

## Chamere Poole's DuVernay and Selma Intro

Born in Long Beach, California in 1972, Ava Marie DuVernay recalls being a kid who didn't see many relatable images of black life and family on television. After graduating from UCLA in 1995 with a double major in English and African American studies, DuVernay skipped film school and created her *own* career path to filmmaking. Interested in journalism, she worked in television media production as well as film publicity and marketing which brought her close to directors and on set experiences that eventually inspired her to try her own hand in the world of film. By 2005, DuVernay was producing her own material that focused on the experiences of people of color in America. It didn't take long for her work to be noticed. For her second film *Middle of Nowhere* (2012), she received the 2012 Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award presented by Film Independent, and she became the 1st African American woman to win the U.S. Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival. After revising the original screenplay script, *Selma* (2014) would become her third directed film. With this work she earned the honor of being the 1st black female director nominated for both a Golden Globe Award and an Academy Award for Best Picture. Her documentary *13<sup>th</sup>* also earned her an Oscar nomination for best feature documentary in 2016. It is predicted that DuVernay will be making more waves this year; her highly anticipated film adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's young adult, science fantasy novel *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) is set to release next month. This will make her the 1<sup>st</sup> black female director of a live-action film with a budget exceeding \$100 million dollars, a feat that also makes her the overall 2<sup>nd</sup> female

director to do so following Patty Jenkins's \$149 million dollar budget for *Wonder Woman* (2017).

In addition to documentaries and major motion pictures, DuVernay's diverse portfolio includes short films, commercials, music videos, and even companies. Her public relations firm the *DuVernay Agency* (1999), beauty services marking aggregate *Urban Beauty Collective* (2003), independent production company *Forward Movement* (2005), and independent resource and distribution association the *African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement* (AFFRM; now called ARRAY; 2010) unite the work of independent artists of color with advocates, and audiences who appreciate and promote their work. DuVernay's professional endeavors truly represent her thought that directing and filmmaking is not only a career, but also a means to activism. This effort is certainly visible in her film *Selma*.

As you view DuVernay's retelling of the struggle for civil rights led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I encourage you to take note of a number of themes being brought to light about 1960s America including: how politics often stalled common sense; how the triple evils of racism, discrimination, and police brutality have historically threatened the pursuit of happiness of people of color in America; how family and community operated on both sides of the color line, but made things better when they breeched the divide; how innocence was lost while hypocrisy hindered progressive national leadership; how generational divide complicated intraracial communication, and how feminine strength not only accented the civil rights movement, but existed as a movement itself. Director DuVernay has highlighted perhaps the most important theme of her film; in her own words: "*Selma*

is a story about voice—the voice of a great leader; the voice of a community that triumphs despite turmoil; and the voice of a nation striving to grow into a better society. I hope the film reminds us that all voices are valuable and worthy of being heard.” Please enjoy tonight’s special screening of Ava DuVernay’s *Selma*.

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