

# White Paper Report

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Project Director: Brian Graney (bpgraney@indiana.edu)

Institution: Indiana University, Bloomington

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## **White Paper Report**

Grant Number: HD-51642-13

Title of Project: Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts

Project Director: Brian Graney

Grantee Institution: Indiana University, Bloomington

Date Submitted: 07/31/2014

## REPRESENTING EARLY BLACK FILM ARTIFACTS AS MATERIAL EVIDENCE IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS

### BACKGROUND

The study of “race movies,” the early motion pictures produced for Black audiences in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presents an ideal humanities context for framing important questions bearing on the digital representation of film artifacts and ephemera as material evidence. In a 2011 article, Jacqueline Stewart proposed a challenging new avenue for the study of early Black film—an area marked by its scarcity of extant documentation—by identifying unmined evidentiary value in what “we can learn from the singularity of each print...and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film’s ‘content.’”<sup>1</sup>

In “Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts,” a Digital Humanities Start-Up Level 1 grant project supported through the National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities, the Black Film Center/Archive (BFC/A) at Indiana University proposed to conduct a two-day conference and workshop in November 2013 exploring the new methodologies and humanities questions emerging through recent scholarship in early Black film studies; and establishing the technological groundwork necessary for enacting these modes of inquiry through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic structures for discovery, presentation, and analysis. The BFC/A also proposed to videotape and transcribe the full conference and workshop proceedings and to make them publicly accessible through an Omeka-based website. All proposed activities were completed successfully within the grant period of May 1, 2013, through April 30, 2014.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### *Planning*

Once the dates of November 15 and 16 were confirmed with all conference participants, the Indiana University Cinema and the BFC/A classroom were reserved as the venues for the conference and workshop. Planning for the event proceeded under the conference title, *Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film*. In further support of the event, the Indiana University Cinema programmed two early Black silent film restorations from the Library of Congress to coincide with the conference and workshop: Richard E. Norman’s *The Flying Ace* (1926) and Oscar Micheaux’s *Within Our Gates* (1919).

In development over June and July, two project websites were launched in mid-August: a public website for distributing information about the



<sup>1</sup> Jacqueline Stewart, “Discovering black film history: Tracing the Tyler, Texas Black Film Collection,” *Film History*, 23, no. 2 (2011), 147-173.

conference events, and a member-only wiki for use by project staff and conference participants. The wiki hosted informational resources regarding the project and offered space for conference participants to outline and discuss their presentations.

#### *Promotion*

Project director Brian Graney announced the conference in a presentation at the July 2013 Summer Film Symposium at Northeast Historic Film. In September, scholar and project advisor Jacqueline Stewart presented her paper, “Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence: Digital Regeneration,” at the 2013 Orphans Midwest Symposium in Bloomington, Indiana, discussing the evolution and goals of the project and promoting the November conference. Graney discussed the project again at more length in November 2013 as a panelist on “Digital Humanities: New Opportunities for Funding, Research, and Access,” a session at the annual meeting of the Association of Moving Image Archivists in Richmond, Virginia.

In October, BFC/A and IU Communications prepared a press announcement regarding the project and upcoming events. This was distributed through professional and academic mailing lists in late October and to press outlets nationally in early November. A version of this announcement was also published in the Fall 2013 issue of BFC/A’s international film journal, *Black Camera*.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Conference and Workshop*

On November 15, 2013, participants and attendees gathered at the Indiana University Cinema for the full-day conference. The event was open to the public and free of charge. Following opening remarks by project director Graney and a welcome from Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities John Lucaites, Shola Lynch (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library) delivered a keynote



address chronicling her research history with visual evidence of Black America and her goals for developing reference resources mining the moving image and sound collections of the Schomburg Center.

Greg Waller (Indiana University) moderated the first of the conference’s three panels, “The State of Research and Platforms for Access,” which featured presentations from Cara Caddoo (Indiana University), Matthew Bernstein (Emory University), and Dana White (Emory University). Caddoo shared her recent work to map early Black cinema circuits of exhibition and lines of Black migration using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Bernstein and White continued the discussion of digital mapping through

their analysis of film censorship records, tracing the exhibitions of controversial race films throughout the South, with a particular focus on the city of Atlanta, Georgia.

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<sup>2</sup> Doyle, Stacey and Brian Graney, “News from the Black Film Center/Archive: Digital Humanities,” *Black Camera: An International Film Journal*, 5, no. 1 (Fall 2013), pp. 285-289.

In “The Carrier as Content,” Rachael Stoeltje (Indiana University) moderated a panel including Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago), Mike Mashon (Library of Congress), Leah Kerr (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures), and Jan-Christopher Horak (UCLA Film and Television Archive). Stewart discussed the impact of various standard and non-standard film formats on early Black filmmaking and exhibition. Mashon stressed the evidentiary value of the physical film artifact, its importance to research and identification, and the practical limitations of providing access to original film elements. Kerr presented the resources now in development through the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures for supporting collections of Black film ephemera. Horak established a link between early race films and more recent Black independent films of the L.A. Rebellion which suffer similar obstacles to endurance and visibility.

Barbara Klinger (Indiana University) moderated the final panel, “The Case of the Race Movie Circuit,” featuring presentations from Allyson Nadia Field (UCLA), Terri Francis (University of Pennsylvania), Barbara Tapa Lupack, and Charlene Register (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill). Field addressed the study of lost films through related artifacts and records, surveying the utility and limitations of various digital resources she has employed in her research. Francis provided insight into her research process by reviewing her investigations into Josephine Baker’s early career and the re-education films of the Jamaican Film Unit. Lupack presented the research challenges behind her most recent publication on Richard E. Norman, advocating for better referral networks between institutions and crowd-sourcing to find lost or forgotten materials. Register concluded the panel with a discussion of the information to be gleaned from government documents, including death certificates and FBI files, and the laborious process of obtaining access to these materials.

The closing roundtable was moderated by BFC/A director Michael T. Martin with Rhea Combs (National Museum of African American History & Culture), Shola Lynch, Cara Caddoo, Jacqueline Stewart, Leah Kerr, Allyson Nadia Field, and Jan-Christopher Horak.

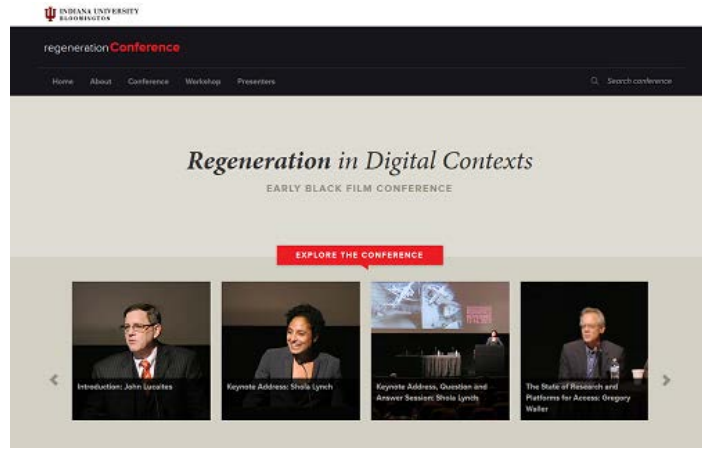
On November 16, 2013, the conference speakers and organizers reconvened at the Black Film Center/Archive for an intensive workshop program. In his introduction, Graney summarized the conversations of the first day as having moved from materiality toward a greater emphasis on issues of loss, invisibility, inaccessibility, and representation. He raised new questions about materiality and loss, and delineated literal and forensic materiality of archival sources as groundwork for the discussions to follow.

The workshop featured five presentations over the course of the day. Reto Kromer (Audio-Visual Preservation by Reto ch LLC) offered a technical report from the field of audio-visual digitization, reviewing various aspects of capturing and representing analog media in digital form and best practices for scanning older film formats. Jonathan Andrew Uhrich (Indiana University) surveyed digital tools in use for formal and quantitative analysis of film, including Cinemetrics, and projects such as Digital Formalism, which encountered the limitations of such tools when applied to older films. Will Cowan (Indiana University) introduced participants to the NEH-funded VideoStream 2 plugin for Omeka, demonstrating its utility in segmenting and annotating films for analysis and presentation. Doug Reside (New York Public Library) discussed and demonstrated various tools developed and in use to expose Performing Arts collections at NYPL, highlighting OpenBR facial recognition and a Popcorn.js-enriched video interface. John A. Walsh (Indiana University) demonstrated the use of Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) encoding for paratextual documents related to early films, and the supplementary tools which exploit this encoding to offer greater discovery and innovative use.

In the workshop's closing session, participants discussed a number of potential future collaborative projects building on the relationships established at the Regeneration conference.

### *Dissemination and Sustainability*

Within 6 months of the 2013 events, all videotaped conference and workshop proceedings were transcribed and made publicly available online at a dedicated website hosted by BFC/A. BFC/A graduate assistant Ardea Smith worked with Michael Tedeschi of Interactive Mechanics and Will Cowan to build the site using the open-source Omeka platform and the VideoStream 2 plugin. The custom Omeka theme designed by Tedeschi allows for faceted browsing and full-text searching of presentation and discussion transcripts linked to corresponding streaming video files. The website is available at <http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/>.



A set of PDF/A-format transcripts was uploaded for long-term retention to the Indiana University Scholarly Data Archive (SDA) repository and indexed in IUScholarWorks, which provides a user-friendly interface for the organization, context, and discoverability of data stored in SDA. This combination of IUScholarWorks and SDA provides mirroring, redundancy, media migration, access control, file integrity validation, embargoes, and other security-based services that ensure the data are appropriately archived. The PDF/A transcript files are accessible at <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17479>.

The tape-based master recordings of the conference and workshop proceedings are stored on-site in the BFC/A's environmentally-controlled archival vault. The derivative H.264/MPEG-4 video files produced from the tapes were ingested for long-term retention in the Indiana University Libraries Fedora digital repository and are accessible through Avalon Media Systems, an open source system for digital audio and video content created by Indiana University in collaboration with Northwestern University. The video files in Avalon are linked to the corresponding PDF/A files in IUScholarWorks. BFC/A's Avalon content is accessible at <http://avalon-pilot.dlib.indiana.edu/>.

### AUDIENCES

The principal events of the project were the conference on Friday, November 15, 2013, and the workshop on Saturday, November 16, 2013. Sixty-eight (68) people were in attendance at the Friday conference, which was open to the public. Twenty-two (22) people participated in the invitational workshop on Saturday. The public audience for the conference included undergraduate and graduate students, university faculty and staff, Bloomington-area residents, and visiting attendees from Indianapolis and Chicago.

Both the conference and the workshop were attended by the participants enlisted for the project, which included an equal number of male and female film historians, archivists, and curators with expertise in African American studies and film history. Scholars from the University of Chicago, UCLA, Emory University, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill joined an interdisciplinary group of Indiana University faculty. Archivists and museum curators in attendance

represented institutions including the Black Film Center/Archive, the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, New York Public Library's Performing Arts Division and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

While not formally part of the grant project, the two silent film screenings programmed by IU Cinema in tandem with the conference provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the NEH project among a wider public at the university. Combined attendance at the two screenings was 221.

## EVALUATION

Following the conference and workshop, UCLA Film & Television Archive director Jan-Christopher Horak published a review of the event on his blog, *Archival Spaces: Memory, Images, History*. Horak summarized the intellectual threads of the conference presentations and emphasized the workshop's success in promoting active collaboration between humanities scholars and digital technology specialists. "The speakers," he wrote of the workshop, "demonstrated a host of technical and conceptual solutions, which were surprisingly free of techno-geek formulations, allowing people like me to finally understand how certain aspects of digitality work. I was particularly interested in the new digital tools, e.g. Popcorn Maker, Cinemetrics, Digital Formalism, Omeka, Simile and Neatline, which allow the scholar to segment, dissect, analyze, and present film and ephemera documents."<sup>3</sup>

In a letter to Indiana University president Michael A. McRobbie, participant Barbara Tapa Lupack offered her congratulations on the success of the event: "It was, most of the participants agreed, one of the best (and best-run) conferences we have attended. The two-day event beautifully balanced keynotes, presentations, and discussions...every aspect of the conference was meticulously planned and executed. Like the other conference participants, I found the sessions stimulating and thought-provoking; and I came away with many ideas for new projects and collaborations. I am convinced, moreover, that the conference will continue to reap rewards in the coming weeks and months, as the material introduced and discussed is applied to research work and classroom instruction."<sup>4</sup>

Other participants expressed their appreciation to the organizers of the event. Matthew H. Bernstein (Emory University) wrote, "The *Regeneration* conference was a great success. I learned so much and was honored and felt privileged to be in the room with so many smart people doing such fascinating work."<sup>5</sup> Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago), whose prior research motivated the development of the project, wrote, "I'm truly honored by your interest in pursuing issues I raised in my article, your consistent references to that piece. I'm also so impressed by the way in which you staged so many fantastic conversations throughout. It was an incredibly productive, illuminating and fun experience that I will never forget."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jan-Christopher Horak, "Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film," *Archival Spaces: Memory, Images, History*, Nov. 19, 2013. <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/blogs/archival-spaces/2013/11/29/regeneration-digital-contexts-early-black-film>

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Tapa Lupack, letter to Michael McRobbie, November 22, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Bernstein, email to Brian Graney, November 19, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Stewart, email to Brian Graney, November 18, 2013.

In the assessment of the project team at BFC/A, we were gratified to see the commitment on the part of all participants to engaging with the themes and questions presented through the project, and a genuine openness in sharing, discussing, and critically assessing their work and methodologies. The interdisciplinary, collaborative nature of the event was fully realized, as seen in the direct responsiveness of the workshop presenters to the conversations of the previous day, and in the active engagement of the conference scholars in the technological discussions. Participants pledged to sustain the relationships established through this project by offering a number of productive directions for continuing collaborative research.

The principal weakness of the project was that the wiki installation configured for conference and workshop planning did not serve adequately for the full range of activities it was intended to support. While the wiki was effective for hosting and sharing informational resources in advance of the conference, it proved less useful for coordinating discussions between the participants around the content of the various panels and presentations. Following the conference, the wiki was abandoned by the participants, with continuing discussions conducted instead by email.

## CONTINUATION OF THE PROJECT & LONG-TERM IMPACT

The Regeneration workshop immediately stimulated talk among the participants of continuing their new collaborative partnerships to advance the study of early Black cinema through digitally-based projects and resources. Across the variety of projects proposed, the participants conveyed an overarching strategy of compensating for the scarcity of extant materials by enhancing access to those that survive, particularly through the encoding of text and tabular data to support discovery and linking of related materials within and across collections.

Throughout the events, two collections were frequently cited as being the most significant archival resources for the study of race film production and distribution: the George P. Johnson Negro Film Collection at UCLA Library Special Collections, and the Richard E. Norman Collection at the BFC/A and Lilly Library. In July 2014, with support from participants Matthew Bernstein, Barbara Tapa Lupack, and Jacqueline Stewart, the BFC/A submitted a proposal to the NEH Division of Preservation and Access to reintegrate, reprocess, digitize, and make publicly available the unique documentary contents of the Richard E. Norman Collection. The proposal would make a substantial contribution to the goals of the current project by creating a sizeable body of digital raw material as a foundation for developing efforts to further enhance access through text and data encoding, mapping, visualizations, and networked collections of related materials. In support of this long-term effort, Mike Mashon offered his dedication to supporting the online Norman project by contributing digital versions of the extant Norman films held at the Library of Congress; and Allyson Nadia Field (UCLA) offered to act as liaison with the UCLA Library Special Collections regarding the Johnson resources.

Another project raised during the workshop was proposed as a potential pilot project building on the conference themes and on research that Brian Graney and Jacqueline Stewart conducted at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in preparation for the conference. Closely examining the one extant 35mm nitrate film print of Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul*, a film with a complex history of exhibition and censorship, confirmed the existence of important discrepancies between the original print and the restored version, demonstrating the limitations of the more readily available DVD





viewing copy as a source for certain lines of research. The pilot as conceived would develop a critical research edition of *Body and Soul*, featuring annotations and related documents organized around a high-resolution static image of the full film artifact, made available for close scrutiny rather than time-based viewing. The critical research edition would serve a function and audience different from that currently met by the existing restored version and commercial DVD release.

## GRANT PRODUCTS

All proceedings of the November 2013 conference and workshop were videotaped, transcribed, and made publicly available online at a dedicated website hosted by BFC/A. The website is available at <http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/>.

Transcriptions of the conference and workshop proceedings are also available in PDF/A format through the IUScholarWorks repository at <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17479>. Video of the proceedings is also shared through Indiana University's Avalon Media System at <http://avalon-pilot.dlib.indiana.edu>.

## APPENDIX I

### *List of Conference and Workshop Presenters*

**Matthew Bernstein** (Emory University)

Professor and Chair, Department of Film and Media Studies

**Cara Caddoo** (Indiana University) Assistant Professor, Department of American Studies

**Rhea L. Combs\*** (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture)

Curator of Photography and Film

**Allyson Nadia Field** (University of California, Los Angeles)

Assistant Professor, Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media

**Terri Francis** (University of Pennsylvania)

Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Cinema Studies

**Brian Graney** (Indiana University)

Archivist and Head of Public and Technology Services, Black Film Center/Archive

**Jan-Christopher Horak** (University of California, Los Angeles)

Director of UCLA Film & Television Archive; Professor, Critical Studies

**Leah Kerr** (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures)

Museum Collections Coordinator

**Barbara Klinger** (Indiana University)

Professor of Film and Media Studies, Department of Communication and Culture

**Barbara Tapa Lupack**, Independent Scholar

**Shola Lynch** (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

Curator, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division

**Michael T. Martin** (Indiana University)

Director, Black Film Center/Archive; Professor, Communication and Culture, American Studies

**Mike Mashon\*** (Library of Congress)

Head, Moving Image Section, Motion Picture, Broadcasting & Recorded Sound Division

**Charlene Regester** (UNC-Chapel Hill)

Associate Professor, Department of African and Afro-American Studies

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\*NEH funding was not applied to support the participation of Rhea Combs and Mike Mashon. Independent funding was provided by the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University – Bloomington.

**Doug Reside** (New York Public Library)  
Digital Curator, Library for the Performing Arts

**Jacqueline Stewart** (University of Chicago)  
Professor, Department of Cinema and Media Studies

**Rachael Stoeltje** (Indiana University)  
Director, Indiana University Libraries Film Archive

**Andy Uhrich** (Indiana University)  
Ph.D. student, Department of Communication and Culture

**Gregory Waller** (Indiana University)  
Professor, Department of Communication and Culture

**John A. Walsh** (Indiana University)  
Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science

**Dana White** (Emory University)  
Goodrich C. White Professor of the Liberal Arts in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

## APPENDIX II

Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film  
Conference and Workshop program

## REGENERATION IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS: EARLY BLACK FILM

Of the hundreds of black-audience films produced since 1905, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist. Those that survive are often in fragmentary form or in markedly different versions, demanding close comparative analysis against other prints and documents widely dispersed across various institutions, including local censorship records, film scripts, newspaper accounts, and promotional images. *Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film* will explore a challenging new avenue for the study of early black-audience motion picture film by identifying, as scholar Jacqueline Stewart suggests, the unmined evidentiary value in what "we can learn from the singularity of each print...and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film's 'content.' "

On November 15, 2013, an interdisciplinary group of scholars, curators, archivists, and digital humanities specialists will convene to consider new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black-audience film studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practice, such as early cinema and experimental film.

At the invitational workshop on November 16, 2013, participants will continue the previous day's agenda by establishing the technological groundwork for enacting these modes of inquiry, through re-evaluation of existing best practices and capture technologies for digitization of original motion picture film artifacts; through demonstrations and assessments of existing open-source tools for presenting and analyzing moving image materials online; and through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic structures for discovery, presentation, and analysis.

The Regeneration Conference has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional support is provided by Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences and Indiana University Center for the Humanities. Photographs courtesy of the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film and the Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University - Bloomington.



#BFC2013

[www.indiana.edu/~regener8](http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8)

[www.indiana.edu/~bfca](http://www.indiana.edu/~bfca)

Email: [bfca@indiana.edu](mailto:bfca@indiana.edu)

Office phone: (812) 855-6041

Bloomington IN 47405

1320 East Tenth Street

Wells Library, Room 044

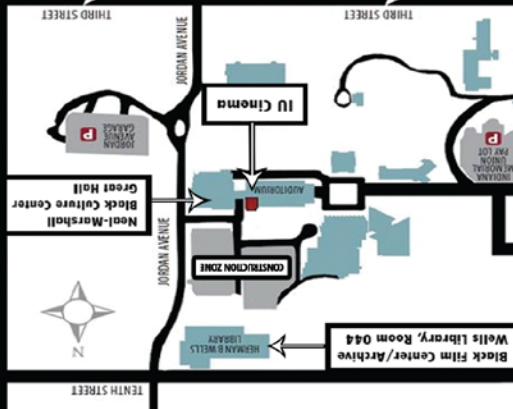
Black Film Center/Archive

[www.cinema.indiana.edu](http://www.cinema.indiana.edu)

Bloomington IN 47405

1213 E. 7th Street

IU Cinema



# REGENERATION IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS: EARLY BLACK FILM



BLACK FILM CENTER/ARCHIVE  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
BLOOMINGTON, IN  
NOVEMBER  
15-16, 2013

## CONFERENCE - FRIDAY 11/15. 2013

LOCATION: INDIANA UNIVERSITY CINEMA (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

8:30AM Coffee

9:00AM Welcome and Introduction

John Lucaites, Associate Dean for Arts & Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Brian Graney, Black Film Center/Archive

9:15AM Keynote Address

"Film, Race & Archives - The Odyssey of a Film Maker & Curator"  
Shola Lynch, Curator of Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

9:45AM The State of Research and Platforms for Access

Moderator: Greg Waller, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Panel: Matt Bernstein, Emory University  
Cara Caddoo, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Dana White, Emory University

11:15AM Break

11:30AM The Carrier as Content

Moderator: Rachael Stoeltje, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Panel: Jacqueline Stewart, University of Chicago  
Mike Mashon, Library of Congress  
Leah Kerr, The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures  
Jan-Christopher Horak, UCLA Film & Television Archive

1:00PM Lunch - Registration Required

Location: Neal-Marshall Grand Hall

2:45PM The Case of the Race Movie Circuit

Moderator: Barbara Klinger, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Panel: Allyson Nadia Field, University of California, Los Angeles  
Terri Francis, University of Pennsylvania  
Barbara Tapa Lupack, Independent Scholar  
Charlene Register, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

4:15PM Break

4:30PM Closing Roundtable

Moderator: Michael T. Martin, Black Film Center/Archive  
Panel: Rhea L. Combs, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution  
Cara Caddoo, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Leah Kerr, The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures  
Jacqueline Stewart, University of Chicago  
Allyson Nadia Field, University of California, Los Angeles  
Jan-Christopher Horak, University of California - Los Angeles  
Shola Lynch, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

5:30PM Reception - By Invitation

Location: Black Film Center/Archive

7:00PM Film Screening: *The Flying Ace*

Location: IU Cinema

Open to the public. Free but ticketed.

## WORKSHOP - SATURDAY 11/16. 2013

LOCATION: BLACK FILM CENTER/ARCHIVE (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

Reconsidering how we define the content of a film print beyond the audiovisual information recorded within the frame, encompassing all of its physical characteristics, markings, and structures as a material artifact, introduces a series of questions bearing on the representation of film as a digital object:

- How must we re-evaluate and amend current best practices for digitization of motion picture film which by design omit or obscure physical attributes of the original artifact?
- What digital tools might be turned to unconventional uses in representing original film artifacts as static images for close examination and study?
- How might this representation of film as a material object offer a conceptual bridge for integrating audiovisual media within a wider network of related visual and textual documentation?

WORKSHOP (CLOSED REGISTRATION)

8:30AM Coffee

9:00AM Introduction

Brian Graney, Black Film Center/Archive

9:15AM Session One

Reto Kramer, AV Preservation by reto.ch LLC  
Andy Urich, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Brian Graney, Black Film Center/Archive

10:30AM Break

10:45AM Session Two

Will Cowan, Indiana University - Bloomington  
John A. Walsh, Indiana University - Bloomington  
Doug Reside, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

12:00PM Lunch

1:00PM Closing Discussion

3:00PM Film Screening: *Within Our Gates*

Location: IU Cinema

Open to the public. Free but ticketed.



## FILM SCREENINGS AT IU CINEMA

Live piano accompaniment by Dr. Philip Carli



FRIDAY. 11/15. 7PM  
*The Flying Ace* (1926)

Director: Richard E. Norman

*The Flying Ace* tells the story of World War I flyer-hero Captain William Stokes who returns home to solve the mystery of a missing paymaster and save the life of the beautiful Ruth Sawtelle. The film was restored in 2010 by the Library of Congress from an original nitrate negative donated by the director's son, Captain Richard Norman, Jr.



SATURDAY. 11/16. 3PM  
*Within Our Gates* (1919)

Director: Oscar Micheaux

Through his young protagonist, Sylvia Landry (Evelyn Preer), Oscar Micheaux critically examines the lines between races, classes, and North and South in his earliest surviving film. Long thought lost, a single nitrate print was discovered under its Spanish release title, *La Negra*, at the Filmoteca Española and reconstructed by the Library of Congress.

## APPENDIX III

Black Camera *journal and Indiana University News announcements*

# BLACK CAMERA

*An International Film Journal*



**THE NEW SERIES**

Volume 5, Number 1 • Fall 2013



## **Archival News**

### ***News from the Black Film Center/Archive***

#### **Digital Humanities**

In November 2013, Black Film Center/Archive archivist Brian Graney and director Michael T. Martin will convene an interdisciplinary group of scholars, moving image archivists, and library professionals for a two-day conference and workshop to discuss the new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black-audience film studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practice. The program, “Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts,” is supported in part by a 2013 Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Of the hundreds of black-audience films produced in the first decades of the last century, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist. Those that survive are found in fragmentary form or in markedly different versions. In a 2011 article, Jacqueline Stewart proposed a challenging new avenue for this area of study by identifying unmined evidentiary value in what “we can learn from the singularity of each print . . . and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film’s ‘content.’”<sup>1</sup>

Jan-Christopher Horak, director of the UCLA Film and Television Archive, notes that “unlike Hollywood features, which were released in sometimes hundreds of prints, Black independent film producers often struck only single prints, screening them until wearing them out before making a new print. These surviving prints reveal which film stocks were used, often include extraneous material cut in by exhibitors, and when the films were struck after the film’s initial release . . . such information is vital in reconstructing a work’s exhibition history.”<sup>2</sup>

Reconsidering how we define the content of a film print to encompass all of its physical characteristics, markings, and structures as a material artifact introduces important questions bearing on how film is represented as

a digital object: How can we amend current best practices for digitization of motion picture film which by design omit or obscure physical attributes of the original artifact? What tools might be turned to unconventional uses in representing film artifacts digitally for close examination and study? And how might this representation of film as object offer a conceptual bridge for integrating audiovisual media within a wider network of related visual and textual documentation? “For the study of early African American cinema,” writes project advisor Stewart, “this exploration of the use of digital technologies to capture—rather than obscure—material details from surviving film prints will be an extraordinary boon, allowing scholars to perform closer analyses that take into account physical traces on these rare artifacts.”<sup>3</sup>

The conference will be held on Friday, November 15, at the Indiana University Cinema; the workshop will be held on Saturday, November 16, at the Black Film Center/Archive. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, will present a keynote address. Other invited conference participants include Matthew Bernstein (Emory University); Allyson Field (UCLA); Terri Francis (University of Pennsylvania); Jan-Christopher Horak (UCLA Film & Television Archive); Leah Kerr (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures collections coordinator); Barbara Tapa Lupack (independent scholar); Mike Mashon (Library of Congress, Moving Image Section); Charlene Register (UNC–Chapel Hill); Jacqueline Stewart (Northwestern University); and Dana White (Emory University).

Indiana University faculty and staff contributing to the conference and workshop program include: Cara Caddoo (American Studies); William Cowan (IU Libraries Software Development); Barbara Klinger (Communication and Culture); Rachael Stoeltje (IU Libraries Film Archive); Gregory Waller (Communication and Culture); and John A. Walsh (Library and Information Science).

## Public Programs

During the spring 2013 semester, the Black Film Center/Archive coordinated and cosponsored a variety of screenings and related events. As the cornerstone of the film series *Living King’s Legacy*, part of the 2013 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration at Indiana University, the pioneering filmmaker and producer Madeline Anderson presented *I Am Somebody* (1970), her documentary on the 1969 Charleston, South Carolina, hospital workers’ strike. Other films in the series included Tim Reid’s *Once Upon a Time . . . When We Were Colored* (1995) and Clark Johnson’s *Boycott* (2001). With the



# IU Bloomington Newsroom

IUB Newsroom » IU Black Film Center/Archive conference focuses on early black film artifacts

## IU Black Film Center/Archive conference focuses on early black film artifacts

Nov. 4, 2013  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. – Of the hundreds of films produced for black audiences before 1950, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist, often in fragmentary form.

Scholars, archivists and digital humanities specialists will gather to discuss the issue on Indiana University's Bloomington campus this month as part of the "Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film" conference, hosted by the Black Film Center/Archive.

The conference comes on the heels of a recent announcement by IU President Michael A. McRobbie, unveiling a \$15 million Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative aimed at preserving and making accessible in digital form the collections of video, recorded music, film and other material assembled by the university over its nearly 200-year history.

Brian Graney, archivist and head of public and technology services at the Black Film Center/Archive, said conference participants will consider how early black film artifacts are rendered as objects of study in transformative digital environments.

"For scholars looking beyond the film text at the contexts of its production, distribution, exhibition and regulation, prints have additional informational value as documents apart from their primary purpose as moving image content carriers," he said. "Because access to original film elements in archives and museums has been, as President McRobbie noted, place-dependent and not readily accessible to scholars, digitization can potentially provide new means to support the growing research interests in aspects of film's materiality beyond the archive -- and possibly beyond the deterioration of the material itself."

The conference is Nov. 15 at IU Cinema. Shola Lynch, filmmaker and curator of the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, will present the keynote address. Additional details are available online, including a [schedule](#), [list of participants](#) and [registration information](#).

In conjunction with the conference, IU Cinema will screen two Library of Congress restorations of black-cast silent features, presented with live piano accompaniment by Philip Carli:

- 7 p.m. Nov. 15, "The Flying Ace" -- Richard Norman's story of World War I flier-hero Capt. William Stokes who returns home to solve the mystery of a missing paymaster and save the life of the beautiful Ruth Sawtelle.
- 3 p.m. Nov. 16, "Within Our Gates" -- Through a young protagonist, Oscar Micheaux critically examines the lines between races, classes, and North and South in his earliest surviving film.

All screenings at the IU Cinema are free but ticketed. Tickets can be obtained at the IU Auditorium Box Office from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; one hour before any screening at the cinema; or by phone at 812-855-1103 for a \$10 service fee per order.

"Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film" is sponsored by the Black Film Center/Archive and has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Office of Digital Humanities. Additional support is provided by the College of Arts and Sciences and IU Cinema.

PRINT SHARE



Featuring an all-black cast, "The Flying Ace" is the only full-length feature film surviving from Richard Norman, a prominent director and distributor of silent race films in the 1920s. The film was restored in 2010 by the Library of Congress.

Print-Quality Photo

### Media Contacts

#### Brian Graney

- Black Film Center/Archive
- Office 812-855-6041
- [bpgraney@indiana.edu](mailto:bpgraney@indiana.edu)

## APPENDIX IV

*Regeneration Conference online coverage: Jan-Christopher Horak and Reto Kromer*

## REGENERATION IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS: EARLY BLACK FILM

Submitted by [Jan-Christopher Horak](#) on November 29, 2013 - 9:00 am

I travelled to Bloomington, Indiana two weeks ago at the invitation of Brian Graney, formerly of UCLA Film & Television Archive, to attend the conference "Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film" (November 15-16, 2013). Brian is now the archivist for the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University, which, according to their [website](#), was founded in 1981 as an archive "dedicated to collecting, preserving, and making available historically and culturally significant films by and about black people. The BFC/A's primary objectives are to promote scholarship on black film and to serve as an open resource for scholars, researchers, students, and the general public; to encourage creative film activity by independent black filmmakers; and to undertake and support research on the history, impact, theory, and aesthetics of black film traditions."



Long under the directorship of founder Phyllis R. Klotman, the Center's Director is now Michael T. Martin, who attended our [L.A. Rebellion symposium](#) and is a contributor to our upcoming book. He is also the editor of [Black Camera](#), which for twenty-eight years has been one of the only serial publications, dedicated specifically to black cinema.

Funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the symposium featured a select group of archivists and scholars working on so-called race films, all black cast films produced for mostly segregated audiences during the 1910s to 1940s. Given that the producers and distributors of such films operated at the very fringes of the mainstream industry, the losses are far greater than with American silent features, where only about 10% are known to survive. For example, only two of Oscar Micheaux's twenty-one silent films are known to exist, and no race films survive from before 1920.

Remaining films are often fragmentary or damaged, so that film historians have had to rely on other forms of evidence, including film stills, posters, playbills, correspondence, scripts, distribution records, box office, newspapers, advertisements, reviews, contracts, censorship records, and even death certificates. After Shola Lynch's moving keynote (she is the new curator of the [Schomburg Center](#)), scholars Matthew Bernstein, Dana White, Cara Caddoo, Terri Francis, Barbara Tepa Lupack and Charlene Regester discussed various innovative ways they have tracked race film distribution and exhibition in local communities in the South, utilizing just such ephemera.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JAN-CHRISTOPHER HORAK  
Director, UCLA Film & Television Archive

*Jan-Christopher Horak is Director of the UCLA Film & Television Archive. In addition to his long career in film archiving and curating, he has taught at universities around the world. He is presently working on a book on designer and filmmaker Saul Bass.*

["Archival Spaces" Archive](#)  
[archive@ucla.edu](mailto:archive@ucla.edu)

### ARCHIVE BLOGS

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Another intellectual thread took its cue from Jacqueline Stewart's dictum that "we can learn from the singularity of each print... and what it might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture." (*Film History*, 2011) A panel of archivists, including my L.A. Rebellion co-curator, Jackie Stewart, myself, Mike Mashon, and Leah Kerr, discussed preservation issues relating to early black cinema, i.e. I reported on the many preservation problems we faced staging the L.A. Rebellion exhibition, emphasizing that they were similar to issues discussed with race films. After a closing roundtable that included many of the speakers, as well as Rhea L. Combs from the new [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) at the Smithsonian, we screened Richard E. Norman's *The Flying Ace* (1926), in a beautiful new print from the Library of Congress.



The second day's workshop, on the other hand, was dedicated to making materials, whether films or ephemera, available in digital form. In particular, the question was how can we represent material objects digitally and what digital tools were potentially available to analyze and make accessible the surviving documents. The speakers, Brian Graney, Reto Kromer, Andy Ulrich, Will Cowan, John A. Walsh, and Doug Reside demonstrated a host of technical and conceptual solutions, which were surprisingly free of techno-geek formulations, allowing people like me to finally understand how certain aspects of digitality work. I was particularly interested in the new digital tools, e.g. Popcorn Maker, Cinemetrics, Digital Formalism, Omeka, Simile and Neatline, which allow the scholar to segment, dissect, analyze, and present film and ephemera documents.



The official program ended with a matinee screening of Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1920), which seems more amazing – despite the visible signs of damage – every time I see it, in particular the way Micheaux directly and consciously refutes the many, many lies propagated by D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). That film was followed in the evening by a screening of Billy Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984), and, on Sunday, Alile Sharon Larkin's *Your Child Comes Back to You* (1979) and *A Different Image* (1982), all films representing the [L.A. Rebellion](#). Larkin's *Child* was in fact preserved at UCLA from original negatives housed at the Black Film Center, once again demonstrating that the project of film

history and preservation, whether African-American or otherwise, will depend on interarchival cooperation and the input of film scholars.

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#BFCA2013



Thank you very much indeed!

#### **Regeneration in Digital Context: Early Black Film**

**15–16 October 2013 at the Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, in Bloomington, ID**

- A digital bench for archives as an additional tool for film analysis?
- OCVE could be an inspiration for variants/versions comparisons of film:  
[ocve.org.uk](http://ocve.org.uk)
- What’s about an interactive filmography on afro-american cinema?
- Many exciting ideas for future research on early black cinema by using digital tools. And also for edition of materials.
- Mike Mashon advocates for a stronger collaboration between archives and scholars.
- Brian Graney investigates the materiality of the film strip. With gorgeous slides.
- Last presenter: Doug Reside, speaking very fast. Approximately 4–5 words per second, I guess...
- John Walsh on embedding metadata, using a document displayed at the UI Cinema he photographed yesterday with an iPhone.  
#TEI
- Will Cowan on #omeka  
[omeka.org](http://omeka.org)
- Andy Uhrich presents many funny tool to analyse image content. (And to create new content.) Yet what’s about sound?
- The workshop on digitisation and digital issues is running smooth... and deep.
- RT @jauhrich: @RetoKromer on #digitalpreservation: the archive must be able to work with the formats it produces
- I guess #absence could be the main title of the last panel this afternoon. And now for the closing roundtable.
- Thank you very much, Mike Mashon! Your presentation has been the best ever. I have just to continue at the workshop tomorrow.
- Very exciting morning with a mix of points of view, combining content, related materials and technical driven investigations.
- My account is not working, therefore I cannot tweet from this conference. Sorry!
- Keynote *Film, Race & Archives – The Odyssey of a Film Maker & Curator* by Shola Lynch. A biography from the field.
- *Regeneration in Digital Context: Early Black Film*, at BFCA, IU in Bloomington, Indiana, on 15–16 November 2013.  
[www.indiana.edu/~regener8](http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8)

## APPENDIX V

*Regeneration Conference website for videotaped and transcribed conference and workshop proceedings*

URL: <http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/>




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# Regeneration in Digital Contexts

EARLY BLACK FILM CONFERENCE


**EXPLORE THE CONFERENCE**



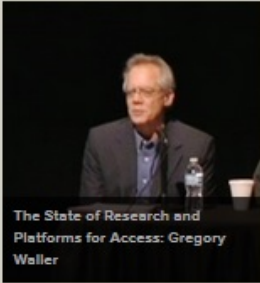
Introduction: John Lucaites



Keynote Address: Shola Lynch



Keynote Address, Question and Answer Session: Shola Lynch



The State of Research and Platforms for Access: Gregory Waller

**ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film, organized by the Black Film Center/Archive, brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars, moving image archivists, and technology specialists in digital humanities for a two-day conference and workshop held in Bloomington, Indiana November 15-16, 2013.

The conference program, November 15, 2013, engaged participants in discussing and articulating new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black-audience film studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practice, such as early cinema and experimental film. Shola Lynch, curator of the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Archive at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, presented the keynote address. In conjunction with the conference two films, *The Flying Ace* and *Within Our Gates*, were shown at IU Cinema.

The invitational workshop, November 16, 2013 continued the previous day's agenda by establishing the technological groundwork necessary to enact these modes of inquiry, through re-evaluation of existing best practices and capture technologies for digitization of original motion picture film artifacts; through demonstrations and assessments of existing open-source tools for presenting and analyzing moving image materials online; and through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic structures for discovery, presentation, and analysis.



The Regeneration Conference has been made possible in part by a major grant from the **National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor**.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed on this website, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## *The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart*

Welcome, Introduction, and Keynote  
Address

Panel One

### Panel Two

The Carrier as Content: Rachael Stoeltje

**The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart**

The Carrier as Content: Mike Mashon

The Carrier as Content: Leah Kerr

The Carrier as Content: Jan-Christopher  
Horak

The Carrier as Content: Question and Answer  
Session

Panel Three

Closing Roundtable



TRANSCRIPT

**INFORMATION**

### Panel Info

Examining the characteristics of archival film prints as they survive in fragmentary and variant versions, Panel Two: The Carrier as Content evaluates these material manifestations of early black-audience films as presenting evidence for understanding their meaning and context.

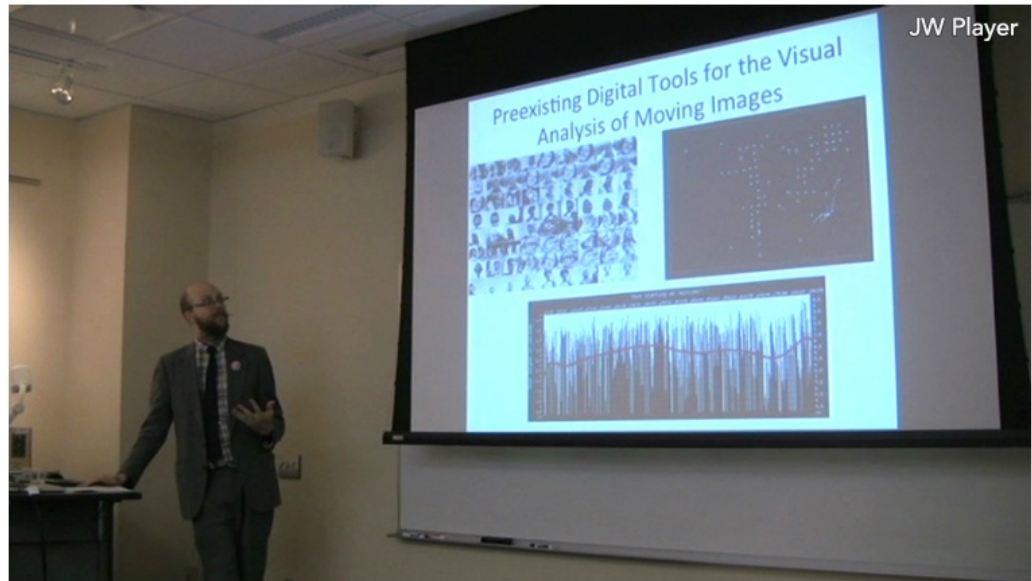
### Title

The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart

## Workshop Session One: Andy Uhrich

### Workshop

- Workshop: Introduction
- Workshop Session One: Reto Kromer
- Workshop Session One: Andy Uhrich**
- Workshop Session Two: Will Cowan
- Workshop Session Two: Doug Reside
- Workshop Session Two: John A. Walsh
- Workshop Closing Session
- Workshop Closing Session: Mike Mashon



TRANSCRIPT

INFORMATION

Andy Uhrich: While we're switching computers I'll briefly give an introduction. So I'm going, Frank asked me to talk about preexisting digital tools that can be used to analyze the visual content of moving images. But I'm not a computer programmer. I'm a film historian and an archivist. So I'm trying to look at these tools to see what possibilities they might offer us in those worlds. And so if people who have the skills and can describe these tools please jump in.

The other point, sort of getting back to Brian's [Graney] opening remarks about the relevance to the themes discussed yesterday in terms of loss, in terms of representation, in terms of materiality, the question is whether these tools address those issues or not. In sort of looking back over them after yesterday's discussion they don't seem to immediately address those issues but maybe