

# Denzel Washington Stars in Richard Attenborough's "Cry Freedom"

Denzel Washington, now in his sixth season as one of the stars of television's long-running "St. Elsewhere" series, was not overwhelmed and did not regard it as a potential career move when producer/director Richard Attenborough offered him the pivotal role of martyred black South African leader, Stephen Biko, in "Cry Freedom."

"You see," he explains quietly, "I don't take on the weight of the things I do because I'm just a vehicle. I am not a source of light, I simply try to be a good reflection of it. There are two important questions I ask myself. Is this right and should I be doing it? I don't look on "Cry Freedom" as a career move, and therefore I don't get excited about it. This may sound crazy — but the first thing I did in my own way, was to ask Steve Biko whether this was the right thing to do and should it be done. I did not say to myself this is going to be great for my career, it's with Richard Attenborough and I'm fortunate to have all those things working for me. I honestly have to admit that I don't care who's doing it. If it wasn't right for me, I wouldn't do it."

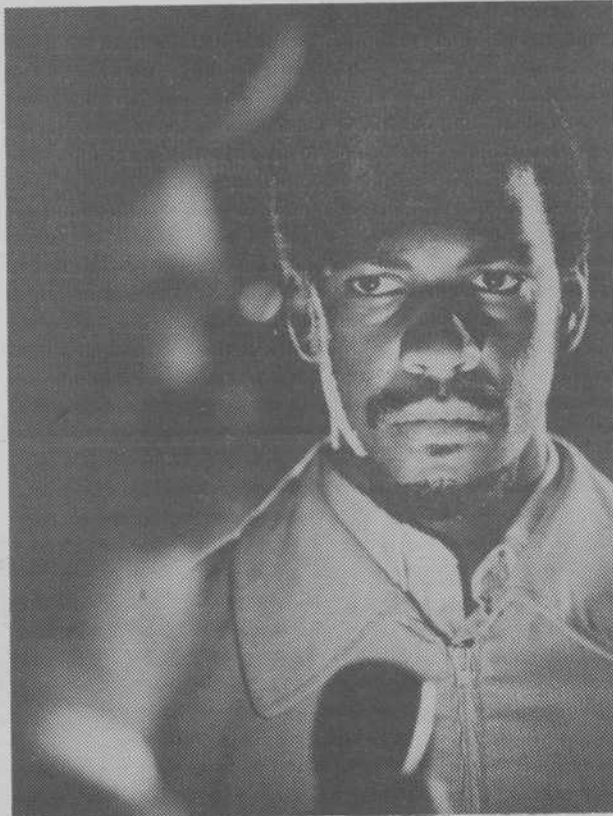
Born in Mt. Vernon, New York, in 1956, Washington

attended Fordham University with the intention of studying medicine. But after appearing in a summer camp stage play, he returned to Fordham in a different state of mind and finally graduated with a B.A. in Theatre Arts. After winning a scholarship and studying for two years at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, he returned to New York and found work with Joseph Papp's Shakespeare in the Park. He followed by appearing in a number of off-Broadway productions, including "Ceremonies and Dark Old Men" and "When the Chickens Came Home to Roost," in which he starred as Malcolm X.

In 1981 Washington made his Hollywood debut in "Flesh and Blood," co-starring Tom Berenger, and then appeared in "Carbon Copy" as the long-lost son of George Segal. Returning to New York, he created the role of Pfc. Melvin Peterson in the Negro Ensemble Company's off-Broadway production of "A Soldier's Play," a performance which not only won him an Obie Award but attracted the attention of the producers of MTM's "St Elsewhere," who cast him in the ongoing role of Dr. Phillip Chandler.

The following year Washington reprised his Pfc. Peterson role in the film "A Soldier's Story," directed by Norman Jewison. He returned briefly to the New York stage for "Every Good-bye Ain't Gone" and then was asked by director Sidney Lumet to appear opposite Richard Gere in "Power," playing a part originally writ-

such a resounding international success, Richard Attenborough's new film "Cry Freedom" is an explosive, emotional and powerful movie set in contemporary South Africa. "Cry Freedom" is based on fact and tells of a profound and extraordinary friendship between two men whose lives initially appeared worlds apart. Their true story



Stephen Biko's (DENZEL WASHINGTON) face is illuminated by police flashlight as he is arrested at a random roadblock.

ten for a white actor in his middle 50s.

In 1984 the actor starred opposite Alfre Woodward in the Los Angeles production of "Split Second" and, early in 1985, following the end of the third season of "St Elsewhere," played the title role in the CBS movie, "The George McKenna Story." It was immediately after his return to New York on finishing the film that he learned Richard Attenborough wanted to meet him to discuss "Cry Freedom."

Washington lives with his wife, actress/singer Pauletta Pearson, and their 3-year-old son, John David, in Los Angeles, where he has been appearing with Paul Winfield in "Checkmates" at the Crossroads Theatre before leaving for England to star in a new film, "For Queen and Country."

### "CRY FREEDOM," Production Notes

In the style of intimate biography set against epic scenery and historic events which made his "Gandhi"

is so controversial that a government tried to suppress it, police officers tried to deny it and one man and his family risked their lives to expose it.

### CREDIT BLOCK

Richard Attenborough's "Cry Freedom" is a Marble Arch Production, starring Kevin Kline, Penelope Wilton, Denzel Washington. Based on the books "Biko" and "Asking for Trouble" by Donald Woods. Music by George Fenton and Jonas Gwangua. Costumes designed by John Mollo. Production designed by Stuart Craig. The editor is Lesley Walker. Co-producers are Norman Spencer and John Briley. Director of photography is Ronnie Taylor, B.S.C. Executive in charge of production is Terence Clegg. Screenplay by John Briley. Produced and directed by Richard Attenborough. A Universal Picture.

### SYNOPSIS

Bantu Stephen Biko (Denzel Washington) is a young black who lives in a township

## NAACP From Page 6

• Minniejean Brown Trickey, 45. The mother of six. She is a writer and lives on a farm at Kenabek, North Ontario, Canada with her husband, a zoologist.

• Jefferson A. Thomas, 44. He lives in Anaheim, CA. Two other special events have been scheduled during the NAACP board meeting. The first is a reception at the Governor's Mansion on Thursday, October 22nd.

The second is a banquet on Friday evening, October 23rd at which Arkansas' Governor, Bill Clinton, will deliver the address.



shack. He has a compelling personality — warm, articulate, compassionate. He is also well educated. At Natal University, as a medical student, he helped to found the Black Consciousness Movement, similar in many ways to the "Black Is Beautiful" campaign concurrently gaining ground in the United States. The aim of the South African movement is to imbue black people with a sense of positive pride in themselves and their heritage without aid or intervention from well-meaning, liberal-minded whites.

Donald Woods (Kevin Kline) is just such a white. His family has lived in South Africa for five generations. Now in his early 40s, Woods is the affluent editor of a crusading newspaper. He has grown to hate the white government's oppressive policy of legalized racism, instituted in 1948 and termed "separate development" or Apartheid.

In 1975, Woods believes he is effectively playing an enlightened role in the struggle to end Apartheid. Then, accepting a challenge, he agrees to meet a black man, 13 years his junior, who has been declared a Banned Person because of his political activity: Bantu Stephen Biko.

(A banned person in South Africa ceases publicly to exist. Effectively imprisoned in your own home, you are forced to act as your own jailer. In addition, you may not be quoted by name in the media. You are forbidden to write anything, even in a private journal. Apart from members of your immediate family, you are not allowed to be with more than one other person at a time. You are prohibited from entering educational, printing or manufacturing premises. Lastly you may not travel outside your banning area, normally the few square miles of the magisterial district in which you live.)

Biko is the first black Afri-

can Woods has met who treats him as an equal. Using friendship and logic, Biko obliges Woods to re-evaluate his liberalism and then proceeds to alter the entire course of the editor's life.

Woods perceives Biko as a persuasive man of peace with the potential to sway many more minds and hearts, possibly even helping to avert the bloodbath increasingly predicted for South Africa to this day. But on August 18, 1977, Biko is arrested at a roadblock outside Grahamstown, Cape Province. Twenty-five days later, a victim of brutal security police interrogation methods, Bantu Stephen Biko is dead.

That his name, his ideals, his vision and his life story are not buried with him is greatly due to the unflagging persistence of his friend, Donald Woods. Becoming himself a banned person, harassed and under constant surveillance by the same security police, Woods and his wife, Wendy (Penelope Wilton), decide they and their five children must leave the country. To do so means abandoning their homeland, their friends, relatives, life savings — everything. They take with them one bag of personal belongings — and a manuscript which is Woods' biography of Biko. It has been written illegally in secret and, because the authorities will consider it as treason, can only be published abroad.

The escape of Woods and his family, entailing disguise, deception and a heart-stopping race against the clock, has all the elements of a fictional thriller. But the very real penalties for even partial failure can only be measured against the fate of Steve Biko and that of countless others — many of them black children who are held to this day in South African police detention, without trial, charge, prosecution or evidence.

### EARL SWIFT SR.



### Cheyenne Square Barber Shop

399-9041

3250 Civic Center Dr.

### THE HAIR STYLIST