

An Evening with **COMMON**

Charlotta Bass Media Trailblazer Speaker Series

Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Bovard Auditorium
University of Southern California

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Lonnie Rashid Lynn, known by his stage name, Common, is an award-winning musical artist, actor, author, and activist from Chicago.
- Common will be in conversation with Dr. Allissa V. Richardson, an award-winning author, journalism professor, and the founding director of the USC Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab.
- You can find a Spotify playlist related to this event at: open.spotify.com/playlist/5cLdQDgBT7Ef2X9o2Fb6u2?s=6922ff07386d46a8

COMMON

Common (b. 1972) is a multi-talented artist, actor, author, and activist from Chicago who breaks down barriers with critically acclaimed, diverse roles. He has won Academy, Emmy, Golden Globe, GRAMMY, and many other awards for his work in music, television, and film.

For the past few years, Common has been deeply engaged in social justice and advocacy work around mass incarceration, mental health, and voting. His foundation, Free to Dream, encompasses his 20 years of leadership as a changemaker, using his entertainment platform to advance social causes, with a focus on education, justice, wellness, and jobs.

In winter 2024, Common released a new book, *And Then We Rise: A Guide to Loving and Taking Care of Self*. In the health and wellness book, Common shares personal stories, tips, tricks, and best practices that he has adopted on his journey to create the best version of himself. The book is written for anyone looking to better themselves, but puts a special importance on Black Americans, whose leading causes of death include heart disease and cancer.



Common's recent credits include his Broadway debut in Stephen Adly Guirgis's *Between Riverside and Crazy*. During the run of the show, Common also hosted "Justice Nights on Broadway," inviting justice advocates, formerly incarcerated and system-impacted people, their family members, and community changemakers for a special performance and talk-back.

In fall 2022, Common wrapped production on Stefon Bristol's new action-thriller *Breathe*. Common will star alongside Jennifer Hudson, Milla Jovovich, and Quvenzhané Wallis.

Common's latest album, *A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 2*, was released on September 10, 2021, through Loma Vista Recordings. In 2021, Common starred in season two of Mindy Kaling's hit Netflix series *Never Have I Ever*. In 2020, Common partnered with Audible to release his podcast, *Mind Power Mixtape*, as well as the Audible original *Bluebird Memories: A Journey Through Lyrics and Life*. On *Mind Power Mixtape*, Common conducted a series of illuminating conversations with artists to explore the secrets of life, love, art, and faith. *Bluebird Memories*, originally recorded live at the Minetta Lane Theatre in New York City, and backed by a world-class band, tracks Common's journey from childhood to manhood.

MUSIC FROM COMMON

Common has released 17 studio albums as well as collaborative, compilation, and live albums and EPs.

Common released his first two albums, *Can I Borrow a Dollar?* (1992) and *Resurrection* (1994), independently. In 2000, he released the critically acclaimed album *Like Water for Chocolate* on a major label. The artist continued to perform and record more award-winning albums, including *Be* (2005), *Finding Forever* (2007), *Universal Mind Control* (2008), *The Dreamer/The Believer* (2011), *Nobody's Smiling* (2014), *Black America Again* (2016), *Let Love* (2019), and *A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 1* and *Pt. 2* (2020 and 2021). In 2022, Common released the soundtrack for the Netflix series *Mo*.

As a social justice advocate, Common often references topics of racism, injustice, and unity in his music.

A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 2, for example, is a follow-up to Common's previous album, *A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 1*, which was written in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, when racial and social justice protests, a contested election, and economic collapse were polarizing the country. The first half of the album was written as a call to action to uplift, heal, and inspire listeners dealing with these injustices. *A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 2* is a continuation of this call to action, but one that sees the world in a new light. The album signifies a rebirth of sorts, as listeners learn to cope with and elevate from tragedy and turmoil. They are given a chance to create a better tomorrow and a responsibility to never forget the past obstacles they have faced.

In 2019, Common released the hit album *Let Love*. The album was inspired by his work and experiences while writing his second memoir, *Let Love Have the Last Word*.



Common, *Like Water for Chocolate*, 2000



Common, *Be*, 2005



Common, *A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 2*, 2021



Common, *Let Love*, 2019

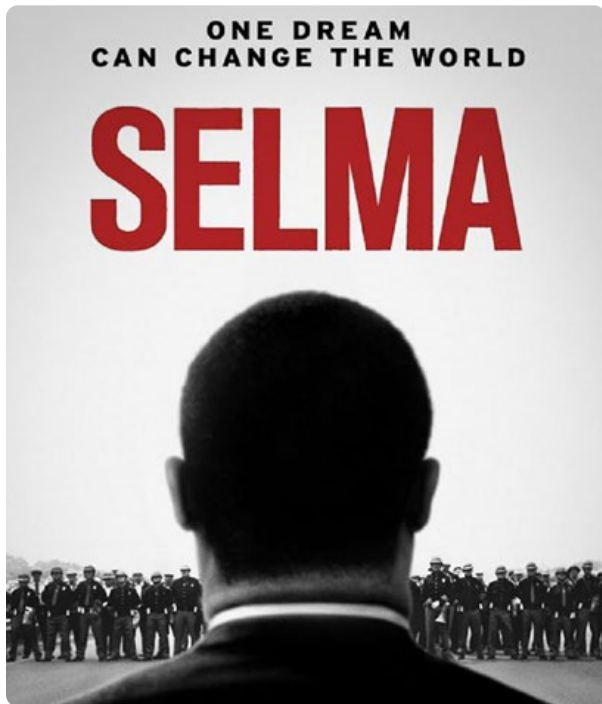


Photo: M. Caulfield



Common and Erykah Badu

In 2017, Common was featured on Andra Day's song for the soundtrack of Open Road Films' *Marshall*, "Stand Up for Something," co-written by Common and eight-time Academy Award nominee Diane Warren. The song received Oscar, GRAMMY, NAACP, and Critics Choice Award nominations, as well as the Hollywood Song Award at the 2017 Hollywood Film Awards.

Common's 11th studio album, *Black America Again*, was released in 2016 on ARTium/Def Jam Recordings. The album includes the socially conscious single "Black America Again," featuring Stevie Wonder, and the anthem "Letter to the Free," the end-title track to Ava DuVernay's Oscar-nominated documentary *13th*, for which he received the 2017 Emmy for Best Music and Lyrics. After collaborating on the album, Common, Robert Glasper, and Karriem Riggins joined together to form the supergroup August Greene. The trio made their live debut in 2018 at New York's Highline Ballroom as part of Glasper's annual GRAMMY Awards party and released their first joint album through Amazon Music.

In 2015, the song "Glory" was released by Columbia Records as the theme song from the 2014 film *Selma*. Written and performed by Common and soul artist John Legend, the song alludes to Martin Luther King Jr.'s voting rights campaign and the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches. "Glory" was nominated for several awards and won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for Best Original Song.

FIVE COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMON

1. "Retrospect for Life" feat. Lauryn Hill (1997)
2. "Love of My Life (An Ode to Hip Hop)" by Erykah Badu, feat. Common (2002)
3. "The 6th Sense" feat. Bilal (2000)
4. "Go!" feat. John Mayer (2005)
5. "Act Too (The Love of My Life)" by The Roots, feat. Common (1999)

COMMON ONSCREEN

Alongside his musical talents, Common is a film, television, and theatre actor.

He starred in the Oscar-nominated 2014 film *Selma*, about the civil rights marches that changed America. In 2016, he appeared in David Ayer's high-profile comic book movie, Warner Bros.' *Suicide Squad*. The film broke box-office records both domestically and around the world.

In 2017, Common starred opposite Keanu Reeves in the highly anticipated sequel *John Wick: Chapter 2* and appeared in Judy Greer's directorial debut, *A Happening of Monumental Proportions* with Allison Janney. He also appeared in Bleecker Street's *Megan Leavey* alongside Kate Mara, Tom Felton, Bradley Whitford, and Edie Falco.

Behind the scenes, Common executive-produced the Netflix drama *Burning Sands* and performed the original song used

for the closing credits, “The Cross,” featuring Lianne La Havas. The film premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was released on Netflix. Common serves as an executive producer of Showtime’s hit TV series *The Chi*, a coming-of-age story set in Chicago from Emmy Award-winning writer Lena Waithe.

In 2018, Common was seen in the Fox 2000 film *The Hate U Give* with Amandla Stenberg, Issa Rae, and KJ Apa. That year, Common also lent his voice to the Warner Bros. animated film *Smallfoot* alongside an all-star cast including Channing Tatum, Zendaya, James Corden, and LeBron James. Common also starred in the indie film *All About Nina* opposite Mary Elizabeth Winstead and directed by Eva Vives, and the action film *Hunter Killer* with Gerard Butler, Gary Oldman, and Linda Cardellini.

In 2019, Common starred alongside Melissa McCarthy, Tiffany Haddish, and Elisabeth Moss in *The Kitchen*, based on the DC/Vertigo comic book series. In 2020, Common appeared opposite Colin Farrell and Jessica Chastain in the action drama *Ava*, directed by Tate Taylor. He also starred in *The Informer* with Joel Kinnaman and Rosamund Pike.

In Spring 2022, Common was seen starring opposite Keke Palmer in the film *Alice*, which premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival.

Common was most recently seen on Apple TV+’s new sci-fi drama series *Silo*, where he stars opposite Rebecca Ferguson, Tim Robbins, Rashida Jones, and David Oyelowo. Created by Graham Yost, the series is based on Hugh Howey’s best-selling trilogy of novels, which is set in a future dystopia where a community exists in a giant silo underground, where they believe they’re protected from a toxic atmosphere. Common plays Sims, the silo’s head of judicial security. The first season of the series was released on May 5, 2023, and the series was renewed for season 2.

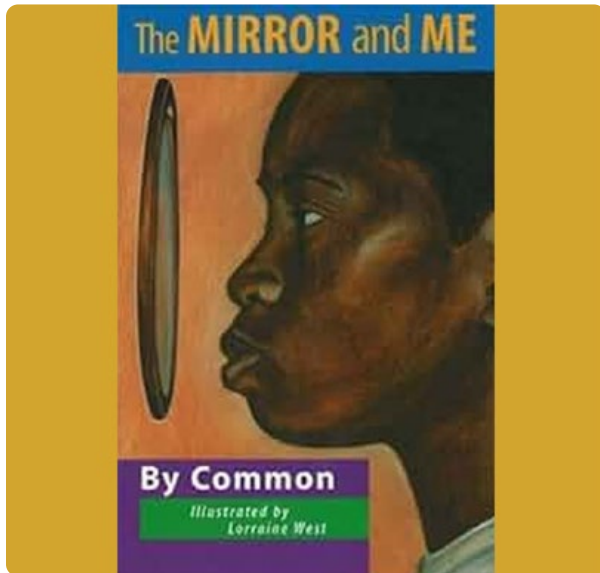
COMMON’S AWARDS

Common has won numerous awards, including:

- Academy, Critics’ Choice, and Golden Globe awards for Best Original Song for “Glory” from *Selma* with John Legend
- GRAMMY Awards for Best R&B Song for “Love of My Life (An Ode to Hip Hop)” with Erykah Badu; Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group for “Southside” feat. Kanye West; and Best Song Written for Visual Media for “Glory”
- A Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Music and Lyrics in *13th*
- BET Awards for Video of the Year and Viewer’s Choice for “Love of My Life (An Ode to Hip Hop)” with Erykah Badu, and Best Collaboration for “Glory”
- BET Hip Hop Awards for Lyricist of the Year (2007) and CD of the Year (*Finding Forever*)
- NAACP Image Award, a *Soul Train* Music Award, and more.



Common and John Legend at the Golden Globe Awards, 2015



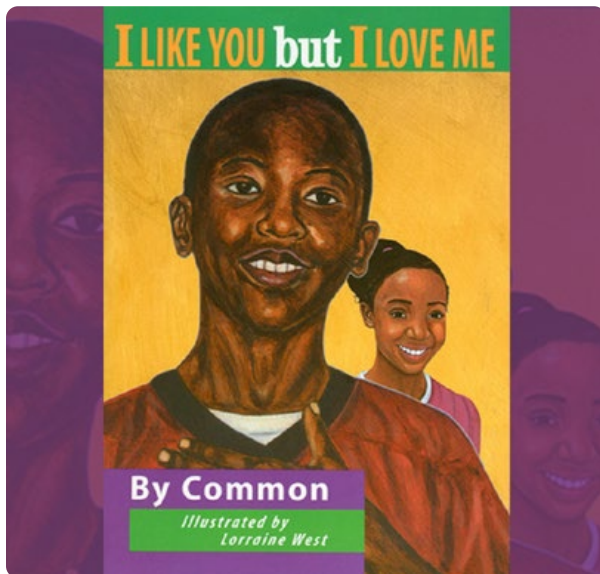
BOOKS BY COMMON

- 🕒 *The Mirror and Me* (2005)
- 🕒 *I Like You but I Love Me* (2006)
- 🕒 *One Day It'll All Make Sense* (2012)
- 🕒 *Let Love Have the Last Word: A Memoir* (2019)
- 🕒 *Bluebird Memories: A Journey through Lyrics and Life* (2020)
- 🕒 *And Then We Rise: A Guide to Loving and Taking Care of Self* (2024)

FREE TO DREAM

Common and his mother, Dr. Mahalia Hines, are the founders of The Common Ground Foundation. It is an organization dedicated to underserved communities and empowering youth with valuable life skills and educational opportunities. The Common Ground Foundation offers students a holistic curriculum that encourages academic excellence and opportunities to fulfill their dreams.

In partnership with PLUS ONE society, Common launched the nonprofit organization Imagine Justice. The nonprofit's mission is to address and end the criminalization of poverty by uplifting the stories of hope, redemption, and humanity of those impacted by mass incarceration.



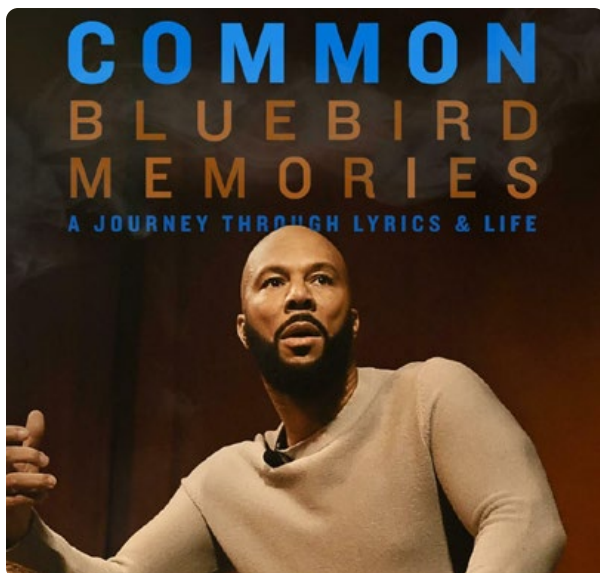
DR. ALLISSA V. RICHARDSON

Allissa V. Richardson researches how African Americans use mobile and social media to produce innovative forms of journalism—especially in times of crisis. Richardson's award-winning book, *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones and the New Protest #Journalism* (Oxford University Press, 2020) explores the lives of 15 mobile journalist-activists who documented the Black Lives Matter movement using only smartphones and Twitter.

Richardson is the founding director of the USC Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab. The research center saves, studies, and shares Black media that changed the world. In February 2023, the Bass Lab debuted USC's first AI-powered Black oral history interview with Lora King—the daughter of Rodney King, whose brutal police encounter was caught on tape in 1991.

Richardson's research has been published in *Journal of Communication*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and many other venues. She has lectured to diverse and wide-ranging audiences around the world, from SXSW to SnapChat, Microsoft, and the NFL. Her expertise in mobile media activism has made her a frequent commentator for news outlets such as ABC, BBC, CBC, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, MSNBC, NPR, *Teen Vogue*, and *Vox*.

She is an inductee into Apple's elite Distinguished Educator program. Additionally, Richardson is the recipient of three esteemed Harvard University posts: the Nieman Foundation



Visiting Journalism Fellowship ('14), the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society Fellowship ('20), and the Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Fellowship ('22).

Richardson holds a PhD in journalism studies from the University of Maryland College Park; a master's degree in magazine publishing from Northwestern University's Medill School; and a BS in biology from Xavier University of Louisiana, where she was named a "Top 40 Under 40" alumna.

CHARLOTTA BASS JOURNALISM & JUSTICE LAB

Dr. Allissa V. Richardson founded the Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism to preserve Black media and amplify Black media makers, activists, and social changemakers.

The Charlotta Bass Lab, which is USC's first Black media studies center, is named in honor of Charlotta Spears Bass, the first Black woman to own and operate a newspaper on the West Coast. The *California Eagle* debuted in 1912 and is credited with sparking a mass migration of Black people from the American South and Midwest who sought promise and opportunity in California. Bass was also the first Black woman to be nominated as vice president for a major political party in America. Her life's work aimed to uplift marginalized communities by promoting political advocacy and civic engagement.

In this spirit of melding journalism with activism, the Bass Lab's mission is to save, study, and share Black media that changed the world. The Charlotta Bass Lab launched during Black History Month last year with three signature initiatives: The debut of a pioneering AI-powered oral history archive titled *Voices of a Movement: The Second Draft Project*; a formal City Council proclamation naming Charlotta Bass's birthday, February 14, a citywide holiday in Los Angeles; and the premiere of the Charlotta Bass Media Trailblazer speaker series featuring a conversation with Dr. Richardson and Nikole Hannah-Jones.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Common writes, "For Black women and Black men in America, self-care is a revolutionary act." What do you think Common means by this?
- Did Common share any tips or anecdotes that will be helpful to you in your self-care journey? What will you take from this talk and embrace in your life?
- Dr. Allissa V. Richardson has written that it is important for marginalized groups to "bear witness" to injustice, using any medium or technology they can access. What is the impact of Common's bearing witness across multiple mediums?



Dr. Allissa V. Richardson

Photo: DaJuana Jones



Charlotta Amanda Spears Bass (February 14, 1874 – April 12, 1969) was an American educator, newspaper publisher-editor, and civil rights activist.



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IF YOU LIKE THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT...

- 🕒 Common Online | @common | thinkcommon.com
- 🕒 Allissa V. Richardson Online | allissavrichardson.com
- 🕒 The Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab at USC Annenberg | basslab.usc.edu
- 🕒 Classes and events at USC Annenberg School for Journalism and Communication | annenberg.usc.edu
- 🕒 Upcoming events with USC Visions and Voices
 - 2/28: [waheedworks: Bodies as Site of Faith and Protest](#)
 - 3/2: [Cypher Summit Block Party](#)
 - 4/17: [Fat Ham](#)

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Karin Saric 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

- 🕒 Common, [And Then We Rise: A Guide to Loving and Taking Care of Self](#) (New York: HarperCollins, 2024).
- 🕒 Common, [Let Love Have the Last Word: A Memoir](#) (New York: Atria Books, 2019).
- 🕒 Common and Adam Bradley, [One Day It'll All Make Sense](#) (New York: Atria Books, 2012).

DATABASES

- 🕒 [Alt HealthWatch](#)
- 🕒 [Gale Health and Wellness](#)
- 🕒 [Hip Hop Public Health](#)

JOURNALS

- 🕒 [Health Equity](#)
- 🕒 [Healthy People 2030](#)
- 🕒 [Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved](#)

STREAMING MEDIA

- 🕒 [Imagine Justice](#): Founded by Common, this organization is devoted to empowering communities and fighting injustice in support of those impacted by mass incarceration.
- 🕒 [Com+Well](#): In this series, Common discusses tools, resources, and information about health and wellness that have influenced his own life.
- 🕒 [A Beautiful Revolution Pt. 1 / Pt. 2](#): This two-part album explores a revolution of peace in the face of adversity and struggle. Poetic “movement music” intended to inspire and uplift.
- 🕒 [Let Love](#): This album serves as a reflection of Common’s spirituality and wellness-driven lifestyle.