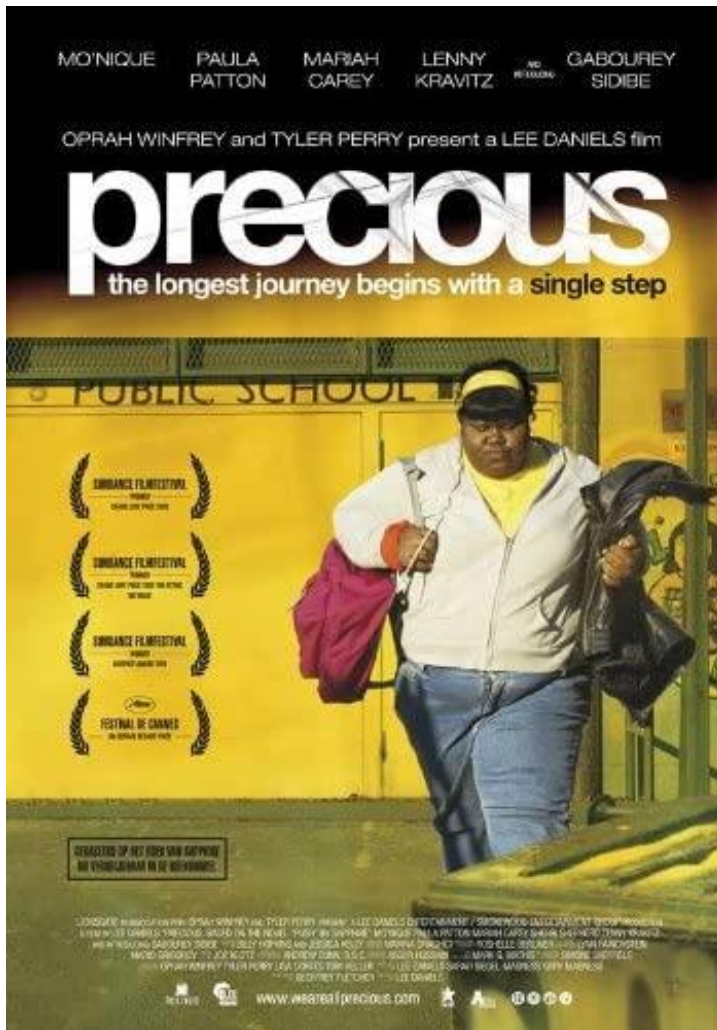


PRECIOUS



An adaptation of Sapphire's 1996 novel *Push*, Lee Daniels' 2009 film *Precious* won two Oscars: one for Best Supporting Actress (Mo'Nique) and one for Best Adapted Screenplay.

The plot focuses on sixteen-year-old Claireece "Precious" Jones (played by Gabourey Sidibe), who lives with her abusive mother, Mary Lee Johnston (Mo'Nique), in a public housing project in Harlem. Claireece is pregnant for the second time by her own father. Her grandmother, Tootsie, cares for Claireece's first daughter, who has Down syndrome. However, when the social worker visits, Mary pretends that her granddaughter lives with them in order to qualify for food stamps.

Mrs. Sondra Lichtenstein, Claireece's school principal, offers her the option of continuing her education at an alternative school. Mary is disinterested in her daughter's education and insists that Claireece should get on welfare. However, Claireece decides to attend classes run by Ms. Blu Rain at the alternative school and becomes a motivated pupil, starting to learn to read and write.

After Claireece gives birth to Abdul, Ms. Rain encourages her to continue her studies. When she

is discharged from hospital, Claireece returns to her mother's house with her baby. Mary blames her for telling Ms. Weiss, the social worker, about her mistreatment at home, which caused her to lose her social security cheques. She assaults Claireece, who flees with Abdul in her arms. With few options available to her, Claireece now has to find a place for her baby and herself and decide her next step in life.

One of the central issues present in the film is physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. As a young and poor African-American mother, Claireece suffers as a result of various oppressions by her parents and the system. Other relevant themes are personal aspirations, education, and motherhood.

There is a frequent contrast between Claireece's mistreatment and her fantasies of being loved, famous, and admired. The use of imagination to escape a harsh reality may be reminiscent of other works of literary fiction such as *The Bluest Eye*, whose protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, suffers similar abuse. Despite the seriousness of *Precious'* subject matter, it also includes comic elements.

It is a moving story with some memorable characters, most of whom are women. There are two particularly positive female role models in the story: Ms. Weiss and Ms. Rain. As for the performances, Mo'Nique's was highly praised and deservedly so, while Sidibe, who had no previous acting experience, is also powerful in her role.

All in all, this excellent drama is not to be missed. The DVD is available in the library.