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**Production Notes**

Running time: 123 minutes  
Not Yet Rated by the MPAA  
Opening: December 25, 2007

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“The Great Debaters” is a Weinstein Company presentation of a Harpo Films production being distributed in US theaters by Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer Studios Inc. (MGM)

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## THE GREAT DEBATERS

THE GREAT DEBATERS is inspired by the remarkable story of Wiley College's winning debate team of the early 1930s. Set against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South, THE GREAT DEBATERS chronicles the journey of the Wiley College debate team—coached by the brilliant and passionate professor Melvin B. Tolson (Denzel Washington). It was Tolson's recognition that the power of knowledge is the greatest advantage of all, which brought these students from underdogs to victors in a time when more than the odds were against them.

Professor Tolson carefully chooses his team not only because they're the best Wiley College has to offer but because they carry within them the spark of a new generation. He sets out to instill in them confidence and a sense of responsibility for more than just their own lives. At the same time he knows he must protect them from his own covert activities as an organizer of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

Tolson's most eager student is 14 year-old prodigy James Farmer Jr. (Denzel Whitaker) who endures the pressure of the team in addition to the towering presence of his father James Sr., PhD (Forest Whitaker), a renowned scholar and towering presence. It is James Jr. who grows up quickly by witnessing the horrific acts of prejudice, feeling the pangs of love and becoming the teacher as his father learns that action and assertion must be practiced in order for knowledge to become power.

In Henry Lowe (Nate Parker), Tolson sees a wild intelligence constantly conflicted between expectations and an exploding temper fueled by his search for justice. His fierce independence often clashes with his professor and teammates. Being part of the debate team may be his first experience with true accountability and the responsibility that follows.

Samantha Booke (Jurnee Smollett) has the honor of being Wiley College's first female on the debate team. She has to deal with not only the prejudice because of her skin but also as a woman forging ahead in a society that has yet to embrace equal rights for the sexes. She's up for the challenge as her confidence grows with each and every debate.

What is seemingly a disconnected group of students is revealed as the calculated, brilliant and far reaching vision of Professor Tolson. As the team experiences unprecedented success and consecutive victories they work even more diligently to reach the ultimate goal – a groundbreaking debate with the National Champions at Harvard.

This fictional story was inspired by the passion, dedication and teachings of Melvin B. Tolson.

Academy Award® winner Denzel Washington (*Training Day*, *Glory*) directs as well as stars alongside fellow Academy Award® winner Forest Whitaker (*The Last King Of Scotland*). The film also stars Kimberly Elise (*Beloved*) and John Heard (*Home Alone*).

Robert Eisele wrote the screenplay from a story by Eisele and Jeffrey Porro. Harpo Films' Oprah Winfrey and Kate Forte produced with Todd Black (*The Pursuit of Happyness*) and Joe Roth (*Mona Lisa Smile*).

Denzel Washington, who made his directorial debut with *Antwone Fisher*, reunites with Academy Award®-winning Cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, ASC (*A River Runs Through It*), twice Oscar-nominated Costume Designer Sharen Davis (*Ray*, *Dreamgirls*), Academy Award®-winning sound mixer, Willie D. Burton (*Dreamgirls*), Producer Black and Co-Producer Molly Allen (*Antwone Fisher*). Production Designer David J. Bomba (*Walk The Line*), Academy Award®-winning Editor Hughes Winborne (*Crash*) and Executive Producer David Crockett (*Gone Baby Gone*) are newcomers to Washington's team.

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## THE GREAT DEBATERS

### Cast

Melvin B. Tolson	DENZEL WASHINGTON
James Farmer Sr.	FOREST WHITAKER
Henry Lowe	NATE PARKER
Samantha Boone	JURNEE SMOLLETT
James Farmer Jr.	DENZEL WHITAKER
Hamilton Burgess	JERMAINE WILLIAMS
Ruth Tolson	GINA RAVERA
Sheriff Dozier	JOHN HEARD
Pearl Farmer	KIMBERLY ELISE

### Filmmakers

Directed By	DENZEL WASHINGTON
Screenplay by	ROBERT EISELE
Story by	ROBERT EISELE JEFFREY PORRO
Produced by	TODD BLACK KATE FORTE OPRAH WINFREY JOE ROTH
Executive Producers	BOB WEINSTEIN HARVEY WEINSTEIN DAVID CROCKETT
Director of Photography	PHILIPPE ROUSSELOT, AFC/ASC
Production Designer	DAVID J. BOMBA
Edited by	HUGHES WINBORNE, A.C.E.
Costume Designer	SHAREN DAVIS
Music Composed by	JAMES NEWTON HOWARD PETER GOLUB
Music Supervisor	G. MARQ ROSWELL
Co-Producer	MOLLY ALLEN
Casting by	DENISE CHAMIAN, CSA

## **THE GREAT DEBATERS**

### **About the Production**

*The Great Debaters* is a fictional story inspired by Wiley College's winning debate team of the early 1930s. Academy Award® winner Denzel Washington steps behind the camera for a second time to direct. He joins fellow Academy Award® winner Forest Whitaker and co-stars as Melvin B. Tolson, the legendary coach. Harpo Films' Oprah Winfrey and Kate Forte produced with Todd Black (*The Pursuit of Happiness*) and Joe Roth (*Mona Lisa Smile*).

Filmed primarily in northeastern Louisiana with a few days in east Texas, production started on May 14, and ended on July 16, 2007.

Then, production moved to Boston to film the key Harvard scenes at the prestigious Sanders Theatre in Memorial Hall as well as turning the Wang Theater's foyer into South Station circa 1935. Monday, July 23, 2007, was the last day of filming.

### **THE HISTORY**

Some years ago writer Robert Eisele's friend Jeffrey Porro brought to his attention a two-page article "The Great Debaters" written by freelance writer Tony Scherman in the magazine, *American Legacy*. Eisele explains, "Jeff Porro is a Washington, DC speech writer, with a PhD in Political Science who knew my taste for social realism and gritty, intelligent stories."

Eisele immediately recognized the debate coach, Melvin B. Tolson, considered one of the best African American poets of the Twentieth Century. Eisele recalls, "I was aware of Melvin B. Tolson's poetry since I'm a published poet myself, but I had no idea he had trained on his debate teams of the 1930s—the students who would become the Civil Rights leaders of the 1950s and 1960s."

Some characters, like Tolson, James Farmer Sr. and James Farmer, Jr. are based on historical figures. Eisele recounts, "Jeff and I spent the next two years researching the facts about the Wiley team and interviewing many of the surviving debaters, including James Farmer, Jr. shortly before his death in 1999. It was an honor to speak to him, the man who led the Freedom Rides."

For many of the other characters, Eisele created composites. He was committed to making the debate team representational and staying true to their passion so he incorporated the stories about their experiences and relationships.

Benjamin Bell, a member of the 1936-1939 team noted in Scherman's article, "Schools were afraid of debating us. Every time they did, they got their pants kicked. How do you think they felt, getting spanked by a little Jim Crow school from the badlands of Texas!"

In an interview with Robert Eisele, Henrietta Bell, one of the first women members of the team, fondly remembered teammate Henry Heights who was a brilliant orator and the team anchor. "He was a freshman when I was a freshman. He was very suave and he could say *anything* in a debate. Sometimes it was brilliant but sometimes he could be ridiculous. When it came to the character of Henry Lowe, Eisele was able to instill a lot of the passion and energy that Heights was known for. Ms. Bell's spirit, drive and expertise were clearly captured in the character of Samantha Booke played by Jurnee Smollett.

For the article Scherman was also very interested in finding out how the debaters' lives turned out. "Hobart Jarrett, class of 1936, became an English professor at Brooklyn College; Hamilton Boswell, class of 1938, became a Methodist preacher; and Henrietta Bell, class of 1934, became a social worker.

As for the flamboyant Heights, its thought he became a preacher but there's no trail of him since the mid-forties.

"Tolson loved doing this. He wasn't paid to do it, he was paid to teach English," shares Tolson Jr. Scherman adds, "He loved the challenge of masterminding the debates, loved toppling vicious stereotypes, loved the laurels he was winning for Wiley and himself. Tolson loved to win." It was this drive and commitment that Eisele and Porro wanted to build the story around. Once that was in place they were ready to bring the project to Harpo.

A prolific television writer and producer, Eisele tackled the project with Porro. Subsequently, Harpo Films, Oprah Winfrey's production company, jumped on Eisele & Porro's pitch. "After hearing Bob Eisele's pitch, Harpo Films was compelled to get involved. We jumped at the chance. It is rare to have that strong, unwavering excitement to option a story. There was no doubt on our part," notes Producer Kate Forte. Thus, began the development process.

Once finished, Eisele's screenplay massaged the historical facts of Wiley College in the 1930s, and turned it into a compelling fictionalized feature film that focused on one year with the debate team. By following four students in 1935, one who was James Farmer Jr., Eisele's screenplay depicts why Wiley College had one of the best debate teams of the time.

### **THE RIGHT CHOICE**

Director Denzel Washington reveals, "When my agent sent me the script, I thought it was an interesting story about these young kids in this small school and how they overcame the odds. It's like "The Little Engine That Could"—going against the great universities of the 1930s."

Once Denzel committed to direct the film, he turned to Producer Todd Black, who was behind Washington's directorial debut, *Antwone Fisher*.

"Denzel was always at the top of our wish list of directors," admits Producer Forte. Of course, we thought of him playing Tolson, but we initially approached him to direct ONLY. We wanted him to have the pure directing experience and not have to juggle both acting and directing. Directing and acting are both daunting and hard enough on their own. To have to combine both is unfathomable."

"I became more and more certain I had to play Tolson with each page. By the time I finished reading the script, I knew as a director I would insist on casting this role," Washington jokes.

Eisele offers, "I was ecstatic when I heard the news. I felt Denzel had done a wonderful job with *Antwone Fisher*. Plus, I knew he'd be perfect in the role of Tolson."

As the development process continued, Black reveals, "We worked with Bob Eisele and made something incredibly unique and different from a lot of Hollywood movies."

As for taking historical fact and creating fiction, Washington considers, "We leant toward the dramatic because it is a movie. The story really belongs to the characters of Henry Lowe, Samantha, James Farmer Jr. and Hamilton Burgess—the debaters. It's about the education of these young kids."

## **FRESH FACES WORK WITH SEASONED VETS**

As the second directing effort from Academy Award® winner Denzel Washington, a man responsible for launching Derek Luke's career by casting him as the lead for *Antwone Fisher*, he had the pull to meet the best and brightest of young actors to be his "great debaters."

Washington permits, "We had a great casting agent, Denise Chamian, and went through the process, looked at a lot of kids and just picked the best."

Just like Melvin B. Tolson took a group of intelligent students and molded them into a formidable debate team, Washington handpicked his actors for the roles of the "great debaters." He chose Denzel Whitaker, Nate Parker, Jurnee Smollett and Jermaine Williams, aware that they could be the hot new stars of tomorrow.

Producer Forte also notes, "[They] were just extraordinary—as actors and human beings. They were sheer joy to be around. They each have huge talent and promise—but they are all so sweet, enthusiastic, and just plain nice. And, their bond together—and with Denzel was so lovely to observe."

Then, for the key adult parts, he cast Academy Award® winner Forest Whitaker as James Farmer, Sr., Kimberly Elise as Pearl Farmer, the mother of James Jr. and John Heard as Sheriff Dozier, an unsavory character.

Denzel Whitaker, who turned seventeen during production, had previously worked with his namesake on *Training Day* in a scene as one of the children of Macy Gray's character. For this movie, he landed the key part of 'James Farmer Jr.,' the 14-year-old freshman who went on to be one of the best debaters of the Wiley College team as well as one of the founding fathers of the Civil Rights Movement who inspired the 'Freedom Rides' of the 1950s & 60s.

Washington allows, "I can't believe his name is actually 'Denzel—Denzel Whitaker.' But that's not why he got the job. He's a brilliant young actor."

Forest Whitaker, who plays his father in the movie, praises, "You could tell from the very first reading that little Denzel is quite the remarkable kid. He's very astute, very intelligent. The scenes I've done with him have been right on."

Kimberly Elise, who plays his mother, smiles, "Little Denzel Whitaker is just magic. He gave me a Mother's Day card that touched my heart. He has that sort of sensitivity where he allows himself to be vulnerable and open on camera. That just pulls you in and makes you want to follow the story with him."

It was obvious that story, character and talent were coming together perfectly. "We all knew we were part of something important in terms of story but we also knew we were part of something important in term of acting experience, observing legends such as Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker interact with these gifted young actors," says Forte.

The other three debaters—Nate Parker, Jurnee Smollett & Jermaine Williams were equally thrilled to be cast in this movie.

Nate Parker, whose natural good looks make it easy to view him as a younger version of Denzel Washington, explains, "I've looked up to Mr. Washington for most of my life—before I became an actor. I had his picture on my desktop, so when I met him, I felt like I knew him as someone who I had been talking to for years which made it easy."

“It was obvious as soon as Jurnee read that she had the role. She was the first one in to audition – and I believe that Denzel was pretty committed to her casting after that first reading,” says Forte. Jurnee Smollett was keen to be in the movie. She admits, “I was aware of this film a long time before I went in to audition. I was very passionate about the project and being a part of it that I started researching the character immediately.”

She continues, “I feel so honored to be a part of this project. I get to watch Denzel work, the notes he has given me, the conversations we’ve had... I will forever cherish the moments. One day I’ll sit back and tell my kids, ‘Yeah, when I was twenty, I worked with Denzel Washington in a film he directed.’”

Jermaine Williams who many will recognize from *Stomp The Yard*, embraced his chance to work with his idol, Denzel Washington. He confesses, “I was very intimidated the first time meeting Mr. Washington. I wasn’t sure how he was going to come across, but he actually came across a lot like a father figure—he approached me, introduced himself and extended his hand—after that, I knew it was going to be easy to work with him.”

Denzel Whitaker considers working with his two namesakes, “Forest taught me things about finding and getting into character—finding the deeper things that make your character tick in a certain situation. Just acting with him, I’d be sitting there feeling like ‘wow, he’s bringing it on and I gotta come up to his level!’”

As for his director and other co-star, Denzel Washington, the young Whitaker offers, “Denzel—he’s just great! He would always tell me his little notes and we would compare them with mine, and then we’d sit and figure it out.”

Black confirms, “It’s been so much fun and interesting to watch these new kids always watching Denzel and Forest—off camera, on camera, on the sides—always watching and learning.”

He continues, “I think it’s been an incredible journey for both sets of people. Denzel and Forest are watching new talent, watching their eyes come alive and watching that they have no bad habits, staying fresh because of that.”

Black further elucidates, “Meanwhile these young actors are watching these incredibly seasoned actors—how they hit their mark, how they deliver something, how they change something up. You can really see the way these young people are being so wonderfully influenced by the master class of teachers.”

He grins, “Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker—you don’t get much better than that!”

Washington permits, “We found four really great young actors and we have given them the opportunity of a lifetime. As far as I can see they’ve excelled in their acting careers.”

He contemplates, “I felt that way about Derek Luke in *Antwone Fisher*, and he’s off to the races now, so I’m curious to see how things go for these kids since I feel the same way about them.”

Smiling, Washington predicts, “I think they’re going to go a long way.”

## **DEBATE CAMP**

To add to the authenticity of the debate scenes, the young actors were sent off to “debate camp” at Texas Southern University in Houston. For two days, the actors were provided with intensive training in the art

of communication in the form of debate, with special emphasis on parliamentary debate. The camp was conducted by TSU's assistant coaches, LaShelle Sargent, Clare Bailey, Terrick Brown, and coordinated by head coach, Dr. Thomas F. Freeman.

Washington reveals, "As an actor, I've always liked to do stuff like 'boot camp' for the various roles--like I did for *Glory* and *For Queen and Country*. It's just part of an actor's job in preparing for a role."

Washington continues, "Texas Southern University has an outstanding debating team right now, so we sent the kids there and put them against the Texas Southern team—just threw them in the water to see if they could swim."

Producer Forte adds, "They crawled into the world of their characters—and the world of debating. They were incredibly competitive to make sure that they excelled in debating."

Jurnee Smollett divulges, "We learned parliamentary style of debating from the remarkable people at Texas Southern University. Dr. Freeman started the debate team at TSU in 1948, and I tell you, this man has a presence! He's so incredibly intelligent."

She continues, "The first day they taught us style and then the second day we actually had to put into practice what we learned which was a challenge. We were reading the newspaper, watching CNN, talking about all the hot issues of the moment. I think in a sense it brought us all together."

Denzel Whitaker agrees, "We started to get to know each other during debate camp, but it was just the beginning. Now, we really look out for each other—just like our characters do in the movie."

Nate Parker offers, "I've been an athlete all my life so when we got to Houston, my goal was that whatever we do, we are going to win."

He continues, "They taught us all how to do different kinds of debate—short, long, structure, format—then we had mock debates. We did a competition to see who made it to the end and we were up against their sophomore teams."

He pauses, "I think we did extremely well..."

Jermaine Williams who plays Hamilton Burgess proposes, "Now in 2007, debate isn't really a popular sport compared to how it was in 1935, but hopefully after seeing this movie, it might be the next big thing. I know after being at debate camp, I'm hooked!"

### **DENZEL WASHINGTON, DIRECTOR**

Producer Kate Forte experienced Denzel's formidable presence throughout the making of the film. "The synergy on the film was palpable. Firstly, it was amazing to observe Denzel direct. He was so confident, so prepared, so focused and energized. He is as good a director as he is an actor—which says a lot!!!"

John Heard, who plays the "bad guy" role of Sheriff Dozier, proposes, "When actors become 'big-time' and embrace something that means something special to them, that's when I take notice. Denzel Washington directing this movie makes it an honor to be a part of his cast."

"This is our third movie together. Previously, we only acted together," smiles Kimberly Elise who worked with Denzel Washington on *John Q* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. She continues, "I love Denzel's honesty and have a great deal of trust for him as a director. He'll challenge me to find something

new, something different. It's like an athlete working with a great trainer who's only going to take what you have already and make it stronger and better because he knows it's there."

Forest Whitaker who has stepped behind the camera a few times himself, praises, Denzel "as a filmmaker who seems very confident, very clear, very sure."

He reveals, "Denzel was very comfortable from the beginning. I remember the first day when he was getting ready; he just seemed so relaxed. He was ready to make this film and had done a lot of work."

Whitaker acknowledges, "I liked it that he brought us all in early so we could rehearse before we starting filming. It gave us the chance to figure out how to shape the character before shooting onto film."

His crew was equally glowing with compliments for Denzel Washington as a director.

Production Designer David Bomba chimes, "What's been so wonderful about this experience is the collaboration. Not only does Denzel give you the most amazing information to work from and to push you towards, but working with Costume Designer Sharen Davis & Cinematographer Philippe Rousselot—it's a magical collaboration—I've been having the time of my life!"

The sound mixer, two-time Academy Award® winner Willie Burton (*Dreamgirls, Bird*) offers, "My first experience with Denzel as a director was *Antwone Fisher* and I was really impressed with how he did for his first time. He was prepared and ready to go. I thought that was pretty incredible because I've worked with a lot of first-time directors and they were not as prepared as Denzel."

Burton continues, "Now with *The Great Debaters*, I knew Denzel was good, but I'm amazed at how much he's grown and how great he is on a film like this. If I had to rate him among all the directors I've worked with in Hollywood, in my book he's considered a great director—he knows what he wants, he's prepared, he's on top of it—plus he's talented!"

Washington has his own take on his ease of being behind the camera, "I've been around a long time and I've worked with some of the best directors in the history of the business."

As for the job of directing, Washington admits, "I really enjoy being behind the camera and I enjoy seeing other people do well. I enjoy that more than acting—much more—there's no comparison!"

### **RECREATING 1935**

Recreating 1935 in 2007 was no easy feat. Hiring Production Designer David Bomba, who had impressed Washington and Black with his work on *Walk The Line*, proved to be a stroke of genius.

Taking advantage of the tax credits afforded to filmmakers in Louisiana, the production opted to shoot most of the movie in small towns outside of Shreveport. Mansfield, Grand Cane, Keatchie, and Belcher, all within a 50-minute drive from the largest city in northeast Louisiana, served as backdrops for East Texas of the Great Depression.

Mansfield turned out to be the main location for the production. Bomba reminds, "The town of Mansfield, Louisiana is our town of Marshall, Texas. Mansfield has a beautiful courthouse in the middle of the square. Two sides of the square have been modernized and updated, while the other two sides were pretty much boarded up. I was able to create a 'back-lot' situation where you don't interrupt business but have a framework of something to use."

Mansfield was also the location for the two main homes that appear in the film—the home of the Farmer family and the home of Melvin B. Tolson.

Bomba compliments, “Mansfield has been extremely cooperative and very excited about what we did—kind of giving their city a little bit of a facelift back in time.”

The production shot one day at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, to take advantage of the exterior. Production Designer Bomba reveals, “Wiley College is an established college in the Piney Woods of East Texas, so there were just a few buildings we could use to fit our time period—the President’s house and the classical administration building ended up being the ones we could use.”

Costume Designer Sharen Davis had her own set of woes in resurrecting clothing from over seventy years ago.

She admits, “It was challenging because clothes from the 1930s are so hard to find. I designed all the clothing for the lead characters, but when it came to the background, I called all over the United States to vintage stores and bought out all outfits that I could find from the late 1920s and early 1930s.”

However, she did score a big coup for the wardrobe of Washington’s Melvin B. Tolson and Forest Whitaker’s James Farmer Sr.

Costume Designer Davis reveals, “Brooks Brothers has been around since the 1800s, so they were nice enough to make clothes from my illustrations for Washington and Forest Whitaker. THAT was a huge help!”

Washington allows, “A lot of the team that was here for this film was on my first movie, *Antwone Fisher*. Philippe Rousselot, a brilliant cinematographer, Willie Burton, a two-time Academy Award®-winner sound mixer, Sharen Davis, a good friend and one of the top costume designers in the business and my producing partner, Todd Black, whom I wouldn’t have made the movie without him.” He adds, “Also I have to give credit to David Bomba whom I worked with for the first time on this movie and is brilliant production designer.”

Now that 1935 is represented on the big screen, Washington discloses, “I’m glad that this group wanted to work with me and create this environment despite the long hours.”

As the movie went into the post-production stage, Washington had the greatest confidence in his team. “It’s surrounding yourself with brilliant collaborators and allowing them to do their job. After all, as captain of the ship, I don’t have to do every job on the ship—I just oversee it.”

### **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

“Although the Wiley team did defeat the national champions, we couldn’t find documentary evidence that they actually debated Harvard University. Nonetheless, we felt for our story Harvard best embodied Wiley’s incredible achievement and conveyed the real Wiley debate team’s true sense of accomplishment. In that era, there was much at stake when a black college debated any white school, particularly one with the stature of Harvard. We used Harvard to demonstrate the heights they achieved,” notes screenwriter Eisele. “The fact that we were granted permission to film there and not have to recreate it, was remarkable,” adds Producer Black.

Co-Producer Molly Allen is responsible for securing Harvard University as one of the key locations of the movie. A former location manager who worked previously with Denzel Washington on his directorial

debut, *Antwone Fisher*, she explains, “The person I was to speak to about filming at Harvard was ‘no, no, no, no, we don’t allow it.’”

She continues, “They told me that they were about education and didn’t want the interruption. But once I got the name of Eric Engle who is in charge of the Sanders Theatre in Memorial Hall, I bugged him a lot. I told him how important it was to the story that we film at Harvard and not recreate it somewhere else. He told me to be patient. He was a tremendous asset to the process. Without Eric, we wouldn’t be at Harvard.”

She smiles, “I’m a fairly impatient person so I bit my nails for four days, but when the door opened, I stuck my foot in and that was it.”

Shooting at Harvard helped the actors tremendously.

“You can just feel the heritage in the place. The moment you walk onto the stage you just instantly smile. It’s an excitement that comes over you—Hello, Harvard!!!!!!!!!!!!” shouts Denzel Whitaker.

Jurnee Smollett agrees, “Walking onto the campus of Harvard, you feel the enormity of the place. It gives you this belief that you can accomplish anything.”

Nate Parker has another take, “It didn’t really hit me until I walked onto the stage of the Sanders Theatre and saw the thousands of scuff marks on the floor and the worn leather seats in the auditorium.”

He continues, “Those scuffs on the wood signify all those feet that have crossed the stage for commencements, for secret societies—that’s when it hit me how serious a place like Harvard is. Especially when I realized this college started without African Americans—or other minorities—and that the desire of people changed that. It makes you appreciate history.”

Washington smiles, “I’m glad that Harvard allowed us to share what they represent. Harvard is the standard. It was the standard then; it is the standard now.”

Allen concedes, “In the end, quite honestly, the names of Denzel Washington, Oprah Winfrey and Harvey Weinstein carry a lot of weight. Coupled with the amazing script, how could they say no?”

### **“THE GREAT DEBATERS”**

In 1935, at the height of the Great Depression, Wiley College had a debate team that beat many universities. This movie is inspired by their wins and the fact that Melvin B. Tolson and James Farmer Sr. nurtured the team, most notably James Farmer, Jr., a gifted student who was enrolled at Wiley when he was fourteen, to be all they could be at a time when the nation was suffering on so many fronts.

In an interview with screenwriter Robert Eisele, Tolson’s eldest son, Melvin Jr., remembered eavesdropping on one of his father’s late night practices in their living room. “They would start off as kind of friendly, informal discussions about the debate topics, with lots of good humor. But they would practice for hours and suddenly it was for real. Dad would prod the debaters until it was a genuine debate. It was like an intellectual fistfight.”

“It is important for all of us to remember our own influence and power. To learn that words are weapons is an invaluable lesson,” notes Producer Forte. “We all have the ability to improve. To emphasize the importance of education, self-motivation, self-reliance is a timeless, useful, universal lesson.”

Producer Black professes, “The reason I responded to this story is that it’s different. It’s educational without beating you over the head. It tells a really great story—almost like a sports movie. You’re rooting for the people. There’s a dedicated teacher involved. It takes the idea of a classic sports movie and turns it on its ear.”

Director Washington considers, “The way I helped shape the story was how it relates to this young boy, James Farmer Jr., and what he sees about his father and what he sees in Melvin B. Tolson.”

Kimberly Elise suggests, “I see in this film a great story about education. We don’t own our children; we’re here to nurture and help shape them. Then, we have to release them and let them blossom and be all that they can be so that they can set the world, you know, aglow with their own thing.”

Forest Whitaker, deemed one of the best actors of his generation, ponders, “I think the movie operates on the theme of tolerance- allowing people to be fully who they are, giving them the dignity and respect of who and what they are.” Yet Whitaker zeroes in on James Farmer Jr., played by Denzel Whitaker.

The older Whitaker offers, “It’s about a winning debate team, but ultimately, it’s about this character,, his rights of passage, him becoming a man and moving into manhood. He slowly goes on this journey that allows him in the end to win and become who he fully is, an actualized person.”

Denzel Whitaker discloses, “I’ve heard very little about James Farmer Jr. in my history books at school. It wasn’t until I did this movie that I got an understanding of his importance in the Civil Rights Movement.” He proclaims, “It’s one of those great stories that needs to be told!”

Washington demurs, “I don’t like to answer questions about what audiences can expect from my movie, but I know there are some brilliant performances by these actors.”

He considers, “But the bottom line, the common denominator, was that there were these great educators at these historically Black Colleges and they put the children first.”

“Remember, there was no television then. Debating was so popular, you could charge admission and get a full house. At Wiley, when you had debates, whatever team was coming, it was a prize occasion. People piled in,” Tolson Jr. recalls.

“It sounds trite—but the film does have timeless and universal themes. It is a war of words. No matter the obstacles, we can achieve. Denzel’s character says something along the lines, ‘the world is not going to welcome you with open arms.’ This is a fact. It is an understatement. So, it is incumbent on us to be smart, resilient, curious, hungry for knowledge, tough, and prepared. We will do combat with our brains, words, and power of persuasion,” adds Forte.

In this instance, it was Melvin B. Tolson and James Farmer Sr., teachers at Wiley College in the 1930s, who nurtured their students to make the world a better place.

## THE GREAT DEBATERS

### About the Cast

#### **DENZEL WASHINGTON / Melvin B. Tolson**

Two-time Academy Award®-winning actor Denzel Washington is a man constantly on the move. Never comfortable repeating himself or his successes, Washington is always in search of new challenges and his numerous and varied film and stage portrayals bear this out. From Trip, an embittered runaway slave in *Glory*, to South African freedom fighter Steven Biko in *Cry Freedom*; from Shakespeare's tragic historical figure Richard III, to the womanizing trumpet player, Bleek Gilliam in Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*, Washington has amazed and entertained us with a rich array of characters distinctly his own.

Perhaps one of his most critically acclaimed performances to date was his Academy-Award® winning performance in *Training Day*, directed by Antoine Fuqua. It was one of only two films in 2001 that spent two weeks at the number one spot at the box office.

Next up for the talented thespian is his starring role alongside Russell Crowe in *American Gangster*, directed by Ridley Scott. The film is based on the true juggernaut success story that portrays the life of a cult hero from the streets of 1970s Harlem during one of America's biggest drug wars.

More recent feature films include *Déjà Vu*, re-teaming Washington with director Tony Scott whom he previously collaborated with on *Man On Fire*. Washington was also seen in Spike Lee's *The Inside Man*, opposite Clive Owen, and *The Manchurian Candidate*, a modern day remake of the 1962 classic film in the part that Frank Sinatra made famous.

In 2002, Washington starred in *John Q*, a story about a down-on-his-luck father whose son is in need of a heart transplant. The film established an opening day record for President's Day weekend, grossing \$24.1 million and was the highest weekend gross in Washington's illustrious career. The film also garnered Washington a NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture.

With many movies to his credit, other notable features include Jerry Bruckheimer's box-office sensation (\$115 million domestic gross) *Remember the Titans*. He also starred in *The Hurricane*, where he received a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor and an Academy Award® nomination (his fourth) for his portrayal of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who was the world middleweight champion boxer during the 1960s, and wrongfully imprisoned twice for the murder of three white people in a New Jersey bar.

Another critically acclaimed performance was his portrayal of Malcolm X, the complex and controversial Black activist from the 1960s, in director Spike Lee's biographical epic, *Malcolm X*, hailed by critics and audiences alike as one of the best films of 1992. For his portrayal, Washington received a number of accolades including an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actor.

His other key films are *The Bone Collector*, *Fallen*, *He's Got Game*, *The Siege*, *Courage Under Fire*, *The Preacher's Wife*, *Crimson Tide*, *Virtuosity*, and *Devil In A Blue Dress*. Additional film credits include Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Jonathan Demme's controversial *Philadelphia* with Tom Hanks and *The Pelican Brief*, based on the John Grisham novel.

In addition to his accomplishments on screen, Washington took on a very different type of role in 2000. He produced the HBO documentary *Half Past Autumn: The Life and Works of Gordon Parks*, which was nominated for two Emmys. He also served as Executive Producer on *Hank Aaron: Chasing The Dream*, a biographical documentary for TBS that was nominated for an Emmy Award. Additionally, Washington's narration of the legend of John Henry was nominated for a 1996 Grammy Award in the category of Best

Spoken Word Album for Children and he was awarded the 1996 NAACP Image Award for his performance in the animated children's special, *Happily Ever After: Rumpelstiltskin*. He made his directorial debut with *Antwone Fisher* that was released in 2002.

A native of Mt. Vernon, New York, Washington had his career sights set on medicine when he attended Fordham University. During a stint as a summer camp counselor he appeared in one of their theatre production and was bitten by the acting bug. He returned to Fordham that year seeking the tutelage of Robinson Stone, one of the school's leading professors, and upon graduation from Fordham, Washington was accepted into San Francisco's prestigious American Conservatory Theater. Following an intensive year of study in their theater program, he returned to New York after a brief stop in Los Angeles.

Washington's professional career began with Joseph Papp's Shakespeare in the Park and was quickly followed by numerous off-Broadway productions including *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*; *When The Chickens Came Home to Roost* (in which he portrayed Malcolm X); *One Tiger to a Hill*; *Man and Superman*; *Othello*; *A Soldier's Play*, for which he won an Obie Award. Washington's other stage appearances include the Broadway production of *Checkmates* and *Richard III*, which was produced as part of the 1990 Free Shakespeare in the Park series hosted by Joseph Papp's Public Theatre in New York City.

Washington was discovered by Hollywood when he was cast in 1979 in the television film *Flesh and Blood*. It was his award-winning performance on stage in *A Soldier's Play* that captured the attention of the producers of the NBC television series, *St. Elsewhere*, and he was soon cast in the long-running hit series as Dr. Phillip Chandler.

In 1982, Washington re-created his role from *A Soldier's Play* for Norman Jewison's film version. Re-titled *A Soldier's Story*, Washington's portrayal was critically well-received. He went on to star in Sidney Lumet's *Power*, Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* for which he received his first Oscar nomination, *For Queen and Country*, *The Mighty Quinn*, *Heart Condition*, *Glory*, for which he won the Academy Award® for Best Supporting Actor and Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*. Washington also starred in the action adventure film, *Ricochet*, and in Mira Nair's bittersweet comedy *Mississippi Masala*.

### **FOREST WHITAKER / James Farmer, Sr.**

Forest Whitaker is one of Hollywood's most accomplished actors/directors/producers who has showcased his talents in a multitude of demanding and diverse roles. Winning the Academy Award® this year for Best Actor for his performance as Uganda dictator Idi Amin in *The Last King of Scotland*, Whitaker also received the Golden Globe, SAG and BAFTA Awards as Best Actor. In addition to this acclaim, his independent film *American Gun*, a movie which he produced and starred in, was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

His other upcoming films include the suspense thriller, *Vantage Point*, opposite Dennis Quaid and Matthew Fox, and *Where the Wild Things Are*, an adaptation of the Maurice Sendak children's classic book, due for a 2008 release, which is mix of live-action, animation and puppetry. He is currently working on *Repossession Mambo*, opposite Jude Law.

Whitaker co-starred in David Fincher's *Panic Room* and Joel Schumacher's *Phone Booth*. In 2000, Whitaker played the title role of a spiritual gangster in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, directed by Jim Jarmusch. The film premiered at the 1999 Cannes Festival and screened at the 1999 Toronto Film Festival to critical acclaim. *Ghost Dog* was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Feature. The film's soundtrack was a co-venture with Whitaker's own company Spirit Dance.

Equally impressive are Whitaker's television credits. He continues to garner critical attention for his

performance on *The Shield*, opposite Michael Chiklis, as well as for his appearance on *ER* that earned him an Emmy nomination in the category of Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series this year.

In 2003, Whitaker appeared to critical acclaim opposite Ossie Davis in the Showtime movie *Deacons for Defense*, where he received a SAG nomination for Best Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries. Forest produced *Chasing Papi*, the first major studio romantic comedy aimed squarely at the Hispanic movie-going market for FOX 2000 through Spirit Dance Entertainment.

Whitaker made his feature-film directing debut with the critically acclaimed, box-office hit *Waiting to Exhale*. He first gained recognition as a director for the 1993 HBO original *Strapped*, for which he received the FIPRESCI Award for Best First Feature at the Toronto Film Festival. He also directed *Hope Floats*, starring Sandra Bullock, and *The First Daughter*, a romantic comedy starring Katie Holmes.

Taking on the role of producer, Forest starred in and executive produced the TV miniseries *Feast of All Saints* which won an Emmy. Before that he starred in, and executive produced, *Green Dragon*, winner of the Humanitas Award in addition to the Audience Award at the South by Southwest Film Festival. He also produced TNT's *Door to Door*, starring William Macy, which was nominated for two Golden Globes, one Emmy, as well as being honored by the American Film Institute.

Whitaker also executive produced Anne Rice's *Feast of All Saints* for Showtime. His other credits include *Witness Protection* for HBO, *Light It Up*, *Phenomenon*, *Species*, *Smoke*, *Ready to Wear*, *Jason's Lyric*, *Platoon*, *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Consenting Adults*, *Stakeout*, *The Color of Money*, *Johnny Handsome*, *Downtown*, *Diary of a Hit Man*, *Body Snatchers*, *Vision Quest* and *Fast Times At Ridgemont High*.

With three college scholarships already under his belt, Whitaker received a 4<sup>th</sup> scholarship, set up by Sir John Gielgud, upon his entrance to the drama program at Berkeley. A seasoned stage veteran at 21, baby-faced Whitaker made his film debut in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. From that point onward, Whitaker has been making history.

In 1988, Whitaker was named Best Actor at The Cannes Film Festival for his brilliant portrayal of jazz legend Charlie Parker in Clint Eastwood's *Bird*, a role for which he also received a Golden Globe nomination. Whitaker later earned widespread recognition for his performance as Jody, the hostage British soldier in Neil Jordan's Academy-Award winning *The Crying Game*. On television, Whitaker garnered a CableACE Award nomination for his performance in the Showtime original film, *Last Light*, directed by Kiefer Sutherland. He also starred in the HBO presentation *Criminal Justice*, for which he earned another CableACE Award nomination, and *The Enemy Within*, for which Whitaker received a Screen Actor's Guild nomination.

### **NATE PARKER / Henry Lowe**

It wasn't until after Nate Parker graduated from Oklahoma State University as a wrestling star that acting even registered as a possible career path. But since being "discovered" Nate has not considered anything other than acting as his life's goal and he is quickly climbing the ladder to be one of Hollywood's elite.

Nate recently completed production on two independent features. First as the star of *Tunnel Rats* a feature that looks at the Vietnam War and focuses on a special US combat unit that hunted Viet Cong in the endless tunnels under the jungles of Vietnam and second in *Felon* in which he stars alongside Val Kilmer as an officer in the penal system who is led by his strong morality instead of the corrupt system that surrounds him.

Among Nate's other feature film credits are *Pride* with Academy Award nominee Terrence Howard, *Dirty Cruel World*, and the title role of Rome in the independent feature *Rome And Jewel*. His television appearances include the Turkish television hit *Valley Of The Wolves*, opposite Sharon Stone, *Cold Case* and *The Unit*.

Besides acting, Nate also writes screenplays, television pilots and continues to be an avid athlete. In his free time he coaches kids in wrestling for a local high school in Los Angeles.

### **JURNEE SMOLLETT / Samantha Boone**

An actress and singer known for delivering heartfelt and energetic performances, Jurnee Smollett's talent continues to evolve with each new project.

Smollett made her breakthrough performance and was voted one of the five Hollywood stars to watch in the millennium by Interview Magazine, when she starred in Kasi Lemmon's critically acclaimed "Eve's Bayou." Smollett portrayed Eve, a young girl who during the course of one summer opens a Pandora's Box of family secrets. Starring opposite Samuel L. Jackson, Smollett's performance earned her a Broadcast Film Critics Award for Best Youth Performance.

Smollett recently starred in Malcolm D. Lee's "Roll Bounce" with Bow Wow, Nick Cannon which garnered her rave reviews from USA Today, The Los Angeles Times, Daily Variety and The New York Daily News among others for her portrayal of "Tori," the endearing friend who goes from braces to beautiful over the course of the film. Smollett also starred in Phil Joanou's "Gridiron Gang," opposite The Rock as well as Stephen Metcalfe's "Beautiful Joe" opposite Sharon Stone.

On television, Smollett starred on the Comedy Central series, "Wanda at Large" with Wanda Sykes. Other guest starring appearances include roles on "House," "E.R." and "Strong Medicine." She also appeared in the made for television movies, "Ruby's Bucket of Blood" with Angela Bassett as well as receiving rave reviews for her starring role in The Wonderful World Of Disney's "Selma Lord Selma," when she brought to the small screen the true-to-life story of Sheyann Webb, a determined, outspoken little girl, who befriended Dr. Martin Luther King during the 60's voter rights movement.

In addition, Smollett starred with Bill Cosby and Phylicia Rashad on the CBS sitcom, "Cosby." For her work on the series, Smollett won NAACP Image Awards in 2000 and 1999, as well as a Vision Award in 1999. Smollett also received much critical acclaim for her guest starring role as the daughter of an activist who is brutally murdered in "NYPD Blue." She began her television acting career at the age of four with a recurring role on "Full House," later reviving the character for a season of "Hangin' with Mr. Cooper." She followed by starring on the 1994-1995 ABC comedy, "On Our Own" with her real life sister and four brothers.

In addition to acting and singing, Smollett is the youngest board member of Artists for a New South Africa (ANSA), a nonprofit organization working in the U.S and South Africa to combat HIV/AIDS, advance human rights and equality, safeguard voting rights, assist, educate, and empower children orphaned by AIDS as well as other at-risk youth. Smollett has been involved with ANSA since the age of 11 and in March 2006 became ANSA's pioneer presenter for Positively Speaking, a program of the Los Angeles Unified School District HIV/AIDS Prevention Unit that brings people who are infected or affected by the disease into middle and high school classes to tell their own stories and lead discussions. Smollett has traveled to South Africa through her efforts with ANSA and met with Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, among others.

**DENZEL WHITAKER / James Farmer, Jr.**

Denzel Whitaker first grabbed the spotlight more than seven years ago by booking commercials. He went on to land a small role in *Training Day*, a movie that brought him face to face with his namesake, Denzel Washington, who went on to win the Academy Award® as Best Actor for his role in the movie.

The talented teenager has since appeared on *One On One*, and played recurring roles in *All That*, and *The War At Home*. In addition, his other television credits include numerous appearances on such hit shows as *ER* and *The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody*. He also appeared recently in a commercial for Wendy's.

A native of California, Whitaker enjoys writing screenplays, playing basketball, golf, hip-hop dancing, digital animation and independent filmmaking. Taking notes from the teachings of his mentors (and unrelated namesakes)—Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker—he aspires to be an actor and a director who will simply entertain.

**JERMAINE WILLIAMS / Hamilton Burgess**

Jermaine Williams most recently starred in *Stomp The Yard*, the coming-of-age film with Columbus Short and Meagan Good that showcased the art of stepping. He next will be seen in the comedy, *The Comebacks*, due for release this fall. Williams is also remembered for his gritty performance in *The Beat* as well as playing Bill Cosby's Mushmouth in the screen version of *Fat Albert*.

Discovered by a talent agent when he was thirteen-years-old, Williams first acted in Warren Beatty's *Bulworth*. He later starred in three seasons of the Disney Channel's *The Jersey* which landed him NAMIC nominations for Best Comedic Performance in a Series, two seasons in a row, as well as winning the Young Artist Award for Best Ensemble in 2000. Williams has also guest-starred on the hit series, *Veronica Mars* and *ER*.

A Los Angeles native, Williams spends his down time playing basketball or in the dance studio where he dances and sings. He dances for the Norwood Kids Foundation, formed by Brandy Norwood, as well as Culture Shock L.A.

**GINA RAVERA / Ruth Tolson**

Gina Ravera has gone from off-Broadway to the big screen of Hollywood. Her film credits include *Soul Food*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Five Heartbeats*, *Lambada*, *Get on the Bus*, *Showgirls*, *One Mile and One Lonely Heart*.

Currently, Ravera can be seen as Detective Irene Daniels on TNT's hit show, *The Closer*. She also has a recurring role on NBC's *ER*. In addition Ravera has guest starred and played recurring roles on such series as *Boston Legal*, *Everwood*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Frasier*. In addition, she appeared in the critically acclaimed MOW's, *The Temptations* and *The Soul of the Game*. She also starred as Jennifer Pryor opposite Eddie Griffin in Showtime's *Pryor Offenses*, based on the life of the late Richard Pryor. Audiences may also remember Ravera from *Time of Your Life* in which she starred opposite Jennifer Love Hewitt and Jennifer Garner.

Ravera's acting career began on the regional theater stage in Los Angeles, where she starred in *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* and *Mothers*.

### **JOHN HEARD / Sheriff Dozier**

John Heard has appeared in over sixty feature films, dozens of television movies and numerous award-winning dramas on television in his thirty-year career. Most recently, he co-starred in *The Guardian*, opposite Kevin Costner and Ashton Kutcher, as well as the hit series, *Prison Break* and *CSI: Miami*.

A graduate of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Heard began on the stage, winning multiple awards in both Chicago and New York, including a Theatre World Award and Obie Award for his off-Broadway performances in *Othello* and *Spirit* in 1976. His early screen successes include roles in *Cutter's Way*, *Chilly Scenes of Winter* and as Jack Kerouac in *Heart Beat*. From there, he landed starring roles in such films as *Big*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Beaches*, *Home Alone*, *Awakenings*, *In The Line Of Fire*, *Pollock*, and most recently, *White Chicks*.

Heard has turned in many memorable performances on the small screen as well, including guest appearances on such hit shows as *The Outer Limits*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Hack*, and all three *Law & Order* series. He was nominated for a CableACE Award for Best Actor in a TV Movie for his 1987 performance in *Tender Is the Night* and earned an Emmy nomination for his role in the 1999 season of the hit series, *The Sopranos*.

Other noteworthy credits for talented actor include his recurring role on *Jack & Bobby*, and guest-starring spots on *Numbers* and *Battlestar Gallactica*. In addition, Heard starred in the independent features *American Gothic* and *Sweetland* which went on to win the Audience Award at the Hamptons Film Festival. Heard also starred and co-produced *Steel City*, which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in 2006.

### **KIMBERLY ELISE / Pearl Farmer**

Kimberly Elise is an actress whose eyes seem able to peer directly into the souls of audience members. Recipient of the 2005 *Rising Star* Black Movie Award, she has garnered notable critical acclaim for her roles in such features as *Beloved*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*.

Elise began acting professionally on the theatrical stages in her native town Minneapolis. Though, she graduated from University of Minnesota with a degree in communications, the prospect of becoming an actress full-time was always of her intention. Her dreams became a reality when a short film she wrote and directed served as her entrance into the American Film Institute. The experience of moving to Los Angeles and studying at the prestigious and fiercely competitive school gave Elise all the confidence needed to make a name for herself in Hollywood.

Shortly after making her debut in the television series *In the House*, Elise made the leap to feature films as a down-on-her-luck young mother who participates in a robbery in *Set it Off* opposite Queen Latifah. Elise made quite an impression and soon received critical acclaim and a Best Supporting Actress CableACE Award for her work in *The Ditchdigger's Daughters*. Her performance in *Beloved*, opposite Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover, shortly thereafter garnered her several awards, including The Chicago Film Critic's Most Promising Actress Award, an NAACP Image Award nomination as well as the Best Supporting Actress Golden Satellite Award.

In 2000, Elise stepped into the lead for the made-for-television feature *The Loretta Claiborne Story*, playing the mentally and physically disabled athlete who made a name for herself by overcoming tremendous odds and becoming a competitor in the Special Olympics. Not only did the film provide an excellent showcase for the versatile young actress, but it was also close to her heart because of her love for sports and respect for people with special needs.

Itching to return to the stage, Elise took on the role of Beneatha in *A Raisin in the Sun* at the Williamstown Theater Festival. Upon closing the play, lead roles in *Bait* with Jamie Foxx and *Bojangles* with Gregory Hines quickly followed.

By the time she appeared in *John Q* as a financially strained mother whose husband's insurance wouldn't cover their son's heart transplant, Elise had been singled out by many critics to be one of Hollywood's brightest young stars, and her strong performance in the film opposite Denzel Washington only helped to strengthen that sentiment and earn her two more NAACP Image Award nominations. In 2004, she starred in the independent film *Woman Thou Art Loosed*, where her performance earned her an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Actress. This was swiftly followed by another independent, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* which to the critic's surprise, opened at number one at the box office and went on to earn nearly \$60 million. Her performance also garnered Elise the Outstanding Lead Actress in a Theatrical Film BET Comedy Award and the Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture NAACP Image Award. In addition, the 2006 Pan African Film and Arts Festival honored Elise with the Beah Richards Award for her outstanding contributions to American film.

Most recently Elise earned her second NAACP Best Actress Image Award for her portrayal of prosecutor Maureen Scofield on Jerry Bruckheimer's CBS television show *Close To Home*. She also starred opposite Terrence Howard in *Pride*.

## THE GREAT DEBATERS

### About the Filmmakers

#### **DENZEL WASHINGTON / Director**

Denzel Washington marked his feature film directorial debut with *Antwone Fisher*. The film, which is based on a true-life story, and inspired the best-selling autobiography *Finding Fish*, follows Fisher, a troubled young sailor played by newcomer Derek Luke, as he comes to terms with his past. The film won critical praise, and was awarded the Stanley Kramer Award from the Producers Guild of America, as well as winning an NAACP Award for Outstanding Motion Picture and Outstanding Supporting Actor for Washington. *The Great Debaters* is the second time that Washington is stepping behind the camera.

#### **ROBERT EISELE / Writer**

A writer, producer, and actor, Robert Eisele has been working in film and television for over two decades.

When his friend, Jeff Porro, first brought to his attention the two-page article that highlighted Wiley College's winning debate team coached by Melvin B. Tolson in the 1930s, Eisele instinctively sensed the cinematic value of the story. With Jeff, he spent the next two years researching the facts about the Wiley team and interviewing many of the surviving debaters, including James Farmer, Jr., shortly before his death in 1999. It was Bob and Jeff's pitch inspired by the true events that Harpo Films, Oprah Winfrey's production company, bought and subsequently developed with Eisele for Denzel Washington to direct.

More recent projects for the prolific writer include *3: The Dale Earnhardt Story*, which appeared on ESPN, and received the second highest rating for any cable movie in 2004.

In 2001, besides penning numerous episodes of the Showtime series, *Resurrection Blvd.*, Eisele was the Executive Producer when the show won the 2001 ALMA Award for Outstanding Television Series. He also earned a 2002 Writers Guild Award nomination for best dramatic episode, the third nomination of his career.

Eisele's second Writers Guild Award nomination came in 1995, with the USA Event Movie, *Lily In Winter*, starring Natalie Cole. Also serving as co-executive producer on the film, Eisele received the Pen Center USA Literary Award nomination for best teleplay in 1996.

In 1993, Showtime's *Last Light*, starring Kiefer Sutherland and Forest Whitaker, garnered Eisele his first Writers Guild Award nomination. Multi-faceted, Eisele was also the executive producer on *Last Light* and played the role of a death row lawyer, acting in scenes with both Whitaker and Sutherland.

Earlier in Eisele's career when he was primarily writing episodic television, he worked on the hit series, *Cagney & Lacey*. His *Ordinary Hero* episode won the Humanitas Prize and Imagen Award in 1986. Michael Mann saw the episode and hired Eisele as story editor for his critically acclaimed premiere season of *Crime Story*. Eisele went on to join *The Equalizer* for the next two seasons, 1987-1989, rising to supervising producer.

Eisele lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Diana, a dance teacher, his son, Nick, an aspiring producer, is working in the film business and his daughter, Marissa, is a college student. Eisele notes that his wife and children are his "most important collaborators."

**OPRAH WINFREY / Producer**

Through her company's film division, Harpo Films, Oprah Winfrey has produced projects based on classic and contemporary literature that have garnered the highest industry honors for quality acting and production. Telefilms under the "Oprah Winfrey Presents" banner have included the award-winning *Tuesdays With Morrie*, based on the best-selling novel by Mitch Albom and starring Academy Award®-winner Jack Lemmon and Emmy Award®-winner Hank Azaria; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, based on the Zora Neale Hurston novel and starring Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry; and Mitch Albom's *For One More Day*, based on his best-selling novel and starring Emmy Award®-winner Michael Imperioli and Academy Award®-winner Ellen Burstyn.

In 1998, Harpo Films produced the critically acclaimed *Beloved*, a Touchstone Pictures feature film based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Toni Morrison, which co-starred Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover and was directed by Jonathan Demme.

Winfrey made her acting debut in 1985 as Sofia in Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple*, for which she received both Academy Award® and Golden Globe® nominations. She also has been lauded for her performances in the made-for-television movies *Before Women Had Wings* (1997), *There Are No Children Here* (1993), and *The Women of Brewster Place* (1989).

**KATE FORTE / Producer**

As president of Oprah Winfrey's Harpo Films, Inc., Kate Forte develops and serves as producer on all feature films produced by Harpo Films. Forte also develops and serves as executive producer on Harpo's event television motion pictures, including the Emmy Award®-winning "Oprah Winfrey Presents" franchise for ABC.

Forte's feature producing efforts for Harpo include *Beloved*, starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover. The critically acclaimed film was based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Toni Morrison and directed by Academy Award®-winner Jonathan Demme.

On the television side, Forte built the "Oprah Winfrey Presents" franchise—a collection of high caliber, feature-quality, made-for-television movies that launched in 1997, and have aired on the ABC Television Network. Its most recent project, *Oprah Winfrey Presents: Mitch Albom's For One More Day*, adapted by Albom from his best-selling novel and starring Emmy Award®-winner Michael Imperioli and Academy Award®-winner Ellen Burstyn, is scheduled to premiere on ABC in December 2007.

The first "Oprah Winfrey Presents" production, *Before Women Had Wings*, starring Ellen Barkin, Tina Majorino and Oprah Winfrey, was honored with an Emmy Award® for Outstanding Lead Actress (Ellen Barkin). Other projects under the "Oprah Winfrey Presents" banner include *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, an adaptation of the novel by Zora Neale Hurston starring Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry, which was the most-watched movie-for-television since 1999; and *Tuesdays with Morrie*, based on the best-selling novel by Mitch Albom and starring Academy Award®-winner Jack Lemmon and Emmy Award®-winner Hank Azaria, which received four Emmy Awards® including Outstanding Made for Television Movie, Outstanding Lead Actor (Jack Lemmon), Outstanding Supporting Actor (Hank Azaria) and Outstanding Single Camera as well as awards from the Screen Actors Guild, Producers Guild of America, Directors Guild of America, and the Broadcast Film Critics Association.

**TODD BLACK / Producer**

Todd Black produced *Antwone Fisher*, the inspirational true-story drama that marked Denzel Washington's directorial debut. When Washington decided to step behind the camera for a second time to helm *The Great Debaters*, he asked Black to join him.

Black most recently produced the box office hit, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, starring Will Smith, with his partners, Steve Tisch and Jason Blumenthal of Escape Artists. They are currently in pre-production on the remake of *The Taking of Pelham 123* to be directed by Tony Scott starring Denzel Washington and John Travolta and also *7 Pounds* to be directed by Gabrielle Muccino starring Will Smith. They also produced *The Weather Man*, starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine, and Brian Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale*, starring Heath Ledger, Mark Addy and Paul Bettany.

In January 2000, Black and Jason Blumenthal merged their production company with the Steve Tisch Company to form Escape Artists. Prior to forming Escape Artists, Black was president of production at Mandalay Entertainment where he developed and oversaw such movies as *Donnie Brasco*, *Seven Years In Tibet*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Les Miserables* and *Wild Things*.

Black attended the theater program at the University of Southern California and began his professional career as a casting associate on various television shows.

**JOE ROTH / Producer**

Joe Roth is the founder of Revolution Studios, which independently produces and finances films in partnership with Sony Pictures Entertainment, Starz Encore Group and Fox Entertainment Group. In seven years of operation, Revolution Studios has released 43 films, including *America's Sweethearts*, *Christmas with the Kranks*, and *Freedomland*, all of which he directed, as well as *Black Hawk Down*, which won two Academy Awards®, *XXX*, which earned more than \$275 million worldwide, and the comedy hits *Maid in Manhattan*, starring Jennifer Lopez and Ralph Fiennes, *Anger Management*, starring Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson, and *Click* starring Adam Sandler.

Prior to founding Revolution Studios, Roth served as Chairman of the Walt Disney Studios, and Chairman of Twentieth Century Fox. In 2004, Roth was the Emmy Award® nominated producer of the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Academy Awards®s. The Oscar Broadcast received ten Emmy Award® nominations, including one for Outstanding Variety, Music or Comedy Special, and won an Emmy Award® for Outstanding Directing for a Variety, Music or Comedy Program.

**DAVID CROCKETT / Executive Producer**

David Crockett recently executive-produced *Gone, Baby, Gone*, starring Ed Harris, Morgan Freeman, and Casey Affleck. The film is the directorial debut of Ben Affleck and adapted from the novel of the same name written by Dennis Lehane who also penned *Mystic River*.

Prior to those films, Crockett executive-produced the gymnastics film *Stick It*, the hit horror remake of *The Amityville Horror* starring Ryan Reynolds, and Wes Craven's *Cursed*, starring Christina Ricci. He also co-produced *Bad Santa* and *The Guru*.

As a unit production manager and production supervisor, Crockett is credited with such films as *40 Days and 40 Nights* and *Frequency*. Crockett began his career in Chicago as a production accountant and went on to work on such films as *Scream*, *Music of the Heart*, and *The Corruptor*.

**MOLLY ALLEN / Co-Producer**

Molly Allen previously worked as a location manager for over thirty feature films. She is credited with such movies as *The Pursuit Of Happyness*, *Fun With Dick And Jane*, *Constantine*, *Along Came Polly*, *Bringing Down the House*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Double Take*, *Bowfinger* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, to name a few. *The Great Debaters* is her first producing credit.

Allen first worked with Denzel Washington on his directorial debut, *Antwone Fisher*. She was responsible for securing the sensitive naval bases in San Diego during the time immediately after 9/11 as well as the other locations in the film, including many in Cleveland. Appreciating her attention to detail, Washington asked her to team with him as his Co-Producer on *The Great Debaters*. Currently Allen in pre-production on *7 Pounds*.

**PHILIPPE ROUSSELOT, A.F.C./A.S.C. / Director Of Photography**

Academy Award®-winner Philippe Rouselot reunites with Denzel Washington having shot his directorial debut, *Antwone Fisher*. The highly respected and talented cinematographer recently shot Robert Redford's *Lion For Lambs*. He also shot Neil Jordan's *The Brave One*, starring Jodie Foster.

Rouselot has collaborated three times with director Tim Burton. He filmed *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Planet of the Apes* and *Big Fish*. He also shot *Constantine*, the movie based on the DC comics/Vertigo Hellblazer graphic novels that starred Keanu Reeves.

In 1993, the French-born cinematographer won the Academy Award® for his work on Robert Redford's *A River Runs Through It*. He also received Oscar nominations on *Henry & June* and *Hope and Glory*. Some of Rouselot's other notable features include *Remember The Titans*, *The People Vs. Larry Flynt*, *Mary Reilly*, *Interview With The Vampire*, *Flesh & Bone*, *Sommersby*, *Dangerous Liaisons* and *Diva*.

**DAVID J. BOMBA / Production Designer**

David Bomba recreated Marshall, Texas of 1935, in northeastern Louisiana and east Texas. Recommended to Director Denzel Washington due to his work on the critically acclaimed *Walk The Line*, Bomba also designed the sets for Michael Cristofer's *The Game Plan*, due out in theaters this fall. Some of his other film credits as production designer include *She's the Man*, *The Wendell Baker Story*, *Secondhand Lions*, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, *Original Sin*, *My Dog Skip* and Todd Haynes' *Safe*.

In 1999, the Art Directors Guild honored Bomba with a nomination for his work on the award-winning HBO movie *Gia*, starring Angelina Jolie in the title role. In 2006, Bomba won the Art Directors Guild Award for Excellence in Production Design for his sets in the acclaimed Johnny Cash biopic *Walk The Line*.

As an Art Director, Bomba has worked on such films as Steven Zaillian's *A Civil Action*, Robert Benton's *Twilight*, Andrew Davis' *Chain Reaction*, John Schlesinger's *Eye for an Eye*, Ron Howard's *Apollo 13*, Bruce Beresford's *Silent Fall* and John Waters' *Serial Mom*, among others.

**SHAREN DAVIS / Costume Designer**

Sharen Davis is a favorite among directors, thanks to her attention to detail. Twice nominated for the Academy Award®, first for her work in Taylor Hackford's *Ray* and then again last year in Bill Condon's *Dreamgirls*, the talented designer was honored this spring by the New York Women In Film & Television organization during their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Designing Hollywood tribute.

Some of Davis' other credits include *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Out Of Time*, *High Crimes*, *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*, *Rush Hour*, *Doctor Doolittle*, *Devil In A Blue Dress*, and Alan Rudolph's *Equinox*, which marked her first feature film. In addition, Davis worked with Director Denzel Washington on his directorial debut, *Antwone Fisher*. Currently Davis in pre-production on *7 Pounds*.

#### **WILLIE D. BURTON / Sound Mixer**

Willie Burton has won two Academy Awards® in the course of his career. His first was for his work on *Bird*, directed by Clint Eastwood, and his second was for last year's hit *Dreamgirls*. A highly respected person in the business, Burton has worked on some of the best movies. A partial list of his films include *The China Syndrome*, *Urban Cowboy*, *The Color Purple*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *In The Line Of Fire*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Bridges Of Madison County*, *Se7en*, *Courage Under Fire*, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, *Beloved*, *8MM*, *The Green Mile*, *Panic Room*, *Man On Fire*, *Jarhead* and *The Pursuit of Happyness*, to name just a few. He also was the sound mixer on *Antwone Fisher*, Denzel Washington's directorial debut.

His most recent film is Peter Berg's *The Kingdom*.

#### **HUGHES WINBORNE / Editor**

Hughes Winborne won the Academy Award® for his work on *Crash*. He went on to edit the box office hit, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, starring Will Smith. In addition, the talented editor is credited with such highly acclaimed movies as the Academy Award®-winning *Sling Blade* (Best Screenplay). Winborne also edited Mark Rydell's *Jump Shot*. Hughes' next project will be *7 Pounds*.

Some of his other noteworthy films include *A Slipping-Down Life*, starring Lili Taylor and Guy Pearce, which was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize when it debuted at the Sundance Film Festival, and *Rhythm Thief*, which won the Special Jury Prize in 1994, also at Sundance. In addition, Winborne edited *Employee of The Month*, *Stark Raving Mad*, *Nobody's Baby* and *Buddy Boy* as well as Ted Demme's short, *The Bet*, another movie that debuted at Sundance and launched the late director's feature film career.

For television, Winborne has edited numerous episodes of the hit series *Alias*, as well as the Emmy-nominated film *Walter & Henry*.

#### **JEFF PORRO / Story By**

Dr. Jeff Porro, Ph.D. has written "first-person speeches" and provided communication strategies for the CEOs of Eastman Chemicals, the McGraw Hill Companies, Office Depot, Bristol Myers Squibb, as well as for diplomats such as former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former President Jimmy Carter and other government leaders, and presidents of some of the nation's leading trade and professional associations. He helps corporate, government and nonprofit leaders take their visions to a new level, moving key audiences with speeches that engage minds, open eyes, touch hearts and awaken the spirit. In addition to offering his expertise to world and business leaders, he has extended his skills to the world of entertainment. Dr. Porro discovered and researched the true story of a Jim Crow-era African American college debate team, and helped turn it into the 2007 feature film *The Great Debaters* starring Denzel Washington.

As head of Porro Associates, LLC, Dr. Porro draws on his background as a research scholar and a Washington policy analyst to weave persuasive arguments. At the same time, his creative writing has given him the skill and empathy to capture a speaker's voice and evoke the speaker's passion.

Dr. Porro holds a Ph.D. in political science from U.C.L.A..

## THE GREAT DEBATERS

Unit Production Manager  
David Crockett

First Assistant Director  
Jono Oliver

Second Assistant Director  
Greg Hale

Melvin B. Tolson	DENZEL WASHINGTON
Henry Lowe	NATE PARKER
Samantha Booke	JURNEE SMOLLETT
James Farmer, Jr.	DENZEL WHITAKER
Hamilton Burgess	JERMAINE WILLIAMS
Dr. James Farmer, Sr.	FOREST WHITAKER
Ruth Tolson	GINA RAVERA
Sheriff Dozier	JOHN HEARD
Pearl Farmer	KIMBERLY ELISE
Helen Farmer	DEVYN TYLER
Nathaniel Farmer	TRENTON MCCLAIN BOYD
Deputy	RITCHIE MONTGOMERY
Pig Owner	JACKSON WALKER
Pig Farmer	TIM PARATI
Dunbar Reed	ROBERT X. GOLPHIN
Harland Osbourne	JUSTICE LEAK
Harvard Debater #1	GLEN POWELL JR.
Harvard Debater #2	BRAD WATKINS
Harvard Dean	BRIAN SMIAR
Wilson	DAMIEN LEAKE
Paul Quinn Debater #1	VOLTAIRE RICO STERLING
Paul Quinn Debater #2	STEPHEN RIDER
Paul Quinn Debate Judge	GORDON DANNIELS
Oklahoma City College Debater #1	DONNY BOAZ
Oklahoma City College Debater #2	SAM WHISNANT
Dr. Jennings	BONNIE JOHNSON
Benita	CHARISSA ALLEN
Trudell	MICHAEL BEASLEY
Enormous Man	GARY MATHIS
Samuel	GEORGE WILSON
Clementine	FAHNLOHNEE HARRIS
William Taylor	HAROLD X. EVANS
Captain Wainwright	J.D. EVERMORE
Lila	SHARON JONES
Joseph	KELVIN PAYTON
White Labor Organizer	SOUTHEY BLANTON
White Sharecropper #1	MICHAEL MATTISON
White Sharecropper #2	JEFF BRAUN
Prairie View Professor	MILTON R. GIPSON
Security Guard	FRANK RIDLEY
Radio Announcer at Harvard Debate	JEREMIAH KISSEL
White Man at Lynching	JACK RADOSTA
Howard Debater #1	MARCUS LYLE BROWN
Juke Joint Musician #1	ALVIN "YOUNGBLOOD" HART
Juke Joint Musician #2	DOMINIQUE FLEMONS

Juke Joint Musician #3	JUSTIN ROBINSON
Juke Joint Musician #4	RHIANNON GIDDENS
Fisk Professor	AHMAD POWELL
Puppeteers	GREG NICOTERO GINO CROGNALE MICHAEL DEAK ALEX DIAZ
Stunt Coordinators	STEPHEN POPE STEPHEN RITZI
Tolson Stunt Double	ROBERT POWELL
Stunts	TIM ANTWINE KEVIN BEARD BOB BECKLES GREGG BRAZZEL LEX D. GEDDINGS THIRL HASTON JIM HENRY JACK LITTLE ERIC NORRIS RUSSELL TOWERY GUS WILLIAMS JOE WILLIAMS
Production Supervisor	VALERIE BLETH SHARP
Co-Editor	JOHN BREINHOLT
Post Production Supervisor	BRIAN MCNULTY
Art Director	JOHN R. JENSON
Assistant Art Director	ROB SIMONS
Set Decorator	PATRICK CASSIDY
“A” Camera / Steadicam Operator	MARK LA BONGE
“A” Camera First / “B” Camera Operator	PAMELA RITTELMEYER
“A” Camera Second / “A” Camera First	XIOMARA COMRIE
“B” Camera First Assistant	SEAN O’SHEA
Additional Camera Assistants	FRANK PARRISH MYRON PARRAN PATRICK BENSIMMON
Film Loader	TIFFANI L. STEPHENSON
Aerial Cinematographer	GARY TOLBERT
Script Supervisor	KAREN GOLDEN
Costume Supervisor	DANA HART
Assistant Costume Designer	JODIE STERN
Additional Assistant Costume Designer	DIAH WYMONT
Mr. Washington’s Costumer	FRANK ROSE
Key Costumer	RIKI SABUSAWA

Set Costumers	YVONNE BASTIDOS
	MITZI HARALSON
Wardrobe Textile Artist	JULIA GOMBERT
Costume Illustrator	FELIPE SANCHEZ
Key Seamstress	GIGI SPENCE
Seamstress	FRANCES LECOMPTE
Costumers	TOBY M BRONSON
	RENEE DODSON CLAPP
	ANDREE FORTIER
	REN HEERALAL
	KRYSTLE LAMOREAUX
	MERIWETHER NICHOLS
	LIZ STAUB
	SUSAN THOMAS
	LAUREN WADE
	RACHEL WALKER
Wardrobe Production Assistants	MEGAN COATES
	ANAYA KELLOGG
	GAYLE ANDERSON
	KENNETH LECOMPTE
	MAX NEWMAN
Department Head Makeup	CARL FULLERTON
Key Makeup	MATIKI ANOFF
First Assistant Makeup	DENISE PUGH-RUIZ
Makeup Artists	LINDA LAZAR
	LATOYA GREEN
	NIKKI BROWN
Department Head Hairstylist	KENNETH WALKER
Co-Department Head / Mr. Washington's	
Hairstylist	LARRY CHERRY
Key Hairstylist	BELINDA ANDERSON
First Assistant Hairstylist	VALERIE GLADSTONE
Hairstylists	ANDREA YOUNG
	ANDREA BOWMAN
	JANICE HUDSON
Sound Mixer	WILLIE D. BURTON, C.A.S.
Boom Operator	GARY A. THEARD
Cable Person	STEVEN HUERSTEL
Video Assist	DAN FURST
Production Coordinator	JEFF VALERI
Assistant Production Coordinator	NICKI JOHNSON
Production Secretary	NATALIA ANDERSON
Office Production Assistants	ANTONIO SANTOS
	MEREDITH WIECK
	TRAE CARTER
Unit Publicist	CID SWANK
Still Photographer	DAVID LEE
Production Accountant	ALISON CANNON

First Assistant Accountant	ANNE SCOTT
Second Assistant Accountants	FRED SHEAR JAMIE HORWITZ
Payroll Accountant	DAVID HICKEY
Accounting Clerk	MINDY JONES
Post Production Accounting	R.C. BARAL & COMPANY
Executive Assistant to Mr. Washington	RITA PEARSON
Assistant to Mr. Washington	STEPHANETTA BINGLEY
Assistants to Mr. Black	CHRISTINE COGGINS JENNA BLOCK
Assistant to Ms. Forte	SHANNON THOMPSON
Assistant to Mr. Crockett	ROB BROWN
Second Second Assistant Director	KALI HARRISON
Additional Second Assistant Director	GEORGE BOTT
DGA Trainee	NATALIE BROWN
Production Assistants	RICK WEAVER JASON HALLEY PATRICK PFUPAJENA THERESA LEE HODGE GRIGSBY TERRY HARRIS DANNY ANDERSON DAVID HEFFLER ALAJAHWON RIDGEWAY ANDRIA WARREN
Film Runner	MARK SHARON
Gaffer	JACK ENGLISH
Best Boy Electrician	JAMES BABINEAUX
Rigging Gaffer	STEVE BEASLEY
Best Boy Rigging Electrician	TARIK NAIM ALHERIMI
Electricians	PHILLIP ABEYTA BRYAN BOOTH SIMONE PERUSSE STEVE THORP
Balloon Technician	BOB BATES
Key Grip	ALAN RAWLINS
Best Boy Grip	RIKO SCHATKE
Key Rigging Grip	TED SAPP
Best Boy Rigging Grip	JACOB ROSS
Dolly Grip	DARRYL HUMBER
Grips	GIOVANNI BOMMARITO GINA CASSIDY DONNY FOWLER GARY KELSO KERRY G. RAWLINS
Location Manager	KEI ROWAN-YOUNG
Key Assistant Location Manager	ALEX BORYS
Assistant Location Manager	CHRISTINA DECHARLES
Location Scouts	RAINE HALL ROBERT M DONALDSON PHILLIP MESSINGER

Air Conditioning Provided by	KAREN BRADY
Air Conditioning Technician	AIR ON LOCATION EDGAR ROBLES
Casting Associate	ANGELA DEMO
Casting Assistant	NATALIE BALLESTEROS
Location Casting	TRACY KILPATRICK
Key Extras Casting	CHRISTOPHER GRAY
Extras Casting Associate	SELISA SIRLS
Extras Casting Assistants	CHRISTIAN JUNEAU LAMAR WILLIAMS
Property Master	JOHN BANKSON
Assistant Property Master	VIRLE REID
Property Assistant	C. ALAN BERRY
Leadman	TOMMY SAMONA
Assistant Set Decorator	HELEN BRITTEN
Set Dressing Buyer	ELIZABETH MIRE
Set Dressing Gang Bosses	CORY PARKER TOM CHRISTOPHER
On Set Dresser	PATRICK FUHRMAN
Set Dressers	ED BURCHAM CHAD HARRIS PHILLIP JOFFRION JOEY KENT GORDON THOMAS
Storyboard Artist	GARY THOMAS
Art Department Coordinator	SHELLIE GILLESPIE
Art Department Assistant	DILLON JIM BREITHAAPT
Set Dressing Assistant	DEBORAH R. NORRIS
Special Effects Supervisor	JACK LYNCH
Special Effects Coordinator	JEFF WOODREL
Additional Editor	GERAUD BRISSON
Apprentice Editor	ALLAN MARASCO
Post Production Coordinator	IAN CROCKETT
Visual Effects Producer	BRIAN MCNULTY
Visual Effects by	300 NINJAS, INC. PACIFIC TITLE AND ART STUDIO
Sound Re-Recording Mixers	TATEUM KOHUT GREG ORLOFF RICK KLINE
Supervising Sound Editors	KAMI ASGAR, M.P.S.E. SEAN McCORMACK, M.P.S.E.
ADR Supervisor	KIM DRUMMOND
Foley Supervisor	JONATHAN KLEIN
Dialogue Editor	SCOTT G.G. HALLER, M.P.S.E.
ADR Editor	ERIN OAKLEY
Sound Designer	DORIAN CHEAH
Sound Effects Editors	JON WAKEHAM JOHN MARQUIS

	HERWIG MAURER
	TIM TUCHELLO
Foley Editor	MICHAEL DRESSEL
Foley Artists	AMY KANE
	ELIZABETH RAINEY
	ANITA CANNELLA
Foley Mixer	CARMINE RUBINO
First Assistant Sound Editor	JACOB RIEHLE
Assistant Sound Editor	ERYNE PRINE
Post Production Sound Services by	424 POST
Music Editor	TODD KASOW
Assistant Music Editor	BARBARA McDERMOTT
Sound Mix Recordist	FRED W. PECK III
ADR Mixers	BRIAN SMITH
	HOWARD LONDON
ADR Voice Casting	KATE CARLIN
Re-Recorded at	SONY PICTURES STUDIOS
Sony Post Production Facilities	RICHARD BRANCA
	JULIANNE McCORMACK
Dolby Sound Consultant	THOM "COACH" EHLE
Technical Score Advisors	STUART MICHAEL THOMAS
	CHRIS P. BACON
	DAVE HOLDEN
Orchestra Conducted by	GAVIN GREENAWAY
Orchestra Contractor	ISOBEL GRIFFITHS
Assistant Orchestra Contractor	CHARLOTTE MATTHEWS
Score Recorded by	GEOFF FOSTER
Score Mixed by	JOEL IWATAKI
Score Recorded at	ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS, LONDON, UK
Score Mixed at	REMOTE CONTROL STUDIOS
Score Coordinator	PAMELA SOLLIE
Score Assistant	JULIA NEWMANN
Orchestra Leader	ROSEMARY WARREN-GREEN
Guitars	JOHN PARRICELLI
	HUGH BURNS
Cello Solo by	MAYA BEISER
Special Effects Makeup	GREG NICOTERO
	HOWARD BERGER
Special Effects Shop Foreman	SHANNON SHEA
Special Effects Sculptors	JAVIER ZEPEDA
	ANDY SCHOENBERG
Special Effects Mold Makers	CHRIS CERA
	JOE GILES
	BRIAN GOEHRING
	AJ VENUTO
	JIM LEONARD
	LINO STAVOLE
	GRADY HOLDER
Special Effects Art	STEVE HARTMAN

	CALEB SCHNEIDER
	CAREY JONES
	ANTHONY MATIJAVICH
	CHRISTINA PRESTIA
Special Effects Hair	ANNELIESE BOIES
	JACK BRICKER
Special Effects Mechanics	DAVE WOGH
	JEFF EDWARDS
Construction Coordinator	JERRY HENERY
Construction General Foreman	DEAN ALLISON
Construction Foreman	SCOTT CHILDERS
Construction Buyer	KATHY BRUNSWICK
Gangbosses	STEVE LAKS
	ROBERT BOWDEN
Paint Supervisor	JIM PASSANANTE
Standby Painter	JOHN MORGAN
Paint Foremen	SEAN BERNARD
	SUSANNA GLATTLY
	ANDREE LAGO
Paint Gangbosses	KEVIN FLEMING
	AZHRIAZ VANASHTA
Sign Writer	MIKE MONCKTON
Greens Foreman	LARRY MISSELHORN
Greensman	RYAN MISSELHORN
On Set Greensman	WILLIAM NUTT
Set Medic	NANNETTE PALMER
Construction Medic	DIANE DAVIS
Transportation Coordinator	TED MOSER
Transportation Captain	RICK DAVIS
Transportation Co-Captain	JUSTIN NANCE
Transportation Dispatcher	LORI MAXWELL
Mr. Washington's Driver	C. GAVIN ROBERSON
Drivers	ANNETTE ANSLEY
	JOHNNY B. ANTWINE
	DAVE BALSLEY
	RICHARD BENAVIDEZ
	ADRIAN CANNON
	BRET CARROLL
	JOHN DEVAY
	BRENT DAHLIN
	STEVE DRIGGERS
	JUAN ECHANARRIA
	MONTE EMERY
	PHIL K. FROST
	DAVE GLAVIN
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	DAN HINES
	RICH LENGLE
	JORGE LOREDO
	KIM MAGRUDER
	WENDE L. MARTIN
	DALE MOSER

DEANNA PANIAN  
EUGENE PURCELL  
BEVERLY REEVES  
BOB SMITH  
JORGE VASQUEZ  
BILLY WEST

Mr. Washington's Security provided by UNITED TACTICAL SECURITY  
Additional Security provided by GREENBELT SECURITY

Animal Wrangler TAMMY PECK  
Wild Animal Wrangler JULIAN SYLVESTER

Dance Consultant DIANNE GRIGSBY

Studio Teacher LOIS YAROSHEFSKY

Clearance Coordinator ASHLEY KRAVITZ

Catering provided by GALA CATERING  
Craft Services NANCY JAMES  
Craft Service Assistants BRIAN STUART  
ARTHUR WELCH

Stand Ins SHAUN COBBS  
DAN HAYGOOD  
WHITNEY HICKS  
DARYLL MANNING  
DELANO WILSON

Inflatable Crowd Extras Provided by THE INFLATABLE CROWD CO.

Digital Intermediate by EFILM  
Colorist YVAN LUCAS  
DI Producer CHRIS PREJZA  
DI Editorial CURTIS LINDERSMITH  
Color Timer LEE WIMER  
Negative Film Management MO HENRY

Title Design and Opticals by PACIFIC TITLE & ART STUDIO  
Title Designer BRUCE SCHLUTER  
Titles Producer UNJOO BYARS

Production and Legal Affairs BABOK & LEVIN, LLP  
Music Legal and Clearance CHRISTINE BERGREN

### **BOSTON / HARVARD UNIT**

Production Supervisor JEFF VALERI

Boston Casting by CAROLYN PICKMAN, CSA

Additional Key Second Assistant Director ERIC YELLIN  
Location Consultant CHARLIE HARRINGTON  
Location Manager JEFF MACLEAN

Assistant Location Manager STEVE OARE  
Location Assistant JOSH YOUMAN  
Transportation Coordinator BILLY O'BRIEN  
Transportation Captain JAMES DONAHUE  
Picture Car Coordinator BOB ANDERSON  
First Assistant Accountant GINO FALLA  
Assistant Production Coordinator KATRINA JOY PARSONS  
Office Production Assistant BRENDAN HARVEY  
Construction Foreman SCOTT FORSTER  
Scenic Foreman PAUL WILSON

**FOR THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY**

Executives in Charge of Production CARLA GARDINI  
KELLY CARMICHAEL  
Executives in Charge of Physical TIM CLAWSON  
Production TRACY MCGRATH  
Executives in Charge of Post Production MICHAEL A. JACKMAN  
JEFF MAYNARD  
Executive in Charge of Business Affairs LAINE KLINE  
Executive in Charge of Music RACHEL LEVY

**FOR HARPO FILMS**

Associate Producers MELODY FOWLER  
VALERIE SCOON  
Physical Production EILEEN MALYSZKO LEE  
Operations and Business Affairs SCOTT STEIN  
Publicity LISA HALLIDAY

Songs

My Soul Is A Witness  
*Performed by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart & Sharon Jones*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell  
Traditional  
Arranged by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart, Sharon Jones & G. Marq Roswell

Begrüssung  
*Performed by Marian Anderson*  
Public Domain  
Courtesy of BMG Classics

How Long Before I Can Change My Clothes?  
*Performed by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell  
Traditional  
Arranged by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart

Rock and Rye  
*Performed by David Berger & The Sultans of Swing*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell & David Berger  
Written by James R. Mundy  
Courtesy of Such Sweet Thunder Recordings

Delta Serenade

*Performed by David Berger & The Sultans of Swing*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell & David Berger  
Written by Edward Ellington, Manny Kurtz, Irving Mills  
Courtesy of Such Sweet Thunder Recordings

Step It Up & Go

*Performed by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart & Teenie Hodges*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell  
Traditional  
Arranged by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart & G. Marq Roswell

I Ain't Got Nowhere To Travel

*Performed by The Delmore Brothers*  
Written by Alton Delmore & Rabon Delmore  
Courtesy of RCA Victor

I Would Do Anything For You

*Performed by Art Tatum*  
Written by Alexander Hill, Claude Hopkins & Bob Williams  
Under License from Universal Music Enterprises  
Courtesy of Verve Music Group

The Shout

*Performed by Art Tatum*  
Written by Art Tatum  
Under License from Universal Music Enterprises  
Courtesy of Verve Music Group

When The Saints Come Marching In

*Performed by the Grambling State University Marching Band Quartet*  
Traditional  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell

Shortenin' Bread

*Performed by the Grambling State University Marching Band Quartet*  
Traditional  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell

Scoodle Um Skoo

*Performed by Papa Charlie Jackson*  
Written by Charles Jackson  
Courtesy of Jazzology Records  
Analog-to-Digital Re-mastering Courtesy of Old Hat Records

Run... Run/All Hid

*Performed by Nate Parker*  
Traditional

Wiley College Fight Song

*Performed by members of The Grambling State University Marching Band*  
Produced by G. Marq Roswell

Stompin' The Blues

Produced by David Berger

Performed by Eric Lewis

Two Wings

*Performed by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart, Sharon Jones with Billy Rivers & The Angelic Voices of Faith*

Produced by G. Marq Roswell

Written by Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart, G. Marq Roswell, Kristin Wilkinson & David Huntsinger

Up Above My Head

*Performed by Sharon Jones, Alvin 'Youngblood' Hart with Billy Rivers & The Angelic Voices of Faith*

Produced by G. Marq Roswell

Arranged by Sharon Jones, G. Marq Roswell, Kristin Wilkinson, Larry Paxton, David & Bonnie Huntsinger

Original Soundtrack on Atlantic Records

Score Album on Varèse Sarabande

Music Research ADAM SWART

Song Recording Engineers JEFF POWELL  
ROGER RHODES  
OSCAR ZAMBRANO  
ROB BRAZZEL  
EDDIE DELANA

On-Camera Songs Recorded at ARDENT STUDIOS, MEMPHIS, TN  
GROOVEMASTERS, SANTA MONICA, CA  
PRECISION STUDIOS, SHREVEPORT, LA  
BENNETT STUDIOS, INGLEWOOD, NJ

Gospel Choir BILLY RIVERS & THE ANGELIC VOICES OF FAITH

Grambling State University Band DR. LARRY PANNELL  
CHARLES LACY

Wiley College Choir STEPHEN HAYES

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Photograph of Langston Hughes by Carl Van Vechten, used with permission of the Van Vechten Trust.

Sarah Norcliffe Cleghorn - "The Golf Links"

William Butler Yeats - "The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water"

James Joyce - "Ulysses"

Scenes filmed on location at  
Memorial Hall's Sanders Theatre at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Wiley College in Marshall, Texas

Citi Performing Arts Center, Wang Theatre in Boston, Massachusetts

Denzel Washington's and Forest Whitaker's suits provided by Brooks Brothers  
Shoes and Belts provided by Allen Edmonds  
Shirts provided by Arrow / Van Huessen  
Hats provided by Stetson

Additional Clothing provided by Carhartt  
Camera Cranes, Camera Car, and Dollies by Chapman/Leonard Studio Equipment Inc.

The Producers wish to thank the following:

Dr. Thomas Freeman  
Clarice P. Lowe  
J. Marie McCleary  
Dr. Melvin B. Tolson, Jr.  
Henrietta B. Wells  
Bukka White  
City of Mansfield, Louisiana  
City of Shreveport, Louisiana  
Deval Patrick and the Governor's Office of Massachusetts  
City of Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Patricia Papa, Boston Film Bureau  
Nicholas Paleologos, Massachusetts Film Office  
Sgt. Michael O'Connor, Boston Police Department  
Mike Testa & Joe Rotondo, DCR  
Dr. Allen Counter  
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Production services provided by Discovery Partners in association with Future Screen Capital

Special Thanks to Wiley College in Marshall, Texas

American Humane Association monitored the animal action. No animal was harmed in the making of this film  
(AHA 01635)



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