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Chadwick Boseman as Jackie Robinson in the film '42,' opening Friday at theaters nationwide.

The Legend

Film '42' the story of Jackie Robinson

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There's a scene in "42" in which Jackie Robinson, the first black player in modern Major League Baseball, endures intolerably cruel racial slurs from the Philadelphia Phillies' manager.

It's early in the 1947 season. Each time the Brooklyn Dodgers' first baseman comes up to bat, manager Ben Chapman emerges from the dug-out, stands on the field and taunts him with increasingly personal and vitriolic attacks. It's a visible struggle, but No. 42 maintains his composure

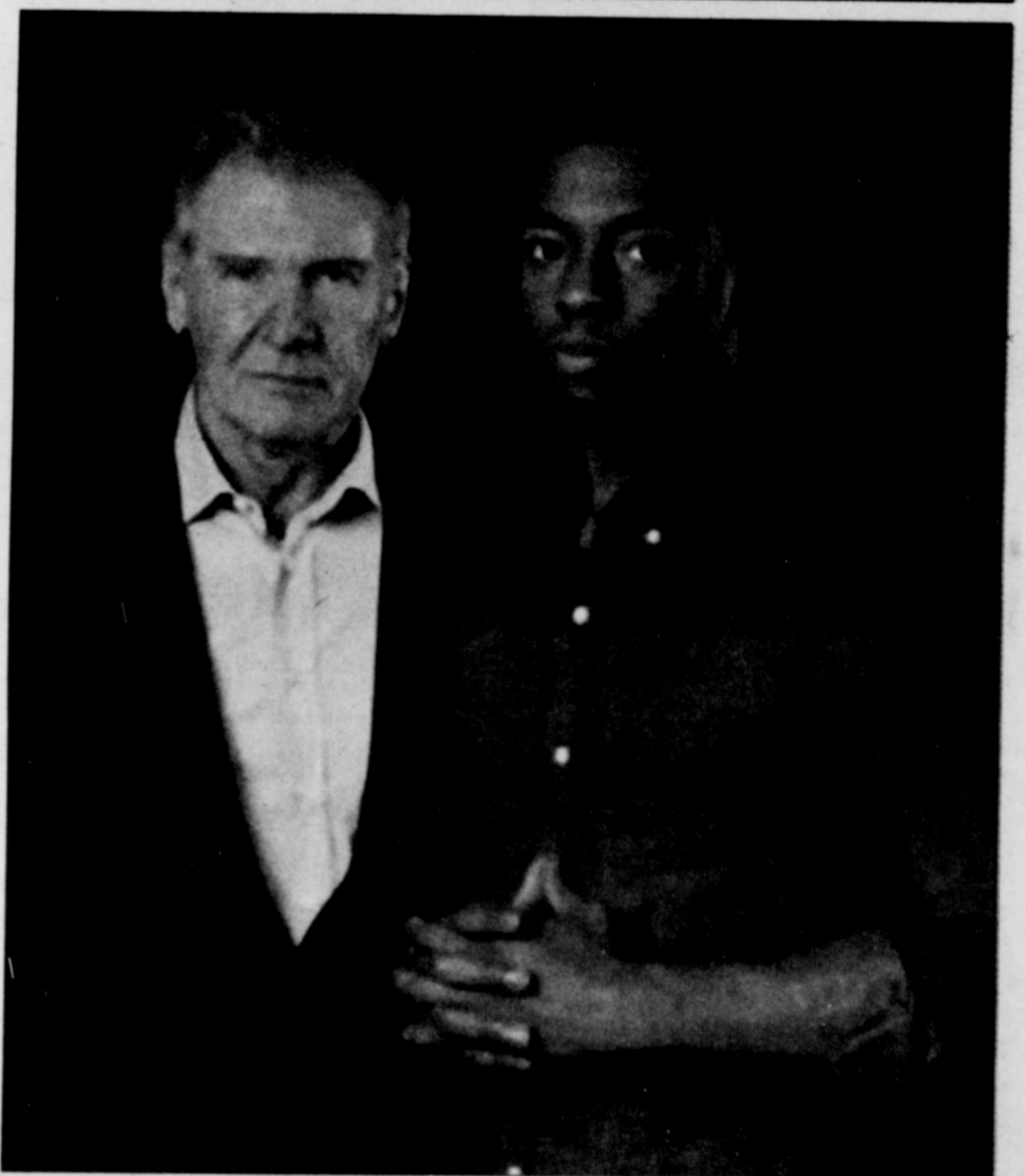
before a crowd of thousands.

As a viewer, it's uncomfortable to watch - although as writer-director Brian Helgeland points out, "if anything, the language we have in that scene was cleaned up from what it was."

Such hatred may seem archaic, an ugly episode in our nation's history that we'd rather forget. But remembering Robinson's accomplishments is more important than ever, say people involved with "42" and baseball historians alike. And because he was such an inspiring cultural figure, it's more important than

ever to get his story right.

Helgeland, an Oscar winner for his "L.A. Confidential" screenplay who previously directed "Payback" and "A Knight's Tale," said he felt "an enormous amount of pressure" to be faithful to Robinson's story, both because of his significance and because his life had been written about so extensively. That included recreating games right from the box scores. So when Robinson (Chadwick Boseman) homers during a crucial pennant-race game off



Harrison Ford (left), and Chadwick Boseman, cast members in the film "42," pose together for a portrait, in Los Angeles.

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