

= Precious ( film ) =

Precious : Base on Nol by Saf ( Based on the Novel " Push " by Sapphire ) , commonly referred to as simply Precious , is a 2009 American drama film , directed and co @-@ produced by Lee Daniels . Precious is an adaptation by Geoffrey S. Fletcher of the 1996 novel Push by Sapphire . The film stars Gabourey Sidibe , Mo 'Nique , Paula Patton , and Mariah Carey . This film marked the acting debut of Sidibe .

The film , then without a distributor , premiered to acclaim at both the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and the 2009 Cannes Film Festival , under its original title of Push : Based on the Novel by Sapphire . At Sundance , it won the Audience Award and the Grand Jury Prize for best drama , as well as a Special Jury Prize for supporting actress Mo 'Nique . After Precious ' screening at Sundance in February 2009 , Tyler Perry announced that he and Oprah Winfrey would be providing promotional assistance to the film , which was released through Lionsgate Entertainment . Precious won the People 's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival in September . The film 's title was changed from Push to Precious : Based on the Novel " Push " by Sapphire , to avoid confusion with the 2009 action film Push . Precious was also an official selection at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival ( particularly the un certain regard section ) .

Lionsgate gave the film a limited release in North America on November 6 , 2009 ( the release was expanded on November 20 ) . Precious received largely positive reviews from critics ; the acting , the story , and its message were generally praised . In the film 's opening weekend in limited release , it grossed \$ 1 @.@ 8 million , putting it in 12th place at the box office . As of February 2010 , the film had grossed over \$ 47 million domestically , ranking no . 65 for 2009 , recouping its \$ 10 million budget , and making it a box office success .

Precious received six nominations , including one for Best Picture , at the 82nd Academy Awards . Geoffrey Fletcher won for Best Adapted Screenplay . Mo 'Nique won the award for Best Supporting Actress , for which she received a standing ovation at the ceremony , along with numerous other accolades .

= = Plot = =

In 1987 , 16 @-@ year @-@ old Claireece Precious Jones ( Gabourey Sidibe ) lives in the New York City ghetto of Harlem with her dysfunctional , abusive , unemployed mother , Mary ( Mo 'Nique ) , who has long subjected her to physical , mental and sex abuse . Precious has been raped by her father , Carl ( Rodney " Bear " Jackson ) , resulting in two pregnancies . The family resides in a Section 8 tenement and survives on welfare . Her first child , " Mongo " ( short for Mongoloid ) , has Down syndrome and is being cared for by Precious ' grandmother , though Mary forces the family to pretend that Mongo lives with her and Precious so she can receive extra money from the government . When Precious ' second pregnancy is discovered , her high school principal arranges for her to attend an alternative school , where she hopes Precious can change her life 's direction . Precious finds a way out of her traumatic daily life by escaping into daydreams . In her mind , she has created an alternate world where she is loved and appreciated .

Inspired by her new teacher , Blu Rain ( Paula Patton ) , Precious finally learns to read and write . She meets sporadically with social worker Ms. Weiss ( Mariah Carey ) , who learns about incest in the household when Precious reveals who fathered her children . While Precious is in the hospital giving birth to her second child , Abdul , she meets John McFadden ( Lenny Kravitz ) , a nursing assistant who shows her kindness . Upon returning home , her mother hits her and deliberately drops 3 @-@ day @-@ old Abdul , angrily revealing that Precious ' revelation about the incest and sexual abuse in the family has resulted in them being cut off from welfare . Precious fights back and flees her home with Abdul . As they set out , she stops at a church window and watches the choir singing a Christmas hymn inside , imagining that she and her fantasy boyfriend are together and singing a more upbeat version of the song . Precious breaks into her school classroom because it is cold and she has nowhere to go . After Blu discovers her the next morning , she frantically calls local shelters looking for a safe place for Precious to stay . Later that night , Precious stays with Blu and

her live @-@ in partner ( leading Precious to speculate that Blu is a lesbian ) . The next morning , Ms. Rain takes her and Abdul to find assistance for them . She tells Precious that she will be able to continue her schooling while she raises Abdul in a halfway house .

Precious 's mother soon returns to inform her of her father 's death from AIDS . Precious later learns that she is HIV @-@ positive , though Abdul is not . Feeling dejected , she steals her case file from Ms. Weiss 's office . As she shares the details of her file with her fellow students , she develops a new outlook on life . Later , Precious meets with her mother at the social worker 's office . Ms. Weiss confronts Mary about her abuse of Precious , pointing to specific incidents going back to when Precious was 3 years old .

Mary tearfully says that it was Precious 's fault that her father raped her because she let him and that she stole ' her man ' from her . She let the abuse happen because she was jealous of her and she had no one . Precious remains distant . Before she leaves , she tells her mother that she didn 't know who she really was until today even after all the horrible things she did to her and allowed to happen to her ; she didn 't see Mary 's true nature because she didn 't want to accept that her mother is a monster . Then Precious tells her she 'll never see her or her children again . Mary begs Ms. Weiss to help her get Precious back , but a shaken Ms. Weiss silently brushes past Mary , refusing to help her because of the extent to which Precious was abused .

Precious , with a changed frame of mind , focuses on improving life for herself and her children , severs ties with her mother , takes custody of Mongo , and plans to complete a GED test to receive a high school diploma equivalency . She walks out into the city with both children in tow , ready to start a new life .

= = Cast = =

Gabourey Sidibe as Claireece " Precious " Jones . The film 's casting director , Billy Hopkins , found her at an open @-@ call audition held at New York City 's Lehman College . Sidibe was chosen over 300 others who auditioned in nationwide casting calls and had no prior acting experience .

Mo 'Nique as Mary Lee Johnston , Precious 's verbally and physically abusive mother . Mo 'Nique and Daniels had previously worked together in Shadowboxer ( in which her character was named Precious ) .

Paula Patton as Ms. Blu Rain , Precious 's alternative @-@ school teacher . Patton said that her character teaches Precious to " learn and read and write from the very beginnings , and pushes her to believe in herself , and pushes her to realize that anything is possible . "

Mariah Carey as Ms. Weiss , Precious 's social worker who supports her during her struggles . In September 2008 , Carey described her character as " not really a likable person , but she does bring this to the surface . " Carey and Daniels had previously worked together on Tennessee . Daniels said that he cast Carey because he was " so impressed " by her performance in Tennessee . According to director Daniels , Helen Mirren , who starred in his previous film Shadowboxer , was originally set to play the part of Ms. Weiss , but obtained a role in a " bigger project . "

Lenny Kravitz as Nurse John McFadden , a nurse who shows kindness to Precious . This film is Kravitz ' feature film acting debut .

Sherri Shepherd as Cornrows

Barret Helms ( as Barret Isaiah Mindell ) as Tom Cruise , Precious 's imaginary boyfriend .

Nealla Gordon as Mrs. Sondra Lichtenstein

Stephanie Andujar as Rita Romero , a 16 @-@ year @-@ old former heroin addict and prostitute , who attends the same alternative school in Harlem as Precious and later befriends her . During Andujar 's audition , Daniels was so impressed that he interrupted her dialogue and stated , " I want you in my movie . "

Chyna Layne as Rhonda Patrice Johnson

Amina Robinson as Jermaine Hicks

Xosha Roquemore as Jo Ann

Aunt Dot as Tootsie , Mary 's mother and Precious 's grandmother . Aunt Dot is the real @-@ life aunt of director Lee Daniels .

Angelic Zambrana as Consuelo

Quishay Powell as Mongo

Grace Hightower as Social Worker

Kimberly Russell as Katherine

Bill Sage as Mr. Wicher ; Sage had co @-@ starred with Carey in Glitter , as well as previously working with Daniels on Tennessee .

Sapphire ( the author of the novel ) makes a cameo appearance as a woman at a daycare center near the film 's end .

= = Production = =

Precious was directed by Lee Daniels and co @-@ produced by Daniels 's company , Lee Daniels Entertainment , and the Sarah Siegel @-@ Magness and Gary Magness @-@ owned Smokewood Entertainment Group . The two production companies had previously collaborated with Daniels on Tennessee ( 2008 ) . Precious had , in total , thirteen producers : Daniels , Oprah Winfrey , Tom Heller , Tyler Perry , Lisa Cortes , Gary Magness , Valerie Hoffman , Asger Hussain , Mark G. Mathis , Andrew Sforzini , Bergen Swason , Simone Sheffield and Sarah Siegel @-@ Magness . Principal photography ( filming ) for the film took place on location in various parts of New York City . The production budget was \$ 10 million .

After Precious was screened at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival in January , it was picked up for distribution by Lions Gate Entertainment and received promotional assistance from Oprah Winfrey 's Harpo Productions and Tyler Perry 's 34th Street Films . Precious was the first theatrical film to be affiliated with Perry 's company . In February 2009 , Lionsgate and The Weinstein Company filed lawsuits contesting ownership of the rights to release Precious . Both companies claim that they had purchased distribution rights to Precious : The Weinstein Company claimed that they had " secured " their rights while Lionsgate stated that they owned the rights to the film 's distribution in North America . Precious ' sales agent Cinetic Media denied Weinstein 's claims , stating that they failed to finalize the deal .

= = Music = =

Composer Robin Thicke wrote and produced " Push " , the film 's original main theme music . Later announcements confirmed that the song would be replaced by Mary J. Blige 's " I Can See In Color " . Leona Lewis ' song , " Happy " ( from her album Echo ) is featured in the film 's trailer . Daniels stated that the artists featured on the film 's soundtrack were selected because they " resonate not only in Precious 's world , but speak to your soul no matter who you are . " Two other songs , performed decades earlier by Queen Latifah and Mahalia Jackson , were also chosen for the film 's soundtrack . The soundtrack features LaBelle ( Nona Hendryx , Sarah Dash , and Patti LaBelle ) , Donna Allen , Jean Carn , Sunny Gale , and MFSB .

Lionsgate , in association with Matriarch / Geffen Records released the soundtrack online as a digital download on November 3 , 2009 , and in stores on November 23 . Daniels confirmed that there are plans to release Blige 's " I Can See in Color " as a single from the soundtrack . The song was written by Blige , Raphael Saadiq and LaNeah Menzies and is produced by Raphael Saadiq . People Magazine Daily noted that the film " mainly had a music supervised soundtrack , but not much of a score , so there were popular songs placed in the movie . " Peter Travers , of Rolling Stone , described " I Can See In Color " as being " a knockout song ... expressing the goal of Precious to see the world in color . "

= = Release = =

= = = Marketing = = =

Precious was screened during the 2009 Sundance Film Festival from January 15 , 2009 , until January 25 in Park City , Utah . At Sundance , Precious was listed under its original title of Push : Based On The Novel By Sapphire ; however , the title was later altered to avoid confusion with another 2009 film entitled Push . Precious appeared in the Un Certain Regard , an award section recognising unique and innovative films , at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival in May , 2009 . At Cannes , the film received a fifteen @-@ minute standing ovation from the audience after the film was screened . Daniels commented that , at first he was " embarrassed " to show Precious at Cannes because he did not want " to exploit black people " and wasn't sure if he " wanted white French people to see our world . " After the success at Precious ' screenings at Sundance , reporters took note that the film could mirror the success of other films that had been screened and praised at the festival . S. James Snyder , of Time , compared Precious 's success at Sundance to that of 2008 's The Wrestler and Slumdog Millionaire ; both films later were nominated for multiple Academy Awards , and Slumdog itself won Best Picture at the 81st Annual Academy Awards .

Winfrey used her status as both a celebrity and a media personality to give the film what was described by Ben Child of The Guardian , as a " high @-@ profile promotional push . " At a press conference Winfrey announced her intention to lead a promotional campaign on behalf of Precious along with her other various platforms , hoping to be able to " bring in different audiences " by promoting the film on her show , in her magazine and on her satellite @-@ radio channel . Katie Walmsley of CNN remarked , based on the film 's positive reception at the Toronto Film Festival , that the film " at the very least , the [ Toronto ] award will guarantee " Precious " substantial distribution , as well as exposure for two @-@ time director Daniels . " The trailer for Precious was shown during previews of the film 's producer Perry 's film I Can Do Bad All By Myself in September 2009 .

== = Box office == =

Precious was given a limited @-@ theatrical release on November 6th , 2009 , and was originally scheduled to appear on screens only in North America . Due to the mature subject matter of the film , it was rated " R " by the Motion Picture Association of America ( MPAA ) in the United States , specifically for strong depiction of " child abuse including sexual assault , and pervasive indecent language " . During its opening weekend , the film earned \$ 1 @, @ 872 @, @ 458 , which placed twelfth on that weekend 's box office list , despite being in only 18 theaters . The film saw a 214 percent increase in its second week of release , earning \$ 5 @, @ 874 @, @ 628 at 174 theaters , which catapulted it up to third place in that weekend 's box office , with a per @-@ theater average of \$ 33 @, @ 762 . On November 20 , 2009 , the film received a wider release , showing at 629 theaters ( thus tripling the number of theaters showing the film ) . In its third week , Precious , as studios had previously estimated , placed sixth at the box office , with the revenues estimated \$ 11 @, @ 008 @, @ 000 ? an 87 @. @ 4 % increase from the previous week .

After riding that three @-@ week wave of success , Precious began to see a decrease in box office earnings . However , the film holds the record as the highest grossing picture to open in fewer than 100 theaters , and holds the record for the highest grossing average per screen for films shown in fewer than 50 theaters . Brandon Grey of Box Office Mojo described Precious as having had a " robust expansion " in its second week of release , and he confirmed that the film holds the record for having the second @-@ highest grossing weekend for a movie playing at fewer than 200 sites , behind only Paranormal Activity . Precious grossed a total of \$ 40 @, @ 320 @, @ 285 in over six weeks of release . The film opened at ninth place in the United Kingdom , with revenues totaling £ 259 @, @ 000 in its opening weekend from a limited release of 47 cinemas , generating a £ 5 @, @ 552 screen average .

== = Home media == =

The film was released on DVD @-@ Video and Blu @-@ ray Disc formats on March 9 , 2010 , reaching number one on the top DVD sales chart in the United States with 1 @. @ 5 million DVDs

sold in its first week of release . It also reached the top position on the rental charts for iTunes and Amazon.com.

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Precious received much acclaim from film critics , particularly for Sidibe 's and Mo 'Nique 's performances . Review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes reports that 91 % of 218 critics gave the film a positive review , with a rating average of 7 @. @ 8 out of 10 . The site 's consensus is that " Precious is a grim yet ultimately triumphant film about abuse and inner @-@ city life , largely bolstered by exceptional performances from its cast . " Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from film critics , gave the film a rating score of 79 based on 36 reviews , indicating " Generally favorable reviews . "

John Anderson , of Variety , said " to simply call it harrowing or unsparing doesn 't quite cut it , " having felt that the film is " courageous and uncompromising , a shaken cocktail of debasement and elation , despair and hope . " Anderson cited Carey 's performance as " pitch perfect " and Patton 's role as Ms. Blu Rain as " disarming . " Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly , praised Carey 's performance , describing it as having been " an authentically deglammed compassion " and praised the film for ' capturing ' " how a lost girl rouses herself from the dead " and for Daniels ' showing " unflinching courage as a filmmaker by going this deep into the pathologies that may still linger in the closets of some impoverished inner @-@ city lives . " Gleiberman described the film as being a movie " that makes you think , ' There but for the grace of God go I. ' [ ... ] It 's a potent and moving experience , because by the end you feel you 've witnessed nothing less than the birth of a soul " and felt that the " final scene of revelation " between Sidibe 's and Mo 'Nique 's characters was strong enough to be able to leave viewers " tearful , shaken , [ and ] dazed with pity and terror . " He identifies how Daniels uses one of the rich scenes created by Fletcher to position Mo 'Nique in a painful confrontation with Sidibe that results in a masterful and thought @-@ provoking performance that delivers the final " push " needed by Sidibe : " The more Precious tries to get away from her mother , the more she 's pulled back " .

Roger Ebert , of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , praised Mo 'Nique and Sidibe 's performances . Ebert described Mo 'Nique 's performance as being " frighteningly convincing " and felt that " the film is a tribute to Sidibe 's ability to engage our empathy " because she " completely creates the Precious character . " He noted that Carey and Patton " are equal with Sidibe in screen impact . " Ebert praised Daniels because rather than casting the actors for their names , " he was able to see beneath the surface and trust that they had within the emotional resources to play these women , and he was right . " Betsey Sharkey , of the Los Angeles Times describes the film as being a " rough @-@ cut diamond ... [ A ] rare blend of pure entertainment and dark social commentary , it is a shockingly raw , surprisingly irreverent and absolutely unforgettable story . " Claudia Puig , of USA Today says that while there are " melodramatic moments " in the film , the cast gives " remarkable performances " to show the audiences the film 's " inspiring message . " Peter Travers , of Rolling Stone called Mo 'Nique " dynamite , " a performance that " tears at your heart . "

Mary Pols of Time praised the film 's fantasy sequences for being able to show the audience a " joyous Wizard of Oz energy " that is able to " open the door into Precious 's mind in a way even [ the author ] Sapphire couldn 't . " Pols felt that , while not implying that the film has " a lack of compelling emotional material " but that the film 's " few weak moments " are the " ones that dovetail with typical inspirational stories . " Marshall Fine , of The Huffington Post , praised the film as being " a film that doesn 't shy away from the depths to which human beings can sink , but it also shows the strength and resilience of which we are capable , even at our lowest moments . " Scott Mendelson , also of The Huffington Post , felt that when you put the " glaring issues aside , " the film " still works as a potent character study and a glimpse inside a world we 'd rather pretend does not exist in America . " But while the film " succeeds as a powerful acting treat and a potent character study , there are

some major narrative issues that prevent the film from being an accidental masterpiece . " Mendelson described the film as being " an acting powerhouse " based on its many emotional themes .

Critic Jack Mathews wrote : " Without being familiar with the source material , you really have no idea how much work went into the adaptation or how well it was done .... ' Precious : Based on the Novel ' Push ' by Sapphire ' ... First @-@ time screenwriter Geoffrey Fletcher did yeoman 's work turning Sapphire 's graphic , idiomatic novel into a coherent and inspiring story about the journey of an abused Harlem teenager . "

Erin Aubry Kaplan writes on Salon.com that the question posed by the film is how to assess the " hopeless story of a ghetto teen ... in the Age of Obama . " She goes on to say that " ' Precious ' proves you don 't always have to choose between artistic and commercial success ; the film 's first opening weekend was record @-@ breaking . It 's a sign how much we needed to tell this story . And , perhaps , how many stories there are left to tell . "

A. O. Scott identifies the script 's precise use of force and adept use of language , including a memorable line created by Fletcher for the adaptation : a " risky , remarkable film adaptation , written by Geoffrey Fletcher , the facts of Precious 's life are also laid out with unsparing force ( though not in overly graphic detail ) . But just as Push achieves an eloquence that makes it far more than a fictional diary of extreme dysfunction , so too does Precious avoid the traps of well @-@ meaning , preachy lower @-@ depths realism . It howls and stammers , but it also sings ... Inarticulate and emotionally shut down , her massive body at once a prison and a hiding place , Precious is also perceptive and shrewd , possessed of talents visible only to those who bother to look . At its plainest and most persuasive , her story is that of a writer discovering a voice . ' These people talked like TV stations I didn 't even watch , ' she remarks of Ms. Rain and her lover ( Kimberly Russell ) , displaying her awakening literary intelligence even as she marvels at the discovery of her ignorance . "

Conversely , reflecting the transformation from script to screen , Dana Stevens of Slate disagrees with Gleiberman 's suggestion that the " film makes you think " and argues that the film 's " eagerness " to " drag " the audience " through the lower depths of human experience " leaves little space for independent " conclusions " . Stevens noted that while the film is about improvement and self @-@ actualization , " it wields an awfully large cudgel " in contrast to Scott 's view of balance : " unsparing force ( though not in overly graphic detail ) " . Perhaps sharing Mathews ' view regarding the daunting challenge of adapting the harsh story of Push , Stevens ' observes that " Daniels and Fletcher no doubt intended for their film to lend a voice to the kind of protagonist too often excluded from American movie screens : a poor , black , overweight single mother from the inner city . "

Precious has also received some negative responses from critics . Writing for the New York Press , Armond White compared the film to The Birth of a Nation as " demeaning the idea of black American life , " calling it the " con job of the year . " In two separate articles , The New York Times cited White 's article as the most powerful negative review , adding that in a recent interview he had remarked that the film 's popularity is a result of the " fact " that " black pathology sells . " Courtland Milloy , of The Washington Post said Precious was " a film of prurient interest that has about as much redeeming social value as a porn flick . " David Edelstein , of New York Magazine , commented that while the film has " elements " that are " powerful and shocking , " he felt the movie was " programmed " and that the film had " its own study guide . " Keith Uhlich , of Time Out New York , felt that the film did not live up to its " long hype , " and felt that it was " bewildering " to discover the film 's praise at the Sundance Film Festival because Uhlich characterized the film as having " shrug @-@ worthiness . " Peter Bradshaw wrote in The Guardian that the film catalogues a " horrendous , unending nightmare of abuse " and then abruptly turns into something resembling Fame . Bradshaw commended the film 's acting and energy but said it was not quite the " transcendent masterpiece " some had made it out to be . Sukhdev Sandhu said in The Daily Telegraph that he found the film " a dispiriting mix of cliché and melodrama , " although he acknowledged that the film does feature some superb acting .

Noting Daniels ' admiration of the work of John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar and the joking attitude he and the actors sometimes took towards their material while making the movie , Jim Emerson

argued that Precious is best understood as a deliberately over @-@ the @-@ top piece of camp in the vein of Waters 's Female Trouble .

= = = Accolades = = =

Precious received dozens of nominations in award categories , including six Academy Award nominations , not only for the film itself but for the cast 's performances , the direction and cinematography , and the adaptation of the novel to the screenplay . Director Lee Daniels won the People 's Choice Award , an award given by audience members at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival . Daniels won both awards for which he was nominated at the San Sebastián International Film Festival ? the TVE Otra Mirada Award and the Audience Award . He was also nominated in the category of Bronze Horse at the Stockholm Film Festival , and won the Best Feature Film Award at the Hawaii International Film Festival .

Precious received five awards at the 2009 Independent Spirit Awards ( ISA ) in the categories for Best Film , Best First Screenplay , Best Direction , Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress .

Precious received nominations from the 67th Annual Golden Globes for the film and for the performances of Mo 'Nique and Sidibe ; Mo 'Nique won Best Supporting Actress .

The film was nominated in all three major categories at the 2009 Screen Actor Guild Awards : Best Cast , Best Actress , and Best Supporting Actress ( in which Mo 'Nique won ) .

Precious was considered for the BAFTA awards in several categories , including Best Picture , Best Director , Best Adapted Screenplay , Best Editing , Best Leading Actress ( Gabourey Sidibe ) , and Best Supporting Actress ( Mo 'Nique ) .

On February 2 , 2010 , the film received Academy Award nominations at the 82nd Academy Awards for Best Picture , Best Actress ( Sidibe ) , Best Supporting Actress ( Mo 'Nique ) , Best Director ( Daniels ) , Best Adapted Screenplay ( Fletcher ) , and Best Film Editing ( Klotz ) . On March 7 , 2010 , Mo 'Nique ( Best Supporting Actress ) and Fletcher ( Best Adapted Screenplay ) won Academy Awards in their respective categories . The film was also nominated for a GLAAD Media Award for " Outstanding Film - Wide Release " during the 21st GLAAD Media Awards .