

# TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY

## OSCAR-WINNING SCREENWRITER

b. October 17, 1980

*"It's really important for us, in terms of the storytellers, to be able to talk about these intimate details that built our lives."*

**He won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for "Moonlight," a film based on his autobiographical play.**

Tarell Alvin McCraney is an award-winning playwright and an actor. In 2017 he won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for "Moonlight," a film based on his autobiographical play, "In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue."

McCraney was born in the tough Liberty City section of Miami, Florida, to a teenage mother who struggled with crack addiction. He survived with the help of a kind-hearted drug dealer and his grandparents, who encouraged learning and offered a vision of life outside his crime-infested neighborhood.

McCraney attended Miami's New World School of the Arts and was accepted into the Theatre School at DePaul University, where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting. At age 24, he enrolled in the playwriting program at Yale School of Drama. Upon graduation he received the prestigious Cole Porter playwriting award.

At Yale, McCraney wrote his first famous play, "The Brothers Size." It opened off Broadway in 2007, when he was a third-year student. The New York Times reviewed it enthusiastically.

"The Brothers Size," and two other plays he wrote in drama school, "In The Red and Brown Water" and "Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet," make up McCraney's acclaimed trilogy, "The Brother/Sister Plays." Set in the Louisiana bayou and drawing upon West African Lore, "The Brother/Sister Plays" distinguished McCraney as a gifted new artist. The trilogy was performed in repertory in the United States and worldwide.

From 2009 to 2011, McCraney served as the Warwick International Playwright in Residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company in London. In 2010 he became a member of the celebrated Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. He also performed with the Northlight Theatre and co-starred in the Chicago premiere of "Blue/Orange."

In 2013 McCraney received a \$625,000 MacArthur Fellowship, known as the "genius grant." The MacArthur Foundation presents the coveted prize annually to 24 "extraordinarily talented and creative individuals."

With the director Barry Jenkins, McCraney co-wrote the screenplay for the 2016 film "Moonlight," which draws on his experience growing up black and gay in a Miami housing project. The film won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay, the Golden Globe and BAFTA Award for best picture, and dozens of other awards and nominations.

Among other honors, McCraney has received London's Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright, The New York Times' inaugural Outstanding Playwright Award and the renowned Whiting Award. The Advocate named him to its list of "40 under 40" and Out magazine featured him on its "Out100" list.

McCraney is the Chair and Eugene O'Neill Professor in the Practice of Playwriting at Yale University School of Drama and the Playwright-in-Residence of the Yale Repertory Theatre.

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