

'Great Debaters' tops at NAACP Image Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Denzel Washington's "The Great Debaters" and Tyler Perry's TBS series "House of Payne" took top honors at the NAACP Image Awards last week.

"The Great Debaters" was named top film, while acting prizes went to its stars — Washington, Jurnee Smollett and teenager Denzel Whitaker. Washington also directed the film, based on the real-life victories of a Black debating team in the 1930s.

"I'll be at that other show next week, but my heart is here," said Washington, who is a presenter at the Feb. 24 Academy Awards. "I'm just so happy to see these young people get recognized."

"Tyler Perry's House of Payne" won for comedy series, and its stars LaVan Davis and Lance Gross won acting prizes. Perry said they had produced 100 shows in a year and that TBS just ordered up another 26.

"Nobody thought it would work," Perry said. "I don't



The Oprah Winfrey-produced "Great Debaters" earned various NAACP Image Awards.

care if a thousand people tell you no, if you get one yes from God, that's all you need to make it. Today, I stand here with that God 'yes.'"

Janet Jackson won for supporting actress in a motion picture for her turn as psychiatrist in Perry's adaptation of his own stage play,

"Tyler Perry's Why Did I Get Married?"

Jackson later introduced Stevie Wonder as he was inducted into the NAACP Hall of Fame. Wonder used his time onstage to praise the 99-year-old organization. "It's through this organization that we now have two [presiden-

tial] candidates, one a female and the other an African-American."

"I say let them both win so that we can have a strong, united people of the United States," Wonder said to applause. "I'm very, very excited about the possibility."

Alicia Keys won four

awards in the music category — for album, song, music video and female artist — but was not in attendance and was not mentioned during the televised portion of the ceremony. The show featured musical performances from Ziggy Marley and Angelique Kidjo, Sounds of Blackness and Wonder.

Special honors at the 39th Image Awards, held at the Shrine Auditorium, went to veteran Oscar-nominated actress Ruby Dee and to singer Aretha Franklin.

Franklin said she was on hand for NAACP's very first awards ceremony.

"I was here when the sets were falling down and cue cards were being written in the wings just before the artists walked on stage," she said. "This is the icing on the

cake for me."

Franklin stirred up controversy in recent days with an angry statement criticizing Beyonce Knowles' introduction of Tina Turner at the Grammy Awards as the "the Queen." In his opening monologue, host DL Hughley pointedly called her "the Queen" and joked that he didn't want to get on Franklin's bad side.

"Grey's Anatomy" won for drama series; its star Chandra Wilson won an acting prize, and creator Shonda Rhimes won for writing. The actor in a drama series trophy went to Hill Harper of "CSI: NY," who handed the trophy off to his mother onstage.

"This is for you. Happy Valentine's Day," Harper said. (See *Debaters*, Page 7)

Writers

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writers for standing firm.

"I'm happy it's over and glad that cooler heads prevailed," said Ajakwe. "I take my hat off to Patrick and the board who got us a better deal that was initially on the table. Clearly it showed that writers do matter and were prepared to make sacrifices to get what they deserved."

The elation was felt by the entertainment community at large. Michael Waynes, owns and operates the Executive Car Service, a by-appointment interior and exterior car detailing company.

"I'm very happy... the strike affected all of us," said Waynes, 42, who has worked the Paramount Studios lot on Melrose Avenue for 23 years.

"I wasn't hit as hard as other businesses because three quarters of my clientele are on the corporate side. However, I had to abandon plans to hire new staff for the beginning of the year."

Marcy De Veaux, a Hollywood corporate public-relations specialist, is looking forward to reconvening business with clients like TNT, TBS and CBS, to promoting new shows on what may be a slim-downed pilot season.

"I'm pleased for the writers and the below-the-line workers," she said. "I think it will be tough to get back to business as usual, but I think the resolution has come early enough that the pilot season will move forward."

Olu Alemoru writes for the Los Angeles Wave.

Movie chronicles life, times of boxer

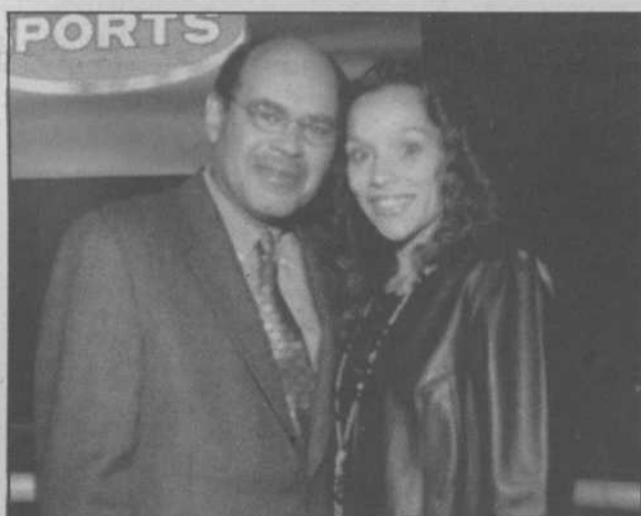
Special to Sentinel-Voice

While the statue of former heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis sits in Caesars Palace, his stature remains a luminous presence in both the sports world and 20th Century America.

The grandson of slaves, Louis become one of boxing's all-time greats, as well as a world-class humanitarian—fighting in World War II, helping his fellow man and, during the Moulin Rouge's brief run in 1955, serving as a greeter.

So it was great to see his son, Joe Louis Barrow Jr., on hand Sunday at the Palms Hotel and Casino discussing his father's legacy. Barrow was part of a program put on by HBO and Comcast in partnership with the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas. The screening of "Joe Louis: America's Hero... Betrayed," chronicled Louis ascent in the face of setbacks. The TV premiere will be aired Sat., Feb. 23 on HBO.

Born May 12, 1914, in LaFayette, Ala., Joseph Louis Barrow—who became known as the "Brown Bomber"—was America's first true crossover athlete. As the first Black sports star worshipped by both Black and White fans, he was respected not only for his boxing talents, but also for showing the world what a person of color could do if given the



Joe Louis Barrow Jr., the former heavyweight champ's son.

opportunity.

When he fought, the world stood still. Louis' record-breaking career began in 1934. Winning his first 27 fights, all but four by knockout, he dominated opponents. Louis held the world heavyweight title 11 consecutive years, successfully defending his title a record 25 straight times; his career record of 68-3 makes him one of the greatest heavyweights ever.

"No human body can take the punishment that Jolting Joe dishes out once he goes after his prey," wrote Nat Fleischer in the April 1939 edition of *The Ring* magazine.

From the Great Depression through World War II and into the 1950s, Joe Louis was the poster boy for the American way of life. In

1938, when Louis beat Germany's Max Schmeling, his victory was seen as democracy's defeat of Nazism, boosting morale and transforming him into a hero.

"Joe Louis had an astonishing career," says Ross Greenburg, president, HBO Sports president Ross Greenburg said in a press statement. "In the mid-'30s, years before Jackie Robinson's arrival in Brooklyn, this boxing champion challenged preconceived notions of race and class."

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