Paul Winfield Talks of Lifetime of Challenges

Paul Winfield didn't know much about the South when he was a boy growing up in the Watts area of Los Angeles. Nor did he know much about the Civil War.

"To show you how remote that situation was for my family," he said, "all through the 1930's and 40's and 50's my mother was a Republican, simply because of Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation. In every other way she was a fairly sophisticated and politically aware woman, but she always felt she owed an allegiance to the Republicans because of this romantic story about freeing the slaves."

Now, Winfield portrays Jonathan, a potter who is killed for hiding runaway slaves, in "The Blue and The Gray." The epic eight-hour mini series about the American Civit War will be broadcast in three parts, beginning Sunday, November 14 (8-11 p.m.). continuing Tuesday November 16 (9-11 p.m.) and concludng Wednesday, November 17 (8-11 p.m.) on the CBS Television Network. Winfield appears only in the first part.

The challenge of a role like this," he said, "is trying to create a full character when you're only working a few days. If I didn't feel I could do that, I wouldn't accept the part. What's interesting about Jonathan is that, while he's on screen for a short

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8 ⁰⁰ ¹⁵ ³⁰ ⁴⁵	Rex Humbard Oral Roberts	Kenneth Copeland	Curious Kaleidoscope Special		Frederick K. Price	Robert Schuller He Is Risen	Three Stooges & Friends	Gospel Expo Show My People
9 ⁰⁰ ¹⁵ ³⁰ ⁴⁵	Sunday Morning	Jim Bakker	Sunday Morning		Dr. Jerry Falwell	Oral Roberts Rex Humbard	Lost In Space	Jimmy Swaggert
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8 ⁰⁰ ₁₅ ₃₀	Archie Bunker Gloria	Chips	Archie Bunker Gloria	Nature	Lawrence Welk	Matt Houston		Matt Houston
9 ⁰⁰ 9 ¹⁵ 30	Jeffersons One Day At	NBC Movie: "Little Gloria	Jeffersons One Day At	Masterpiece Theatre	Merv Grittin	ABC Movie:	This Week In Review	ABC Movie
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1 1 ⁰⁰ 15 30 45	News CBS News Mo Forte	Madame's Place Jim Bakker	News CBS News Entertain- ment	Twilight Zone • Twilight Zone	Sports Wrapup Movie: ''Fuzz	News 5 ABC News: Wrestling	Jerry Falwell	News ABC News Barry Farber
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time, he's a catalyst whose death changes the protagonist's life. So my goal is to establish him as a sympathetic presence who can serve as a focal point for the story even after he's no longer seen."

Winfield is no stranger to challenges. "I learned early on that, regardless of which world I was traveling in, the black community or the white community, I sometimes had to appear to be conforming," he said. "I sometimes had to tell people what I thought they wanted to hear."

An example. In junior high school music class he had to choose an instrument to play. Winfield selected the violin, then switched to the cello.

"In my neighborhood," he explained, "the cello was a more practical instrument than the violin. Carrying it to school, it looked more butch than a violin case. I could tell people it was a baby bass and that I planned to be a jazz musician.

"Of course I had no such plans at all. I just needed an arecutable cover so that J would appear to be conforming."

In fact, in those days Winfield didn't know what he planned to be. "I was pretty much a loner during my schooling," he said. "My father was a laborer, and we moved around a lot. You didn't have time to get to know people. Books really became my best friends.""

That all changed when he played a small role in a school play and scored a personal success. "Suddenly I was accepted," he said. "I didn't need any introductions. People came up to talk to me. I didn't even have to be dressed in the latest styles."

Winfield's fate was sealed. He determined to become an actor, despite his parents' disapproval. "They never really approved of my decision," he said, "and they were quite right. At the time there were very few successful black actors. People knew Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Sidney Poitier. Two of those three sang and danced, and I didn't do either."

But he persevered. In time he was getting guest spots on television series. "Once my parents could see me on TV, it became very exiting for them," he said. "I'd overhear them telling people, "We always knew he'd be great'."

When he received an Oscar nomination as Best Actor for his role in "Sounder," Winfield took his mother as his date to the Academy Awards ceremony. "It was one of the. highlights of her life," he said.

His own personal highlight is his portrayal of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the six-hour mini-series "King," for which he received an Emmy Award nomination as Best Actor.

"That's the piece of work that best defines what I do and who I am," he said "Portraying Dr. King was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. First, there was the brute work of playing a leading role in a six-hour mini-series. We filmed in Georgia during a hot, uncomfortable summer, and we were harassed by the Klan.

"But overriding all that was the responsibility of portraying someone who was, in my opinion, the most important American leader of this century in terms of changing a nation's perception of itself. Yet, he was a man who never during his lifetime felt he accomplished anything, felt he was a failure in every way."

For Paul Winfield, the struggles are pretty much over, though the challenge: are not. Constantly in demand, he can afford to be selective about scripts. A reflective man, he is still something something of a loner. He lives by himself in an old San Francisco home he has restored. He's come a long way from those days of carrying a cello through Watts. But not so far that he's forgotten.

"Once when my mother was visiting me in San Frnacisco," he said, "I took her to a hugh nursery. Various people would come up and ask, 'Aren't you Paul Winfield?' And she would take over, saying 'This is my son, did you see "Sounder"?? giving them a whole list of my credits.

"As we were about to leave, a woman come up to me. You could tell she knew me from somewhere. I saw my mother getting in gear to deliver her spiel. Just then this woman asked me, "Don't you drive the Fillmore bus?" My mother did a fast U-turn an walked to the other side of the room.

"Later on I reminded her, you have to take the bitter with the sweat."

WOMEN-IN-ACTION is having its Annual Dinner-Membership Meeting on Wednesday, October 27, 7 p.m. at the Downtowner Motor Inn. For more information call 682-1431 or 682-9578.