

SIDNEY POITIER, KBE

ACTOR, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, AND DIPLOMAT

Known for critically acclaimed roles during a career spanning 1946 to 2001, including *The Defiant Ones*, *Lilies of the Valley*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and *Separate but Equal*. Instrumental in raising the visibility of African American performers, helping to break down the color barrier. Earned multiple prestigious awards; distinguished as first African American actor (and first Bahamian actor) to win the Academy Award for Best Actor. Served as non-resident Bahamian ambassador to Japan from 1997 to 2007 and as Bahamian ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 2002 to 2007.

ENTERTAINMENT CAREER

Multiple Companies

1946 – 2001

Actor, Director, Producer

Appeared in more than 55 motion picture, television, and stage productions, collaborating with major studios, top directors and producers, and other high-caliber actors.

- **Actor, Major Motion Pictures:** Beginning in 1947 with uncredited role in *Sepia Cinderella*, starred in more than 40 feature films.
 - Achieved greatest box office draw in 1967 with three highly successful films, *To Sir, with Love*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.
 - In 1963, distinguished as first African American to win Academy Award for Best Actor, for *Lilies of the Field*.
 - Recognized with first Academy Award nomination in 1958, for Best Actor in *The Defiant Ones*.
- **Actor, Television:** Starred in six television movies and two miniseries between 1991 and 2001.
 - Filmed final acting role as Henry Cobb for the 2001 TV movie, *The Last Brickmaker in America*.
 - Portrayed Nelson Mandela in 1997 television movie, *Mandela and de Klerk*, focused on negotiations between Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk to restructure government of South Africa.
 - Starred as Thurgood Marshall in 1991 television miniseries, *Separate but Equal*, depicting Marshall's arguments before the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*.
 - Early career included guest appearances on four television shows, *The Philco Television Playhouse* (1952 and 1955), *Ponds Theater* (1955), *Omnibus* (1952), and *CBS Television Workshop* (1952).
- **Actor, Theater:** Debuted in 1946 as Harry Belafonte's understudy in *Days of Our Youth*. Other stage work included *Lysistrata* (1946) and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959).
- **Director:** Directed nine films between 1972 and 1990, including *Stir Crazy* (1980), which ranked as top-grossing film directed by an African American for 20 years.
- **Producer:** Served as producer or executive producer on three major motion pictures and one television movie between 1971 and 1998.
- **Narrator:** Recorded multiple spoken word albums, including *Poitier Meets Plato* (1964), *Sidney Poitier Reads Poetry of the Black Man* (1969), and the Grammy Award-winning *Life Beyond Measure* (2008).

DIPLOMATIC AND BOARD CAREER

Multiple Entities

1995 – 2007

Diplomat and Board Member

Extended influence beyond acting and directing to include corporate and government positions.

- Appointed as non-resident ambassador from Bahamas to Japan from 1997 to 2007 and as ambassador from Bahamas to UNESCO from 2002 to 2007.
- Served on board of directors of The Walt Disney Company from 1995 to 2003.

A W A R D S & A C H I E V E M E N T S

Academy Awards

- 2001, Honorary Academy Award Recipient
- 1963, Best Actor, *Lilies of the Field*
- 1958, Best Actor Nominee, *The Defiant Ones*

British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA)

- 2016, BAFTA Fellowship Recipient
- 1968, Best Foreign Actor Nominee, *In the Heat of the Night*
- 1967, Best Foreign Actor Nominee, *A Patch of Blue*
- 1965, Best Foreign Actor Nominee, *Lilies of the Field*
- 1962, Best Foreign Actor Nominee, *A Raisin in the Sun*
- 1959, Best Foreign Actor, *The Defiant Ones*
- 1958, Best Foreign Actor Nominee, *Edge of the City*

Golden Globe Awards

- 1991, Best Actor in a Miniseries or Television Film Nominee, *Separate but Equal*
- 1981, Cecil B. DeMille Award Recipient
- 1970, Henrietta Award Nominee, World Film Favorite
- 1969, Henrietta Award Nominee, World Film Favorite
- 1968, Henrietta Award, World Film Favorite
- 1967, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama Nominee, *In the Heat of the Night*
- 1965, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama Nominee, *A Patch of Blue*
- 1963, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama, *Lilies of the Field*
- 1961, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama Nominee, *A Raisin in the Sun*
- 1959, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy Nominee, *Porgy and Bess*
- 1958, Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama Nominee, *The Defiant Ones*

Grammy Awards

- 2009, Best Spoken Word Album Nominee, *Life Beyond Measure*
- 2001, Best Spoken Word Album, *The Measure of a Man*

Prime Time Emmy Awards

- 1997, Outstanding Actor in a Limited Series or Movie Nominee, *Mandela and de Klerk*
- 1991, Outstanding Actor in a Limited Series or Movie Nominee, *Separate but Equal*

Screen Actors Guild Awards

- 2000, Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient
- 1998, Outstanding Actor in a Miniseries of Television Movie Nominee, *Mandela and de Klerk*

Other Awards and Tributes

- 2021, Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, "Sidney Poitier Grand Lobby" Dedication
- 2014, American Academy of Achievement, Golden Plate Award
- 2011, Film Society of Lincoln Center Gala Tribute Honoree
- 2009, United States Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient
- 1995, Kennedy Center Honors Recipient
- 1994, Hollywood Walk of Fame Star for Motion Pictures
- 1992, AFI Life Achievement Award Recipient
- 1974, Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE)
- 1963, Berlin Film Festival, Silver Bear for Best Actor, *Lilies of the Field*
- 1958, Berlin Film Festival, Silver Bear for Best Actor, *The Defiant Ones*