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Baftas 2026: BBC apologises for not editing out racial slur shouted by guest with Tourette's

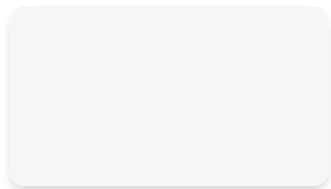
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Actors Michael B Jordan and Delroy Lindo were on stage at the time during the award ceremony in London.



23 February 2026

Steven McIntosh Entertainment reporter



Getty Images

The racial slur was shouted while Michael B Jordan (left) and Delroy Lindo were presenting an award

The BBC has apologised for not editing out a racial slur from its Bafta Film Awards coverage after a guest with Tourette's syndrome shouted out when two black actors were on stage.

John Davidson, whose life story inspired the film I Swear, shouted the N-word as Sinners stars Michael B Jordan and Delroy Lindo presented the first prize of Sunday's ceremony.

The moment was not edited out of the BBC One broadcast, which was shown on a two-hour delay, and remained on BBC iPlayer on Monday morning before the ceremony was removed.

A BBC spokesperson said: "We apologise that this was not edited out prior to broadcast and it will now be removed from the version on BBC iPlayer."

The shout was audible in the broadcast, although many viewers would have struggled to make out the word.

Conservative Party leader **Kemi Badenoch said** the BBC had made "a horrible mistake" by not editing it out at the time, adding: "I think an apology is important, they need to explain why it wasn't bleeped out."

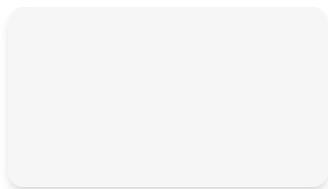
In its statement, the BBC said: "Some viewers may have heard strong and offensive language during the Bafta Film Awards.

"This arose from involuntary verbal tics associated with Tourette syndrome, and as explained during the ceremony it was not intentional."

The corporation declined to comment further on why it wasn't initially edited or bleeped out.

After the ceremony, **Lindo told Vanity Fair** that he and Jordan "did what we had to do" as they carried on presenting the category, but also said he wished "someone from Bafta spoke to us afterward".

In a statement, Bafta said it acknowledged the "harm this has caused, address what happened and apologise to all".





Getty Images

John Davidson's tics could be heard several times during the ceremony

Tourette's is characterised by sudden, involuntary and repetitive movements or sounds, known as tics.

Between 10% and 30% of people with the condition have tics that produce socially unacceptable words such as swearing - known as coprolalia - according to the Tourette's Action charity.

Davidson, a Tourette's campaigner from Galashiels in Scotland, who was made an MBE in 2019, shouted loudly several times before and during the Bafta ceremony.

He said on Monday that he was "deeply mortified if anyone considers my involuntary tics to be intentional or to carry any meaning".

"I have spent my life trying to support and empower the Tourette's community and to teach empathy, kindness and understanding from others and I will continue to do so," he said in a statement.

"I chose to leave the auditorium early into the ceremony as I was aware of the distress my tics were causing."

Bafta said it took the duty of care to all its guests seriously and had started "from a position of inclusion", taking measures to inform attendees of Davidson's presence and that they may hear strong language.

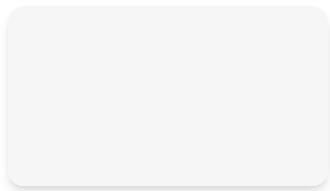
"Early in the ceremony a loud tic in the form of a profoundly offensive term was heard by many people in the room," the statement said.

"Michael B Jordan and Delroy Lindo were on stage at the time, and we apologise unreservedly to them, and to all those impacted. We would like to thank Michael and Delroy for their incredible dignity and professionalism."

Bafta also thanked Davidson for his "dignity and consideration of others, on what should have been a night of celebration for him".

"We take full responsibility for putting our guests in a very difficult situation and we apologise to all," it added.

"We will learn from this and keep inclusion at the core of all we do, maintaining our belief in film and storytelling as a critical conduit for compassion and empathy."





EPA

Robert Aramayo, who played Davidson in *I Swear*, won best actor and rising star

During the ceremony, host Alan Cumming referred to "some strong and offensive language" from someone with Tourette's who therefore had "no control over their language", adding: "We apologise if you were offended."

Hannah Beachler, the production designer from the film *Sinners*, wrote on X: "The situation is almost impossible, but it happened 3 times that night, and one of the three times was directed at myself on the way to dinner after the show.

"I understand and deeply know why this is an impossible situation. I know we must handle this with grace and continue to push through.

"But what made the situation worse was the throw away apology of 'if you were offended' at the end of the show. Of course we were offended."

Jordan's former co-star on *The Wire*, Wendell Pierce, posted: "It's infuriating that the first reaction wasn't complete and full throated apologies to Delroy Lindo and Michael B Jordan.

"The insult to them takes priority. It doesn't matter the reasoning for the racist slur."

Oscar winner Jamie Foxx added in a comment posted on Instagram that the slur had been "unacceptable".

'Not being abusive'

Speaking to BBC News, Robert Aramayo, who won best actor for playing Davidson in *I Swear*, said: "They're tics, he [Davidson] is ticking, and we have to understand that the way we perceive Tourette's is a joint responsibility.

"It's not shouting obscenities, it's not being abusive, it's Tourette's and they're tics.

"If it can lead to a deeper understanding of Tourette's syndrome and what tics actually are, if our movie is a part of that conversation, then that's a really incredible thing."

Pippa McClounan, communications manager of Tourette's Action, told BBC News: "As much as these words do cause hurt and shock in people, it's really vital that the public understands a fundamental truth about Tourette's syndrome, that the tics are involuntary, and they are in no way reflection of what that person is thinking and their beliefs.

"This is what John lives with every day of his life... and the backlash that he experiences throughout his life you see in the film."

I Swear follows Davidson's struggle growing up with Tourette's in 1980s Scotland.

Davidson was awarded his MBE for his efforts to increase understanding of the condition and help families deal with it.

As well as best actor, Aramayo, from Hull, also received the Baftas' Rising Star prize, and *I Swear* won best casting.



Getty Images

Akinola Davies Jr (left) and brother Wale Davies won outstanding debut by a British writer, director or producer

Elsewhere, part of an acceptance speech including the remark "Free Palestine" was edited out of the BBC broadcast.

My Father's Shadow director Akinola Davies Jr made the remark as he ended his speech to accept the prize for best debut by a British writer, director or producer.

Davies Jr and his brother Wale, the film's writer, spoke on stage for two-and-a-half minutes, but their speeches were edited to about one minute for broadcast, which the BBC said was due to time restrictions.

A BBC spokesperson **told Deadline**: "The same happened to other speeches made during the night and all edits were made to ensure the programme was delivered to time. All winners' speeches will be available to watch via Bafta's YouTube channel."

Additional reporting by Ian Youngs.

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