May 2023 Newsletter

Click here to see previous newsletters.

BFCA Awarded an NEH Grant to Process and Digitize the Paulin S. Vieyra Collection

The Black Film Center & Archive has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for the Humanities Collections and Reference Resources program for the full amount of $325,582. The BFCA will hire a processing archivist and an M.L.S. grad student for three years to process, digitize, and make available the Paulin S. Vieyra collection. Vieyra (Jan. 31, 1925–Nov. 4, 1987) was a filmmaker, producer, and scholar whose career is central to West African film history. He was the first African film student at the prestigious IDHEC (Institute for Advanced Cinematographic Studies) in Paris, oversaw Actualités Sénégalaises under Léopold Sédar Senghor’s government, and was one of the founders of both FESPACO and FEPACI, critical institutions that showcase, promote the works of, and advocate for African filmmakers.
“The support of the Vieyra family, especially Stéphane Vieyra, was crucial to the grant application process,” said Associate Professor Akin Adesokan, who was interim director of the BFCA and supervised the writing of the grant application. “They were mindful of the importance of the collection, and this was also reflected in the enthusiasm of Africa-based scholars, who started making inquiries about access as soon as they learned of BFCA’s acquisition of the collection.”

(Akin Adesokan served as the BFCA Interim Director & supervised the writing of the NEH grant application. Photo by Maggie Richards)

(BFCA Archivist Amber Bertin wrote, serves as the Principal Investigator, and the person who will oversee the project over the next three years.)
Click here, to read the full news release: BFCA awarded NEH grant of $325,582 to archive and digitize Paulin S. Vieyra’s collection: News: The Media School (indiana.edu)

(Items from the Paulin S. Vieyra Collection)

(INEH Seal)
THANK YOU to all of the donors!

Thank you to all of the donors and participants in the 2023 IU Day! We loved seeing all of the pictures and school spirit all over social media and the world. Your donations will help us to continue our mission. If you missed out on IU Day, please know that donations can be made at any time. Please click the link below and stay tuned for more events.

When Jerald Harkness was shooting in 1993 for the documentary *Facing the Facade* — a film that followed the experiences of eight Black Indiana University Bloomington students at a predominantly white institution — the last thing on his mind was how the film would be perceived 30 years later.

But when the death of George Floyd brought a renewed focus on the experiences of Black people in America, it became clear that *Facing the Facade* and Harkness were having discussions that were ahead of their time.

BFCA Interim Director Rachael Stoeltje’s longtime friendship with Jerald
Harkness led to her reaching out to discuss his long-term archival plans for his film legacy. After working with him over a period of months, she was delighted to bring in this collection.

(Rachael Stoelje and Jerald Harkness)

Now, scholars, filmmakers and members of the IU community will have access to this film and many other audiovisual materials from Harkness, an IU alumnus, as he makes IU’s Black Film Center & Archive the home for his film collection. The gift consists of master copies, outtakes, interviews and other production elements from Harkness’ award-winning, 30-year career. Also included are Harkness’ home movies and preliminary interviews from incomplete projects.

Click here to read the full news release.
Words from Mr. Harkness:

"I am honored and humbled that my work spanning my career will have a home at the Indiana Black Film Center Archives - BFCA. My experiences as an undergraduate student at Indiana University laid the invaluable foundation that molded me into the filmmaker that I am today.

I want to personally thank my IU professors, Gloria Gibson, Brian Powell, Gary Doc Sailes, Suzanne Schwibs and James Naremore for their guidance and inspiration.

There were so many IU classmates who helped me along the way, but I want to send a special thanks to Christian Carroll, Angela Horton Huffman, Lara Decker Pastore, Mark Nisenbaum, Anthony-Tony Favors, and Jens Cornelius Knudsen.
I want to extend my sincerest love and appreciation to my family at the Indiana Memorial Union where I had the resources and support to find my voice as an aspiring filmmaker as a Union Board Director.

And finally, I want to extend a huge thanks to the wonderful people at the Indiana University Black Film Center Archives: Rachael Stoeltje – my former “Study Buddy”, Amber Bertin, Ja Quita Roberts, Dan Hassoun, and Essence London.

This means more to me than words can express.”

---

**Black Filmmaker Interviews**

The Black Film Center & Archive holds hundreds of rare interview recordings documenting the stories of Black film artists. In our ongoing monthly series, "The Black Film Center & Archive Presents: Black Filmmaker Interviews," we will widely publish one previously-unreleased interview from our collections.

The series continues with a conversation with legendary filmmaker Spike Lee, recorded with then-BFCA director Audrey T. McCluskey on October 9, 2002 at Indiana University, Bloomington. Mr. Lee was onsite at IU to accept the BFCA’s Oscar Micheaux Distinguished Achievement Award. [https://media.dlib.indiana.edu/media_objects/wp989586g](https://media.dlib.indiana.edu/media_objects/wp989586g)
Congratulations, to Dr. Akin Adesokan, former BFCA interim director, current Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies, and continuous BFCA supporter! The BFCA was honored to serve as hosts for Akin’s book launch event of his book, *Everything Is Sampled: Digital and Print Mediations in African Arts and Letters.*

*Everything Is Sampled* examines the shifting modes of production and circulation of African artistic forms since the 1980s, focusing on digital culture as the most currently decisive setting for these changes.

(Dr. Akin Adesokan wrote personal messages and autographed books of *Everything Is Sampled* at his book launch event.)
Drawing on works of cinema, literature, music, and visual art, Akin Adesokan addresses two main questions. First, given the various changes that the institutions producing African arts and letters have undergone in the past four decades, how have the representational impulses in these forms fared in comparison with those at work in pervasively digital cultures? Second, how might a long view of these artistic forms across media and in different settings affect our understanding of what counts as art, as text, as authorship? Immersed in digital culture, African artists today are acutely aware of the media-saturated circumstances in which they work and actively bridge them by making ethical choices to shape those circumstances.

Through an innovative development and analysis of five modes of creative practice—curation, composition, adaptation, platform, and remix—*Everything Is Sampled* offers an absorbingly complex yet nuanced approach to appreciating the work of several generations of African writers, directors, and artists. No longer content to just fill a spot in the relay between the conception and distribution of a work, these artists are now also quick to view and reconfigure their works through different modes of creative practice.

*(Dr. Akin Adesokan talks to attendees about his news book, *Everything Is Sampled.*)*

*Everything Is Sampled* is available now and can be purchased here: [Everything Is Sampled](http://iupress.org)
On April 3, the BFCA was delighted to welcome a visit from Dr. Hélène Charlery (Professor of English Lit at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès in Toulouse, France) and a return visit from Dr. Delphine Letort (Professor of English at the University of Maine in Le Mans, France). Dr. Charley, who is currently conducting research for a project on director Ava DuVernay, examined a selection of unique collection materials put on display by BFCA archivists (including memorabilia from the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and publicity material for lost 1920s “race” films produced by Norman Studios).
(Hélène Charlery and Delphine Letort)
New Post on the BFCA Blog

(A compilation of stills from Black films screened at the 2023 Atlanta Film Festival.)

Archival Assistant Essence London virtually attended the Atlanta Film Festival April 20 - May 5th. Throughout her viewing, she paid special attention to films by Black directors & films featuring Black actors. Check out her blog post “Top 5 Black Films at the 2023 Atlanta Film Festival” for a digest of contemporary works from her unique perspective.

Click here to read her blog post:
On April 7, the BFCA was honored to entertain a visit from director Stephanie Rothman, who was a campus guest of the IU Cinema as part of its Jorgensen Guest Filmmaker Series. One of the first women to hold an executive position at a major independent film studio, Ms. Rothman directed seven independent features throughout the 1960s/70s -- including *The Velvet Vampire* (1971) and *Terminal Island* (1973) -- that are now recognized for their unique blending of exploitation genre tropes with feminist, racial, and class commentary. During her tour of materials from the BFCA’s collections, Ms. Rothman reminisced a brief early encounter with Pam Grier and spoke on the continued importance of elevating the role of female filmmakers in cinema history.
(Amber Bertin, Archivist, and Stephanie Rothman)
April 13, 2023, IU Assistant Professor and friend of the Black Film Center & Archive Dr. Elena Guzman presented at the Research Symposium hosted by the Center for Research on Race & Ethnicity in Society. Her keynote lecture titled “The Poetics of Afro-Caribbean Ritual Filmmaking: Building a Multisensorial Theory of the Flesh” also included a private screening of her debut feature *Smile4Kime* (2023).
Dr. Guzman introduced the concept of ritual filmmaking, then applied it to her experience creating the documentary centered on Black women’s friendships and mental health. In addition to a traditional question & answer session, she invited the audience to write offerings on notecards she’s kept—an adaptation of an exercise Johanna Tesfaye closed with during her visit to campus in March 2023. Please send your congratulations to Dr. Guzman, and be on the lookout for more screenings of *Smile4Kime*!
(Ja Quita Joy Roberts and Dr. Elena Guzman pose for a picture, after her keynote.)
A new adventure: The Black Film Center & Archive ZINE!!

Archival Assistants Eva Stuart and Essence London spearheaded the publication of *Perf*, a new zine project designed to increase BFCA visibility and to inspire engagement with the rich tradition of Black film. Zines are mini magazines that have historically combined radical-leaning literature with a do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic. The title *Perf* references internet slang for the word "perfect" as well as the perforations in motion picture stock. We envision the contents including everything from Black film history to glimpses into the film preservation process, and more. Many of you were excited to flip through the zine we launched earlier this year.

![Eva Stuart and Essence London, BFCA Archival Assistants](image)

We’re pleased to announce issue 2 of *Perf* is hot off the press! It’s decorated throughout with pressed flowers as a nod to the theme "media preservation & home movies" and to celebrate the warm weather. Inside, you’ll find a
filmmaker's guide to preservation, a shoutout to the South Side Home Movie Project, a special feature on BFCA content available at Media Collections Online, and much much more. Stop by the office for your copy!
Our Finance and Office Administrator, Ja Quita Joy Roberts, was asked by Dr. Gloria Howell, Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center Director and friend, to participate in this year’s Black Congratulatory Ceremony, in a special way. She was asked to place the Kente Stoles onto the undergraduates in attendance, during the sacred “Rites of Passage” part of the ceremony. One of the
undergraduates included her daughter, Javenique Roberts, who is a graduate from the School of Public Health. Congratulations to all of the IU Class of 2023 Graduates, from the BFCA!

(Courtesy family picture - Ja Quita Joy Roberts, son & daughter)

A message from Dr. Howell, to the faculty and staff participants:
“On behalf of the NMBCC team, I extend thanks for all that you contributed to this year's Congratulatory celebration! I think having you all as faculty and staff who have walked alongside the graduates during their tenure at IU participate in the ceremony is one of the strongest demonstrations of "the village" concept in our community. I know the personal significance of calling names and placing stoles for some of you, (like Joy who had a daughter walking across the stage 😊)); so, it was a joy witnessing your joy! 😊 Thank you again for not only participating but assisting as we laid the stoles and prepared for the event to begin.”

Click here to watch this year's Black Congratulatory Ceremony

(SEveral members of the platform party - IU Black Faculty & Staff)
Ja Quita Joy Roberts, BFCA's Finance and Office Administrator, was asked to provide an "Intro to the BFCA" to Jay Kincaid's Media School C223 Class - Intro to Design and Production. She talked about the history of the BFCA, gave a virtual tour made possible by the Matterport Scan of the BFCA that she spearheaded and coordinated in March of 2022, which allowed her to easily
discuss the collection's items, hosted a trivia game section, and then ended with a Q&A. The class was surprised at how lively the presentation was and were thankful for the BFCA Swag and candy she brought, as well. From Jay Kincaid: "My goal is to expose the students to all aspects of media including collections, while also providing diverse perspectives and engagement."

(Ja Quita Joy Roberts presents to the MSCH C223 class)

---

**Media Reserves Screenings**

In collaboration with IU Media Services, once a month, films from the Black Film Center & Archive’s collections will be shown on the large screen in Media Services’ public area, conveniently located right outside our main entrance on
the ground floor of the Wells Library. Stop by Media Services on May 19th, to see titles from the BFCA’s collections!

NOW SHOWING:

A Selection of Films from the Black Film Center & Archive’s Collections

BLACK FILM CENTER & ARCHIVE
On April 13, we wished happy birthday to educator, scholar, and pioneering filmmaker Zeinabu irene Davis (born 1961)! A member of the L.A. Rebellion movement, Ms. Davis has produced astonishing narrative, documentary, and experimental works of Black feminist cinema for over 40 years, including *Cycles* (1989), *A Period Piece* (1991), *A Powerful Thang* (1991), *Compensation* (1999), and *Co-Motion: Tales of Breastfeeding Women* (2010). As Professor of Communication at UC San Diego, Davis continues to produce films (including the upcoming short *Pandemic Bread*) while mentoring new generations of visionary artists. The Black Film Center & Archive is honored to house many of Ms. Davis's works, including a 16mm print.
of *Cycles* and a work-in-progress edit of *Compensation* submitted to the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1993.

(1998 photo of Davis and film still from *A Powerful Thang* from the BFCA General Collection; still from *Compensation* edit from the Mary Perry Smith Collection)
Noble Johnson

On April 18, we observed the birthday of actor and pioneering producer Noble Johnson (1881-1978)! After working as a horse trainer and cowboy for several years, Johnson entered the new motion picture industry in the early 1910s as a supporting actor. Dedicated to addressing the lack of African American screen representation, in 1916 Johnson co-founded (with brother George) the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, the first Black-owned studio dedicated to producing films for Black audiences. Johnson produced 5 features as the Lincoln Co.'s president and star actor, often supporting the business with the paychecks he earned acting in other studios' productions. Unable to balance being both a working actor and a company head, Johnson reluctantly closed the Lincoln studio in the early 1920s after receiving an ultimatum from Universal Pictures to choose between the two career paths.
Johnson would act (often uncredited) in over 140 films from the 1910s-1950s, including as the Skull Island native chief in *King Kong* (1933). Given his striking 6'2" frame and light skin complexion, Hollywood execs frequently consigned him to “exotic” Native American, Arabian, or “native” roles typical for many non-white actors at the time.

Sadly, almost none of the Lincoln Co.’s output exists today outside of short surviving fragments. Although he is an obscure figure today, recent work by historians (including IU professor Cara Caddoo) continue to unearth the story of Noble Johnson as one of African American cinema’s earliest creative pioneers.

https://tinyurl.com/yyjnfzfc
THE TROOPER OF TROOP K
IN 3 PARTS

Featuring
NOBLE M. JOHNSON
SUPPORTED BY
BEULAH HALL AND JIMMIE SMITH

A THRILLING PICTURIZATION OF THE LATE CARRIZAL MEXICO BATTLE. BETWEEN THE FIGHTING U.S. TENTH CAVALRY AND THE CARRANZISTAS SOLDIERS

produced by LINCOLN MOTION PICTURE COMPANY
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
April 28 marked the birthday of public media leader and filmmaker Jacquie Jones (1965-2018)! A graduate of Howard University and Stanford, Ms. Jones dedicated her professional life to expanding the focus and accessibility of public media within minority and low-income communities. From 2005-2014, she was executive director of the National Black Programming Consortium (now called Black Public Media), where she pioneered digital media initiatives such as the Katrina Project, the Masculinity Project, and NMI: Project. As a filmmaker in her own right, Ms. Jones won a Peabody Award for her masterful documentary series Africans in America (1998) tracing the history of American slavery.
Rosario Dawson

(DVD screenshot from *He Got Game* from the Black Film Center & Archive General Collection; 2011 headshot of Ms. Dawson by Frazer Harrison via Getty)
In Memoriam

Harry Belafonte

The BFCA remembers the life and legacy of music and screen legend Harry Belafonte (1927-2023), who has passed at age 96. A towering figure of 20th century pop culture, Belafonte popularized Jamaican calypso music across the world and his Hollywood success in films like Carmen Jones (1954), Island in the Sun (1957), and Odds Against Tomorrow (1959) helped break the color barrier for Black men in serious dramatic roles. A lifelong peace and social justice activist, Belafonte used his fame and wealth to support other people of color (including bailing Martin Luther King, Jr. out of jail in Alabama and funding various civil rights and anti-apartheid groups). He made his final film appearance in Spike Lee’s BlacKkKlansman (2018), fiercely schooling a group of young activists about U.S. lynching history and the radical importance of saying that “Black lives matter.”
(Headshot of Belafonte & screenshots from 16mm prints of Island in the Sun, Odds Against Tomorrow, & The Angel Levine from the Black Film Center & Archive's General Collection)
Matterport Scan - We've Gone 3D!
Can’t physically visit our office? How about a virtual visit instead? The BFCA office on IU Bloomington's campus was recently given a Matterport 3D scan courtesy of the Indiana University IU3D Team. Check out this unique interactive virtual tour, featuring our space, amenities, and several featured items from our archival collections, such as the item pictured below! (Simplex 35mm Projector donated by Jon and Jennifer Vickers from the Vickers Theatre and the collection of Kenneth Marks).

Click the link below and then the play button in the bottom left corner for an automated tour or click around and explore the space at your leisure.
https://bfca.indiana.edu/about/virtual-tour.html
For more information about the BFCA, please visit our website www.bfca.indiana.edu. To subscribe to our blog, please visit our blog page https://blogs.iu.edu/bfca/ and click on “Subscribe” in the bottom right of the screen. Please consider ways to give, to continue our efforts and supporting our mission. We sincerely thank you all for your support. We would not be able to complete all of our wonderful programs and awesome events, without your help.

Warmest regards,
BFCA Interim Director and Staff