

R.I.P. John Singleton



Film director John Singleton passed today at the age of 51 after suffering a stroke April 17th and going into a comatose state. His family removed him from life support after considering his condition and prospects for recovery. Singleton's innovative contributions to the film industry made him one of the most important directors of the 20th and 21st century. He unapologetically put his lens on Black life and brought seldom heard stories to the screen. His debut film, *Boyz n the Hood* made America look at violence in the neighborhoods from the perspective of humanity instead of exploitative stereotypes. He told [NPR](#),Â

"If you see the films I make and if they are in an urban setting, I basically have an agenda to not only entertain but for you to feel something and to say something. Because this is where I'm from, you know what I mean? I'm making you feel something for this environment. I'm not exploiting it."

Singleton and Spike Lee were the first major directors to use rappers in film roles with *Boyz n the Hood* and *Jungle Fever* being released a month apart in 1991. Ice Cube would get his acting start in Singleton's feature and Queen Latifah broke into the acting world in the role of a Black woman critical of interracial relationships.Â Singleton's story about gang violence was a national event that had people leaving the theater in droves with tears in their eyes.Â

Boyz n the Hood made him the youngest director and first African-America to be nominated for a Best Director Oscar. He would finish the '90s with the epic *Poetic Justice* that co-starred Tupac Shakur and Janet Jackson, *Higher Learning* and *Rosewood*. Michael Jackson utilized Singleton's talents for his famous 1991 video "Remember The Time." His movies were one of

the places where several Black Hollywood stars got their first film roles including Regina King, Morris Chestnut and Janet Jackson. His movies always dealt with racism such as the on-campus skinhead violence of *Higher Learning* or the destroyed Black communities of The Rosewood Massacre that took place in 1923.Â

In the 2000s, he paid tribute to Gordon Parks by remaking *Shaft* and directed *Baby Boy* which starred then-newcomers Taraji P. Henson and Tyrese as a dysfunctional mother and son in their first film. He later moved into a new lane with the action films *2 Fast 2 Furious* and *Four Brothers*. Singleton had plans to make a movie about his old friend and colleague Tupac Shakur but there were delays that stopped it from becoming a reality. In 2017, he co-created the FX series *Snowfall* about the rise of crack cocaine in Los Angeles during the '80s. The success that he experienced throughout his career did not stop him from being critical of Hollywood studios who he said did not want Black people directing films about Black people.Â

I was discovered by a master filmmaker by the name of John Singleton. He not only made me a movie star but made me a filmmaker. There are no words to express how sad I am to lose my brother, friend & mentor. He loved bring the black experience to the world. ..Us at Cannes â€~90
pic.twitter.com/CaRKjZtjgB

– Ice Cube (@icecube) [April 29, 2019](#)