

Award-Winning Actor Idrees Degas Tragically Dies Following High-Speed Police Chase Incident in Los Angeles on May 23

Celebrated Chicago-born stage and screen actor, Morehouse graduate, and a theatrical force leaves a legacy of artistry, class, and unforgettable performances.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The entertainment industry is mourning the tragic and untimely death of acclaimed actor [Idrees Degas](#), who died on the evening of May 23, 2026, after being caught in the aftermath of a high-speed police pursuit involving a suspect. While the male suspect was arrested, authorities say details surrounding the incident are still unfolding.

"A Chicago native with a commanding stage presence and unmistakable style, Idrees Degas built a respected career in Hollywood spanning theater, television, and independent film," said his longtime manager and publicist, [Dr. Marie Y. Lemelle](#), PhD, Ped.D. "His life and career were violently cut short, and it is unforgivable." Known for his high-fashion aesthetic and emotionally charged performances, he earned recognition both on and off screen as a fearless creative force whose artistry reflected discipline, intelligence, and depth.

Degas entry into the entertainment world was ushered in more than a decade ago by the illustrious Kramer family. He shared, "My Hollywood journey was guided by the industry circle of legendary filmmaker Stanley Kramer, his multi-talented daughter Katharine 'Kat' Kramer, a former Miss Golden Globe Ambassador, and her mother, Karen Sharpe-Kramer, who were invaluable, and memories I will always treasure."

In 2023, Degas received the Hollywood African Prestigious Awards (HAPA) honor for Best Actor in



Actor, singer and producer Idrees Degas was bestowed with several awards throughout his career. Photo: Platinum Star PR

the short film "The Rain Has Passed," further solidifying his reputation as one of the emerging actors to watch. He recently completed three feature films produced by Footage Films. His latest project, "[Night Shift](#)," premieres June 5, 2026, on Tubi.

"The HAPAwards sends condolences to the family and many friends of Mr. Degas," said Dr. Tina Weisinger, CEO and Founder of the HAPA. "Mr. Degas was a class act and an HAPA award-winning actor whose commitment to his craft pushed the limits of artistic excellence. He will be sorely missed as one of our staple presenters and a valued member of the HAPA family."

Degas, a graduate of Morehouse College, was also set to star in the upcoming feature film "The 6ix," written and directed by fellow Morehouse graduate and Chicago native Chuck Whitman. "Idrees was a talent that I was excited about in the role of Tone," said Whitman. "Idrees was a cool guy, always classically dressed. He brought authenticity, intelligence, and presence into every room he entered. This loss is devastating."



Live theater was one of Idrees Degas' passions and his dual role in the "Double V" received great reviews. Photo: Platinum Star PR

For the past year, Degas had been deeply immersed in development for the highly anticipated one-man film production "After Dark with Miles Davis," written by Dr. Lemelle. Degas was the star and executive producer of the theatrical experience, which was scheduled to open in September 2026 at SIR Studio in Hollywood, then move to WePlay Studios in Inglewood, California, followed by a U.S. tour and an international tour culminating in Japan in 2027.

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*Dr. Marie Y. Lemelle, MBA,
PhD, Ped.D, Talent
Manager/Publicist*

“The devastating news of his death broke my heart,” said Dr. Lemelle. “He will be truly missed. We have shared many red-carpet premieres, phenomenal moments, and one-of-a-kind experiences over the more than 10 years we have known each other. My brother, my friend, my star.”

Degas was slated to star in a dozen vertical productions produced by Platinum Star Media Group

that would launch another exciting segment of his career.

"Idrees was more than a client. He was family," continued Dr. Lemelle. "He possessed rare artistic brilliance and the courage to disappear fully into a character. He studied his craft with discipline and respect for the stage. His commitment to taking trumpet lessons and becoming Miles Davis was extraordinary. We believed this production would redefine his career and introduce audiences around the world to the depth of his talent, which included an amazing singing voice."

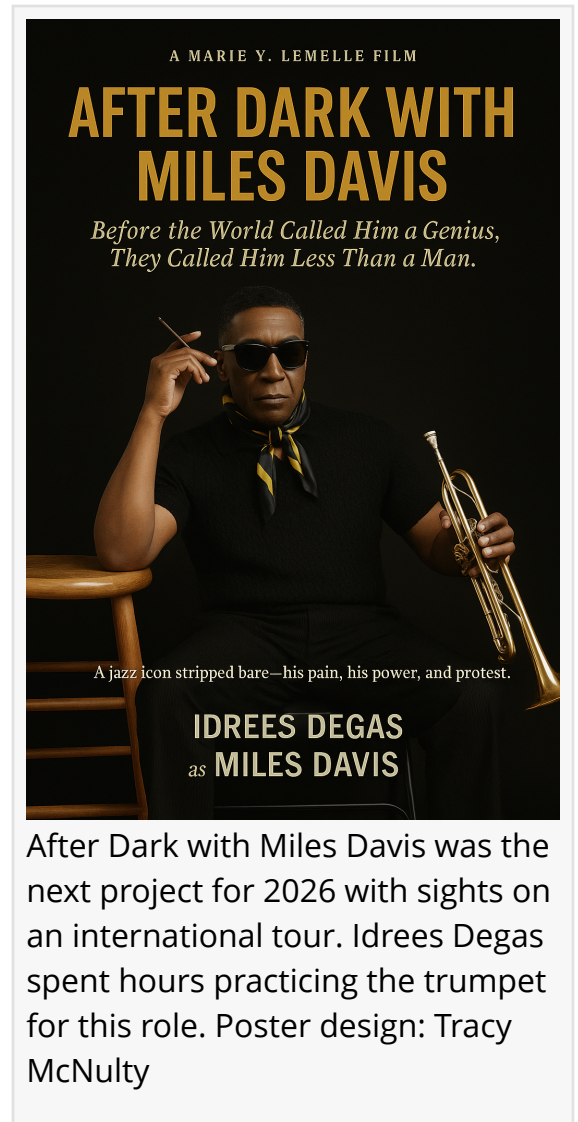
His stage and theater work remained central to his artistry. In 2025, he appeared in the hit play, "Madam of Leimert," written and directed by Larryjean "Gene" Powell. In 2024, he starred in "Double V," written and directed by Michael A. Shepperd, delivering a standout dual performance that showcased his dramatic range and versatility.

A Shakespearean-trained actor, Degas began his stage career in productions including "The Heritage" at The Goodman Theatre and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" at The Steppenwolf Theatre. His screen credits included appearances in Showtime's "Black Monday," starring Don Cheadle and Regina Hall, and directed by Seth Rogen. He also appeared in HBO's political satire "Veep," as an African military dictator opposite Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

Casting Director Carnetta Jones remembers the actor's spirit and presence. "Idrees's melodic voice and gentle soul were a welcome medicine," said Jones, who cast him in three roles for projects produced by Footage Films. "Our conversations were uplifting. His presence will be deeply missed. His film performances will remain a reminder of what an incredible talent he was."

Throughout his career, Degas remained committed to expanding opportunities for Black actors in theater and film while balancing commercial success with artistic integrity. Friends and colleagues frequently described him as charismatic, intellectually curious, and intensely dedicated to his craft.

Degas was also represented by Kia Todd, head of Kia Todd Talent Agency. "Idrees was a kind-hearted, good-natured man whose passion for life was matched only by his determination to pursue his dreams as an actor," said Kia Todd. "He approached every opportunity with gratitude,



humility, and an unwavering commitment to his craft. I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to meet and work with him. His warmth, positive spirit, and genuine nature left a lasting impression on everyone who crossed his path."

Talent manager Matt Chassin, an integral executive member of the Platinum Star Media Group management team, also remembers long talks about upcoming projects. "I was shocked to learn of Idrees' sudden passing. No one should ever become a victim because of a high-speed chase," said Matt Chassin. "Idrees was more than just another talented actor. He was a beautiful person who approached the world with grace and compassion. He will be missed by everyone whose lives he touched."

Spencer Michael Collins IV of BLACMail Productions also shared his condolences. "We join so many others in mourning the loss of our brother, fellow actor, and friend," said Collins. "Idrees was a gifted artist whose presence, talent, and spirit left a lasting impression on everyone he knew. Whether on stage, on screen, or in conversation, he carried himself with dignity, warmth, style, and grace. We celebrate a life that touched so many and a legacy that will continue to inspire beyond his physical presence."

His death leaves behind his daughter, father, extended family members in Chicago, colleagues, and countless friends throughout the entertainment community. He was preceded in death by his mother, who passed away in 2019.

Plans for a memorial celebration honoring the life and artistic legacy of Idrees Degas are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Matt Chassin
Platinum Star Media Group
+1 213-276-7827

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Actor Idrees Degas and his manager Dr. Marie Y. Lemelle attended the "green carpet" gala presented by the CFB Foundation at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel on March 29, 2026. Courtesy photo.

X
Other



One of Idrees Degas' talents was his versatility and flexibility to play a variety of roles. In a Footage Films production, *Twins*, he played the judge. He remarked, "Great writing and a fun shoot with talented cast and crew." Photo: Footage Films

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