

Viola Davis: The 'Won't Back Down' Interview

Viola Davis was born on Aug. 11, 1965, on her grandmother's farm in St. Matthews, S. C., but raised by her parents in Central Falls, R.I. After earning a degree in theater from Rhode Island College in 1988, she went on to do post-graduate work at the prestigious Juilliard School prior to embarking on a critically-acclaimed professional career.

Ms. Davis made a memorable mark on Broadway, winning Tonys for stellar performances as Tonya in "King Hedley II" and as Rose in the revival of "Fences." She's also been nominated twice for an Academy Award, for her powerful portrayal of stoic Aibileen in "The Help" and for her equally-sterling interpretation of Mrs. Miller in "Doubt."

Viola's other noteworthy screen credits include impressive outings in "Traffic," "Nights in Rodanthe," "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close," "Eat Pray Love," "Madea Goes to Jail," "Antwone Fisher," "World Trade Center," "Trust," "Knight & Day," "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" and "State of



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

Play." And her upcoming films include "Enders Game" with Harrison Ford, "Beautiful Creatures" with Emma Thompson and "The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby" with Jessica Chastain.

Here, she talks about her new film, "Won't Back Down," a female empowerment saga, where she plays Nona Alberts, a jaded teacher who joins forces with a frustrated single-mom (Maggie Gyllenhaal) to turn around an underperforming public school.

Kam Williams: Hi Viola, thanks for the interview.

Viola Davis: Thank you, Kam.

KW: Music teacher Steve Kramer asks: What interested you

in "Won't Back Down?"

VD: My interests in the film were two-fold: the backdrop of education and also the human story within it about a woman who, when she was in her twenties, had all these high ideals and hopes of taking the world by storm as a great teacher and also as a great mother. But all of that was just blown to bits, and we find her at a low point where she's totally disillusioned. For me, the movie is about her story of coming back to life again. And that journey is a very human one. It intrigued me, and I saw it as a very interesting challenge as an actor.

KW: What was it like working with such a top-flight cast: You had an Academy-Award-winner Holly Hunter, as well fellow Oscar-nominees Maggie Gyllenhaal and Rosie Perez?

VD: You forgot another Oscar-nominee, Marianne Jean-Baptiste. It was fabulous! To me, it's always a luxury to be able to work with the best of the best because they make it easier for you to do what you do. It's harder to work with people who are not as dedicated to their craft. It also leaves you a better actor when you finish the project, since you always feel like you've learned something. And it's refreshing to spend time with actors who are so vocal, so articulate. "You get more material to steal from." That's what I always say. [LOL]

KW: Editor/Legist Patricia Turnier would like to know whether you had any problems with any of your lines in the script, and how you handle such a controversy.

VD: Yes, I did have a problem with a few things, which is good for an actor. The average person might not see it that way. The sentiment that I had a little trouble with was the idea that, "You change the school, you change the community." I couldn't wrap my mind around that. I just feel that those two trains need to be leaving



Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhaal in 'Won't Back Down'

the station at the same time. I think that that's a heck of a responsibility to expect schools and teachers to change these challenged communities. Many of them are experiencing growth deficits or are going bankrupt, and are infected

the high school teacher who inspired him to become a teacher was how the union had stepped in and saved the man's job when the system was failing him. So, I don't feel it's anti-union. I consider it pro-activist.

When you're really passionate, you're going to grab hold of every rope you see, and wrap them around your arms and legs to claw your way out.

with gang violence with as many as 85 percent of the people living below the poverty line. I knew this was going to be a hotbed issue, but I didn't realize how volatile it was going to become once the movie was released. Nevertheless, I welcome this spirited discourse. That's always been a spearhead to change.

KW: Is the big brouhaha due to allegations that the picture is anti-union?

VD: Yes, that is what the controversy's about. I don't think the film's anti-union. I feel it's pro-education. The teacher, in the end, becomes the hero. The teacher! Oscar Isaac's character [Michael Perry] says in the film that the one of the things he remembers about

KW: Larry Greenberg was wondering what would you say is the movie's message?

VD: The movie really emphasizes that we're all in the position to be the change that we want to see in this country. And I think there's no better time to bring that message home. What's interesting is that that theme is a common thread in the film, even in terms of the two main characters' taking control of their own personal lives. At the end of the day, nobody can tell you how to tackle failure or how to handle change. The world is very good at encouraging you to go along with the status quo and at basking in your

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Services for Richard Carley, 81

Mr. Richard Eddie Carley, the husband of Mrs. Alice Stein (King) Carley and father of Ms. Constance Carley, passed away on Thursday, Sept. 20, in Seattle, Wash. He was born on the 26th of November, 1930 in Tampa, Fla. He served over 20 years in the United States Coast Guard from which he retired in February 1968.

A viewing will take place from 3 until 7 p.m. on Thursday the 27th of September in Columbia Funeral Home's Fire-side Room.

Mr. Carley's remains will be interred at 10:30 a.m. on Friday the 28th of September at Tahoma National Cemetery located in Kent, Wash. A memorial service will then take place at Grace



United Methodist Church located in Seattle, Washington at 1 p.m. followed by a repast.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEATTLE 2012



If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Friday September 28

OLDMILL DAYS/ THE FOREST FESTIVAL. Chainsaw Carvings Competition, ice sculptures carvings, live music, lumber jack show and much more. All day event. Port Gamble, HWY 104, 1/4 mile south of Port Gamble

BITE OF BROADVIEW. This family friendly festival

has a little something for everyone. Enjoy carnival rides and games, live music, food and more. 4 - 10 p.m. 405 N. 117th St.

Saturday September 29

HARVEST CELEBRATION. Featuring Harmonica Plaza, The Smalltime String Band, an orchard maze & scavenger hunt and much more. Come enjoy the Harvest Celebration free for all to enjoy. 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Magnuson Park Amphitheater & Children's Garden, 6344 NE 74th St.

Sunday September 30

SEATTLE CENTER WELCOMES VIBRANT AND ENTERTAINING POLISH FESTIVAL. Free entertainment and performances by Polish groups, workshops

related to Polish Culture and children's activities. Noon - 6 p.m. Seattle Center, 305 Harrison St.

Friday October 5

PHINNEY FARMER'S MARKET. There's always a wonderful array of fresh fruits, vegetables and other locally made food as well as several enticing options. Phinney Neighborhood Center Gallery, 6582 Phinney Ave. N.

Sunday October 7

CROATION CULTURAL ROOTS AND CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES AT CROATIAFEST. Enjoy live performances, cultural displays, hands-on activities, foods and a lively marketplace. Noon - 8 p.m. The Seattle Center, 305 Harrison St.