The Black Film Center & Archive is thrilled to announce and welcome new director: Dr. Novotny Lawrence

Novotny Lawrence will serve as the director of the Black Film Center & Archive beginning August 1. He will also join the Cinema and Media Studies program as an associate professor in the Media School.
“The BFCA is world-renowned for Black film, and having the chance to lead it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” he said.

The Black Film Center & Archive dedicates itself to collecting, preserving, and providing historically and culturally significant films by and about Black people. It serves as an open resource for scholars, students, and the general public. The center also supports research on the history, impact, theory, and aesthetics of Black film traditions.

Lawrence will be coming from the Greenlee School of Journalism and the English department at Iowa State University. His research focuses on African American cinematic and mediated experiences, film and media history, and popular culture. He authored “Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s,” a book discussing trends in black representation in films of the early 1970s. Lawrence has also been the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Popular Culture* since 2019. He was previously chair of the radio, TV, and digital media department at Southern Illinois University, which provided him with leadership experience he believes will be useful in his new role.

“I am also invested in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives. I will rely on those principles to lead the BFCA in developing programming, and in further demonstrating its value to the IU campus, Indiana, and across the U.S. and the world, more broadly,” he said.

As director, Lawrence aims to increase the BFCA’s profile across the world, bringing in a host of scholars, filmmakers, and media makers, hosting exciting programming, and working to secure collections. He also aspires to be a good colleague, productive scholar, and effective teacher and mentor to students at IU.

“I’m really looking forward to leading it (the BFCA) and working with its partners/followers to honor past filmmakers’ and scholars’ legacies while also highlighting contemporary researchers and artists as well,” Lawrence said. “I am confident that by being patient and with staunch commitment, we will achieve our goals.”
Black Filmmaker Interviews: Yoruba Richen

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 independent filmmaker Yoruba Richen, in audio recorded with then-BFCA director Michael T. Martin on March 8, 2008. A transcribed version of this interview was previously published in the Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 28 (3): 183-194.

https://media.dlib.indiana.edu/media_objects/6d570j30j

---

**American Black Film Festival**

The BFCA’s own Essence London attended the American Black Film Festival virtually June 19-25th and wrote an overview of her top picks! The documentary features impressed her, but there are films from other categories she also recommends you look into. Read "ABFF 2023: The Documentarians Really Shine" [here](#).
On the blog, you'll also find a special profile on Kyra Knox, director of Bad Things Happen in Philadelphia, which premiered at ABFF and is doing well on the festival circuit. "We Started Out with Trust" discusses Knox's unexpected yet fulfilling partnership with Executive Producer Mark Mims, alongside the heavy experiences of creating a film focused on gun violence in her city.
On June 12, the BFCA welcomed the Media School’s Cinema Academy summer program for pre-college students interested in filmmaking. Approximately 30 students participated in the hour-long visit, which included a tour of our facilities, a discussion of archives and the possible definitions of “Black cinema,” and demonstrations of sample archival objects.
Social Media Highlights

Joseph Vásquez

On June 8, we observed the birthday of independent filmmaker Joseph B. Vásquez (1962-1995)! Born and raised under difficult conditions in the South Bronx, Vásquez dreamed of becoming a moviemaker from an early age, earning a film degree from the City College of New York. The high point of Vásquez’s film career came in 1991 when New Line Cinema produced his inner-city coming-of-age dramedy Hangin’ with the Homeboys, which won the top screenwriting award at the Sundance Film Festival and featured an early starring role by John Leguizamo. Mental health and AIDS-related struggles cut Vásquez’s film career short, and he passed having completed four features.

In 2013, an unproduced screenplay by Vásquez was posthumously released as The House That Jack Built (2013), directed by Henry Barrial. In recent years, Hangin’ with the Homeboys has been recognized as a uniquely poignant entry in the cycle of “hood films” released in the early 1990s.
On June 15, we wished happy birthday to TV veteran and Blaxploitation icon Judy Pace (born 1942)! A versatile talent able to shift effortlessly between sweet and villainous roles, Ms. Pace’s performance as Iris in *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1970), one of the first Blaxploitation films, set a template for the confident and sly femme fatales later embodied by actors like Pam Grier and Tamara Dobson. Through the 1970s, Ms. Pace was a frequent presence on both the big and small screen, with roles in films like *Cool Breeze* (1972) and *The Slams* (1973) and shows like *Sanford and Son* (1974) and *Good Times* (1975), as well as many TV commercials and fashion ads. In 1971, she
helped found the Kwanza Foundation, a Black nonprofit dedicated to supporting other actresses in the industry and fundraising for women's issues.

(Publicity stills of Ms. Pace and 16mm screenshot from Cotton Comes to Harlem from the Black Film Center & Archive General Collection)
Donald Faison


(VHS screenshots from What'cha Gonna Do About Hate? and Hard Chorus from the Black Film Center & Archive's Mary Perry Smith Collection; 2010 photo of Faison at the Tribeca Film Festival by David Shankbone)
On June 30, we recognized the birthday of celebrated actor, singer, dancer, and civil rights activist Lena Horne (1917-2020)! Though her movie career was limited by studio and exhibitor racism, Ms. Horne’s fiery screen persona and vocal range in productions like Cabin in the Sky (1943) and Stormy Weather (1943) cemented her as one of the most unforgettable musical actors of classical Hollywood. She left Hollywood in the 1950s to pursue successful nightclub, state, and recording careers,
including a one-woman Broadway show that ran for more than 300 performances in the 1980s.

(Publicity stills and signed memorabilia from Ms. Horne from the Black Film Center & Archive’s Mary Perry Smith Collection and General Collection)
Steve "Peg" Reynolds

July 7 marked the birthday of silent film stuntman Steve “Peg” Reynolds (1892-1945)! Reynolds, who lost a leg in early life under unclear circumstances, parlayed his disability into a short screen career when his friend, director Richard Norman, made him a regular player in six all-Black “race” films he produced in the 1920s. Promoted as the “One-Legged Wonder,” Reynolds’s jaw-dropping stunts—including hopping
between train cars and shooting a rifle while riding a bicycle—became one of Norman Studios’ key attractions. A skilled showman, Reynolds traveled the country helping promote Norman films, sometimes performing short variety acts before screenings. Sadly, only one of his film performances (1926’s *The Flying Ace*) exists today in its entirety, but ample surviving promotional material from Norman Studios testify to Reynolds’s legacy as one of cinema’s first Black daredevils.

(Posters and lobby cards from the Black Film Center & Archive’s Richard E. Norman Collection)
July 14 was the birthday of filmmaker Shari L. Carpenter (born 1961)! Her career began after penning a fan letter to Spike Lee, who then employed her as a script supervisor on his films for the next 15 years, including *Malcolm X* (1992), *Bamboozled* (2000), and *Inside Man* (2006).

Ms. Carpenter's own directorial voice has emerged over many indie shorts and features, commercials, and TV work, including *Kali's Vibe* (2002), an episode of Ava DuVernay's *Queen Sugar* (2021), and the hit Lifetime films *Single Black Female* (2022) & *Strength of a Woman* (2023).

The Black Film Center & Archive retains Ms. Carpenter's submission materials for her short film directorial debut *Since Lisa*, which she sent to the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame annual film competition in 1996.

(B&W photo from the BFCA’s Mary Perry Smith Collection; color headshot by Michael Rowe via Variety)
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