

# Sell out with me, oh yeah ...

## African-American actresses buy stardom with Dorothy Dandridge biography

Opinion Editor



JAMES FRANCIS  
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ame, immortality and money. These three elements pervade the American society in more ways than one person can count. Although it is the American dream to live life to the fullest, be successful and enjoy the fruits of hard labor, often this sentiment is forgotten; it is turned into a desire for power, dishonesty and immoral life choices.

But there is one place on this planet where a person's aspirations can become an elated dream come true — Hollywood. It is the place of glamour and glitz; it is a region of starry-eyed individuals waiting to make their big break in show business, whether it be in acting, directing, singing or any of the many other facets to investigate.

Hollywood is a society within itself. Like all other materialistic entities, Hollywood also has a dark side; a place where aspiring actors and filmmakers do not like to talk about — The Greed Club. This is the place where people are enjoying the art of making and selling in films.

Instead, people begin to realize that they have become icons of the American society, powerful enough to take control of whatever new and uprising trend is taking place.

Today, in what Hollywood insiders are calling one of the biggest film fiascos, four African-American actresses are vying for the title role in the upcoming film depiction of the life of Dorothy Dandridge, the first African-American woman to receive an Oscar nomination.

Most noted for her leading role in *Barm in Jones*, Dandridge even has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. But her life wasn't always filled with happy moments of making movies and working with famous crowds. Dandridge had a problem with alcohol and severe depression, both which became a serious detriment to her life as her career began to dwindle. Other tragic occurrences, such as the collapse of her marriage, only added to the pressure of trying to remain popular in the public eye.

Like many other film stars of her time, Dandridge suffered a career slump. During this time, she turned to drinking heavily and misusing her prescribed anti-depressant medications. She dropped out of the high-society

scene and went back to singing in clubs; she also had to leave her home and move into one that was a bit less expensive for her budget.

Dandridge also saw many tremendous and horrific changes during her time. In February 1965, Dandridge learned that a good friend of hers, Nat King Cole, had died of cancer. Afterwards, Dandridge began a road of recovery. She cut back on her alcohol intake, began using her anti-depressant medication somewhat more under control and she even had secured a show at the New York club Basin Street East. She was scheduled to perform on Sept. 10.

Two days before her appearance, Dandridge was found dead in the bathroom of her apartment. One report said Dandridge died because of an embolism: a blood clot in her right foot, caused by a fracture. A later report said she died of a drug overdose from her anti-depressants. Whatever the truth behind her death, Dandridge lived a life full of hopes and lost dreams. She was a pioneer for African-American female entertainers.

Dandridge's life recently has been chronicled in a biography titled "Dorothy Dandridge: A Biography" by Donald Hogle. The down side of this biography is that Hollywood now plans to create a film about her life; the battle for the role being shared by four of America's "most respected and talented African-American actresses," as Serena Altchul of MTV News said. It's great that this woman's story is going to be told, but the actresses in question — Whitney Houston, Janet Jackson, Halle Berry and Vanessa Williams — are not nearly in the right mentality or accomplished enough in their careers to play such a role.

Houston is not a great actress; her success comes from grabbing the coattails of more prominent Hollywood figures such as Kevin Costner, Angela Bassett and Denzel Washington. Janet Jackson's highest acting achievement has been with her late co-star Tupac Shakur in *Poetic Justice*. As far as Berry and Williams, both have more combined acting talent in their fingers than Houston or Jackson, but they still are not as accomplished as someone

should be to play the role of Dandridge.

But once again, The Greed Pool rears its ugly head in the twisted plot of this scam for each of the actresses to garner the role. Berry already has been chosen as executive producer and star of a Dandridge film that is in the works for HBO. Houston, more deviously, has purchased the movie rights for the biography. Although the chance to portray Dandridge is a great opportunity, her life should be treated as more than just a way to gain fame or prestige in

the big loom of Hollywood.

America's greed always has been around, but never so much as it has been in this case. A celebrated film actress and songstress such as Dandridge deserves more than power-hungry entertainers attempting to achieve status as pioneer actresses. Every woman up for the part in the film should have to audition; this is the way filmmaking is supposed to be done. Hogle, the biography's author, should choose the person he feels is best suited to play the

part. In essence, he has the power, but it would seem the batting eyelashes and beautiful faces of a few "respected" and "talented" actresses have won him over in the long run.

Dorothy Dandridge died at the age of 42, a great loss to film and entertainment for America and its African-American citizens. Hollywood personae need to get their priorities straight and understand that acting is an art form, not a battle with the goal of receiving bragging rights.



GRAPHIC: Brad Graeber

## Church denominations send message of inconsistency

Individual churches have a responsibility to their respective denominations and members to exhibit denominational consistency.

The cross and flame of Methodism. The symbol looks so simple, yet to Methodists, it means so much. A member of the denomination places a great deal of trust in such a symbol.

Religious symbolism is by no means peculiar to the United Methodist Church. Catholics have similar symbols, as do Lutherans, Episcopalians, Muslims and Jews. Moons, stars, crosses — what do they mean? They are more than a series of lines arranged in a particular way; they are more than a catchy design.

These symbols give insight into what an individual believes. They are a representation of one's faith, an interpretation of God. People become comfortable in how they worship their God.

Affiliation with a church provides someone with a church group — for Methodists, a family within the Christian family. This family has a specific set of beliefs in God, in worship and in ministry to others. A Methodist, therefore, should be able to visit any United Methodist Church with a good idea of what to expect in terms of worship.

People with similar beliefs should theoretically be expected to worship in a similar fashion. Methodist churches have an obligation to sing hymns, administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and affirm members' faiths in accordance to the *Methodist Hymnal*.

This brings to mind the case of United Methodist churches in Bryan-College Station. First United Methodist Church of Bryan and A&M United Methodist Church exhibit this consistency, adhering closely to the *Methodist Hymnal* in the actual worship service. Aldersgate United Methodist, however, is a totally different story.

The worship service is in no way consistent with either A&M or First Methodist. Take the 9 a.m. service of July 20, 1997: The service lasted one hour and 45 minutes to the other

two churches' hour. Musical selections were not from the *Methodist Hymnal*, but from transparencies projected onto a screen at the front of the church.

During one of these hymns, members of the church started to dance. The minister called members of the congregation to the front of the church and asked them to "witness" to others about their faith.

At one point in the service, a reference was made to the conversion of members of the Islamic faith.

These five items of worship are unacceptable for a church affiliated with United Methodism. When a church affiliates itself with a particular denomination, it has a responsibility to that denomination to be like other churches in the family.

This provides an important service to individual affiliates of that denomination. When a Methodist church is a Methodist church, a person is able to "judge a book by its cover." This empowers the individual member to know what to expect in worship, thus ensuring he or she will enjoy and even be uplifted by worship.

The members of Aldersgate, without a doubt, become uplifted by their worship. Calling the church Methodist, however, is unfair to fellow Methodists. The ultimate result of this is that visiting Methodists will be needlessly exposed to a worship service that is divergent from their beliefs.

Even worse, visitors to the church who know nothing about Methodism will have a tainted initial impression of the practice and worship of the United Methodist Church.

The finger, surprisingly, should not necessarily be pointed at Aldersgate. The United Methodist Church should be held accountable for all churches that bear its name, and it should vigorously defend the idea of denominational consistency not only in faith, but in worship.

This argument can and should be carried out to other denominations. Individual churches must be representative of the denominations they represent.

Guest Columnist



DAVID RECHT  
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### MAIL CALL

#### MSC advertisement clouds student's mind

It is amazing to me how one individual can twist an idea created by another. Did MSC Student Programs intend to alienate African Americans? I don't think so. To say "I suppose African-Americans only are seen as entertainers and clowns by MSC Student Programs" is ignorant.

From reading the letter you submitted, I draw the conclusion that

you are an ignorant person in general. Prairie View A&M was originally established as a separate but equal college, but how many years ago was that? And how many years has it been since African-Americans were first admitted into this school?

If you check admission records, you might find that the number of African-Americans has increased significantly since the school opened up to African-Americans.

To say that the University is "slowly ... deliberately and categorically calculating" African-Americans "out of the Aggie equation" is once again an ignorant statement. I am sorry that you hold the views that you do.

I hope that you don't believe that white students think that you and other African-Americans should be in the cotton fields at Prairie View.

Your place is in a desk next to college students of all races in College Station at Texas A&M.

So before you go off on another tangent about how African-Americans are not wanted at A&M, remember your own words, "Please think before you print."

Joe Barnes  
Class of '98

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