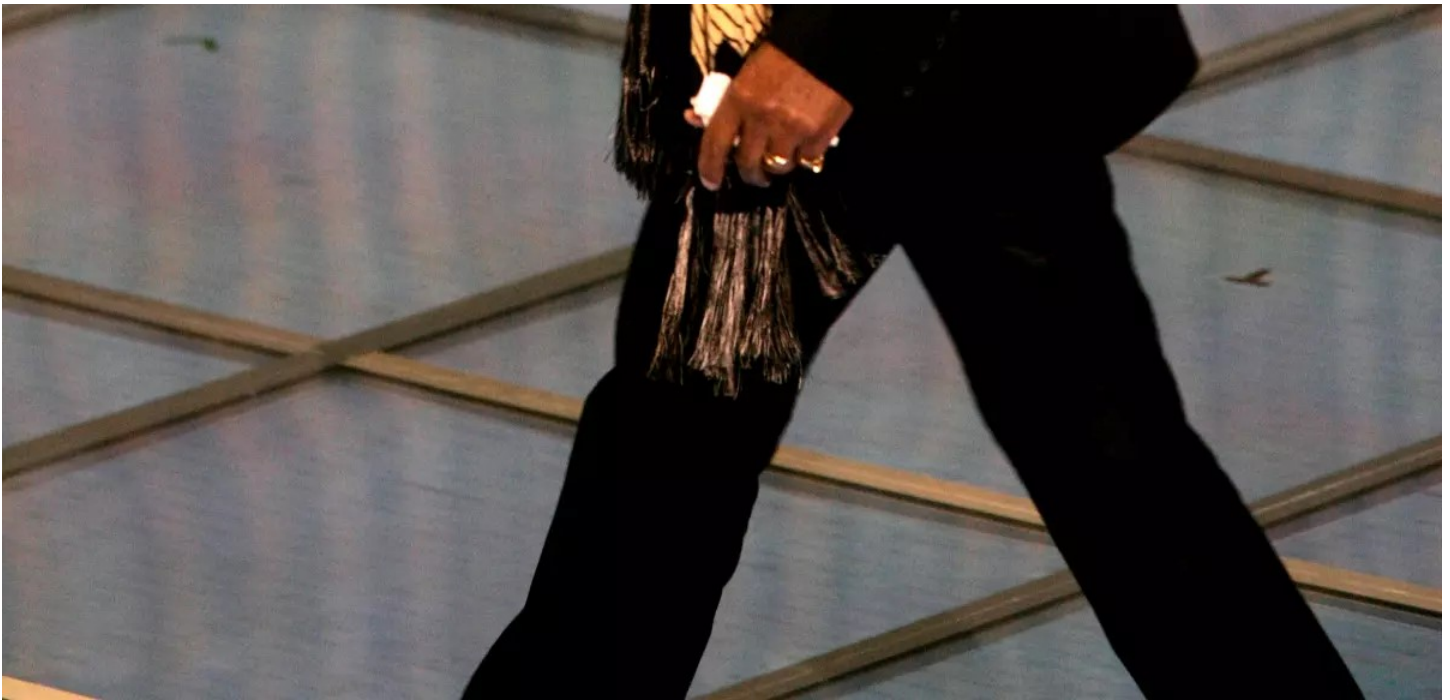




AWARDS

Oscars flashback: Morgan Freeman enters the history books





Morgan Freeman became part of a groundbreaking pair when he won an Oscar for his performance in “Million Dollar Baby.” (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By Randee Dawn

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The Academy Awards itself was already geriatric age by the time the 2005 ceremony rolled around. But that doesn’t mean there were no more milestones to be set or records broken. And indeed, history was made that evening: The lead actor and supporting actor Oscars were both won by Black men for the first and, so far, only time.

The 77th Academy Awards event at the Kodak Theatre was in some ways a triumph of representation. Jamie Foxx became the first Black actor to receive two acting nominations in the same year, and he’d go on to win one of them, besting “Hotel Rwanda” star Don Cheadle, among others, for his lead performance in “Ray.” By that time, Morgan Freeman had already triumphed in the supporting category for his turn in “Million Dollar Baby.”



AWARDS

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Feb. 24, 2025

Worth a million, baby

Freeman accepted his first Oscar from presenter Renée Zellweger early in the ceremony. It was his fourth of five nominations — he had previously been recognized in the supporting category for “Street Smart” and lead category for “Driving Miss Daisy” and “The Shawshank Redemption” — and the first time he’d been nominated for working with director Clint Eastwood. Freeman played former boxer Eddie “Scrap-Iron” Dupris in Eastwood’s “Million Dollar Baby,” a film for which star Hilary Swank would earn the lead actress trophy later in the evening.

Freeman became the oldest Black actor to win an Academy Award (he was 67 at the time) and gave a short speech once he got up to the microphone. “I want to thank everybody and anybody who ever had anything at all to do with the making of this picture, but I especially want to thank Clint Eastwood for giving me the opportunity to work with him again and to work with Hilary Swank,” he said. “This was a labor of love. And I thank the academy. I thank you so very much.”

Clearly, Freeman has good chemistry with Eastwood; he previously worked with him on 1992’s “Unforgiven” and again on “Invictus.” Freeman’s fifth Oscar nomination was for his performance as Nelson Mandela in the 2009 film.

“I have worked with a number of directors and my favorite of them all, I think the best of them all, certainly for me, is Clint Eastwood,” Freeman said in an [episode](#) of “Oprah’s Master Class” not long after the 2009 film was released. “When we started developing ‘Invictus,’ we said: ‘Who should we get to direct?’ And I said, ‘I can only

think of two people: Clint and Eastwood.”



MOVIES

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New nominees

Freeman was the only nominee in the category with any previous Oscar nominations. Emmy winner Alan Alda was nominated for playing Sen. Ralph Owen Brewster, a politician looking to give a monopoly on international travel to Pan Am in “The Aviator”; Thomas Haden Church played a soon-to-be-married man on a road trip to wine country with his friend in “Sideways”; Foxx was also nominated as a taxi driver who picks up a hit man in “Collateral,” and Clive Owen played dermatologist Larry Gray, who was catfished and then caught up in a twisted love polygon in “Closer.” None of Freeman’s competitors have been Oscar-nominated since.

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