

Podtalk: Tim Blake Nelson, Karan Kendrick of ‘Just Mercy’

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CHICAGO – Getting the right chemistry in casting a film is crucial in a drama, and the new film “Just Mercy” anchors lead actors Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx with two vital characters actors. Karan Kendrick portrays Millie McMillian, the wife of Foxx’s character, who is on death row. Tim Blake Nelson is Ralph Myers, a key witness.

“Just Mercy” is the based-on-truth story of Walter McMillian (Foxx), an African American man who is accused of a 1990s murder he did not commit. The irony of this accusation is that it takes place in Monroeville, Alabama. This is the hometown of Harper Lee, who set the scenario in her famous book about racial injustice, “To Kill a Mockingbird,” in a town like Monroeville. Enter Bryan Stevenson (Jordan), a fresh out of law school attorney looking to make a difference. With the help of Eva Ansley (Brie Larson), he takes on Walter’s case, and seeks the justice the man never received.



Tim Blake Nelson and Karan Kendrick in ‘Just Mercy’
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Tim Blake Nelson portrays a key prosecution witness in the case, who is coerced to get back on the stand and clarify his story. This is the type of character role that Nelson is famous for, going back to his film debut in “This is My Life” (1992). From there he has taken on memorable

and vital TV/movie supporting roles in "The Thin Red Line," "O Brother Where Art Thou?," "Holes," "The Astronaut Farmer," "Lincoln," "Fantastic Four," "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" (Title Character) and in 2019, "The Report," as well as "Angel Has Fallen," among others.

Timothy Blake Nelson was born in Oklahoma, and attended their Summer Arts Institute. He attended Brown University as a Classics Major, and studied drama at the Julliard School. He recently had a play entitled "Socrates" at the prestigious Public Theatre in New York City (he talks his education and the play in the Podtalk below).

Karan Kendrick has TV/film credits back to 2008, including "Tyler Perry's House of Payne," "Madea Goes to Jail," "The Odd Life of Timothy Green," "Hidden Figures" and "The Hate U Give." HollywoodChicago.com spoke to Karan and Tim on both the red carpet at the 55th Chicago International Film Festival (first question each) and in a longer interview the next day.



Tim Blake Nelson in 'The Ballad of Buster Scruggs' and Karan Kendrick in 'Hidden Figures'

Photo credit: Netflix and 20th Century Fox

In PART ONE of a Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, Tim Blake Nelson of "Just Mercy" talks about prep for portraying real-life people, his stage play "Socrates" and his close encounter with writer/director Nora Ephron.

In PART TWO Karan Kendrick reflects on portraying Minnie McMillian in "Just Mercy," her technique in prepping film versus television, and her impressions on both working for Tyler Perry early in her career and his new studio complex.

"Just Mercy" opens nationwide on January 10th. See local listings for other theaters and show times. Featuring Tim Blake Nelson, Karan Kendrick, Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx, Brie Larson, Rafe Spall and O'Shea Jackson Jr. Screenplay adapted by Destin Daniel Cretton and Andrew Lanham. Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. Rated "PG-13"



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