

The Brilliant Lecture Series Presents - A Conversation With Sidney Poitier

Written by Forward Times Staff
Thursday, 29 September 2011 00:00



Public Invited To Hear Ground-breaking Actor/Director Speak At Houston Baptist University's Dunham Theater

HOUSTON – Nearly five years after his first appearance with the Brilliant Lecture Series, Houstonians will have a chance to see a little bit of Oscar history in person. On November 6th Sidney Poitier, who holds two of the coveted golden statues, will sit down with Houstonians to discuss his life's journey as part of The Brilliant Lecture Series – Conversations with Brilliance. Poitier is known not only for ground-breaking roles in films such as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *To Sir, With Love*, but also for his work as a humanitarian, director and diplomat.

Just a few months short of his 85th birthday, Poitier will entertain and engage audiences at Houston Baptist University's 1,200-seat Dunham Theater with a lecture followed by a question-and-answer session with the audience.

According to Brilliant Lecture Series Founding Director Scott Brogan, Poitier will share his experiences as an actor, marked by a lifetime of cinematic roles that shaped the way people viewed African-Americans in this country.

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In addition, says Brogan, Poitier plans to discuss how fame has allowed him to influence generations of people around the world to become more aware of critical global issues. “Sir Sidney Poitier has lived in a world where ethnic minorities have suffered great indignities and discrimination, but then used his fame to increase understanding of social justice. We could not be more honored to host this remarkable person in Houston,” he added.

Tickets ranging from \$25 to id="mce_marker"25 for this rare opportunity to see Poitier, a national treasure who has inspired three generations, are available through The Brilliant Lecture Series office, 713.974-1335 or www.brilliantlectures.org. In addition to premium seating at the lecture, a limited group of sponsorship opportunities ranging from \$5,000 – \$40,000 are still available and include acknowledgement on signage and in the souvenir program and VIP ticket packages. Additionally, contributors to The Brilliant Lecture Series – Conversations with Brilliance may elect to purchase blocks of tickets to donate to a non-profit organization of their choice. Previous recipients of these ticket donations include Habitat for Humanity, International School, Skills 4 Living, Bo’s Place, The Women’s Center and Texas Children’s Hospital Cancer Center.

“Sidney Poitier’s life journey is an inspiration to so many,” said Brogan. “As we considered national and international role models, artists and humanitarians who would appeal to tomorrow’s leaders – the young people of today – it became clear that the story of his unique journey and his insight on life will resonate with all Houstonians,” he added.

The Brilliant Lecture Series, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that aims to educate, inspire and increase public awareness within the community and youth of Houston by providing a forum for interaction with today’s leaders. Founded in 2005, The Brilliant Lecture Series –Conversations with Brilliance launched with a lecture by Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, which was attended by some 2000 people, including students from partnering schools and non-profit organizations. Past speakers include Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Dame Julie Andrews, Lauren Bacall, Diana Ross, Barton Brooks, Doc Hendley, Joan Rivers and Dr. Maya Angelou.

The Brilliant Lecture Series – Conversations with Brilliance provides a unique forum for the exchange of ideas, perspectives and opinions and, through local community- and education-based partnerships within each speaker’s field of interest, fosters ongoing relationships in order to continue activities for the benefit of the community. For example, local school children traveled to Jordan in 2006 as a result of Her Majesty’s visit.

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In addition to ticketed guests from across the city, the Poitier lecture audience will include students from schools and universities throughout the Greater Houston Area. Supporters of The Brilliant Lecture Series – Conversations with Brilliance make it possible for young people to participate in the event at no cost by underwriting tickets through partnerships with the non-profit.

Biographical background: Sir Sidney Poitier:

Raised on Cat Island in The Bahamas, Poitier's early years were influenced by the struggles of parents of meager resources who scraped together a living selling tomatoes and other produce grown on their tiny farm. At age 16, he was sent to Miami to live with an older brother and, two years later, he moved to New York City where, following a brief stint in the Army, he pursued an acting career, despite the many obstacles inherent in competing for very few roles assigned to black actors.

Despite early failures, Poitier persevered. He focused on learning standard American diction and, in fact, learning to read. His commitment paid off; he finally landed an understudy role with the American Negro Theater. From there, Poitier made his Broadway debut in *Lysistrata* in 1946, and just four years later, he appeared for the first time on the silver screen in *No Way Out*, followed by *Blackboard Jungle* in 1955. It was this role that earned Poitier critical acclaim and national recognition. In 1959 Poitier received his first Academy Award nomination for his role in the *Defiant Ones*, though it was not until 1964 that the now-famous actor took home the first.

Oscar for Best Actor awarded to an African-American for his role in *Lilies of the Field*. In 1967 a series of three groundbreaking films, *To Sir, With Love*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night* made Poitier a household name across the country.

A true trailblazer, Poitier has been honored extensively for both his film and humanitarian work. He is the recipient of Lifetime Achievement Awards from the American Film Institute, the Screen Actors Guild and the Kennedy Center. Additionally, he is a five-time recipient of the NAACP Image Award, winner of the 2006 Marian Anderson Award, recipient of the 2006 Cunard Britannia Award for Lifetime Contributions to International Film presented by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and winner of two Golden Bear Awards from the Berlin Film Festival. In 2006, at the 59th Cannes Film Festival, Poitier was pronounced Commander of Arts and Letters, France's most prestigious commendation.

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Poitier is the recipient of four honorary doctorate degrees, the last from New York University, and, in 1968, he was knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He is also president and CEO of Verdon Cedric Productions. As the ambassador to Japan from the Bahamas and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization from the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Poitier's priorities have been debt forgiveness and the fight against AIDS.

Poitier is married to Joanna Shimkus Poitier, is father to six daughters, a grandfather to four and a great-grandfather to one.

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About The Brilliant Lecture Series:

To learn more about The Brilliant Lecture Series – Conversations with Brilliance and the organization's mission and programs, visit www.brilliantlectures.org.{jcomments on}