

# Finally, an Academy Awards pshow worth viewing

By George E. Curry  
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Like Usher, I have a confession. I don't usually watch the Academy Awards. I don't think much of the garbage that usually emanates from Hollywood. And I almost gag every time someone tries to hold up entertainers and athletes as role models for African-Americans. But I tuned in Sunday night for one reason and only for one reason — to see if Jamie Foxx would get a well-deserved Oscar for his portrayal of Ray Charles. And when he won, I yelled.

To understand my attachment to the movie, "Ray," you must understand that I love to mimic people. I can imitate Jesse Jackson, Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, my high school principal, my former football coaches, Howard Cosell and Stevie Wonder, among others. But after seeing Jamie Foxx as Ray Charles, not a week has passed without me imitating Jamie Foxx imitating Ray Charles.

I know what you're thinking: "Why not skip the middleman and imitate Ray Charles?" If that's your question, you haven't seen the movie. See, imitating Jamie Foxx is imitating Ray Charles. There is no middleman. Rooting for Jamie Foxx to win was also prompted by my feelings toward Ray Charles, the man.

## Malcolm X

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predict what Malcolm would think if he were alive today, but I believe he would embrace the situation in Darfur, Sudan, and oppose the war in Iraq." Kelley's remarks came after Professor Manning Marable's recitation of Malcolm's life, noting his rise from criminality to world acclaim as a political thinker and an intellectual.

These points were given further exposition by Farah Jasmine Griffin, Jessica Buchanan, Bryonn Bain, Sonia Sanchez, and Imam Al-Hajj Talib Abdur-Rashid.

Imam Rashid placed Malcolm's life within a religious context, carefully charting his religiosity that grew from the strictures of the Nation of Islam to orthodox Islam.

This Malcolm moment was co-sponsored by the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, the Center for Contemporary Black History, the Association of Black and Latino Graduate Students, and the Black Students Organization.

At about the same time people were assembling at Columbia, some of Malcolm's daughters were at the center of a celebration at the newly renovated Audubon Ballroom that by May 19, Malcolm's birthday, will be called the Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center.

A number of prominent political figures were in attendance, most notably the Rev. Al Sharpton and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. There is no point attempting to list all of the people that crossed the stage at Abyssinian Baptist Church for the Institute of the Black World 21st Century celebration of Malcolm's life and influence.

Percy Sutton, founder and chairman emeritus of the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation, recounted his days with Malcolm, stirring the crowd with his recollection of riding with the leader in a car, accompanied by heavily armed body guards. "They think they're guarding me," Sutton recalled Malcolm saying.

Malcolm told Sutton a story about a man named Omar and his appointed rendezvous with destiny, and then stunned his lawyer with: "My destiny is that someone will kill me."

When he stopped performing before segregated audiences in the South, he began occupying a special place in my heart. I've been a fan of Bill Russell, the former Boston Celtics center, and Muhammad Ali over the years, not because they were exceptional athletes — and they were — but because they refused to be relegated to anyone's back seat.

When I was in high school, I remember reading Bill Russell's autobiography, "Go Up for Glory," and his recounting how he flew back to Boston when he learned that he was expected to stay in a segregated colored hotel on the road. Ali risked his career, standing up for his religious beliefs. Russell and Ali were the exceptions.

And so was Ray Charles. And that's why I pulled so hard for Jamie Foxx on Sunday night. I was also pleased that Morgan Freeman won an Oscar for his supporting role as a retired boxer in "Million Dollar Baby." I'd much rather see him win for that than for "Driving Miss Daisy." Let Miss Daisy drive herself.



GEORGE CURRY

the second.

Confession No. 2: I didn't see *Monster's* or any other kind of ball. I make no apology for not wanting to see a Black woman have an affair with a racist prison guard who executed her husband.

In my book, there isn't that much acting in the world. Not only did I not pay to see the movie, I refuse to watch it on free TV, if you can call cable free. I decided a long time ago that I would not knowingly waste my time or money on a Black person playing an ignorant, demeaning or subservient role. As you've probably deduced by now, I didn't do cartwheels when Denzel and Halle picked up their Oscars.

Of all of the great movies Denzel Wash-

## Lawsuit

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"They'll have to do it the old-fashioned way," she said. In the Brown family's claim, they believe Brown "made no aggressive movements, no furtive gestures, and no physical movements which would suggest to a reasonable officer that he was armed with any kind of weapon, or had will, or the ability to inflict substantial bodily harm against any individual."

The claim also says Brown was not driving in a manner that would suggest to any "reasonable" officer that he had an intent to harm them. In addition to the release of more facts surrounding the shooting, the family is also asking for the personnel files of Officer Garcia following a *Los Angeles Times* report that said Garcia has had problems in the past with following procedure.

"[Garcia] made it into a fast-moving situation. ...He made it into a life-or-death situation," Dunn said. "We know there has been some question regarding his ability."

The claim alleges the city is to blame for "deliberate indifference to the maintenance, training and control of the Los Angeles Po-

## Clingman

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lice Department." The claim further alleges civil rights violations, which could prompt the family to file a federal court suit, Dunn said.

"A life was taken, and we're standing together now because we do not accept that," Dunn said. In the wake of Brown's death, elected officials, clergy and community activists have tried their best to keep tempers from flaring further, holding community meetings and prayer sessions to prevent another civil unrest.

The NAACP, which has been relatively silent since the Brown shooting, announced that it will sponsor a March 11 public hearing on police misconduct.

According to a statement released by the NAACP of Los Angeles, those attending must agree that the meeting is "our last such meeting, because we are not going to break up this meeting until we have a solution and a plan of action. We believe that public monitoring and measuring progress will help our city heal."

Gene Johnson Jr. writes for the *Wave Newspapers*.

ington has starred in — "Malcolm X," "Hurricane Carter" and "Remember the Titans" — Hollywood decided to reward him for his role as a dirty cop. Some of my friends have argued — obviously, without success — that I should lighten up and realize these are only movies. In the ideal world, that might be true. But movies are never just movies to us.

It does matter what roles we see African-Americans play. It does matter whether they are rewarded for playing the role of a principled, self-loving person or a White racist's sex object.

Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee managed to star on Broadway and in Hollywood without compromising their dignity. Some of our Black performers don't have their dignity intact because they never had any in the first place. They are under the illusion that they are just actors and actresses.

I don't expect everyone to share my view. If you want to spend money supporting movies that denigrate African-Americans, don't complain when that's all Hollywood gives you. In the foreseeable future, I am going to quote Jamie Foxx quoting Ray Charles: "I gotta do what I gotta do."

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the *NNPA News Service*.

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and social independence. The King is not going to do it, brothers and sisters.

Since I have been writing this weekly column for more than a decade, I figured I'd let a White man, do the talking this time; maybe more of our people will listen and act, because if a White man called for a revolt, it must be all right for a Black man to call for one. So I leave you with Patrick Henry's most famous words:

"Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department.

Malcolm's life may have been snuffed out, but "they kill our Black shining princes," boomed Viola Plummer, one of several veteran activists saluted at the event, including Regent Adelaide Sanford, Preston Wilcox, Sister Kefa Nephphys, Jitu Weusi, the Rev. Herb Daughtry, and Herman Ferguson.

Ferguson, a founding member of the Organization of the African-American Unity, was effusive in his praise and recollections of Malcolm. Rather than relay some of his impressions, see the long interview he did in *Souls* journal, sponsored by the Center for Contemporary History at Columbia.

However, it should be noted that Ferguson did reveal some portions of conversations he had with Malcolm. "When I became part of the OAAU, Malcolm told me that the only things he had to offer were prison and the graveyard," Ferguson said.

Among the highlights at Abyssinian was the indomitable Sonia Sanchez, and she was as passionate here as she was earlier in the evening at Columbia. After reciting a long roster of heroes and heroines, Sanchez chose her own special way of ululation and conjuring the magnificence of the fallen Malcolm.

M-1 of dead prez read with impeccable resonance the eulogy Davis delivered at Malcolm's funeral, and the Welfare Poets and crew electrified the church with its rap and rapture.

As Ron Daniels and James Turner declared, toward the program's end, though a good job had been done remembering Malcolm, "there is still a lot of work to be done" to live up to his name and immeasurable contributions.

"If you truly want to carry on Malcolm's legacy, then you'll go back to your communities and organize," Daniels said, conveying once again the admonitions put forth by the church's pastor, Rev. Calvin Butts; Haki Madhubuti; Professor James Smalls; Carlos Russell; Monifa Akinwale-Bande; Marta Vega; and Grenada's Ambassador Lemuel A. Stanislaus. "Malcolm may be gone in the flesh, but his spirit is everywhere," said poet Shani Jamila. Yes, everywhere.

Herb Boyd writes for the *New York Amsterdam News*.