

# Cultural Daily

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## Chadwick Boseman's Words

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, May 12th, 2021



Chadwick Boseman © Anke Hoffman-HFPA 2017

When the Oscars producers planned for the last award of the night to go to best actor, they were counting on [Chadwick Boseman](#) winning it posthumously for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, but Academy voters gave it to the excellent Anthony Hopkins for *The Father*. They were hoping for a tearful speech from his widow, like she had given at the Golden Globes two months prior, when the journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press voted him best actor in a drama. [Click here to watch](#). She said, "But we don't have his words." So here are some answers he gave during our

numerous interviews.



Chadwick Boseman (c) HFPA 2017

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In the movie [42](#) (2013) directed by Brian Elgeland, Boseman played baseball legend Jackie Robinson.

He said about his widow, Rachel Robinson: *She challenged me, she said, “when I first wanted to make this movie, Sidney Poitier would have played him, then Denzel Washington was supposed to play him (with Spike Lee directing), and now we ended up with you. So who are you?”*

About Harrison Ford, who played Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey: *I had questions about doing an imitation of Jackie Robinson versus capturing the spirit of the man, and he gave me some great advice about how to do it.*

About racism: *Racial discrimination in this country comes from the fact that slavery was a financial endeavor, and in order to justify this inhumane act, there had to be a dehumanizing justification. So African Americans were seen as less than human, then that propaganda was spread and supported. And it has taken all the way up until now to get rid of those ideas, but racism has not completely been killed, it's still here.*





Chadwick Boseman © HFPA 2014

In *Get on Up* (2014) directed by Tate Taylor and produced by Mick Jagger, Boseman played singer James Brown.

*He said: James Brown is a chameleon and also a control freak, he's like an angel in one moment and a devil in the next, and I say that with great affinity for him, but it's true. He had some sort of hypnotic power that could pull you in, like a pied piper type of deal.*

*About Mick Jagger: Like James Brown, he conveys supreme confidence. Any time that he steps on the stage with The Rolling Stones, he has such a powerhouse energy that is Godlike, something beyond human almost.*

In *Marshall* (2017) directed by Reginald Hudlin, Boseman played future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall as a young lawyer.

About growing up in a Southern state: *I am from South Carolina, so for my entire life, I have seen Confederate flags flying from trucks and license plates. And I have seen my parents, my brothers, my family members stopped by police for no reason. So it's always been a question, how do you deal with this situation? Do you respond directly and violently or peacefully, spiritually and consciously?*

About attending Howard College in Texas: *There's always going to be protests when you are on a college environment, and there were a number of police shootings. A student was killed by an off-duty cop, and we marched to the justice department. So that has always been part of my life, injustice has always been present.*



Chadwick Boseman as Black Panther © Marvel Studios

In *Black Panther* (2018) directed by Ryan Coogler, Boseman appeared larger than life as the Marvel superhero King of Wakanda.

He said: *Socially, culturally, it's an amazing thing to be a part of this, it's beyond a dream come true to work on this movie.*

About his real life heroes: *Right now it's my parents. To this day, I look at my mom, and she is super calm under pressure, she was a nurse. We have a big family, and I would see how calm she would be when family members were under duress. My father's heart is really big, bigger than most men. So his heart is what I aspire to and what I love. As many famous people that I encounter and as many historical figures that I have played, there's nobody that has those attributes that I see in my parents.*

He also looks up to: *Danny Glover, who is as an artist and an activist, I respect him very much for what he does. And obviously Harry Belafonte.*





Chadwick Boseman © Armando Gallo-HFPA 2018

George C. Wolfe, the director of his last movie, *Ma' Rainey's Black Bottom* (2020), produced by Denzel Washington from the 1982 play by August Wilson, said he didn't know that Boseman was sick: *I found out about the loss like everybody else did. It's a testament to his heroics and grace as a human being that he only shared with all of us working with him his talent and nothing else. His work was so staggeringly brilliant. He would go into it at full force, emotionally brutal and raw. It's an astonishing performance.*

This is how Viola Davis, who had played his mother in *Get On Up*, felt about learning of Boseman's passing: *Complete devastation. I'm not going to lie, I wailed. Everyone did, it's how you react when someone dies. But he is probably the perfect example of what you should do with the time you have on this earth, because even if you live to be 100, it pales in comparison to how*

*long you're going to be dead. You should do what he did. You are leaving a legacy, crumbs for people to pick up and be inspired by, to help them feel alive. That's the only thing you could control, and there's that the famous saying, when the last person dies who has a memory of you, that's when you'll fully be dead.*

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