

Taken together, these critiques are part of a larger debate about who owns American history, especially the portions of that history that were led, organized and shaped in large part by African-Americans. White supporters and fellow travelers of the movement have had the license to dramatize both historical events (*Mississippi Burning*, which inaccurately cast the FBI as the hero of Freedom Summer) and fictional accounts (*The Help*) of the era. But DuVernay's film — alongside Lee Daniel's *The Butler* and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* — is one of the few black-directed efforts to ever grace the big screen.

Part of the controversy over *Selma* stems not only from the film's portrait of Johnson, but from the lack of white protagonists in major roles. This is not to say that the movie only shows whites as villains. If Alabama Gov. George Wallace and the brutal Selma Sheriff Jim Clark are depicted as unapologetic racists — which they were — sympathetic white characters abound, including [James Reeb](#) and [Viola Liuzzo](#), two relatively unknown figures from the Selma protests who were killed by local whites for their activism. And two Johnson men, [adviser Lee C. White](#) and [Assistant Attorney General John Doar](#), are portrayed as quietly determined allies of the movement.

Selma is unapologetic in depicting the movement as one that was primarily led by black women and men. Black women stand out on this score with subtle and nuanced depictions of Coretta Scott King, Annie Lee Cooper, Diane Nash, and Amelia Boynton definitively illustrating black women's fierce activist commitment and leadership in civil rights struggles. Intimate scenes between activists in King's Southern Christian Leadership and the young militants of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced "snick") showcase the generational tensions, bruised egos and intellectual firepower that made the movement successful. King's trusted lieutenants Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, Hosea Williams and James Orange are all given their due, as are John Lewis — now Congressman Lewis —

and Jim Forman of SNCC. Cameo appearances by C.T. Vivian, one of the movement's most courageous and unsung heroes, and Malcolm X give a fuller picture of the history than we've ever seen on film.

The real problem many critics have with this film is that it's too black and too strong. Our popular reimagining of the civil rights movement is that it's something we all did together and the battle is over; that's just not true.

Selma's two biggest set pieces showcase the depth and breadth of institutional racism in America then and now. The first depicts the brutal violence that police meted out against peaceful protesters on "[Bloody Sunday](#)," the March 7, 1965, demonstration on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The second highlights the triumphant March 25 speech by King in Montgomery before 25,000 people. The first instance reminds us, in the aftermath of Ferguson and Eric Garner grand jury decisions, of the way in which anti-black state violence can impact society even with a sympathetic president in the White House.

The second instance, in this "Age of Obama" and #BlackLivesMatter, is remarkable for what DuVernay does *not* do and what so many critics have ignored. Rather than linger on King's victory in Montgomery, *Selma* drinks in the moment as a collective achievement, not only for black Americans, but also for democracy and human rights. She offers a courageous and much-needed corrective for our time.

Selma reminds us to honor not just the heroic figure making speeches, but the collective will of so many who made progress possible. Ultimately, the beating heart of this film rests not with its portrait of LBJ, or even King, not with what group has been left out or ignored, but with the larger truth that the civil rights movement's heroic period reflected our collective strengths and weaknesses as a nation, something Americans are loath to recognize let alone acknowledge. *Selma's* greatest gift is that, even when it



reimagines some moments of history, it remains unflinching in its examination of America's racial soul.

“Director Ava DuVernay on sharing the story of ‘Selma’ and deconstructing American heroes (NPR)”

GWEN IFILL: When I first saw this movie — I have seen it twice — my first time, my heart was in my throat. The second time, I was looking at it with a little bit of historical scrutiny, because there have been so many questions now raised about the choices that you made.

What has been your response to all of that?

AVA DUVERNAY: My response is that this is art. This is a movie. This is a film. I'm not a historian. I'm not a documentarian. I am an artist who explored history. And what I found, the questions that I have, the ideas that I have about history, I have put into this project that I have made.

I understand people wanting to see history through their own gaze, through their own lens, and this is the way that I see it. This is the way that I interpret it. And so, you know, I can get into a debate about the minutia of history and interpretation, but I'm not a custodian of anyone's legacy.

I'm not a librarian. I'm not selling a book. I'm not trying to maintain an image of anyone, not of King, not of Johnson, not of any of the people that we chronicle in the film. I'm trying to imbue the film and invite people into the spirit of the movement. And that was my intention. That's what I believe we have done. And I invite people to come and check it out for themselves.

GWEN IFILL: One of the things I found most surprising about this film is that there had never been a feature film done about Martin Luther King, in which he was the central figure.

Why is that? And do you think that any of the backlash that you have experienced in the last week or two is related to that?

AVA

DUVERNAY: Yes, I mean, I think part of the reason why you have had companies and artists hesitant to dive in, a bunch of reasons, intellectual property issues with the speeches and issues with the estate,

ideas about films with black protagonists not being at the top of the list of the studios to make.

But, certainly, all the different camps and constituencies, constituents — all the different camps and constituencies around this issue have made it challenging for filmmakers to feel like they could be free in telling the story as they saw it.

And that's strangled the story for longer than it should have. I mean, 50 years since the events that we have chronicled, and never a major motion picture with King at the center.

GWEN IFILL: You make the point about the stories that were told and were not told.

One of the most surprising things I have heard is that people who saw that the title was "Selma" and that Oprah was affiliated with the project thought this was a movie about a woman named Selma played by Oprah. I am surprised at that.

AVA DUVERNAY: That is the time that we're in.

I mean, that — some of the questions that I have heard, some of the statements that I have heard as we have taken the film across the country, jaw-dropping at what people don't know, you know? Selma doesn't resonate with people in the way that it should, as being just such a cornerstone for democracy, in terms of what it's done for voting rights and equality.

People don't even know what that is. We open the film with the scene of four little girls and the Birmingham bombing. And this is just a quintessential, pivotal point of departure for everything that happened after in the movement. And yet I have people walking up to me saying, is that real? Did that — did that really happen?

I mean, someone said to me, Dr. King wasn't really 39 when he died, was he?

GWEN IFILL: You have been nominated for a Golden Globe for best director, first African-

American woman ever. David Oyelowo has been nominated for best actor. Why didn't you call this movie "King"? He is such a central figure in it.

AVA DUVERNAY: Well, he's a central figure in it, but "Selma" is not King's only story.

I felt very, very adamant about the fact that



this film be broadened to include the community of people who came together to make this so. Truly, they were not a monolith. There were all kinds of different ideas about how to achieve the goal. That's something that we really talk about in the film quite a bit.

There were a bunch of different organizations, personalities, people, ideas about how to get there, how to keep their eyes on the prize. But they did. And they were able to come together around this one voice that amplified the message. And so that is the beauty of King to me. He was a leader of people, so you have to show the people to understand the greatness of his leadership.

And to not do that, I think, is missing a big opportunity. So it was important to kind of deconstruct our heroes, whether it be King, whether it be LBJ, and really kind of distill their relationship down to some key scenes.

It wasn't always smooth. These were two great minds who often were in a chess match. To say that this was a skip in the park and they were holding hands the whole way is to really just be really disingenuous about what was happening at that point.

You know, we're in a — at a time in history where everything was on fire and everything was being questioned. And that's what's we're doing on film.

GWEN IFILL: Did you leave the impression that Johnson was more complicit in things like the FBI tracking of King than he was?

AVA DUVERNAY: Complicit? I have questions about it. I have questions about it. And those questions, I have put into the film.

There's never a scene where we say very clearly that Johnson ordered the tape or commanded that something be done. But it does leave room for the gray areas, as I see them.

And so all of my questions, all of my ideas, all of my thoughts about this time in history are in this interpretation of Selma. It is one vision of it. It's not the only, it's not the absolute correct one. It's one. And it's valid.

I mean, one of the op-eds that was written had the words, this film should be ruled out for the Christmas season and awards season. That was the last line of Joseph Califano's op-ed.

I just think that is disturbing. It's against the very ideals of what Johnson's legacy that we're talking about stood for. If we're talking about equality, if we're talking about voice, then let this voice be heard.

Let me just say that Johnson — the Johnson character gets applause in most screenings at the end of the film, when he gives the "We shall overcome" speech. I mean, audiences are going on an emotional journey with him. They're seeing a beginning, middle, and end, an arc to that character that starts at one place and ends in another that is very triumphant and positive. And so that's what I would invite people to — to just see the movie and check out.



John Lewis: “John Lewis tells his truth about ‘Selma’” (Los Angeles Times)

The role of art in our society is not to reenact history but to offer an interpretation of human experience as seen through the eyes of the artist. The philosopher Aristotle says it best: “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inner significance.”

The movie “Selma” is a work of art. It conveys the inner significance of the ongoing struggle for human dignity in America, a cornerstone of our identity as a nation. It breaks through our too-often bored and uninformed perception of our history, and it confronts us with the real human drama our nation struggled to face 50 years ago.

And “Selma” does more than bring history to life, it enlightens our understanding of our lives today. It proves the efficacy of nonviolent action and civic engagement, especially when government seems unresponsive. With poignant grace, it demonstrates that Occupy, inconvenient protests and die-ins that disturb our daily routine reflect a legacy of resistance that led many to struggle and die for justice, not centuries ago, but in our lifetimes. It reminds us that the day could be approaching when that price will be required again.

But now this movie is being weighed down with a responsibility it cannot possibly bear. It's portrayal of President Lyndon B. Johnson's role in the Selma marches has been called into question. And yet one two-hour movie cannot tell all the stories encompassed in three years of history — the true scope of the Selma campaign. It does not portray every element of my story, Bloody Sunday, or even the life of Martin Luther King Jr. We do not demand completeness of other historical dramas, so why is it required of this film?

"Lincoln," for example, was a masterpiece, a fine representation of what it takes to pass a bill. It did not, however, even mention Frederick Douglass or the central role of the abolitionists, who were all pivotal to the passage of the 13th Amendment. For some historians that may be a glaring error, but we accept these omissions as a matter of perspective and the historical editing needed to tell a coherent story. "Selma" must be afforded the same artistic license.

Were any of the Selma marches the brainchild of President Johnson? Absolutely not. If a man is chained to a chair, does anyone need to tell him he should struggle to be free? The truth is the marches occurred mainly due to the extraordinary vision of the ordinary people of Selma, who were determined to win the right to vote, and it is their will that made a way.

As for Johnson's taped phone conversation about Selma with King, the president knew he was recording himself, so maybe he was tempted to verbally stack the deck about his role in Selma in his favor. The facts, however, do not bear out the assertion that Selma was his idea. I know. I was there. Don't get me wrong, in my view, Johnson is one of this country's great presidents, but he did not direct the civil rights movement.

This film is a spark that has ignited interest in an era we must not forget if we are to move forward as a nation. It is already serving as a bridge to a long-overdue conversation on race, inequality and injustice in this country today. It may well become a touchstone, a turning point for another generation of activists who will undertake the next evolutionary push for justice in America.

It would be a tragic error if Hollywood muted its praise for a film because it is too much a story and not enough an academic exercise.

Whenever I have a tough vote in Congress, I ask myself what would leaders of courage do? What

would King and Robert Kennedy do? What is the right thing to do? What is the fair and honest thing to do?

The people have already spoken. They are marching to the theaters, arrested by the drama of this film, moved by ideas too long left to languish, driven to their feet and erupting in enthusiastic applause.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Wikipedia)

Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([Pub.L. 88–352](#), 78 [Stat. 241](#), enacted July 2, 1964) is a landmark [civil rights](#) and [labor law](#) in the United States that outlaws [discrimination](#) based on [race](#), [color](#), religion, sex, ^[a] and national origin.^[4] It prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, [racial segregation](#) in schools and [public accommodations](#), and employment discrimination. The act "remains one of the most significant legislative achievements in American history".^[5]....

The **[Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)** is a landmark piece of [federal legislation](#) in the [United States](#) that prohibits [racial discrimination](#) in [voting](#).^{[7][8]} It was signed into law by [President Lyndon B. Johnson](#) during the height of the [civil rights movement](#) on August 6, 1965, and [Congress](#) later amended the Act five times to expand its protections.^[7] Designed to enforce the [voting rights](#) guaranteed by the [Fourteenth](#) and [Fifteenth Amendments](#) to the [United States Constitution](#), the Act sought to secure the right to vote for [racial minorities](#) throughout the country, especially in the [South](#). According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), the Act is considered to be the most effective piece of federal [civil rights](#) legislation ever enacted in the country.^[9] It is also "one of the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in U.S. history."^[10]

...The act also contains "special provisions" that apply to only certain jurisdictions. A core special provision is the Section 5 preclearance requirement, which prohibited certain jurisdictions from implementing any change affecting voting without first receiving confirmation from the [U.S. attorney general](#) or the [U.S. District Court for D.C.](#) that the change does not discriminate against protected minorities.^[12]

....Section 5 and most other special provisions applied to jurisdictions encompassed by the "coverage formula" prescribed in Section 4(b). The coverage formula was originally designed to encompass jurisdictions that engaged in egregious voting discrimination in 1965, and Congress updated the formula in 1970 and 1975. In *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), the [U.S. Supreme Court struck down](#) the coverage formula as unconstitutional, reasoning that it was no longer responsive to current conditions.^[13] The court did not strike down Section 5, but without a coverage formula, Section 5 is unenforceable.^[14] The jurisdictions which had previously been covered by the coverage formula massively increased the rate of voter registration purges after the Shelby decision.^[15]

Edmund Winston Pettus (July 6, 1821 – July 27, 1907) was a lawyer and politician who represented [Alabama](#) in the [United States Senate](#) from 1897 to 1907. He served as a senior [officer](#) of the [Confederate States Army](#), commanding [infantry](#) in the [Western Theater](#) of the [American Civil War](#). After the war, he was politically active in the [Ku Klux Klan](#), serving as a [Grand Dragon](#).^[2]

The [Edmund Pettus Bridge](#) across the [Alabama River](#) in [Selma](#), built in 1940, was named after him. According to *Smithsonian*, "The bridge was named for him, in part, to memorialize his history, of restraining and imprisoning African-Americans in their quest for freedom after the Civil War".^[3] In 1965, the bridge became a landmark of the [civil rights movement](#).

Edmund Pettus (Wikipedia)

THE FALL 2022 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XLV:

August 30 William Wellman *Wings* 1927
 Sept 6 Jean Renoir *Rules of the Game* 1939
 Sept 13 Michael Curtiz *Casablanca* 1942
 Sept 20 Nicholas Ray, *In a Lonely Place* 1950
 Sept 27 Luis Buñuel *Viridiana* 1961
 Oct 4 Orson Welles *Chimes at Midnight* 1966
 Oct 11 Mel Brooks *Young Frankenstein* 1974
 Oct 18 Arthur Penn *Night Moves* 1975
 Oct 25 Sydney Pollack *Tootsie* 1982
 Nov 1 Akira Kurosawa *Ran* 1985
 Nov 8 Martin Scorsese *Goodfellas* 1990
 Nov 15 Hiayo Miyazaki *The Wind Rises* 2013
 Nov 22 Ava Duvernay *Selma* 2014
 Nov 29 Pedro Almodóvar *Parallel Mothers* 2021
 Dec 6 Ang Lee *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* 2000

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