August 2023 Newsletter

Welcome Back!

The BFCA welcomes new Director, Dr. Novotny Lawrence!
On August 1, Dr. Novotny Lawrence joined us as Director of the Black Film Center & Archive! He also begins as an associate professor in The Media School’s Cinema and Media Studies program.

Dr. Lawrence writes: I am thrilled to be the new Director of the beacon of global Black film archival materials, scholarly research, and programming, or to put it succinctly, all things Black cinema. I earned my doctorate from the Theatre and Film Department (now Film and Media Studies) at the University of Kansas. There, I specialized in Black cinematic representations with an emphasis on Blaxploitation films of the 1970s, a subject that at the time, had only received scant academic attention. Consequently, one of my early goals was to help legitimize Blaxploitation cinema as an area of scholarly inquiry by bringing greater attention to the films, directors, actors, production studios, music, audiences, and the other elements that characterized the movement, to shed light on oft-overlooked Black film histories and to make mainstream accounts of film history more complete. That I have published extensively on Blaxploitation cinema in conjunction with the increased and now-sustained scholarly investigations into the movement, is evidence that my and other researchers' works are making valuable contributions to Black film discourses.

My approach to the Blaxploitation Movement and representations of Blacks in films, more broadly, intersect with the Black Film Center & Archive's mission—collecting, preserving, and promoting global and diasporic Black cinema. As Director, I am excited to engage in the work of acquiring collections, delivering programming, hosting filmmakers and scholars, and countless other initiatives. My vision also includes:

- Increasing the Black Film Center & Archive’s presence and role on the IU campus, in the Bloomington community, Indiana, nationally, and internationally;
- Delivering inclusive programming that highlights historic and contemporary Black experiences and the intersections thereof;
- Attending events such as the Heartland Film Festival, the St Louis International Film Festival, Black Film Fest, and the Pan-African-Film and Television Festival (FESPACO) to establish a festival artist to BFCA archive pipeline.

This is a sampling of the initiatives in which I will consistently engage as the new Director of the Black Film Center & Archive. My wonderful staff and I have begun
taking small steps that will help bring my larger vision to fruition. However, we also need the help and support of the BFCA’s friends and partners, The Media School, IU, the Bloomington community, and all the film researchers, archivists, and aficionados committed to The Work that is the Black Film Center & Archive. I hope to begin that journey with you all at the Director’s Welcome events on August 30th and 31st!
BFCA's Open House and meet the new director!

Come check out the BFCA and meet Dr. Lawrence!!

**Wednesday, August 30th, 12:30pm-2:30pm**
**Thursday, August 31st, 1:30pm-2:30pm**

To begin the fall semester, we're opening our doors to you all! Come meet us, take a look around, learn about our facility, history, resources and enjoy good food provided by BFCA friend and partner, **Chef Lee**!

We are located in Herman B. Wells Library Room 044, on the ground floor, across from Media Services and the Bookmark[et] Eatery.

The BFCA Team is looking forward to meeting you or reconnecting with you! Please join us and bring a friend!

(Photo courtesy - Dr. Novotny Lawrence)
In celebration of our new director Dr. Novotny Lawrence’s research, the BFCA presents a new Blaxploitation-themed exhibit located in the basement level of the IU Cinema: Sticking It to ‘The Man’: Blaxploitation Lobby Cards, 1970-1976. Lobby cards were small collectible prints frequently used from the 1940s-1980s to promote upcoming film releases. A lobby card series typically featured images of key stars or scenes and were displayed and distributed in customer-facing areas of movie theaters. This exhibit of lobby cards for various Blaxploitation titles features beautiful promotional art for films like Cotton Comes to Harlem (1970), Super Fly (1972), Scream Blacula Scream (1973), and Foxy Brown (1974), and highlights the star image of performers like Pam Grier, Christopher St. John, Richard Roundtree, and Tamara Dobson. Stop by and check it out next time you are near the IU Cinema!
Job opportunity - BFCA Project Archivist
(Deadline Extended to August 20, 2023)

The BFCA continues its search for a Project Archivist. We have extended the deadline to apply to August 20th at midnight. Here is the description and link to apply, below: [Project Archivist Application](#)

We are also proud to add two new books by past BFCA directors to our reference library: Akin Adesokan’s *Everything Is Sampled* and Michael Martin’s 3-volume anthology on *African Cinema: Manifesto and Practice for Cultural Decolonization* (co-edited with Gaston Kabore). All are available for purchase through Indiana University Press.
Our Summer included a major technology update to the BFCA!!

(Rachael Lawson, James Stroman, Ja Quita Joy Roberts, and Will Whitten)

This summer brought major technology upgrades to the Black Film Center & Archive. Thanks to the dedication of Manny Knowles, Learning Space Design Engineer in the Classroom Technology Services Department, our Seminar Room is up and running with cutting-edge software to accompany our sleek new projector, cameras and speakers, legacy deck connectors, and so much more. He brought to life an idea to elevate that space and customized the technology, manually. Next time you schedule a meeting or a research visit with us, you will have everything you need to make it a success!
The day that the College of Arts & Sciences IT Office’s (CITO) representatives and the Media School Tech Team arrived to continue upgrades to individual workstations and our copy machines, the office buzzed with music and shuffling feet as we all helped to unpack boxes, set aside dated tech for IU Surplus, and check off meticulous to-dos on the white board along the way. Now, BFCA staff members can do their best work on computers, Blu-ray players, scanners, and printers that run smoothly—and are from this decade! Thanks to Office Administrator and Finance Officer, Ja Quita Joy Roberts’ persistent advocacy and The Media School administrators’ approvals, we’re no longer behind the times! Thanks to her for overseeing the project and continuing to collaborate with the Media School Tech Team and CITO to complete the testing and troubleshooting processes. There are so many thank you’s that we’d like to extend to each person, individually, but we know that there are many more who were also behind the scenes, as well. THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!

Take a look at our photo gallery below:
(Allen Major, Mike Gray, Ja Quita Joy Roberts, Kate Crum, Jay Kincaid)
In April 2023, our Finance & Office Administrator, Ja Quita Joy Roberts, was recommended and then unanimously voted into the Indiana Memorial Union Board of Directors. It is comprised of 18 student directors and four non-student directors, and its mission is to unify and represent the students and greater community of Indiana University through diverse, high-quality programming.

As perfectly stated on the IMU website, "We strive to improve students' academic and personal experience with thought-provoking, educational, and entertaining programs. In addition, we are dedicated to promoting the Indiana Memorial Union as the center of campus life and serving students as stewards of the Union. As a board, we are committed to enhancing the IU community by fostering student involvement and personal growth while upholding the spirit and traditions of Indiana University."

I'm honored to be part of this wonderful group of doers and look forward to all of the things we will continue to successfully accomplish, together!

(Photo by Mohena Gupta, IMU)
July 19 marked the birthday of Pan-African filmmaker Sarah Maldoror (1929-2020)! Born and educated in France, Maldoror was among the first generation of artists to use cinema in the struggle for African liberation, as well as one of the first women to direct films in Africa. Her first feature, *Sambizanga* (1972), boldly depicts the 1961-74 Angolan War of Independence against Portugal from a Black feminist perspective, and has been recognized as one of the early masterworks of Pan-African cinema. An activist first and foremost, Maldoror repeatedly explained, “For
many African filmmakers, cinema is a revolutionary tool, a political education to raise consciousness.”

(Images from the Black Film Center & Archive's Josef Gugler Collection)
On July 28, we recognized the birthday of character actor Billy Mitchell (1889-1952)! Mitchell appeared in nearly 40 Hollywood productions between 1940 and 1951, including the W.C. Fields vehicle *The Bank Dick* (1940) and the classic film noir *Double Indemnity* (1944). He also did voice work for the notorious Looney Tunes short *Goldilocks and the Jivin’ Bears* (1944), which Warner Bros. pulled from circulation due to its racial stereotyping. Mitchell was almost entirely relegated to uncredited servant roles, and there are few accessible biographical details about his life.

(Screenshots from *The Bank Dick* [1940] and *Mr. District Attorney* [1941])
On August 2, we wished happy birthday to the indelible essayist, novelist, poet, and activist James Baldwin (1924-1987)! Beyond his era-defining writings on race, sexuality, and class, Baldwin’s works have also left a deep cinematic legacy. Documentaries such as *I Remember Harlem* (1981), *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (1989) and Raoul Peck’s masterful *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016) have explored Baldwin’s wide-ranging life and thought, while his novels have been adapted by filmmakers like Stan Lathan [*Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1984)] and Barry Jenkins [*If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018)]. In a 2018 interview, Barry Jenkins referred to Baldwin’s work as his “personal school of life.”
Publicity stills from the Black Film Center & Archive's Mary Perry Smith and General Collections; discs from the General Collection
August 9 marked the birthday of the Queen of Pop, Whitney Houston (1963-2012)!

One of the most influential and beloved recording artists of the 20th century, Ms. Houston’s soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* (1992), in which she also starred, remains the best-selling album of all time by a female vocalist. Ms. Houston also starred in *Waiting to Exhale* (1995), *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996), and *Cinderella* (1997), and was one of the producers of *The Princess Diaries* series (2001-2004). Since her 2012 passing, Ms. Houston’s music and life have been subject to multiple documentaries and dramatizations, most recently in Kasi Lemmons’s biopic *I Wanna Dance with Somebody* (2022).
(Betacam screenshots of promotional press kit for *The Bodyguard* from the Black Film Center & Archive’s Mary Perry Smith Collection)
August 17 was the birthday of celebrated Black film memorabilia collector Edward Mapp (1929-2021)! A Professor of Speech and Communication at CUNY, Dr. Mapp published widely on Black American film history and promotional art. Dr. Mapp parlayed his passion for Black cinema into a personal collection of more than 1,200 posters and artifacts from 1921-2001, most of which he gifted to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Museum in the 1990s. Between 2000-2011, he also donated almost 300 of his posters, lobby cards, printed programs, and videos to the Black Film Center & Archive, where they remain permanently available for researchers as the Edward Mapp Collection. Much of the collection has been digitized and is now accessible to the public: https://tinyurl.com/2763pvea.
Matterport Scan - We've Gone 3D!
Can’t physically visit our office? How about a virtual visit instead? The BFCA office was 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 & Jennifer Vickers from the Vickers Theatre & 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](http://www.bfca.indiana.edu). To subscribe to our blog, please visit our blog page [https://blogs.iu.edu/bfca/](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