

NEH Application Cover sheet (FZ-292711)

Public Scholars

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Prof. Allyson Nadia Field

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Status: Senior scholar
Field of expertise: Film History and Criticism

INSTITUTION

University of Chicago
Chicago, IL 60637-1512

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Black Love on Screen: The Story of Something Good-Negro Kiss from Vaudeville to Twitter*

Grant period: From 2024-07-01 to 2025-06-30

Project field(s): Film History and Criticism; African American Studies; Theater History and Criticism

Description of project: In 2017, a short silent film made 120 years earlier reemerged from a forgotten corner of an archive to become a viral sensation across social media and broader popular culture. That film, *Something Good-Negro Kiss*, depicts an African American couple joyously embracing, holding hands, and kissing. Upon its rediscovery, the film touched millions of people who celebrated its unexpected early depiction of Black love. *Something Good* is an expression of Black love on screen that is unprecedented in the history of American cinema and challenges how we understand Black representation at the turn of the twentieth century and popular culture's negotiation of blackness. This book tells the story of the rediscovery of this rare media artifact, the effect it has had on contemporary viewers, its impact on American popular culture history, and the significance of its moving image of Black love from the vaudeville stage to Twitter.

REFERENCE LETTERS

Samantha Sheppard
Associate Professor
Performing and Media Arts
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Black Love on Screen: The Story of *Something Good-Negro Kiss* from Vaudeville to Twitter

Allyson Nadia Field

Significance and contribution

The lights dim and the projector whirs as the moving image crackles to life on the screen after 120 years of dormancy: twenty seconds of a man and a woman embracing, kissing, and swinging their arms in playful laughter. What is remarkable is that this is an African American couple showing affection on screen, forming a piece of early film history most people didn't think could exist given the racist landscape of early popular culture. Here, all but forgotten and exhumed from the dusty archives, is evidence of a more complex history of race in American cinema—the first image of Black love on screen. This stunning rediscovery, made by film archivist Dino Everett in 2017 and subsequently identified by me as *Something Good-Negro Kiss*, made by William Selig in Chicago in 1898 with vaudeville performers Saint Suttle and Gertie Brown, has led me on a journey to further excavate turn-of-the-century films featuring performances of Black humanity, offering a new history of American cinema that centers race and racialized representation, and a timely intervention that resonates with current efforts to infuse cinema with nuanced portrayals of Black love and affection at a time of greater national reckoning with the legacies of systemic racism. The book I present here places *Something Good* at the center of a new history of American cinema. I argue that the rediscovery of this brief silent film of an African American couple kissing in an endearing manner, suffused with pleasure and play and devoid of caricature, does no less than radically change American film history.

My identification of *Something Good* resulted in tremendous national and international media attention and its rediscovery has resonated in the contemporary moment. As a rare historical artifact of Black love, *Something Good* hit a chord in contemporary Hollywood. Netflix counsel and Twitter personality Kyle Alex Brett set the film to the score of Barry Jenkins's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) series *Black Love Doc* posted it to Instagram with sobbing emojis: “We’re not crying you are!” The film blew up the twitter-sphere, resulting in a viral response across social media platforms with shares and comments from significant Hollywood figures like Jenkins, Viola Davis, Tracee Ellis Ross, Lena Waithe, Jada Pinkett Smith, Mj Rodriguez, Tambay Obenson, and Janelle Monae. Poet and Mellon Foundation President Elizabeth Alexander shared it; the creator of #OscarsSoWhite, April Reign, retweeted it; and “The Black List” founder Franklin Leonard commented, “Absolutely broke me.” To date, Brett’s initial post has been viewed over a million times and has been shared by celebrities with tens of millions of followers.

The widespread resonance of this film with contemporary viewers is a major impetus for my writing this book and presents an opportunity for public engagement with film history scholarship. This rediscovery represents a missing piece of American film history that not only impacts how scholars understand that history, but also speaks to how contemporary audiences seek images and histories that can serve as a usable past. This rediscovery shows that Black love on film has a legacy as long as the medium itself.

In addition to celebrities and the general public, artists and filmmakers also encountered the rediscovered *Something Good* in its viral circulation. The film has inspired African American artists including filmmakers Kevin Jerome Everson, Kahlil Pedizisai, and Amina Ross, and poets Christian Campbell and Gabrielle Daniels. One of the outcomes of this book is the argument that the rediscovery of *Something Good* does not merely change how we understand the emergence of American cinema—though it does—but also informs contemporary artistic practice and negotiations of blackness across the history of cinema.

Sources and organization

My sources for this project include newly rediscovered film prints, archival materials, and primary documents such as newspapers and government records. Although no production files survive for *Something Good*, and very little documentation is extant, I have accessed the company files of the Selig Polyscope Company, held at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, and collected all available related primary materials from newspapers, trade journals, and other print sources. I have also recorded an interview with Kevin Jerome Everson and Kahlil Pedizisai on their film *Glennville*, inspired by *Something Good*. This book is strongly supported by historical evidence, yet because scant material artifacts survive for the corpus I study, I also rely on a method of informed speculation—an

imaginative reconstruction of absent, lost, missing, or fragmentary material used to articulate the history being told—to tell the story of *Something Good*, its performers, and its impact in the nineteenth century and today.

Foreword—Barry Jenkins: Director Barry Jenkins helped *Something Good-Negro Kiss* go viral when its naming to the National Film Registry coincided with the release of his *If Beale Street Could Talk*, an adaptation of James Baldwin’s novel centered on Black love. Jenkins could speak to *Something Good*’s significance for American cinema and efforts to assert Black humanity on film. We have acquaintances in common (Terri Francis, Michael Gillespie, Jacqueline Stewart) and I plan to approach him to write a Foreword to the book.

Introduction: The Introduction offers the general reader an entry point into the historical significance of early film, race and representation, and how the archive informs historical research. I detail the forms racialized representation took in early cinema to underscore the singularity of *Something Good* against a backdrop of persistent racist imagery and the significance of onscreen Black love in the nineteenth century to today.

Chapter 1—Discovering *Something Good-Negro Kiss*: This chapter traces the process of identifying *Something Good*, made in Chicago in 1898 by William Selig with vaudeville performers Saint Suttle and Gertie Brown, two of the famed Rag-Time Four. It is laid out like a detective procedural, engaging for a general reader while instructive for historians. For public audiences, it also establishes the significance of archival work, material objects, and the “stuff” of film history—something typically out of frame for the non-specialist—while arguing for the importance of these details for understanding film history.

Chapter 2—Black Love on Screen: Early Kiss Films Lost and Found: As powerful an image of Black humanity as *Something Good* asserts, its meanings aren’t entirely self-evident. How did audiences at the turn of the twentieth century understand it? This chapter takes the rediscovery of *Something Good* as a lens to rethink the influences of minstrelsy on early cinema, arguing for the presence of a hidden yet fundamental racial structuring of *The John C. Rice-May Irwin Kiss* (Edison, 1896), on which Selig’s film was based.

Chapter 3—Dancing into the Twentieth Century: The Rag-Time Four and the Cake Walk: The rediscovery of *Something Good* resurfaced an unidentified cake walk film held in the Library of Congress, featuring the same performers. This chapter focuses on the Rag-Time Four as popular vaudevillians whose interpretation of the cake walk dance was a creative resistance to dehumanizing portrayals of African Americans.

Chapter 4—The Artistic Afterlife of *Something Good*: What happens to a lost film after its rediscovery? In the case of *Something Good*, it can change public perception, it can make us rewrite history, and it can be a source of artistic creativity—as with *Glennville* (2020), a short film made by experimental filmmakers Kahlil Pedizisai and Kevin Jerome Everson as a response to *Something Good*. *Glennville* is a recalibration of (film) history, bringing in new historical contexts and discussions to the representation of Black love on screen. Through its dialogue with *Something Good*, made over 120 years prior, *Glennville* provides a case for thinking through not only how contemporary African American filmmakers respond to the past but also how cinematic artifacts gain new purchase on collective imaginations.

Epilogue—“No Blackface, Just #BlackLove”: The Epilogue revisits the viral circulation of *Something Good* on social media, where one Twitter user remarked that while anti-Black violence was ravaging American cities, “artists were fighting the battle of representation... no blackface, just #BlackLove.” The intimate encounters traced through the book—the onscreen kiss, the engagement with archival finds, the care of the historian, and the moving response by the public—assert the power and imperative of bringing to light the historical lineages of Black love on screen.

Competencies, skills, and access

As I note above, the rediscovery of *Something Good* went viral in 2018, reaching tens of millions of viewers, and the interest and enthusiasm continue. In September 2021 the Facebook page “Old Black Hollywood” (85,000 followers) posted about the film, garnering over 20,000 likes, 6,000 shares, and 512

comments. My book aims to target this audience. Between 2018 and 2022 I was interviewed by and/or had my work covered by: BBC Radio, NPR (Weekend Edition Sunday), and NPR affiliate stations. The front page of the *Chicago Tribune's* Sunday Arts Section ran a full-page story by Nina Metz on my research as well as a second article by Lolly Bowean. I was also featured on a television segment for Chicago's PBS affiliate WTTW. My work has also been mentioned in the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times*, among other periodicals, and widely across online publications including *The Smithsonian*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Root*, *HuffPost*, *Uptown Magazine*, *Shadow and Act*, *IndieWire*, *Afropunk*, *Nitrateville*, *Quartz*, and the History Channel's website.

My research has a history of public impact. After the publication of *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Duke UP, 2015), my work on pioneer Black filmmaker William Foster was optioned for feature film development by a Los Angeles producer, and I continue to work with industry professionals to showcase the important contributions of African American filmmakers to the development of American cinema. I have close ties to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, having been named an Academy Film Scholar in 2019, and my work on *Something Good* was featured in a recent article in *A.Frame*, the Academy's newsletter. The film is a centerpiece of the Academy Museum's landmark exhibition "Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898–1971" and an image from the film is currently featured in merchandise (e.g., T-shirts, tote bags) sold in conjunction with the show—a peculiar phenomenon I will explore in the book's Introduction or Epilogue. I am also working with the Library of Congress on public-facing web content to frame and contextualize their collection of African American films.

In the discipline of Cinema and Media Studies, I have been actively involved in fostering public-facing scholarship. For example, at the annual conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (which represents 3,000 scholars in over 500 institutions worldwide) in 2023, I will be presenting in a roundtable discussion on "Elements of Style and Substance: Writing on Cinema and Media for the General Public" with Annie Berke, Marsha Gordon, Hilary A. Hallett, and Erin Hill. At the University of Chicago, I am part of the Academic Communicators Network, which works with University Communications to convey scholarly research beyond the academy. The University of Chicago also has a robust media relations office that promotes the work of faculty and actively pitches stories to national and international outlets; the initial article on *Something Good* published online in *UChicago News* was their most circulated news story of the year.

I already have a demonstrated history of moving outside the context of academia. The large-scale L.A. Rebellion project that culminated with the award-winning publication of *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema* (UC Press, 2015) was multifaceted and focused on public engagement. More recently, *Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film* (Duke UP, 2019) garnered attention outside of the scholarly and archival communities as we mounted public screenings at venues such as the National Gallery in Washington, DC, and online for spectators across the world. Films related to both projects have been named to the National Film Registry, resulting in heightened attention from major media outlets and across social media.

Most recently, I was appointed to the National Film Preservation Board by the Librarian of Congress, Dr. Carla Hayden. With the annual announcement of the National Film Registry, I will engage the public in historicizing and critically contextualizing the films added to the registry each year.

Final product and dissemination

Black Love on Screen will be written engagingly, undergirded by rigorous scholarly research. The book is under contract with University of California Press for their academic-trade imprint, a new initiative aiming to bring cutting-edge scholarship to a general readership through large print-runs and marketing led by a dedicated publicist. I will use the time afforded by the NEH Public Scholars fellowship to work with a developmental editor and hone my writing for public audiences. During the editing process I will also write articles for popular publications and websites to generate broad interest in the book.

This cultural history has the potential to appeal to a mass audience interested in American popular culture, race and representation, and cinema's long and vexed history of Black performance. There is increasing broad fascination in contemporary Black culture with film heritage and with recuperating histories, and there has been demonstrated interest in the topic as evidenced by the widespread interest garnered by the rediscovery of *Something Good* and public investment in the history of African American film more broadly. Given the viral interest in the rediscovery of *Something Good*, I anticipate that this book, once published, will receive considerable media attention and that public audiences and scholars alike will be eager to read it.

Work Plan

My research for this book began with the rediscovery of the film *Something Good-Negro Kiss* in 2017 and my subsequent identification of it and its performers. To date I have published two scholarly articles on this research in *Film History: An International Journal* and *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, respectively. I have also published two blog pieces on this project in *ASAP/Journal* (Black One Shots) and *Domitor Snapshots*, both intended for a broad interdisciplinary readership. I have also given a set of talks—scholarly and general interest—on *Something Good-Negro Kiss*: its rediscovery, identification, and afterlives.

Because I am writing this book in a different style than my previous scholarly books and articles, I need dedicated time to focus on writing for a general audience. I will spend the time developing my voice and writerly style to be engaging for all readers. If given the time enabled by the NEH Public Scholars program, I will be able to draw from resources at my institution to hone these skills; the Academic Communicators Network at the University of Chicago supports scholars aiming to present their research to a broad public, and I have been working closely with an experienced developmental editor recommended by the University of California Press on writing for a general readership.

If I receive a NEH Public Scholars Fellowship, I will take a year to write and edit the book full-time. While I edit the manuscript and review copyedits and proofs, I will write related articles for a broad readership to generate interest in the book. The research for this book is largely complete (and will be finished by the start of the fellowship); chapters 1 and 2 will be developed from published scholarly articles, chapter 3 is currently in draft form, chapter 4 will be developed from a public talk, and the Introduction and Epilogue will be developed from published online essays. I am confident I will be able to complete the manuscript during the award period since my focus will be solely on the craft of writing and telling this story for an interested mainstream readership.

Timeline (full-time writing and editing July 2024–June 2025):

July-August 2024:

- Revise chapters 1-2 for general readership
- Solicit Foreword from Barry Jenkins

September-October 2024:

- Complete chapter 3

November-December 2024:

- Complete chapter 4

January-April 2025:

- Write Introduction and Epilogue
- Read entire manuscript out loud and edit for readability
- Submit manuscript to the press
- Write an article related to the Oscars and other film awards (for award season) and Black History Month for *A.Frame*, *Oprah Daily* and *Oprah.com*, and other outlets.

May-June 2025:

- Review Copy Edits and Proofs
- Write related articles for publications such as *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The Nation* (all of which I have contacts at), as well as publications and media outlets that ran stories about *Something Good* including NPR, BBC, *The Root*, *IndieWire*, and *The Chicago Tribune*.

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SELECT ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Chicago Theater Programs, 1895-1915, Newberry Library, Chicago.

James Francis Driscoll Collection of American Sheet Music, Newberry Library, Chicago.

Robert S. Abbott – John H. Sengstacke Family Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, The Chicago Public Library.

William Selig Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.

Thomas A. Edison Papers, Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, New Jersey.

SELECT PRIMARY SOURCES

Historical African American newspapers and magazines; Historical national newspapers and local papers.

Industry trade journals, Media History Digital Library, Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research.

Interview with Kahlil Pedizisai and Kevin Jerome Everson, conducted July 13, 2020.

Interview with Kevin Jerome Everson, conducted March 2, 2021.

SELECT SECONDARY SOURCES

Baldwin, Davarian. *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Brooks, Daphne A. *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1950-1910*. Duke University Press, 2006.

Cripps, Thomas. *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

Erish, Andrew. *Col. William N. Selig, the Man Who Invented Hollywood*. University of Texas Press, 2012.

Everett, Anna. *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909–1949*. Duke University Press, 2001.

Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Temple University Press, 1993.

Gunning, Tom, “The Cinema of Attraction.” *Wide Angle* 8:3-4, 1986.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. W.W. Norton, 2019.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. South End Press, 1992.

———. *All About Love: New Visions*. William Morrow, 2000.

Klein, Amanda Ann, “The Kissing Cycle, Mashers, and (White) Women in the American City,” in *Cycles, Sequels, Spin-offs, Remakes, and Reboots: Multiplicities in Film and Television*, ed. Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer (University of Texas Press, 2016), 22-40.

Musser, Charles, “The May Irwin Kiss: Performance and the Beginnings of Cinema,” in *Visual Delights Two: Exhibition and Reception*, eds. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (John Libbey, 2005), 96-115.

Robinson, Cedric J. *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Sampson, Henry T. *Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films*. 2nd ed. Scarecrow, 1995.

———. *Blacks in Blackface: A Source Book on Early Black Musical Shows*. Scarecrow, 1980.

———. *The Ghost Walks: A Chronological History of Blacks in Show Business, 1865–1910*. Scarecrow, 1988.

Slide, Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*. Greenwood Press, 1994.

Smith, Jacob, “Kissing as Telling: Some Thoughts on the Cultural History of Media Performance.” *Cinema Journal* 51.3 (Spring 2012): 123-128.

Stewart, Jacqueline, “Discovering Black Film History: Tracing the Tyler, Texas Black Film Collection.” *Film History* 23, no. 2 (2011): 147–73.

———. *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity*. University of California Press, 2005.

Williams, Linda. “Of Kisses and Ellipses: The Long Adolescence of American Movies.” *Critical Inquiry* 32.2 (Winter 2006): 288-340.

SELECT SOURCES ON THE CRAFT OF WRITING

Foster, Thomas C. *How to Write Like a Writer*. Harper, 2022.

Germano, William. *On Revision: The Only Writing That Counts*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Rabiner, Susan, and Alfred Fortunato. *Thinking Like Your Editor*. W.W. Norton, 2002.

ALLYSON NADIA FIELD

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

The University of Chicago

Department of Cinema & Media Studies, Division of the Humanities
Associate Professor of Cinema & Media Studies and the College, January 2016—
Director, Film Studies Center, July 2022—

University of California, Los Angeles

Department of Film, Television and Digital Media, School of Theater, Film and Television
Associate Professor of Cinema & Media Studies, July 2015-December 2015
Chair, Moving Image Archive Studies, July 2014-June 2015
Assistant Professor of Cinema & Media Studies, July 2008-June 2015

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Ph.D., June 2008, Comparative Literature with a Secondary Field in Film & Visual Studies
Dissertation: "Filming Back and Black: Strategies of African American Political Modernism."

Universiteit van Amsterdam, M.A. with Honors and First in Class, Film and Television Studies, September 2000
Masters Thesis: "*L'Histoire Ciselée*—Letterist Cinema 1951-1952: the Films, the Scandals and the Press."

Stanford University, A.B. *cum laude* with University Distinction and Departmental Honors, Art History, June 1998
Honors Thesis: "Jean-Luc Godard and Guy Debord: Revolutionary Cinema and the Cinema of the Revolutionary."

AWARDS AND HONORS

- Mellon Publication Support, Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, University of Chicago, 2022
- Mellon Course Innovation Grant, Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, University of Chicago, 2022
- ACLS/Burkhardt Residential Fellowship, Newberry Library, 2020-21
- Academy Film Scholars 2019 Fellowship, Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, May 2019
- NEH Summer Institute for College and University Faculty, "Art and Public Culture in Chicago," June 2018
- Inclusive Pedagogy Grant, University of Chicago, May 2018
- Co-Principal Investigator (PI) with Darnell Hunt, "Hollywood Advancement Project: Diversity and the Bottom Line," Transdisciplinary Seed Grant, UCLA, 2014-2015
- Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University, 2007-2008
- Graduate Fellow, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, 2007-2008

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Co-Editor with Marsha Gordon. *Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film* (Duke University Press, 2019).

- Finalist for the 2020 Kraszna-Krausz Book Award.
- Reviews: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Screen*, *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*

Co-Editor with Jan-Christopher Horak and Jacqueline Stewart. *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema* (University of California Press, 2015).

- Winner of the 2016 SCMS Best Edited Book Award.
- Winner of the 2016 Kraszna-Krausz Book Award.
- Reviews: *Black Camera*, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, *Journal of American History*, *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *Sight and Sound*, *Art in America*

Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film & The Possibility of Black Modernity (Duke University Press, 2015).

- Finalist for the Richard Wall Memorial Award from the Theatre Library Association
- Reviews: *Journal of African American History*, *Senses of Cinema*, *History*, *Studies in American Culture*, *Journal of American History*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Black Camera*, *Journal of Southern History*, *Film Criticism*, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, *Film History*, *Communication Booknotes Quarterly*

Recent Journal Articles & Book Chapters

Guest Editor and Introductions, Special Issues on Speculative Approaches to Film Histories, *Feminist Media Histories* 8.2 (Spring 2022) and 8.3 (Summer 2022).

"The Cinema of Racialized Attraction(s): *The John C. Rice-May Irwin Kiss* and *Something Good-Negro Kiss*," *Discourse* 44.1 (Winter 2022): 3-41.

"Archival Rediscovery and the Production of History: Solving the Mystery of *Something Good-Negro Kiss* (1898)." *Film History* 33.2 (Summer 2021): 1-33.

“Making the Absent Present: Writing about Nonextant Media” in *Writing About Screen Media*, ed. Lisa Patti (Routledge, 2020): 92-95.

“Glennville.” *Black One Shot* 14.2, *ASAP/Journal*. August 27, 2020.

“Woke-ish.” Editors’ Forum: “Art, Process, Protest,” *ASAP/Journal* 3.2 (May 2018): 217-221.

“The Other Side of the Tracks: Nontheatrical Film History, Pre-Rebellion Watts, and *Felicia*” with Marsha Gordon. *Cinema Journal* 55.2 (Winter 2016): 1-24.

Recent Public Scholarship

“Looking (and Looking Again) at Black Film History” with Cara Caddoo. *Now See Hear!* Library of Congress National Audio-Visual Conservation Center Blog. October 4, 2022.

“The Story of a Three Day Pass: Ordinary Love.” Essay on *The Story of a Three Day Pass* (1967) for *Melvin Van Peebles: Essential Films*, Criterion Collection’s Melvin Van Peebles boxset (September 2021).

“Seeing Life Through a Different Lens.” With Marsha Gordon. *Sight & Sound* 31.3 (April 2021): 19-21.

“Black Cinema at Its Birth.” Criterion’s *The Current*. March 3, 2020.

“No Blackface... just #BlackLove.” Domitor *Snapshots*. October 2019.

“A Portrait of Love, Grief, and Injustice: Strong Island (Yance Ford, 2017).” *Docalogue*. April 2018.

“Felicia.” With Marsha Gordon. Library of Congress National Film Registry, 2016.

TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

Selected Recent Public Programs

“Chicago Film History: Seeing Selig,” Chicago History Museum, March 23, 2022.

Introduction and conversation, *Wilmington 10—USA 10,000* (dir. Haile Gerima, 1979), Block Cinema, Northwestern University, February 18, 2022.

Screening Introduction with Marsha Gordon, *Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, February 15, 2020.

Discussion with Eve Ewing, Jacqueline Stewart, and DJ Rae Chardonnay on *Within Our Gates* (Dir. Oscar Micheaux, 1920), *Loose Machinery: A Symposium on the Chicago Race Riot of 1919*. University of Chicago, October 23, 2019.

Selected Recent Invited Talks

“Recovering Black Love on Screen: Unearthing Lost Films and the Traces of Alternative Histories.” University of Chicago Harper Lecture, Los Angeles, February 16, 2022.

“No Blackface, Just #BlackLove,” Office of Civic Engagement, University of Chicago, February 10, 2022.

“Early Black Cinema in Chicago: Lost and Found.” Humanities Day, The University of Chicago, October 16, 2021.

Keynote Speaker, “In the Wake of Archival Rediscovery: The Afterlives of *Something Good-Negro Kiss* (1898).” Black Lives on Screen series, University of Iowa, March 12, 2021. *Remote*.

“*Something Good-Negro Kiss*: Rediscovering Early Film, Reassessing Racialized Performance.” Center for Visual Cultures workshop, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 25, 2020. *Remote*.

Keynote Speaker, “The Speculative Archive: Early African American Cinema and Film Historiography.” Center for Visual Cultures, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 24, 2020. *Remote*.

“Recovering Black Love on Screen: Early Film and the Legacies of Racialized Performance.” Indiana University, February 21, 2020.

Keynote Speaker, “Archives & Speculation: Early Film and the Legacies of Racialized Performance.” Audience Lost: Minority Women and Spectatorship conference, Ghent University, Belgium November 23, 2019.

Distinguished Faculty Lecture, “The Attraction(s) of the Kiss: Early Film and the Legacies of Racialized Performance.” Media Aesthetics Core Course, University of Chicago, November 6, 2019.

“African American Kiss Films, Black Intimacy, and the Emergence of American Cinema.” Inaugural Lecture, Faculty Research Colloquium, Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, University of Chicago, February 12, 2019.

“From the Minstrel Stage to the Moving Picture Screen: African American Performance and the Speculative Archive.” The Karla Scherer Center for the Study of American Culture, The University of Chicago, November 27, 2018.



November 22, 2022

To the Award Committee:

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Sincerely,



Raina Polivka
Senior Editor
University of California Press



The College of
Arts&Sciences

**Department of Performing &
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January 17, 2023

National Endowment for the Humanities
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506

Dear NEH Public Scholars Program Committee:

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Sincerely,



Samantha N. Sheppard
Associate Professor
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sheppard@cornell.edu


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January 23, 2023

Dear Members of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Public Scholars Committee,

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Sincerely,



Racquel Gates
Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies
Columbia University