

HIDDEN FIGURES USA 2016

Running time: 127 minutes

Language: English

Credits

Director: Theodore Melfi
Screenplay: Allison Schroeder, Theodore Melfi
Based on Book by: Margot Lee Shetterly
Cinematography: Mandy Walker
Editing: Peter Teschner
Music: Benjamin Wallfisch, Pharrell Williams, Hans Zimmer

Cast

Taraji P. Henson Katherine G. Johnson
Octavia Spencer Dorothy Vaughan
Janelle Monáe Mary Jackson

Kevin Costner Al Harrison
Kirsten Dunst Vivian Mitchell
Jim Parsons Paul Stafford
Mahershala Ali Colonel Jim Johnson
Aldis Hodge Levi Jackson
Glen Powell John Glenn

Kimberly Quinn Ruth
Olek Krupa Karl Zielinski
Kurt Krause Sam Turner
Ken Strunk Jim Webb
Lidya Jewett Young Katherine Coleman
Donna Biscoe Mrs Joylette Coleman

Awards

Hidden Figures was nominated for numerous awards, including three Oscar nominations (Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress for Spencer) and two Golden Globes (Best Supporting Actress for Spencer and Best Original Score). It won the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture.

The film is based on the non-fiction book by Margot Lee Shetterly which is the true story of a team of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. The adapted screenplay focuses on the lives of three of the protagonists, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson, with their careers at NASA. It is worth noting that, as a dramatization, the film makes tweaks to the timeline, characters, and events of the book.

Plot Summary

As the United States raced against Russia to put a man in space, NASA found untapped talent in a group of African-American female mathematicians that served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in U.S. history.

In 1961, mathematician Katherine Johnson works as a human computer in the segregated division West Area Computers of the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, alongside her colleagues, aspiring engineer Mary Jackson and their unofficial acting-supervisor Dorothy Vaughan.

Following a successful Soviet satellite launch, pressure to send American astronauts into space increases. Katherine is assigned to assist Al Harrison's Space Task Group, given her skills in analytic geometry. She becomes the first black woman on the team; and in the building, which has no bathrooms for non-white people.

Meanwhile, Dorothy is informed that she will not be promoted as the bureaucracy is not planning to assign a "permanent supervisor for the coloured group". Mary is assigned to the space capsule heat shield team, and immediately identifies a flaw in the experimental space capsule's heat shields. With encouragement from the team lead, she submits an application for an official NASA engineer position and begins to pursue an engineering degree more assertively.

We follow these women as they quickly rose the ranks of NASA alongside many of history's greatest minds specifically tasked with calculating the momentous launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, and guaranteeing his safe return.

An epilogue reveals that Katherine calculated the trajectories for the Apollo 11 and Space Shuttle missions. In 2015 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The following year, NASA dedicated the Langley Research Center's Katherine G. Johnson Computational Building in her honour.

Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson crossed all gender, race, and professional lines while their brilliance and desire to dream big, beyond anything ever accomplished before by the human race, firmly cemented them in U.S. history as true American heroes.

Review

Simran Hans in The Guardian writes:

"The genius of Theodore Melfi's film is not in the originality of the script – as far as prestige pictures go, its dramatic and comedic beats are easy to anticipate – but in the novelty of the story and the liveliness of the performances. Each leading lady gets her own arc, though we mostly stick with Katherine, a brilliant mathematician and mother of three with excellent cat-eye glasses, who must brush off everyday office racism in order to prove herself to her stern but otherwise tolerant boss Al Harrison (Kevin Costner). This is Henson's film, though the supporting cast are uniformly excellent, in particular *Moonlight's* Mahershala Ali as Katherine's dashing love interest, a gentle, serious man impressed and only a little intimidated by her intelligence."

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