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Tulane University alumnus Rob Steinberg has a pivotal role in the film *12 Years a Slave*, which is the true story of a free black man — Solomon Northup — who is kidnapped and sold into slavery before the Civil War.

Steinberg plays New York shop owner Cephus Parker who befriends Northup. When Parker gets word (with the help of a character portrayed by Brad Pitt) that Northup has been enslaved, Parker travels thousands of miles to help free his friend.

“I would often tear up in preparing what I needed to bring to the role,” Steinberg says. “I was in awe of my character’s character. I had to look inside myself to see what was in me, what I could draw upon ... it’s the love of a friend that would make my character go to great lengths to correct an injustice.”

Steinberg says that *12 Years a Slave* is a “magnificently important film” about slavery.

He is proud “to be part of something that is truly special ... it wasn’t just doing a job. I think that all of us who worked on the film felt that way.”

The film, released in movie theaters today (Oct. 18) and opening in New Orleans on Nov. 1, already is getting Oscar buzz.

Steinberg graduated from Tulane in 1981 with a BA in communication. He worked in New York in the music industry, representing heavy metal bands. But after he suffered a serious accident, he underwent a long period of recovery and reflection. Then he moved to California to become an actor.

“I decided to be the artist instead of representing the artist,” he says. His break came when he landed a part in *Die Hard 2*.

“I starred in some movies that weren’t very interesting and had some small parts in movies and TV shows that were.”

Four years ago, Steinberg moved back to New Orleans and he has since then found steady work in Hollywood South.

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