

Barbara Klinger: I think we're going to get started. I'm Barb Klinger, Professor here at IU. It's my pleasure to moderate this session at 2:45 on The Case of the Race Movie Circuit. I think what we'll find as our presenters go along that the race movie circuit will kind of flip in and out of various peoples' presentations and we'll find ourselves returning to the issue of the retrievable past and its many complications and challenges. That will be woven through these presentations as well.

I'm going to introduce everybody at once and we'll be going in the order in our program, if we have any luck. So the very first person will be Allyson Field and she's an Assistant Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA and an affiliated faculty of the Moving Image Archive Studies program and the Ralph Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA. She's working on a project about African American uplift films of the 1910's and also, as we heard earlier today, with UCLA archive of the L.A. Rebellion of Black filmmakers from the 1970's to the 1990's.

The next person we'll have presenting will be Terri Francis, who is in the Cinema Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania. She was previously at Yale in the Film Studies program and also in the Department of African American Studies. She has a book on Josephine Baker and a new project on Jamaican film history.

Barbara Tapa Lupack is an independent scholar who has taught at St. John's University, Wayne State College and at SUNY where she served as an Associate Dean at Empire State College. She's written more books than I can talk about at this moment. She's written on literary adaptations in black American cinema and she also, I have a show and tell, has written on Richard E. Norman and race filmmaking. She has a very generous forward by Michael T. Martin in this book as well and did a lot of her research for it here at IU at the Black Film Center/Archive.

Then our final speaker in this session is Charlene Register, who is currently an affiliate faculty with the Global Studies minor at UNC Chapel Hill. She's published on African American actresses and also on black entertainers in African American newspaper articles and much more.

These are just capsule summaries of an amazingly accomplished foursome. So let's welcome Allyson [Nadia Field] to the podium. Thank you.

Allyson Nadia Field: Thanks, Barb [Barbara Klinger]. And I want to thank Brian [Graney] too and everyone at IU for putting this on. This is really wonderful and for having me here. It's really such an honor to be part of this company and part of this conversation. So thank you.

So this conference addresses strategies of early black film research through material analysis of surviving artifacts. Yet, with approximately 90%, if not more, of early black film nonextant. How are we going to account for the materiality of films when the films themselves are lost?

Film history, as we know, is a history of survivors and scholarly writing is consequently disproportionately weighted to extant films. I believe that we need to complement this incredibly important effort of archivists and scholars who have labored to find and collect and repatriate and preserve extant exemplars of early black cinema with increased attention to titles that are considered lost.

So in the case of African American cinema where no films or fragments are known to survive from the early teens this is especially important if we're going to get a more complete understanding of how filmmakers employed motion picture technology, how films circulated and how audiences engaged with early black filmmaking practices.

So in my research into pre 1915 black film it became very clear to me that the lack of an archive of films meant that the extra filmic discourses surrounding the films and filmmakers, themselves scant, would have to be mobilized to fill in the too many gaps that existed in filmographies of early black filmmaking as well as to provide the evidence wherever possible of the films formal strategies, their appeals to audiences, the reception by various spectators and the circulation in theatrical and nontheatrical context. This is about attending to the materiality of context that Michael Martin mentioned this morning.

So I've tried to reconstruct a history of pre 1915 black filmmaking practices entirely out of surviving ephemera to argue what I'm calling uplift cinema, the early use of motion pictures as a medium of persuasion and representation in the service of African American advancement and self-definition by black filmmaking entrepreneurs, educational institutions for African Americans from around 1909 to 1915. So to date I've compiled filmography about 35 titles that were produced and exhibited but I think is actually closer to 50.

I also imagine that this is a project that's a model for a sustained research into non-extant film. In the case of uplift cinema not one fragment survives and really only two or three photos that may possibly be production stills or frame enlargements. So to account for the entire body of work we have to construct a constellation of surviving artifacts to look adjacently from the film itself to the world in which it was produced, circulated, and received.

Of course, this is standard historical research and something we've been talking about all day. What I want to stress here are the possibilities that surviving materials have for allowing us to account for what we can't see. So in my project I'm interested in how the body of films that I've termed uplift cinema mobilize the various aspects of moving picture technology and cinema's exhibition regimes to constitute an effective uplift upon producers and spectators.

The context of the film's production and exhibition as well as accounts of their reception provide clues to indicate how they were formally constructed. So in this sense, absence becomes the archive. The traces that remain from a film's existence from conception to production to circulation are themselves the objects of inquiry.

In putting these remarks together I took quite literally the prompt sent by Brian [Graney] to reflect on pragmatic concerns of the work of your research. So I'm going to give a brief overview of online resources that I've used for extra filmic research in early black filmmaking and show examples of how I use them to research uplift cinema. I imagine these will be very familiar to most of you. The digital resource landscape is changing very rapidly. So I thought it was useful to share and hopefully you'll have resources that I'm not aware of either so they can be added. Even if the resources themselves are familiar I hope that the examples from my research that I show will be new to some of you.

Online databases allow for broad searches covering a range, a number of sources in years where otherwise we would have to depend on the proximity of materials such as complete runs of journals, newspapers, microfilm, and we talked about that this morning as well. I think we're all familiar with the process of doing a long-term project where you start with the dusty volumes in the library and microfilm and then end up with searchable online databases. These tools certainly save time but they also pose other problems, not the least of which is the unreliability of the search mechanisms. As Cara [Caddoo] mentioned this morning the important and also the importance of reading them in context as Matthew Bernstein talked about as well.

So I want to make it clear that digitized archival materials accessed first from a scholar's computer should not replace actual legwork. I imagine this is not a point I need to make in this room but is something that I always underscore with my students.

So in the case with my research on uplift cinema I started with visits to Hampton and Tuskegee archives, the papers of George Foster Peabody that were held at Harvard and the Booker T. Washington papers on microfilm and, of course, the George P. Johnson Negro Film Collection at UCLA that many of you have mined for your own research. Here is the finding aid accessible to the online archive of California but as you can see there are no online items available from the collection though it has been microfilmed.

So my uplift cinema project is an amalgam of archival research that is in person, hands on research in archival collections and supplementary investigation of extra filmic texts many of which are digitally available and what I'm going to focus on here.

So, of course, the online resource that I found the most useful have been repositories of newspapers. However, these are not all collected in one spot. Readex, America's historical newspapers and ProQuest historical newspapers are crucial collections for major, mainstream and African American papers. For example, ProQuest has the *Chicago Defender*, which is important not just for articles but for advertisements as well. So here's a profile of the photographer turned filmmaker Peter P. Jones and an advertisement for the black owned Anderson Watkins Film Company's nonfiction film *A Day at Tuskegee*, and an announcement for the Foster Photo Film Company to assemble relatives of black military to make smile movies to send to the troops in France, which is a fascinating use of the local film by an early African American filmmaker.

So Readex has the *Indianapolis Freeman*. Here you get a sketch of Juli Jones, Jr., who was the pen name of William Foster, as you know, done by Billy Evans and an advertisement for Foster's *The Barber*, which he produced under the name Juli Jones, Jr.

Many of these papers have national distribution or scope beyond their local environment. So for local or regional information the search has to broaden to other databases. For example, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* is available on ProQuest but the internet archive has some issues with the *California Eagle*. So you can get the local angle on issues such as the release of *Birth of a Nation*. But like many digitized collections there's much that's missing.

This is, unfortunately, a very common sight in the *California Eagle* collection. So online research must be supplemented with looking at actual papers, if they are available and weren't thrown away when they were microfilmed. I think most online versions are actually from the microfilm in most cases.

Of course the other problem is that while it doesn't close like a brick and mortar library the internet is not always available. The bottom message from the Library of Congress is especially dismaying concerning the recent federal government shutdown. I got this when I wanted to look up a newspaper on the Chronicling America site. That said, when you do have access one of the most interesting collections that's free to anyone with an internet connection is the Library of Congress's collection of historic American newspapers, many of them are regional. So, for example, here's a piece in the "Broad Ax" on the wife of Peter P. Jones with a fascinating description of her role in her husband's photography studio.

And also from the Library of Congress their prints and photographs online catalog has a large digital repository and what's not digitized can be requested. So here you can see the mention of a portrait of Booker T. Washington by Peter P. Jones and a few days and \$80 later this arrives. Actually I believe we're the first folks outside of the Library of Congress to see this portrait, which I think is really exciting.

Another good database but one you have to pay for, which Greg [Waller] mentioned this morning, is the newspaper archive. It's a really good collection of regional papers. So, for example, here's a notice in the Trenton *Evening Times* about the screening of Boston based filmmaker George Broom's film *A Trip to Tuskegee* at a church. On the right a "New York Tribute" notice of the incorporation of the white owned Afro American Film Company that black entrepreneur Hunter C. Haynes started with before branching out on his own.

So for more about the New York based Haynes I turned to Old Fulton Postcards. Has anyone used this? Yes. It's an amateur history buff who put together this collection of New York historical newspapers. So the interface, as you can see, is pretty terrible but the collection is invaluable and includes the *New York Age* and the *New York Clipper*. So, for example, here are two articles on Haynes and Devers that I accessed through the Old Fulton Postcard site.

Far more professionally organized, IU has a collection of the *Indianapolis Recorder*, and here you see a portrait of Hunter Haynes from that paper.

So in addition to these newspaper databases there are some important photo collections that are online. Like the Library of Congress the New York Public Library has a digital photo collection that's quite impressive. So here's one of my favorite photos, a group of soldiers at an Army YMCA camp, YMCA Camp Travis in Texas apparently at the "movies" in 1917.

So for my work this has also been really, it's been really important to look carefully at the mainstream press and the trade press. So thanks to the Media History Digital Library project many trades from this early period have been digitized and are searchable though I, again, caution against relying on the search mechanism. Like most of what I found online the search function is not 100% reliable and should be coupled with careful and thorough browsing, which is time consuming but far more effective.

Something that didn't come up in a search, for example, the trades sometimes covered black filmmakers just as they covered black theaters and black subject films by white filmmaking concerns. Here you see a brief article on William Foster which is fascinating for its ventriloquizing of Foster's presumed dialect towards the bottom. This coverage by the mainstream trades is really interesting on its own as well as a counterpoint to the coverage of uplift filmmakers that they received in the black press.

To end, I just wanted to point out a few other resources that can be useful. Ancestry.com can provide information about individuals through the collection and digitization of official documents, a census report, military records, and so forth. The records are not as complete for African American citizens, as many of you have probably figured out. I'm told that the librarians if you go to the Church of Latter Day Saints they're happy to work with you and can be very, very helpful in tracking down people for biographical information.

Also, the MPPDA Digital Archive, the AMPAS online resources and Dartmouth's new Media Ecology Project all promise to be really tremendous resources.

This is by no means an exhaustive list and these tools are really just that. It depends on how they're used. In employing or deploying these tools we find that the archive is actually quite rich. What matters is how you look and how you make sense of what you find. Lost to us nonexistant films nonetheless existed and functioned in particular context, had actual effects on specific audiences and consisted of certain formal properties. Part of this work of archival contextualization is to refine our judgments on what these nonexistant films would have looked like and how they appealed to spectators.

This is the primary challenge that this project on uplift cinema aims to address. Digital resources can provide greater access to investigating these questions but it's the questions that matter.

Thank you.