

<b>Issue Date</b> June 22, 2010	<b>Engraver</b> Trident
<b>First Day City</b> New York, NY	<b>Colors</b> Yellow, Magenta, Cyan, Black
<b>Artist</b> Gary Kelley Cedar Falls, IA	<b>Image Area (w x h)</b> 1.42 x .84 in. 36.07 x 21.34 mm
<b>Designer</b> Derry Noyes Washington, DC	<b>Format</b> Pane of 20 (1 design)
<b>Art Director</b> Derry Noyes	<b>Plate Numbers</b> "V" followed by four single digits
<b>Typographer</b> Derry Noyes	<b>Marginal Markings</b> Header: "BLACK HERITAGE," "33rd IN A SERIES," © 2009 USPS, plate numbers, price, barcodes, plate position diagram, biographical text, USPS logo
<b>Modeler</b> Avery Dennison, Security Printing Division (AVR/SPD)	
<b>Manufacturing Process</b> Gravure	
<b>Printer</b> Avery Dennison (AVR)	

### Oscar Micheaux

The 33rd stamp in the Black Heritage series honors pioneering filmmaker Oscar Micheaux (1884-1951), who wrote, directed, produced, and distributed more than 40 movies during the first half of the 20th century. Micheaux was active at a time when African-American filmmakers were rare, venues for their work were scarce, and support from the industry did not exist—and when a unique African-American voice was bound to cause controversy.

From the start, Micheaux's films mocked corrupt preachers or depicted characters who gambled, drank alcohol, or used slang and vulgar language. "I am too much imbued with the spirit of Booker T. Washington," he explained in 1924, "to engraft false virtues upon ourselves, to make ourselves that which we are not. Nothing could be a greater blow to our own progress." By contrast, Micheaux ensured that his heroines were typically intelligent and strong and that his films promoted hard work and education. In a 1947 letter distributed to theater managers, he defended his portrayal of the African-American experience: "We want to see our lives dramatized on the screen as we are living it, the same as other peoples, the world over."

Forgotten after his death, Micheaux was rediscovered in the late 1960s and 1970s by film historians. Although only 15 of his movies are known to have survived in whole or in part, his ingenuity and determination have made him a cinematic icon. In 1986, he was posthumously awarded a special Directors Guild of America award, and in 1995 the Producers Guild of America established the Oscar Micheaux Award to honor "an individual or individuals whose achievements in film and television have been accomplished despite difficult odds."

The stamp features a stylized portrait of Micheaux by Gary Kelley, who based the stamp art on one of the few surviving photographs of the filmmaker. The photograph, which appeared in his 1913 novel *The Conquest*, shows a young, determined filmmaker eager to discuss and promote his on-screen portrayal of the African-American experience.



Rodney Lawrence Hurst Sr. Papers  
Thomas G. Carpenter Library  
Special Collections





# Oscar Micheaux



OSCAR MICHEAUX (1884–1951) was a man ahead of his time. Born to a farming family in southwestern Illinois, he went on to write, direct, produce, and distribute more than 40 movies during the first half of the 20th century—long before African-American filmmakers enjoyed industry support or widespread venues for their work.

Micheaux's films were often rooted in his own experiences. As a young man, he worked a variety of jobs, including a stint as a Pullman porter, before purchasing land in South Dakota and becoming a homesteader. In 1913, he turned his own experiences into *The Conquest*, the first of several novels. As he traveled the country selling his books, Micheaux showed an entrepreneurial spirit that foreshadowed his career as a filmmaker.

In 1919, Micheaux earned rave reviews in the Chicago press after he wrote, directed, and produced a big-screen adaptation of his 1917 novel *The Homesteader*, which combined a love story, a Western, and a dramatic tale of African-American life. During the 1920s, he made more than 20 movies about such controversial subjects as mob violence, lynching, and racial identity. He also adapted novels, produced courtroom dramas, and dabbled in autobiography, and later he became the only producer of silent movies for African Americans to make the transition to producing sound pictures.

This 33rd stamp in the Black Heritage series features artwork by Gary Kelley based on one of the few surviving photographs of Micheaux: a portrait from his 1913 novel *The Conquest* that shows a young, determined filmmaker eager to discuss and promote his on-screen portrayal of the African-American experience. As Micheaux himself explained in 1947: "We want to see our lives dramatized on the screen as we are living it, the same as other peoples, the world over."



background and intaglio: Fotosearch Stock Photography; top and bottom left: Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; top right: Courtesy of the State Archives of the South Dakota Historical Society; bottom right: © Bettmann/Corbis

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# BLACK HERITAGE

33rd IN A SERIES

VII11

VII11



VII11

VII11





# OSCAR MICHEAUX

## COMMEMORATIVE STAMP ● FIRST-DAY-OF-ISSUE CEREMONY

Columbia University School of the Arts ● Miller Theatre  
2960 Broadway & 116th Street  
New York, New York ● June 22, 2010 ● 11 a.m.

### MASTER OF CEREMONIES

VOZA RIVERS  
Chairman, Harlem Arts Alliance  
Executive Producer  
New Heritage Theatre Group

### WELCOME

CLAUDE M. STEELE  
Provost  
Columbia University

### INTRODUCTION TO MUSICAL GROUP IMPACT

JAMAL JOSEPH  
Chair, Film Program  
Columbia University School  
of the Arts

### NATIONAL ANTHEM

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING  
IMPACT REPERTORY THEATRE  
Harlem, New York

### OFFICIAL STAMP DEDICATION

DELORES J. KILLETTE  
Vice President and Consumer  
Advocate  
United States Postal Service

### MUSICAL TRIBUTE

WYCLIFFE GORDON QUARTET

### REMARKS

GEOFFREY FLETCHER  
Adjunct Faculty of Film, Columbia  
University School of the Arts  
MELVIN VAN PEEBLES  
Independent Filmmaker and Author

### MOVIE TRAILER PRESENTATION: OSCAR'S COMEBACK (work-in-progress)

LISA COLLINS  
Director/Producer; Columbia  
University School of the Arts  
(MFA '98)

MARK SCHWARTZBURT  
Co-Director/Producer

### CLOSING REMARKS

VOZA RIVERS

### HONORED GUESTS

PEARL BOWSER  
Filmmaker ("Midnight Ramble")  
Author and Micheaux Scholar

### JAINÉ GAINES

Professor of Film, Columbia  
University School of the Arts

### JERRY WILSKE

Director, Oscar Micheaux Center  
Gregory, SD



UNITED STATES  
POSTAL SERVICE®



# OSCAR MICHEAUX

**This 33rd stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Oscar Micheaux (1884–1951),** who wrote, directed, produced, and distributed more than 40 movies. An ambitious, larger-than-life figure, Micheaux thrived at a time when African-American filmmakers were rare, venues for their work were scarce, and support from the industry was virtually nonexistent.

Born to a farming family in Illinois, Micheaux spent his teenage years as a laborer before becoming a Pullman Porter and traveling the country by train. In 1904, he purchased land in South Dakota and became a homesteader, an experience he turned into *The Conquest*, the first of his several novels.

In 1918, Micheaux began writing, directing, and producing his first movie: a big-screen adaptation of his third novel, *The Homesteader*. Combining a love story, a Western, and a dramatic tale of African-American life, *The Homesteader* earned rave reviews, and Micheaux went on to make more than 20 movies during the 1920s, some of them controversial. During the 1930s, when Micheaux found himself competing with sound films and slick Hollywood movies for the attention of black audiences, he became the only producer of silent movies for African Americans to make the transition to producing sound pictures as well.

Forgotten after his death, Micheaux was later rediscovered by South Dakota historians and film historians; today he is a cinematic icon remembered for his portrayals of the African-American experience. As he wrote in 1947, "We want to see our lives dramatized on the screen as we are living it, the same as other peoples, the world over."

The artwork on the Oscar Micheaux stamp keenly captures its subject's entrepreneurial spirit and independent vision. Artist Gary Kelley based his stylized depiction of Micheaux on one of the few surviving photographs of the filmmaker, a portrait in his 1913 novel *The Conquest*.





# OSCAR MICHEAUX

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE • JUNE 22, 2010 • NEW YORK, NY 10188

**First Day of Issue Ceremony**



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