

Michael T. Martin: Good afternoon. And welcome to the closing workshop of this two-day event. For those of you who are just joining us, let me very quickly introduce the panelists. My name is Michael Martin. Rhea Combs here on my left joins us from the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution. And here's the good news: In 2015, the bricks and mortars pulling this institution together, at least physically, will be in place, and I think you said in the Mall?

Rhea L. Combs: Yes.

Michael T. Martin: Next to the Washington ...

Rhea L. Combs: Monument.

Michael T. Martin: Monument. Cara Caddoo, one of our own here at Indiana University, Department of American Studies; Leah Kerr, the Academy of Music ...

Leah Kerr: Music? The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures.

Michael T. Martin: Of Motion Pictures.

Leah Kerr: Wow, you moved me.

Michael T. Martin: Yes. Jacqueline Stewart, whom I think of as one of our own from Chicago, the University of Chicago. Allyson Field, University of California, Los Angeles, one of the three principal curators of the LA Rebellion Monumental project. Jan Christopher Horak, who spoke earlier, also from the University of California in Los Angeles. And Shola Lynch, she corrected me. I said first Shola, its Shola, from the Schomberg Center, who gave the keynote address this morning.

I would like to begin this conversation with ...

Rhea L. Combs: Hey, sir, Jacqueline?

Michael T. Martin: I did. Yes, I did. I think I did. Okay. Let's begin this conversation with broadly speaking the organizing concern of the conference. That is how can we deploy the film artifact in whatever condition it exists to recuperate, reconstitute, in whatever formats and platforms available in order to understand and interpret the past? Or to put it differently, such artifacts, however imperfect and incomplete, enable us to recover, give meaning to, and make sense of the past.

With this in mind, and as a starting point, two issues are central in my view. And for which, the panelists will be asked to address, both pivot, both pivot on Jacqueline Stewart's provocative and novel assertion. And I want to read that to you. I know it's showed up everywhere, just about everywhere. But let me run it by you again, because it is provocative and it is novel. I'm quoting here. We can learn from the singularity of each print in and what ... and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies, underscore content. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as the films content, again underscore content.

Here's the first question. Two of three. But let me preface it with one other statement. We've spent throughout the day, almost did it in half, much about the hardware, the infrastructure, the various platforms, and ways of collecting data in order to engage with, with film. I'd like to use this hour that we have to focus moreso and especially in light of the fact tomorrow there will be a very intense technical exchange and conversation among the participants to focus in on matters of interpretation, matters of meaning. So my first question, by having the print, and knowing its exhibition history, its specificities, does that contribute to its interpretation and meaning? And I would like for Jacqueline [Stewart] to start that conversation among us.

Jacqueline Stewart: Well, yeah, content and meaning, both really complicated terms, and I think we've been complicating them all day. Right? Two observations. I guess one would be the panel; one of the earlier panels was titled the Carrier and the Content. And I suppose one of the arguments I was trying to make is that we don't necessarily need to think about those as separate, that we can think about the carrier as contributing to the content. But one thing that's been really I guess sort of frustrating for me as a part of the conversations that we've been having today gets to some of the methodological questions that we're trying to answer here. And this is to get to your question about meaning, what are we looking for when we say we're trying to ascertain the meaning of these representations or their patterns of circulation, or even their unavailability. So what's been bothering me, especially since lunch time, I guess, in that last panel about absence, is that, I don't know, there's a certain kind of arrogance, maybe, that I think we bring as scholars sometimes to our research where we expect that we should be able to find everything that we're looking for, that we should be able to tell a comprehensive and believable story about these representations in the past. It seems like again and again, what we're saying is that it's impossible to do that. So there's some really interesting, I think, ethical questions that are arising for me right now, that maybe we could talk about, that are related to the kinds of expectations that we're bringing to our interpretative work. And I think that they're also really shaping the relationships between scholars and archives, and archivists, and collectors. Give me what I'm looking for, or how dare they not have every issue of, you know, like where does that come from and how can we develop not just like methodological strategies to manage those absences, stuff is there and then it's not, and so forth, the mercurio qualities of those things. But, maybe talk about a different kind of ethics around historical reconstruction and how our work at trying to re-narrate these histories is necessarily always variable as well; recognizing that as soon as we publish something it's wrong, it's incomplete. That's happened to everybody in this room, right?

Shola Lynch: Or inspires new scholarship.

Jacqueline Stewart: Yes.

Shola Lynch: I mean part of it is that I think about it in two terms. One as archaeology. You go digging. You find certain things. You try and interpret it the best you can, but it isn't complete. And then somebody comes along and they find something else, and it fits. So there is the kind of relay race of information, and all we can really do is the best we can in a particular moment, in the particular time frame, with the particular budget. This is how I think about documentary filmmaking, because I know as soon as I click

picture lock, that piece of footage I've been looking for, for the last five years, will show up. So then I go, okay, great, I've passed the baton to somebody else. And I think that we have to remember that we are one link, one leg in the relay.

Jacqueline Stewart: I think that's great, yes. And that's where the kind of technologies that we're going to be thinking about using to do collaborative work, to let our work really build, so it's not just my book, your article, and you missed this point, and you, you know, some of it is the mechanics of publishing, the competitiveness of archiving.

Shola Lynch: Some of it is y'all academics.

Jacqueline Stewart: And y'all archivists too.

Leah Kerr: I think that a lot of it comes from that as researchers we want to be the detectives and solve that story or we want to put the end on it. And we do have to just let go a little bit and realize that we're adding to the collective knowledge and that someone else will carry on. But, yes, you do want to be that person, like I nailed it, I got it.

Michael T. Martin: Please.

Allyson Nadia Field: No, I ... its funny because I actually, the whole day, I haven't sensed a sense of competitiveness at all amongst any, I mean I haven't felt that way. And actually, I think about the question of ethics a little differently. I think for me, at least with working on non-extant-film, I think the ethical imperative is actually to look at what we can't see and to try to ... understanding that anything we say will be imperfect but that there's an ethical problem with only look at what survives because then we're privileging survivors and we know that that is inherently, it's like the econ proverb, or the history of lions only be written by the hunters. And so it's about being the lion's historian.

Michael T. Martin: Shola [Lynch]. The filmmaker now and not the archivist, Jacqueline's [Stewart] point about certain ethical considerations, and I want to add to that aesthetic considerations that a part of your practice, and it determines what kind of historical artifacts you use, and how you use them, in making sense of your project. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Shola Lynch: Well, it actually determines how you tell the story, because if you don't have the visual evidence, you can't tell the story. So, it's an imperfect history always. So, for instance, in the Angela Davis film, if we weren't able to find the footage of the shootout between the Panthers and the LAPD, and then subsequently to find unlabeled, of course, the footage of Angela, that that scene wouldn't have existed. We would have only talked about it, and then it has a different meaning, or we might not have talked about it at all. And so filmmaking is imperfect as history, but it's a good draw. It's a good draw to get people interested in the subject, I think.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes, I wanted to take this one step further in terms of the objects themselves because I and others have spoken about restoring films, making films more complete. Well it is an absolute truism that, and I say this to students all the time, Leah and Moses, is that any work you're doing on the material is completely

infused with subjectivity, and that whatever you're creating, since none of us can go back to 1920 and know what the original was, it is always an object for speculation, and whatever you do is speculative in the sense because even if you have a script, even if you have a shooting script, things change, people do things differently. You will never know for certain. And one thing I like to insist on is when, if we do a restoration, that we say this is a restoration from this date and it is this restoration. It is not, and this is a problem in the scholarly community that once that comes out on DVD or something, it is mistaken as the original object when it is not and never can be. And that is an ethical question on both sides.

Michael T. Martin: Let me ask a larger question about the same subject. In developing an argument, a case for a narrative of the LA Rebellion, what criteria do you use about what's going to be included and what's going to be rejected in order to substantiate that narrative?

Jacqueline Stewart: We didn't reject anything. Yes, we didn't reject anything, I mean in terms of what we would take in, and I think this may have been unusual for UCLA as a massive archive. And I think the policies collections mandate is that the archive doesn't take out-takes, but for this project I believe that we did in some cases. So the question of what was part of the tour or what was exhibited, but that wasn't, that was for us that was just like a showcase I think of what we found. But in terms, as an archival project, there was nothing that we turned away.

Allyson Nadia Field: I mean we're still collecting because names keep coming up. And so the idea is you take, you think as expansively as possible and then you try to make sense of it, whether it's in the curated series, whether it's in the traveling show, whether it's in the book. I mean there are many different kinds of narratives of how you would define these films and filmmakers. And frankly, we're not even wedded to the idea that these are all African Americans at all. And so all of these questions are part of the, come up through the collecting process. But you have to make the door as wide as possible in order to get to that.

Michael T. Martin: Please.

Rhea L. Combs: And I would say that that's one of the things that we're doing, many of the issues and many of the ideas, and sort of thoughts that have been raised today are things that are really exciting I think for me working as a curator for the Smithsonian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, in setting up this Center for African American Media Arts, because we are having to grapple with these questions of what do you take, what don't you take, this notion that I think Jackie [Jacqueline Stewart] raised about the carrier and the contribution and it's equally as important. So what we do often times is try to have an oral history with that collector if possible, so that many of the times we're talking about individuals who have held on to something for years, for decades, and then are really sort of allowing us to be the holder of that information if it's a photograph of someone from the 20's, or just got a photograph of carte du vite of Frederick Douglass that's signed, and then the people who had it are these 90, this 90 year old couple who've been married and lived in his home, and then you have all of that information, and living in that home, and growing up

there, all of the different sort of political leaders who were part of that. So you have all of that information and we want to make sure that we're able to hold that story as well, and not be the ones who are the scholars determining what is valuable and what's not valuable. So many of these issues are things that we're excited about grappling with and being able to raise and push this conversation further.

Michael T. Martin: Yet decisions are being made about what you, what gets left in and what gets left out, and I think that becomes particularly important when you're teaching the LA Rebellion, and could you speak to that?

Jan-Christopher Horak: I mean it really is a serious question because the fact is the filmmakers, the direct participants to themselves, do not agree on an overall narrative. There are in fact many narratives. And the narratives, for example, surrounding Jamaa Fanaka are completely different than for Billy Woodberry and Charles Burnett. And frankly, there is a huge, huge, gender divide. The gender divide is much greater than the racial divide within the LA Rebellion. And the way women filmmakers of color and their success rate, or what they chose to do and not do is very different from the male members of the group. So I think I would be loath to create a master narrative for that very reason.

Allyson Nadia Field: Yes, I think we've gone out of our way not to be wedded to a master narrative which is very tricky when you're writing a book. That's why it's taking so long. Yes, that's why I didn't write an introduction. No, but in teaching, I think telling these as multiple intersecting narratives, and in thinking about waves, the way, I mean the history has been written in these kind of waves of students, but then you think about the fact that they all come from different kinds of backgrounds, there's not one kind of monolithic class identity, all of these things subvert a lot of what the narrative already is about them out there. So we're trying to say, actually there are a lot of cases that challenge that narrative, and that's how I teach it. And you show examples of films that folks aren't used to seeing, going beyond Julie Dash, and Billy Woodberry, and more, and talking about Alile [Sharon Larkin]. I'm really glad we're seeing Alile [Sharon Larkin] films this weekend. Filmmakers that you may have heard of but aren't familiar with their work, and that's what we're trying to do and really say it's you think it's like this but it's actually much broader.

Rhea L. Combs: Exactly, Allyson [Nadia Field]. I think that that's really the critical component, is that finding these works, or reading them even if they're non-extant, but being able to look at that still as material is what's exciting, because at that point we're able to provide these multiple narratives that we know exist but sort of haven't been told. And it's critical in terms of being able to reach or having conversations with colleagues about what should be the key word searches, and it's like really let's not be so myopic in our view but really sort of push the boundaries and think about all of the different ways that scholars and others would be able to access this information and not look at it in these sort of right or wrong ways, but really sort of the multiplicity that is reality for all of us.

Michael T. Martin: To bring closure to this question so we can move to the second and last which will take us easily 20 minutes or so, talking about methodologies, we all have

our own particular tool kits, and they're derived from our orientations, our training, and so forth. Are there things in particular that you've discovered, honed, and developed, as part of your way of coming at the subject itself, not just the artifact, not just the print, but also the ways in which we discover intentionality, for example, the ways in which we come to understand through those artifacts what this film might mean, and to whom it might mean something to?

Jacqueline Stewart: I mean if you were to ... I mean I see myself as an African Americanist, so in terms of thinking about academic practice being tied to important political questions, it seems as though one of the values of trying to address the puzzle piece, sort of nature of what we're looking at here, is to get people to recognize not just the difficulties that these filmmakers face in trying to get their work produced, and the really rich and complicated social context in which African Americans engage with media during this period, but also to recognize how this is all related to political movement, right, like questions of social justice. I suppose that's also a way in which I feel like I bring a black feminist lens to the work that I do, and what is now, kind of a standard way of thinking about intersectional questions, right?

Shola Lynch: Got you.

Jacqueline Stewart: Yes. And it, so there really hasn't been, as far as I have really seen, any explicit ...

Michael T. Martin: Template.

Jacqueline Stewart: Or thinking out loud about archival practice and feminist thought. Maybe I'm just not knowing about this. But, I think that it could be a really productive way of addressing some of the kinds of interpretation questions that you're asking, as well as these methodological questions of how to recover what has been lost, and then what uses do we want to make of these like aporia.

Michael T. Martin: Key word, utility. Jan?

Jan-Christopher Horak: I think the only thing I would add to that is that what made the LA Rebellion project different is that it wasn't a matter of us going into the archive. We had to create the archive before you could actually do the, get down in the ditches and do the film historical work. And that, beginning with the oral histories that we did, collecting the papers, finding the surviving films, etcetera, and that unfortunately is the kind of project that you can't often do in your daily work in the archive. You are painfully aware of that, I'm sure, Michael [T. Martin] that you just, there are too many other administrative things and you have too many other collections that need attention. But, so that is kind of a unique situation, but it's the kind of thing that has to happen in lots of other areas because there's still lots of terra incognita on this film historical map, so.

Jacqueline Stewart: The power dynamic. I guess that's what I suppose I'm trying to address when thinking about this from an African American history, like a black feminist perspective. And Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] alluded to this in his comments earlier, when we approach these filmmakers, say, hey, now we're excited

about your stuff, after decades, they want to know why, what do you want to do with it, can we trust you. So building trust was a huge component of this. And, there, and so I'm not sure exactly how we would map some of these questions onto the race movie period stuff, except maybe in the way that Charlene [Regester], the experience of looking at those death certifications, and the way that you talked about sort of like redacting some of the details about, you felt a need to protect these people, which I totally understand that there are these concerns about how to deal with the power that we have to be able to narrate these people's lives, and what we can and should expose. And I think these are aspects of archiving and of narrating stories about these materials that we need to talk about more seriously.

Jan-Christopher Horak: We had to, UCLA made us all take an ethics in oral history training before we were allowed to interview anyone, for those very issues that Jackie's [Jacqueline Stewart] mentioned.

Allyson Nadia Field: And I would just add to that, that at least I think the question about ethics, and I think addressing notions of power, at least for the LA Rebellion but also I think for my work on Uplift Cinema, this is an institutional history. So if you look at it through what are the, how are these institutions using motion pictures, or what's the institutional relationship or conditions that enable motion picture production, whether it be in the 1960's, 70's, in Los Angeles, or in the South in the teens. It's about understanding kind of the economic situation in place that creates those opportunities and then allows them to circulate beyond just like thinking about individuals I guess.

Michael T. Martin: Let's ... we're going to get to you in a moment. Yes. We've been talking about the artifact, in whatever condition it is in, it's in the frame. Let's talk about it now outside of the frame. So my second question concerns the absence of the film print, which Greg Waller raised earlier in the panel, this morning and the implications this has for representation. Here again, Jacqueline's [Stewart] assertion about this expanded notion of content may be however imprecise a means to reconstitute and make sense of a film absent its materiality. [Cara] Caddoo's research, and Shola's [Lynch] comments this morning appears to support this view. That is mapping the circulation route and exhibition sites of a film no longer extant in correspondence to, for example, black cultural formations can reveal much about its reception and therefore an approximation of its representations for at least the people who inhabit that formation. And I'd like for Cara [Caddoo], her research is right on this, Allyson's [Nadia Field] right on it, and for Shola [Lynch] as a filmmaker as well to comment on this. And, then whoever else wants to.

Cara Caddoo: Sure. My phone kept turning on by itself and I missed the very end of your question. Sorry. I'm sorry.

Michael Martin: The question is ... the question is how in the absence of the film can one in reconstructing its circulation history and its exhibition history do two things, help us to understand what this film had to say, what it's about, and how through its circulation, for example, in black communities, black settlements, in their response to it, by individuals, by groups, by organizations in that community, come to understand what this film that no longer exists is about, and that's part of your work.

Cara Caddoo: Well, I think maybe to address that question, and also to think about what Jackie [Jacqueline Stewart] was saying earlier, which really resonated with me because I think the project of historical research and archival research is so much embedded in this idea of power, right, and you have a lot of power, or you don't have power, you're trying to claim power. And I think part of the, maybe what you were talking about in terms of the arrogance, the thing when we find something in the archive that maybe supports, or proves, or is something that we search for, and then don't look past that, or don't find it and then just say well then it doesn't exist, and maybe thinking past those points and thinking around the idea of what is it that we feel like we need to necessarily prove. And so when I have asked the question how can I reconstruct these films, what exactly was shown, I realized at a certain point that even the way that I was framing that question wasn't based on these assumptions about film that were based on the kind of way that films were shown in like commercial theaters. And as I kept reading stuff, I came to see these films changed through time as they're being exhibited over months and months. And as far as my own research, I haven't been able to exactly reconstruct how those films were shown, but I think that the fluidity of it maybe, I don't know.

Allyson Nadia Field: Yes, I mean I can talk about one example that I think is indicative of kind of my methodology. But in looking at the films that were made by institutions like Hampton University, Hampton Institute at the time, the way in which they made, made and used film and circulated film was very much coming from a system that was already in place, using photography and using live demonstrations of trades, live demonstrations of skills that the students would learn, as a tool for fundraising. So there was a system in place that had certain kind of aesthetic components that you see through photography and that you see through pageants, that then when they started using motion pictures they slotted it in, in certain ways, along with music. So then how, if we understand how these pre-film modes were being used, then maybe that will tell us something about how the films were used. And so I went back into the 19th Century to see how they were using other forms of technology. And what it turned out is that when you look at the films, even though they're no longer extant; you get enough of the sense of the scenario, and enough of the story the way it was reported, the way that they document them, the way they talked about them, that you can see that it fit in the same kind of paradigm, of like in this case of a before and after trajectory of life before Hampton, they come to Hampton, they get training, and then they go back to their community. So this kind of mode of presenting the necessity of the institute for donors, you see existing in photography, you see repeated through the pageants and all of these other modes, and the songs, and so we can make certain assumptions about how moving pictures worked according to those forms. So that's why I'm really interested in not just accounting that these films existed, and that's important, I mean it's important to know that these, that they were engaged with using motion picture technology, but I'm also interested in how formally they worked and how they functioned, both for audiences but for the students that were involved in making them and for the donors that were seeing them, and how they might have called upon these kind of representational regimes that were in place in these earlier modes. I don't know if that answers your question at all, but.

Michael T. Martin: Let's turn to the filmmaker again. You're wearing that hat. How do you reconstruct a historical moment, a set of events, where there's no evidence available to substantiate that? Some documentary filmmakers, they create, they construct ...

Shola Lynch: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Whoa. Whoa. Okay. So a documentary filmmaker is a combination of a historian and journalist, and we're also concerned with aesthetics. So, the thing that we are ... truth is paramount. So it's not as though we just talk to you, you tell us a story, we're like great, that's it, no footage, let's make it up. I mean but there is a methodology in terms of talking to as many people. It's analogous to what you're saying about an oral history. We talk to as many people as possible and there are common truths that happen, and that sometimes both the truths that are common but also the contradictions are equally as interesting. But you also need to now that something actually happened before you ... so in the Angela Davis film, I did do recreations, but they're ...

Michael T. Martin: Re-enactments?

Shola Lynch: Re-enactments, yes. I hesitate to call them that. They're more images, impressions. It's not; we didn't have the money for like set, design, act, go. And I didn't want it to interrupt the narrative. But, there are moments, and in fact after the screening, we premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, somebody, I had an interview with a reporter who was like, well and so why did you make up those love scenes between Angela and George. I said, well, they're recreations.

Jacqueline Stewart: Yes.

Shola Lynch: But they are not made up. We actually have not only testimony from the people that are there, we have the FBI files, who do you think I am? You know. So this actually, I guess this is another question, but I relate it to what you were saying about power and not power. He asked me that question because I'm a woman of color telling a story about a woman of color, so of course I can't be objective about my analysis of the story, which, you know. So, the one thing I wanted to say about the previous conversation, and then I'm going to hand it over, is that part of the thing about researching and methodology is you can have as many rules and practices as possible, but there's something intuitive about it, that you have to remain open to the possibility, you have to remain open to review the material over and over again for the things you might have missed. An example I'll give is Angela Davis's interview even, I did this interview with her over days, etcetera. I was like, okay, this is it, this is it. I was like she didn't give me anything, she didn't give me anything. And what I realized is that I wanted to her to be a character she wasn't. I wanted her to be man on a wire, Philippe Petit, oh my goodness, and when I met George I loved him, and etcetera, like we don't ... we come with our preconceived ideas of what the story is going to be and who is going to tell it in one way. Angela Davis is shy, and intellectual. And I read the transcript over and over again, and I just started watching bits of it over and over again. And then I realized that when she talked about George, she fixed her hair. I was like oh yeah, oh yeah, there it is. How many times had I seen that interview before? How many times did I work with the material? So it's like we do, we're never going to be perfect. We're going to come with a certain sense of arrogance. We're going to come with a preconceived

idea, because it has to get us started. But, we, at the same time, have to be open to deconstructing our own prejudices as we go along the way.

Jacqueline Stewart: That's beautiful. Yes, that's beautiful.

Michael T. Martin: Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] and Jacqueline [Stewart], as scholars, archivists, is that okay what she does?

Jan-Christopher Horak: Oh, yes, I was just endorsing it.

Michael T. Martin: Is that okay?

Jacqueline Stewart: Yes, yes.

Shola Lynch: I'm using that.

Jacqueline Stewart: The microphones like it too.

Michael T. Martin: What else can be ... well, actually, we only have 10 minutes. Let's have some questions. It's wide open, folks. The young man with, I don't have my glasses on.

Leah Kerr: There's a man with two pairs of glasses on.

Mike Mashon: I don't even know where to start. I have like ten things I'd like to say. Well, I'll just pick one at random then. It's actually more for Ally [Allyson Nadia Field], as anything else. Sometimes it's almost heretical to think about this as an archivist, but I wonder if sometimes we don't mourn the loss of the film a little bit more than we should? And perhaps, I'm struggling to formulate the chicken or the egg kind of question here. But, Ally [Allyson Nadia Field], the work that you've done, on the Uplift Films, you've written wonderfully persuasively about them without having seen hardly any of them because they don't exist.

Allyson Nadia Field: None of them, none.

Mike Mashon: I'm sorry, none. Did, I mean, there's no way to know this. I just don't know that your argument would have been any different if you had actually seen the films. I mean I don't know how, you know, I'm not sure how important it would be for you to have seen those documents ...

Allyson Nadia Field: Well, it's interesting ...

Mike Mashon: Because you've written so well about their context.

Allyson Nadia Field: I mean that's very kind. I think when Shola [Lynch] this morning was talking about the importance of being able to see something; I think it may not have been important for me to see them. I mean certainly I would have liked to, and that's a desire I have, and I've spent so much time with this material that I have an image of what it looks like in my mind, that I would like to compare it to some sort of reality. But, I don't want to celebrate the lossness, because I think there's a sense in which it's important for someone to see them. I think it's important, these matter and they matter

very much, I mean that what comes up over and over again is how powerful these images are, and I can only imagine how powerful that would be if we were able to have that evidence now of what these students look like, how they were engaging with film, what that would mean to like a young college kid filmmaker now to see the kind of possibility. One of the things that also came up in doing the LA Rebellion is the importance of when you teach this material, the imperfections make it accessible in a way that when we show Hollywood cinema, that's really alienating for our students like I can't make that, I don't have 100 million dollars. But you can make "Diary of an African Nun" in Culver City. I think there's something really powerful to the accessibility of this material. So I'm a little skirting your answer, but I think it does and it doesn't. But this is a story that is precisely about lost film. It would be a different story if the films were here. But it is necessarily about that absence.

Michael T. Martin: Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak]?

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes, what I wanted to say, I mean I think when we're talking about race films or the films of African Americans in general, then it's a very specific issue and we can see how the institutionalized racism in this country has created the situation. So it's a little bit different. But I think we have to remember that as a culture, as a whole, this mania that we have to collect everything is a relatively new thing. You know, previous generations accepted loss. It is only now that where we have with digitality and all of this, there's this notion that we have to save everything. Well, actually we don't. I mean, if we have enough examples and we can extrapolate in some cases from virtually nothing, the way Ally [Allyson Nadia Field] does. I mean, it's we don't need every single episode of every single TV show. We don't need everything. We need some of it.

Rhea L. Combs: I would challenge that, especially when you're dealing with African American subjectivity.

Jan-Christopher Horak: I prefaced that, I wasn't talking about African Americans.

Rhea L. Combs: Well, because I think one of the things that we deal with at the museum is really sort of having people come to us and say there's finally this national platform, this national space, where information that we didn't, that's been lost or that we want to make sure is on a platform, has a space where someone can tell our story, and hear our story, because of the power dynamics and the institutionalized racism that has left us invisible, now we can actually see our stuff here in perpetuity, on the national mall. And so I think this sort of being able to collect has a different sort of conversation is different when you deal with the sort of peculiar history of African Americans in, or black people just throughout the diaspora.

Allyson Nadia Field: Yes, and just because there's such a proliferation of the kind of racist misrepresentation of the early period that does survive, the absence of that counter-image I think is all the more felt.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes.

Rhea L. Combs: I just want to point out, I'm sorry, that as an example of some of the things we've recently, I had a woman, this older sort of octogenarian came to me and said would you be interested in this piece, and it's sort of this 1930's still of an all-black cast of "Green Pastures," and they were, it was a production and they were doing it in Colorado. And it was just you saw with this huge cast, in the 30's, and various people with smiles and just some looking stoic, and they were well-dressed, but then it allows scholars to be able to talk about sort of when they were there, go to the newspapers, look, get reception on sort of how that production was received, what theater was there because they're in front of the marquee, and it's a New York cast, you know all-black cast of "Green Pastures." So having these moments where you're able to sort of collect this information and have this 80 year old woman share this material with us, and be able to document this history, it gives that moment of even though we don't have, well it was obviously a play but you don't have these sort of still, you don't have the motion picture, you don't have the other thing. But if you have this photograph, it allows you an opportunity to answer, or at least pose questions that provide other scholars to really sort of delve deeper into a moment and history of time.

Michael T. Martin: One second. Chris's [Jan-Christopher Horak] point I think is well taken, and just a little levity. If there's anyone here who's in the NSA, the National Security Association, Agency, they would whole-heartedly disagree with your position. One must collect everything, please.

Shola Lynch: You never know what you're looking for.

Miriam Petty: So I think I'm connecting the conversation about the power dynamic to Jacqueline's earlier point about ethics. I mean, because I think there's a way in which whether we're talking from the academy or from institutions like the Smithsonian or the Schomburg, and maybe less so those two, but part of the reason that having this octogenarian come to you is such a moving, I won't talk for three minutes I promise, is such a moving thing is because in some ways for an African American community that's an act of faith in a particular kind of way, and that as parts of these institutions we're inheritors of a legacy, that isn't always a good one. So we've inherited this relationship between African Americans and institutions like universities and institutions like museums so that is not part of the ethics then, number one, that don't always expect people to be happy to hand you their stuff. And the other part of it is when they do, you have to be an actor of a different kind. You have to be someone who is beginning to create a different kind of relationship, a different kind of, a different level of agency for those folks. It's sort of a question in terms of whether that seems to be, I mean everybody's nodding so I'm assuming that everyone agrees with me about that.

Charlene Regester: I had a comment. Oh. My comment was that I think there is some lessons to be learned with respect to Oscar Micheaux's "Within Our Gates," which was lost for many years. And people, to some extent, dismissed Micheaux in his aesthetics as a filmmaker. And then when the film was rediscovered, he was almost sort of resurrected. And so I'm just saying I think that's an excellent example of lessons to be learned and how we need to be cautious in sort of erasing people in very particular ways. And then the other comment that I wanted to make is because the film was titled "La Negra" and was found in an archive in Madrid when it was brought back to the US, that

was a heated debate with the scholars in terms of how to retranslate the Spanish back to English in an appropriate manner that reflected the black dialect that he intended in that particular film. And some of that debate is still unresolved. So that's just another important issue in terms of ethics and are we really treating it fair. And then the final thing I wanted to say is when the film was brought back, it reshaped research around Micheaux and other films. Jane explored, gave a new examination of "Birth of a Nation." Matthew Bernstein did his research on the Leo M. Frank lynching. So a number of research was respond just because of the resurgence of that film.

Michael T. Martin: Thanks very much, and congratulations, and many thanks to our panelists.