

40 Must-Watch Films For Black History Month That Educate, Empower, Inspire, & Entertain

Black History Month is a time to reflect, learn, and celebrate the richness of Black culture, resilience, and achievements.

What better way to do that than through the power of film and TV?

Whether you're looking for thought-provoking documentaries, powerful biopics, or groundbreaking dramas, these 40 must-watch films will educate, enlighten, empower, inspire, and entertain you.

From stories of trailblazers who changed history to cinematic masterpieces that capture the essence of the Black experience, this list is a tribute to the voices, struggles, and triumphs that continue to shape our world.

John Lewis: Good Trouble

John Lewis: Good Trouble is a 2020 American documentary film directed by Dawn Porter about the life of civil rights activist and United States congressman **John Lewis**.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X is a 1992 American independent epic biographical drama film about the African-American activist Malcolm X. Directed and co-written by Spike Lee, the film stars Denzel Washington in the title role.

The Black Godfather: The Clarence Avant Story

For decades, the world's most high profile entertainers, athletes and politicians have turned to a single man for advice during the most pivotal moments in their lives and careers, including Grammy Award® winners, Hall of Famers, a Heavyweight Champion of the World and two U.S. Presidents.

That man is Clarence Avant.

The Black Godfather charts the exceptional and unlikely rise of Avant, a music executive whose trailblazing behind-the-scenes accomplishments impacted the legacies of icons such as as Bill Withers, Quincy Jones, Muhammad Ali, Hank Aaron, and Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

42

The film **42** follows Jackie Robinson's trials and tribulations as he signs on to the Brooklyn Dodgers under legendary team manager Branch Rickey.

The Great Debaters

A drama based on the true story of Melvin B. Tolson, a professor at Wiley College Texas.

In 1935, he inspired students to form the school's first debate team, which went on to challenge Harvard in the national championship.

Judas and the Black Messiah

Offered a plea deal by the FBI, William O'Neal infiltrates the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party to gather intelligence on Chairman Fred Hampton.

Marshall

The story of Thurgood Marshall, the crusading lawyer who would become the first African-American Supreme Court Justice, as he battles through one of his career-defining cases.

Hidden Figures

Three female African-American mathematicians play a pivotal role in astronaut John Glenn's launch into orbit.

Meanwhile, they also have to deal with racial and gender discrimination at work.

Red Tails

A crew of African American pilots in the Tuskegee training program, having faced segregation while kept mostly on the ground during World War II, are called into duty under the guidance of Col. A.J. Bullard.

Black Barbie

Tracing the origin of the first Black Barbie doll to the filmmaker's aunt, who asked why Barbie couldn't look like her, this documentary explores her quest for representation and diversity.

Becoming

Becoming is an intimate look into the life of former First Lady Michelle Obama during a moment of profound change, not only for her personally but for the country she and her husband served over eight impactful years in the White House.

The film offers a rare and up-close look at her life, taking viewers behind the scenes as she embarks on a 34-city tour that highlights the power of community to bridge our divides and the spirit of connection that comes when we openly and honestly share our stories.

Self Made: Inspired By The Life Of Madam C.J. Walker

Academy Award® winner Octavia Spencer stars as Madam C.J. Walker, the trailblazing African American haircare entrepreneur who was America's first female self-made millionaire.

High On The Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America

Host Stephen Satterfield travels across the United States to uncover how African-American cuisine has fueled social justice movements, transformed communities and awakened cultural creativity in America in powerful and lasting ways.

Barry

A young Barack Obama, known to his friends as “Barry,” arrives in New York City in the fall of 1981 to begin his junior year at Columbia University.

In a crime-ridden and racially charged environment, Barry finds himself pulled between various social spheres and struggles to maintain a series of increasingly strained relationships with his Kansas-born mother, his estranged Kenyan father, and his classmates.

Barry is the story of a young man grappling with those same issues that his country, and arguably the world, are still coming to terms with 35 years later.

The Six Triple Eight

The Six Triple Eight is inspired by the first and only Women’s Army Corps unit of color to serve overseas in WWII.

Given an extraordinary mission and united in their determination, these unsung heroes delivered hope and shattered barriers.

Shirley

SHIRLEY tells the story of the first Black congresswoman and political icon, Shirley Chisholm, and her trailblazing run for president of the U.S.

It chronicles her audacious, boundary-breaking 1972 presidential campaign.

A Ballerina’s Tale

A feature documentary on African American ballerina Misty Copeland that examines her prodigious rise, her potentially career ending injury alongside themes of race and body image in the elite ballet world.

Amazing Grace

A documentary presenting Aretha Franklin with choir at the New Bethel Baptist Church in Watts, Los Angeles in January 1972.

Black Boys

BLACK BOYS illuminates the spectrum of black male humanity in America.

An intimate, inter-generational exploration, BLACK BOYS strives for insight to black identity and opportunity at the nexus of sports, education and criminal justice.

One Night In Miami

A fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown gathered discussing their roles in the Civil Rights Movement and cultural upheaval of the 60s.

Rustin

Activist Bayard Rustin faces racism and homophobia as he helps change the course of Civil Rights history by orchestrating the 1963 March on Washington.

Get On Up

A chronicle of James Brown's rise from extreme poverty to become one of the most influential musicians in history.

The Banker

In the 1960s, two African-American entrepreneurs hire a working-class white man to pretend to be the head of their business empire while they pose as a janitor and chauffeur.

Southside With You

Barack Obama, a freshman at Harvard Law School, gets a job at a Chicago law firm under the orders of young Michelle Robinson.

After some reluctance, Michelle accepts Obama's invitation for a trip that will change her life.

Black Panther

T'Challa, heir to the hidden but advanced kingdom of Wakanda, must step forward to lead his people into a new future and must confront a challenger from his country's past.

Race

Jesse Owens' quest to become the greatest track and field athlete in history thrusts him onto the world stage of the 1936 Olympics, where he faces off against Adolf Hitler's vision of Aryan supremacy.

Ailey

An immersive portrait of dance pioneer Alvin Ailey, told through his own words and a new dance inspired by his life.

The Immortal Life Of Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman, becomes an unwitting pioneer for medical breakthroughs when her cells are used to create the first immortal human cell line in the early 1950s.

The Burial

Inspired by true events, a lawyer helps a funeral home owner save his family business from a corporate behemoth, exposing a complex web of race, power, and injustice.

Men Of Honor

Carl Brashear is an ambitious sharecropper who joins the U.S. Navy to become the world's first black master diver.

But as he works through diving training, the racist Master Chief sets out to make Carl's journey as difficult as possible.

Lee Daniels' The Butler

As Cecil Gaines serves eight presidents during his tenure as a butler at the White House, the civil rights movement, Vietnam, and other major events affect this man's life, family, and American society.

Queen of Katwe

Living in the slum of Katwe in Kampala, Uganda, is a constant struggle for 10-year-old Phiona and her family.

Her world changes one day when she meets Robert Katende, a missionary who teaches children how to play chess.

Coming To America

An extremely pampered African prince travels to Queens, New York and goes undercover to find a wife that he can respect for her intelligence and strong will.

Concrete Cowboy

Sent to live with his estranged father for the summer, a rebellious teen finds kinship in a tight-knit Philadelphia community of Black cowboys.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Tensions rise when trailblazing blues singer Ma Rainey and her band gather at a recording studio in Chicago in 1927.

King Richard

A look at how tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams became who they are after the coaching from their father Richard Williams.

Bessie

The story of legendary blues performer Bessie Smith, who rose to fame during the 1920s and '30s.

What Happened, Miss Simone?

A documentary about the life and legend Nina Simone, an American singer, pianist, and civil rights activist labeled the "High Priestess of Soul."

Ray

The story of the life and career of the legendary rhythm and blues musician Ray Charles, from his humble beginnings in the South, where he went blind at age seven, to his meteoric rise to stardom during the 1950s and 1960s.

Roxanne Roxanne

In the early 1980s, the most feared battle MC in Queens, New York, was a fierce teenage girl with the weight of the world on her shoulders.

At the age of 14, Lolita "Roxanne Shanté" Gooden was well on her way to becoming a hip-hop legend as she hustled to provide for her family while defending herself from the dangers of the streets of the Queensbridge Projects in NYC.

Have a beautiful Black History Month! 

With Love,

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