

THE POWER OF ONE

In 1967, Morgan Freeman began his ascent in the world of stage, screen and television with his debut in an off-Broadway production called *The Niggerlovers*. In the 25 years since, Freeman has grown into an actor of uncommon talent and versatility.

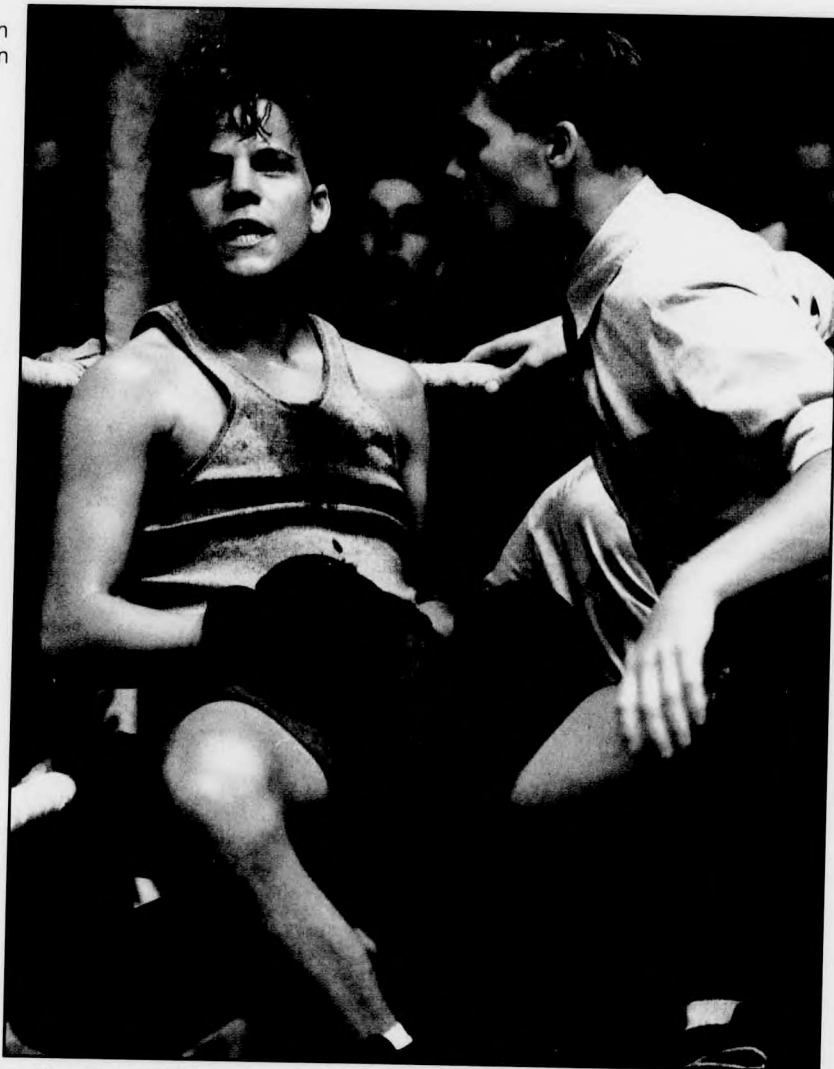
He grew up less auspiciously; first in Greenwood, Miss., then in Chicago's tough South Side. Freeman's earliest education came from the streets, where he apprenticed in thievery and gang warfare. These were survival tactics, he says. Below the turbulent exterior, Freeman knew that life as a punk was not the career opportunity he longed for. "I was scared. I'm not the violent type," he admits.

School turned out to be a haven for him, and helped him focus on his earliest aspiration: to be a jet pilot. He eventually joined the U.S. Air Force, staying for almost four years before moving on to acting and dancing classes in California.

After relocating to New York he honed his talent on- and off-Broadway doing everything from musicals (*Hello Dolly*) to Shakespeare, earning countless awards (including three Obies) along the way. He also appeared in numerous TV projects ranging from *The Atlanta Child Murders* to the popular kids' program *The Electric Company*, on which he appeared as a regular for more than five years.

His move to the big screen provided an explosive outlet for his talents. In 1987 he starred as a vicious pimp in *Street Smart*, a role that earned him his first Academy-award nomination. That performance prompted film critic Pauline Kael to ask the rhetorical question: "Is Morgan Freeman the greatest American actor?"

Freeman then starred opposite Michael Keaton as the tough drug-rehab counsellor in *Clean and Sober*. Possibly trying to make up for lost time, Hollywood took quick notice



Stephen Dorff (above left), Armand Mueller-Stahl (below left), Morgan Freeman and Guy Witcher star in this drama in which the characters' fears and frustrations are dealt with both in and out of the boxing ring.



and in 1989, Freeman appeared prominently in three major features.

In *Lean on Me*, he portrayed Joe Clark, the controversial New Jersey teacher who miraculously raised the academic level of an inner-city high school by relying on his dedication, courage and a large baseball bat. And *Glory* was a magnificent film about the first all-black infantry unit in the U.S. Civil War.

Freeman's most famous role to date is that of Hoke Colburn in *Driving Miss Daisy*. His moving portrayal of the fiercely proud chauffeur had already captured audiences in the stage production. *Daisy* made a graceful leap to the big screen and was the popular Oscar choice for best picture of 1989.

His newfound popularity helped earn him the role of Azeem in the high-profile blockbuster *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* with Kevin Costner, in which the fiftysomething Freeman performed his own rigorous stunts. An accomplished horseman, he also learned to be proficient in the 12th-century fighting technique known as scimitar-wielding. The film exposed him to a different segment of the moviegoing population, one that no doubt viewed him as a newcomer.

Freeman costars with Sir John Gielgud in his latest project, *The Power of One*, about a young British boy attending school in South Africa who must battle his own fears and beliefs, as well as the hostility of his fellow students, in a race-conscious society. He remains a lonely outsider until he is befriended by two older men, one black and one white, who teach him both how to box and to follow his conscience.

It's a story of compassion and humanity that should fit Freeman like a glove.

— Tom Jokic



FEATURING MORGAN FREEMAN'S KNOCKOUT TALENT