USC Visions & Voices

PROGRAM

LOSING GROUND@40

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27: SCREENING AND TALKBACK

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Ted Mann Theater

7:30–10 P.M.

***LOSING GROUND* SCREENING AND TALKBACK**

A screening of *Losing Ground* will be followed by a conversation with Spelman College professor and filmmaker **Julie Dash** (*Daughters of the Dust*); **Jacqueline Stewart**, director and president of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures; and **A.E. Stevenson**, assistant professor of gender and sexuality studies at USC. **Nina L. Collins**, daughter of Kathleen Collins and manager of the estate, will introduce the film.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28: PANELS + RECEPTION

California African American Museum

1–2 P.M.

Roundtable 1—Philosophy and Ecstasy in *Losing Ground*

Featuring **LaMonda Horton-Stallings**, Georgetown professor and author of *The Afterlives of Kathleen Collins*. Moderated by USC assistant professor **A.E. Stevenson**.

2–2:10 P.M.

Break with refreshments

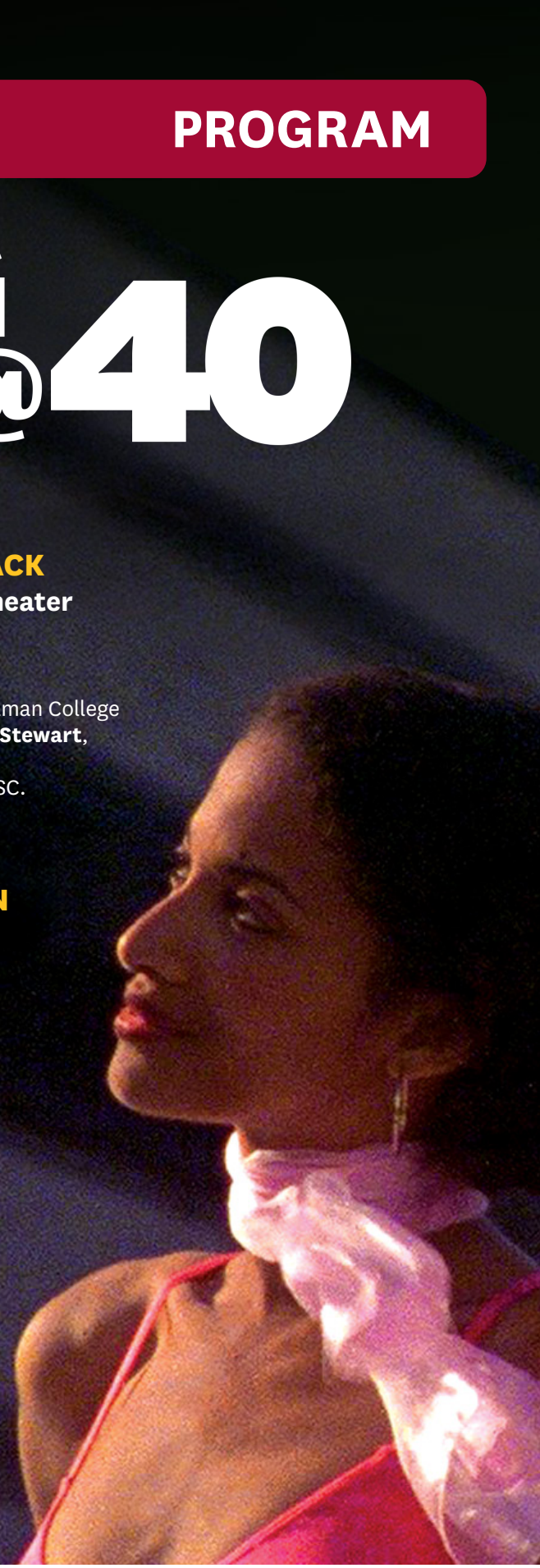
2:10–3:10 P.M.

Roundtable 2—Form in *Losing Ground and* Black Independent Filmmaking

Featuring UCSD professor and documentary filmmaker **Zeinabu irene Davis**, UC Irvine professor **Philana Payton**, and Cornell University professor and author **Samantha Noelle Sheppard**. Moderated by USC PhD candidate **Alex Hack**.

3:10–4 P.M.

Closing reception



USC Visions & Voices | USC Dornsife | Academy Museum of Motion Pictures | CAAM California African American Museum

BIOS

ADRIENNE ADAMS is a Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellow and PhD student in American studies and ethnicity at USC. Adams was a LEAP Fellow at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, consultant for the Guggenheim Museums and Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth, and archivist-in-residency at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

NINA L. COLLINS, daughter of the late Kathleen Collins, rescued the original negative of *Losing Ground* and restored the film in 2015. In addition to serving as the manager of her mother's estate, she is the chief creative officer of Revel and founder of Woolfer. She published *What Would Virginia Woolf Do?* in 2018 under Grand Central Publishing and is the board chair of the Brooklyn Public Library.

JULIE DASH broke through racial and gender boundaries 30 years ago with her film *Daughters of the Dust*. It won Best Cinematography at Sundance, and Dash became the first African American woman to have a wide theatrical release of a feature film. Dash has also directed multiple episodes in the second season of the award-winning drama series *Queen Sugar*, created and produced by Ava DuVernay and Oprah Winfrey for OWN Television, and is the Diana King Endowed Professor in Film at Spelman College.

ZEINABU IRENE DAVIS is an independent filmmaker and professor of communication at UCSD. *Spirits of Rebellion: Black Cinema from Los Angeles*, her most recent feature documentary, which covers the L.A. Rebellion film movement, has received the African Movie Academy Award for Best Diasporic Documentary and Best Feature Documentary and Audience Award from the BlackStar Film Festival. Her narrative work is currently running on the Criterion Channel.

ALEX HACK is a PhD candidate in cinema and media studies at USC, where she also earned her MA in the same field. Her dissertation project approaches medicine and its software as fertile ground for humanistic analysis, asking us to consider that racial harm lies too in supposed benevolence.

LAMONDA HORTON-STALLINGS is a professor of African American studies at Georgetown University. She is the author of *The Afterlives of Kathleen Collins: A Black Woman Filmmaker's Search for New Life; A Dirty South Manifesto: Sexual Resistance and Imagination in the New South; Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures;* and *Mutha' Is Half a Word!: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture*.

PHILANA PAYTON is an assistant professor of film and media studies at the University of California, Irvine. She was previously awarded a UC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA, and is currently working on her first manuscript, tentatively titled, *Celestial Bodies: Black Women, Hollywood, and the Fallacy of Stardom*.

SAMANTHA NOELLE SHEPPARD is an associate professor of cinema and media studies at Cornell University and author of *Sporting Blackness: Race, Embodiment, and Critical Muscle Memory on Screen*. In 2021, she was named an Academy Film Scholar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

A.E. STEVENSON is an assistant professor of gender and sexuality studies at USC who teaches advanced gender studies and Black feminist futures. In 2021–2022, Stevenson was a Penn Predoctoral Fellow for Excellence through Diversity.

JACQUELINE STEWART is the director and president of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, and the chair of the National Film Preservation Board, a 2021 MacArthur Fellow, and professor of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago. Since 2019, she has hosted *Silent Sunday Nights* on the Turner Classic Movies network.

USC Visions & Voices THEME**GUIDE**



LOSING GROUND @40

FILM SCREENING & TALKBACK
Fri | 1.27.23 | 7:30 p.m.
The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

PANELS & RECEPTION
Sat | 1.28.23 | 1 p.m.
California African American Museum

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- *Losing Ground* (dir. Kathleen Collins, 1982) was one of the first feature-length motion pictures directed by a Black American woman.
- It won first prize at the Figueroa International Film Festival in Portugal in 1982 but did not receive an official release until it was restored in 2015.
- *Losing Ground* @ 40 is a two-day, multi-site program that brings together Black women filmmakers, scholars, and curators to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the pathbreaking film, introduce new audiences to Collins's innovative practice, and convene those long inspired by it.

"Collins was a polymath and an artist of extraordinarily diverse and original talent—simply one of the great artists, both literary and cinematic, of her time."

—Richard Brody, writing in *The New Yorker* in 2019

USC Visions & Voices USC Dornsife Academy Museum of Motion Pictures CAAM California African American Museum

KATHLEEN COLLINS

Kathleen Collins (1942–1988) was a filmmaker, playwright, poet, fiction writer, activist, and educator. She made two narrative films, *Losing Ground* and *The Cruz Brothers and Miss Malloy*, and wrote many plays and screenplays, including the theatrical plays *In the Midnight Hour* and *The Brothers*. A collection of her short fiction, *Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?*, was posthumously published in 2016.

Collins was born and grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey. She earned a BA in philosophy and religion from Skidmore College, and an MA in French literature and cinema from the Sorbonne.

Inspired by a visit from two members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to her college campus, Collins became active in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, including canvassing in Georgia to register Black voters. Collins was arrested twice as a participant in the Albany Movement, a desegregation and voting rights movement formed in Albany, Georgia.

After graduate school, Kathleen Collins worked at the New York City public broadcasting network NET, and later worked as an editor for the BBC and other organizations.

In the 1970s, Kathleen Collins was a professor of film history and screenwriting at the City College of New York and also worked as an assistant director on Broadway musicals. She made her feature films later in the 1970s and early '80s.

She had two children, Nina Lorez Collins and Emilio Collins.

Upon her death from breast cancer, most of Kathleen Collins's work was left to her daughter, Nina Lorez Collins, who has worked to have it restored, reissued, and published.

INFLUENCES

Kathleen Collins cited as major influences:

- **Lorraine Hansberry**, the first Black woman writer to have a play performed on Broadway: *A Raisin in the Sun*. In addition to her literary work, Hansberry was an activist involved in the U.S. civil rights movement, global struggles against colonialism and imperialism, and local struggles against evictions and more in New York City.
- **Eric Rohmer**, a French filmmaker who was part of the French New Wave. His films include *My Night at Maud's*, *Claire's Knee*, and *The Green Ray*. Rohmer also worked as an editor of the film journal *Cahiers du cinéma*.

WRITTEN BY KATHLEEN COLLINS

Screenplays

Women, Sisters, and Friends
A Summer Diary
Lila
The Story of Three Colored Ladies
Losing Ground
But Then She's Madame Flor
Conversations with Julie

Plays

Almost Music aka Portrait of Katherine
In the Midnight Hour
The Brothers
Begin the Beguine
While Older Men Speak
Looking for Jane

Fiction

Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?
Woman Waiting at a Window



Whatever Happened to Interracial Love? Stories by Kathleen Collins


Lorraine Hansberry speaking to an audience



The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures



California African American Museum (CAAM)



Kathleen Collins

THE ACADEMY MUSEUM OF MOTION PICTURES

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures is the largest U.S. museum devoted to moviemaking. It is a new museum that opened in 2021, and is part of Museum Row in the Miracle Mile district of Los Angeles. The museum holds more than 13 million objects in its collection, including film reels, costumes, posters, props, and screenplays. Highlights include Dorothy's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*, the typewriter on which Alfred Hitchcock wrote *Psycho*, and costumes worn by Bela Lugosi in *Dracula* and Emma Stone in *La La Land*, among many others. The museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning Italian architect Renzo Piano and is located in a historic 1939 Streamline Moderne building that once housed the May Company department store.

CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

The California African American Museum (CAAM) was founded in 1977. The first African American museum of art, history, and culture fully supported by a state, CAAM was established as a direct result of years of activism by visionary founders and community members. CAAM moved to its permanent home in Exposition Park in 1984. The museum's permanent collection houses 5,000 objects, including paintings, historical objects, print materials, and mixed-media artworks. CAAM's mission is to research, collect, preserve, and interpret for public enrichment the history, art, and culture of African Americans with an emphasis on California and the western United States.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- In a 1981 interview, Kathleen Collins said, "I'm interested in solving certain questions such as: How do you do an interesting narrative film?" How do you think Collins succeeded in creating an interesting narrative film in *Losing Ground*? What do you think makes for an interesting narrative film?
- How does Collins use POV (point of view) in *Losing Ground*?
- Do you see the influences of Collins's literary, philosophy, and/or theater background in the film?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- The Kathleen Collins website
  kathleencollins.org
- *Losing Ground* streaming
  criterionchannel.com
- Kathleen Collins Master Class at Howard University, 1984
  https://vimeo.com/203379245
- Classes and events at the USC School of Cinematic Arts
  cinema.usc.edu
- Los Angeles Filmforum
  lafilmforum.org

- Upcoming Visions and Voices events, including
  - **2/1/23:** SOUL 2023: Producing to Power in the 21st Century
  - **2/8/23:** *Uprooted: The Journey of Jazz Dance*
  - **2/15/23:** A.I.M by Kyle Abraham: *An Untitled Love*
  - **2/21/23:** An Evening with Nikole Hannah-Jones
  - **2/22/23:** John Singleton: A Celebration—*2 Fast 2 Furious*
  - **3/5/23:** John Singleton: A Celebration—*Hustle & Flow*
  - **3/5/23:** John Singleton: A Celebration—*Black Snake Moane*
  - **3/8/23:** Birds of No Nation: Afghan Women on Art, Gender, Freedom, and Exile

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

CHRISTINA SNIDER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- LaMonda Horton-Stallings, *The Afterlives of Kathleen Collins: A Black Woman Filmmaker's Search for New Life* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2021).
- Phyllis Klotman, *Frame by Frame: A Black Filmography* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979).
- Phyllis Klotman and Gloria J. Gibson, *Frame by Frame II: A Filmography of the African American Image, 1978–1994* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997). .
- Geetha Ramanathan, *Kathleen Collins: The Black Essai Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2020).

DATABASES

- Oxford African American Studies Center
- Black Studies Center

JOURNALS

- *Ethnic and Racial Studies*
- *Journal of African American History*
- *Western Journal of Black Studies*
- *Women Make Movies*

