

CSI Star Says New Faith-Based Film Is What America Needs Right Now

In the new inspirational sports drama, popular actor Mykelti Williamson (*Fences*, *CSI: New York*) stars as Coach Hailey, an important voice of encouragement to two teens facing an emotional and spiritual battle. The longtime actor, who rose to popularity as the fan-favorite Bubba in *Forrest Gump*, appealed to him because of the way his character modeled encouragement to young people.

"Our director, Chris Dowling, refused to be preachy, which is right up my alley," he said during the film's red-carpet premiere. "Because when you're told to be a witness, it doesn't necessarily mean to say it; it means to live it and be that witness."

Williamson was also drawn to the project as a "way to do something with my art where people don't have to hide their children and duck."

"It's a family movie," he said. "It's, it's inclusive, and that's what we need in America right now. We need inclusion. When I read it, I was fired up, and I'm so happy I did it."

To portray Coach Hailey, Williamson drew upon his own personal faith and a desire to have a father figure in his life. The Missouri native points to two important figures who impacted his life, his late stepfather who taught him "how to be a man" and a neighbor who was an actor.

"His name was Leo Johnson," he said. "He was an actor, but he was also a cowboy. He was a buffalo soldier, and Mr. Johnson looked out for all the kids in the neighborhood and was as inspiring to all of us as this character (Coach Hailey) was to

the boys in this film.”

Run the Race releases Feb. 22, and Williamson is hoping its message of encouragement and determination will impact a wide variety of audience members.

“I’m really proud of this movie,” he said. “I like it, and I hope it lands and resonates with everybody.” {eo}

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Coach Hailey (Mykelti Williamson) encourages Zach (Tanner Stine) in *RUN THE RACE*—in theaters February 22, 2019. (2019 RTR Movie Holdings, LLC. All Rights Reserved.)

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