Oprah says ‘Colour Purple’ helped her deal with childhood rape

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Oprah Winfrey said “The Colour Purple” helped her cope with the trauma of being raped as a young girl, as she introduced a new film based on Alice Walker’s acclaimed novel Thursday.  
  
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The movie — a musical — is the second big-screen adaptation, after Steven Spielberg’s 1985 drama, and again portrays the hardships and sexual abuse faced by Black women in the US South during the early 20th century.  
  
“From the very first time I read ‘The Colour Purple’ it was a blessing in my life — because until that time I didn’t know that there was language for what had happened to me,” Winfrey said after a screening in Los Angeles.  
  
“I had been raped and had a child at 14, who later died, and I did not have any language to explain what that was.  
  
“That book was the first time that there was a story about me.”  
  
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“The Colour Purple” tells the coming-of-age story of Celie, a Black girl living in rural Georgia who is raped by her father and forced to give away two children.  
  
As it unfolds, Celie is forced into an abusive marriage, but comes to bond with and find strength from other women dealing with their own various traumas and prejudice.  
  
Winfrey recalled how, in the 1980s, upon learning that Spielberg was adapting the film, she had “literally prayed on my knees every night for the opportunity to be in that movie.”  
  
Spotted on her TV talk show by musician Quincy Jones, who was producing the film, Winfrey was cast as Sofia, a strong and feisty woman who encounters racism and tragedy.  
  
Winfrey was Oscar-nominated, and told Thursday’s audience that the movie “changed my life,” and to now be producing a remake meant life had “come so full circle.”  
  
– ‘Passing the baton’ –  
  
After Spielberg’s film, “The Colour Purple” was adapted into a stage musical which opened on Broadway in 2005.  
  
The new movie is inspired by that musical, and strikes a lighter, often joyous and uplifting tone.  
  
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Spielberg, Winfrey and Jones all serve as producers, while “The Colour Purple” Broadway actors Fantasia Barrino and Danielle Brooks return as Celie and Sofia.  
  
Winfrey said the character of Sofia became so “iconic for me” that she had insisted on being on set during the shooting of one particularly memorable scene.  
  
In the scene, Celie — jealous of Sofia’s independence — has advised her friend’s husband to beat her, prompting Sofia to confront her.  
  
“It felt like passing the baton,” she told the audience at the headquarters of the Oscar-awarding Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.  
  
The movie is directed by Blitz Bazawule, a Ghanaian filmmaker best known for overseeing Beyonce’s 2020 musical film “Black Is King.”  
  
The cast also includes Colman Domingo, Taraji P. Henson and Louis Gossett Jr.  
  
Music stars H.E.R., Jon Batiste and Halle Bailey — seen in this year’s “The Little Mermaid” — also feature.  
  
“The Colour Purple” will be released by Warner Bros in theaters on Christmas Day.  
  
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