In September 2012, the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University was awarded a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) to preserve the 1976 documentary film *Rainbow Black: Poet Sarah W. Fabio*.

Sarah Webster Fabio (1928-1979) established herself as an influential figure in the black cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s through her contributions as a poet, performer, literary critic, and educator. Fabio’s major poetic work includes the seven-volume *Rainbow Signs* (1973), consisting of *Black Back: Back Black; Boss Soul; Jujus/Alchemy of the Blues; Soul Ain’t, Soul Is*; and *Together/To the Tune of Coltrane’s “Equinox.”* As an educator, Fabio has been celebrated as the “Mother of Black Studies” for her pioneering work in the 1960s to establish programs at the University of California at Berkeley and Oakland’s Merritt College, a focal point of the early Black Power movement in the San Francisco Bay Area. Today, her legacy is most widely known through her Folkways Records albums, including *Boss Soul* and *Jujus/Alchemy of the Blues*, which set her poetry to the music of Don’t Fight the Feelin’,* a band featuring her sons, Cyril Leslie Fabio III and Ronald Fabio, and son-in-law Wayne Wallace.

Sarah’s daughter, Cheryl Fabio, produced *Rainbow Black: Poet Sarah W. Fabio* as her MA thesis film in communications at Stanford University. Studying under Canadian Film Board member Ron Alexander, Cheryl began shooting in 1972 and continued her work through 1976. Among the earliest footage is a 1972 studio sequence capturing the recording session for *Together/To the Tune of Coltrane’s “Equinox”* with the Don’t Fight the Feelin’ band and engineer Fred Cohn.

Cheryl and her classmate Angie Noel shot the core of the film in 1975 over a marathon weekend session in Iowa City, during Fabio’s time there as a Ph.D. student at the University of Iowa. Interspersed with interviews conducted by her daughter, Fabio reads selections from her poems including “My Own Thing,” “Juju: For Grandma,” and “Evil Is No Black Thing,” which she identifies as marking a radical transition in her writing. She discusses her alignment with the Black Power movement—given first expression in her poetry through “Race Results, U.S.A., 1966,” a response (continued on page 5)
BFC/A Staff News

Brian Graney recently joined the staff of Indiana University's Black Film Center/Archive as Archivist and Head of Public and Technology Services. He has specialized in audiovisual archives and preservation for over fourteen years, holding past positions at Northeast Historic Film, UCLA Film and Television Archive, and New Mexico State Records Center and Archives. He is a co-founder and current President of the non-profit Center for Home Movies, co-founder of CHM's international flagship event, Home Movie Day, and past Director of the Board (2005-2009) of the Association of Moving Image Archivists.

Leanne Mobley, a graduate student with the School of Library and Information Sciences, helped with the digitization of the African Film Posters Collection at the BFC/A in the summer of 2012. The project is now in the queue to begin work with the Digital Library Program.

Kristin Huffman volunteered in the summer of 2012 to work with filmographic database and to research modes of outreach for the BFC/A.

Ardea Smith recently joined the BFC/A staff as the Graduate Assistant for the 2012-13 academic year. She is a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science, slated to graduate in the Fall of 2013. Focused on school media in her studies, Ardea would like to be a school media specialist. Here at the BFC/A, she is helping to maintain our inventories and collections and organizing new materials. She'll also help maintain our website.

Natasha Vaubel has been hired as the new assistant editor of Black Camera: An International Film Journal, the academic journal of the BFC/A. Natasha has previously worked as an instructor of Comparative Literature at Indiana University and as the Assistant Director for the Project on African Expressive Traditions at Indiana University. In addition to her study of film in the African diaspora, she brings with her an extensive background in African literature, particularly the literature of South Africa.

Spring 2012 at the BFC/A

During Spring 2012, the BFC/A collaborated with a number of organizations on a variety of screening programs. In January, along with the Native American Graduate Student Association, we kicked off the Sixth Native Film Series at the IU Cinema with the Sundance and Berlin Film Festival hit On the Ice, Boy, Hearing Radmila, and a curated series of shorts featuring Native and Indigenous women by Melissa Bisagni. Two directors were able to join – On the Ice’s Andrew Okpeaha MacLean (via skype), and Hearing Radmilla’s Angela Webb – and the Melissa Bisagni of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian also came to present.

For Black History Month, the BFC/A continued its relationship with the Bloomington Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta with the Black Legacy Film Series at the Monroe County Public Library. The lineup focused on African American women behind and in front of the camera and featured four films: Darnell Martin’s Cadillac Records with Beyoncé Knowles playing blues legend Etta James; the Billie Holiday biopic Lady Sings the Blues, starring Diana Ross; The Duke is Tops, the 1938 classic featuring Lena Horne; and Tanya Hamilton’s debut feature Night Catches Us, with Kerry Washington in the lead role.

What’s the first film you ever saw? Bambi. Actually – I believe I went to see a double feature with Bambi and Who Framed Roger Rabbit? in a beautiful old 20s style theater in my hometown [Moundsville, WV] where they used to show old movies.

What has been the most exciting thing about working at the BFC/A for two years? I love working with the collections, and leafing through all kinds of materials for films and directors I hadn’t known about. I really like some of the older stuff, from the 20s and 30s. There’s always something interesting to learn, or directors I didn’t know about before who are really fascinating.

What are some of the most interesting items in the holdings of the BFC/A that you have come across? This feels kind of nerdy, but I really like to look through the receipts from theaters that we have in the Norman Collection. They show how many people came to particular screenings in particular theaters, what kind of food they bought, matinee balances, and so on. It’s really interesting. I also really like looking at the pressbooks put out by films – it’s really interesting to see the difference between how a movie was marketed and what the film looked like. For example, Double Possession is a 78 minute version – it’s the exact same footage – of the 110 minute Ganja and Hess, and it’s a pretty interesting difference in the way the two are marketed.
Fall 2012 at the BFC/A

The Black Film Center/Archive co-sponsored a number of screenings and events this past fall in collaboration with the Indiana University Cinema and other partners. The exhibition and screening program Axe of Vengeance: Ghanaian Film Posters and Film Viewing Culture recreated a Ghanaian cinema space at the Grunwald Gallery of Art for viewings of films, supplemented by an IU Cinema program including Bob Smith Jr’s Black is Black: Mamma Mia (2000) and Fred Amata’s Oganiwe (1999). CUBAmistad: A Celebration of Cuban Art & Film, a sister-city project between Bloomington, Indiana, and Santa Clara, Cuba, included screenings of Habanastation (2011), Kordavision (2008), Maestra (2011), and Juan of the Dead (2011), with appearances by directors Hector Cruz Sandoval (Kordavision) and Catherine Murphy (Maestra). Filming Work: Working Films, a series honoring the struggles of ordinary people for workplace justice, featured Bill Duke’s The Killing Floor (1983), based on the life of Chicago labor leader Frank Custer. The tenth annual International Home Movie Day put out an open call for personal and family films to be shared with a community audience. The 2012 James O. Naremore Lecturer Jacqueline Stewart, Associate Professor of Radio/Television/Film and African American Studies at Northwestern University, presented her recent research on Spencer Williams and screened Williams’s The Blood of Jesus (1941) in a preservation print from Southern Methodist University’s G. William Jones Film and Video Collection. Shirley Clarke’s Cool World included screenings of new 35mm prints of The Connection (1962) and Ornette: Made in America (1985), restored through a collaboration between UCLA Film & Television Archive and Milestone Films. For the series Claire Denis: Confronting the Other, Denis visited Bloomington to introduce and discuss a number of her films, including Beau Travail (1999), Trouble Every Day (2001), and White Material (2009). Rufus Jones for President (1933) was presented at To Save and Project, the 10th International Festival of Preservation at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in an archival print from the collections of the BFC/A. And No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger (1968), documenting the April 1967 Spring Mobilization to End the War and featuring interviews with three black veterans recently returned from Vietnam, was screened in honor of Veterans for Peace at a free event cosponsored by Boxcar Books and Community Center.

In conjunction with the November 2012 film series, Claire Denis: Confronting the Other, the BFC/A mounted an exhibit of ten original French-release posters foregrounding the organizing themes of this uncompromising filmmaker. The exhibit was curated by Brian Graney with assistance from Stacey Doyle and Ardea Smith. BFC/A Director Michael T. Martin contributed an exhibition statement and brochure, The Cinematographic Archive of Claire Denis: Poster Art as Cultural Labor. Denis attended the exhibit at BFC/A during a private reception held on the occasion of her Indiana University visit on November 10.

J. Ronald Green donated a collection of research and manuscript material regarding his two books on Oscar Micheaux: Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux (IU Press, 2000) and With a Crooked Stick – The Films of Oscar Micheaux (IU Press, 2004). Green is Professor of Film Studies in the Department of History of Art at Ohio State University. His writings on Micheaux and other topics have appeared in journals such as Film Quarterly, Griffithiana, Black Film Review, and Cinema Journal, and in various anthologies including Manthia Diawara’s Black American Cinema (1993) and Pearl Bowser, Charles Musser, and Jane Gaines’s Oscar Micheaux and His Circle (2001).

Cornelius Moore, Co-Director of California Newsreel, donated a collection of material to support the study of African cinema, including DVDs, books, posters, pressbooks, journals, and film festival catalogs. Founded in 1968, California Newsreel is a non-profit film distribution organization that specializes in films from Africa and the African diaspora. Their Library of African Cinema has a diverse collection of films from throughout the African continent, thematically focused on issues such as post-colonial conflict, gender relations, economic development, health, human rights and cultural life.
A Conversation: Jordache A. Ellapen, Director of *cane/cain*

Earlier this year, *(W)rap Sheet* sat down with Jordache Ellapen, the director of *cane/cain* and a PhD student in the American Studies department at Indiana University. *Cane/cain*, which, per Ellapen, “challenges what it means to be Indian in South Africa,” was featured at Film Africa 2012, which described the short film as being “Beautifully filmed, with a distinctive, original style.”

WRAP SHEET: After watching and reflecting on *cane/cain*, I think of all of the social markers and categories that are packed into the film – race, class, religion, immigration, nativism, sexuality. And though the film isn’t long, the breadth of the film doesn’t seem forced or packed in. Was that the sort of film you set out to make?

JORDACHE A. ELLAPEN: I set out to make a film that would use my family archive, collected over a few decades by my grandparents and other relatives in our family, to tell the history of early Indian migration to South Africa. However, the film I ended up making looked very different. I knew one of the things I wanted to do was to explore sexuality, and I wanted to make a film that spoke both to migration in the historical sense and to sexuality in the contemporary sense. The process of writing the script was about how to bring these different stories together. One of the reasons for doing this was that the histories of Indian migration to South Africa are done primarily through an anthropological and sociological perspective. My research focuses on visual culture and I wanted to see what would happen if we approached Indian migration through a different perspective, one that also emphasizes the intersectionality of race, sexuality and religion.

WS: In the film, as the various elements begin to build, the burning of the sugar cane field seems to act as a release point, and the xenophobic attacks were only African on African violence writes out other histories of migration. One of the histories that is under risk of being written out of this narrative, which is very much embedded in narrative of the nation, is the recent influx of Indians, Pakistanis, and Indian immigrants affected by those attacks, and, secondly, xenophobic attacks have been part of the history of South Africa. The view that the xenophobic attacks were only African on African violence writes out other histories of migration. One of the histories that is under risk of being written out of this narrative, which is very much embedded in narrative of the nation, is the recent influx of Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis from the Indian subcontinent.

JE: The first thing I should say about that is the film is made against the backdrop of the xenophobic attacks in SA that happened in ’08 & ’09. Those attacks were represented in the media as African on African attacks - Mozambican, Zimbabwean, Nigerian, etc. immigrants were being attacked by black South Africans. What was missing from that narrative was that firstly, there were recent Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Indian immigrants affected by those attacks, and, secondly, xenophobic attacks have been part of the history of South Africa. The view of writing the script was about how to bring these different stories together. One of the reasons for doing this was that the histories of Indian migration to South Africa are done primarily through an anthropological and sociological perspective. My research focuses on visual culture and I wanted to see what would happen if we approached Indian migration through a different perspective, one that also emphasizes the intersectionality of race, sexuality and religion.

WS: With those references, how is the film received by a South African Indian audience?

JE: It makes sense if you get the visual references. The sugar cane has strong resonance, but it’s also clear that this is about much more than just sugar cane. As a filmmaker – or someone who is interested in visuality – I was very interested in the aesthetic of the cane. The space where I grew up is a very rural sugar cane community, and it is just beautiful. The sugar cane marks time. There are times when it’s cut down, when it’s planted, and when it’s burnt. The growth and harvesting of the cane marks the calendar year. When the cane is burnt, black dust from the cane rains down and lightly covers everything. My my memory of sugar cane is like that.

One of the themes I’ve been very interested in is resurgence of the indenture narrative in the past ten years (maybe more) amongst the South African Indian community. This is reflected a number of recent films and novels that explore this theme. It’s almost as if we forgot it, we left it. I want to understand what this emergence means for Indian identity in South Africa. I wanted to make reference to that narrative in a way that I was familiar with – with beauty of the cane, its seasonal destruction through fire, the way it defines and engulfs the landscape.

We can talk about that reference in terms of sexuality also, with Aben and Cain in the fields. I wanted to play around with the kind of frivolity of youth and growing up. It’s almost like a coming-of-age narrative, two young boys discovering themselves in the cane. This is about the innocence of youth and childhood, though it does have a certain homoerotic-ness to it.
I wanted to reference the fluidity of sexuality – a lot of boys have these kinds of homosocial bonds that are part of our development as human beings. I also wanted to connect the cane fields to the present day through labor; the cane machine, the crushing of the cane to produce cane juice. This provides a connection through time and space.

**WS:** Those scenes in the fields are from the past, although we don’t discover what happened then until later. In the present, Aben and Tariq share a sexual encounter as Aben deals with the weight of the past. Can you talk about the sexuality in the film with respect to the sex scene between Tariq and Aben?

**JE:** There is Tariq who is married, and there is Aben who is gay identified, but there’s an insinuation that there’s a tension between religion and sexuality with his character. I think there is a lot of research that needs to be done in terms of space, migration and sexuality, because in my observations – and I’m not an anthropologist but I spent a lot of time in the space in which the film was shot - one of the things I’ve noticed is the ways in which migrant South Asian or Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi men cruise in that space. It adds a complex layer to sexuality and how sexuality is used as a way of social mobility. Sexuality could be used for economic reasons in these spaces, but we also need to be aware of how migrants (men and women) are exploited on numerous levels, sex being one of these. So it’s about power and exploitation – those are little residues that I wanted to explore in the film just to complicate the ways we think about sexuality. I wanted to challenge the fixed ways we think about sexual identities. To me, sexuality is a very fluid terrain. I wanted to capture this fluidity and related how one reads sexuality in terms of migration, desire, connection. We have to think about this – about how sexuality and migration play out for two men who come from very different communities, who speak different languages and who have experienced very different kinds of traumas in their lives. On the one hand there is the trauma of migration and its link to xenophobic violence, and the constant threat that hovers over the migrant body. And on the other hand, the trauma of loss; loss of innocence, loss of childhood, loss of life. To me it was about these two men finding a way of communicating with each other. Sex becomes a common language between them, and through this language they find catharsis. I see the sex in the film as a form of communication; it’s through this act of sex that they come to terms with the kind of traumas that they have experienced in their lives.

**Rainbow Black Restoration (continued from page 1)**

**JE:** to the police murder of 16-year-old Matthew Johnson in Hunter’s Point, and how problems of distribution and discrimination facing black poets demanded that she self-publish her work in this vein. Another sequence documents a session of her Black Poetry course at the University of Iowa, capturing Fabio’s influence as an educator and mentor. Finding herself leading an all-black class, she notes how this is “in effect a one-room black schoolhouse” within the larger university environment, and that she as professor is “the sole point of relevancy in [her students’] lives to pull them away from the major culture that was destroying their identities.”

On completion of the film, Cheryl worked closely with BFC/A archivist Brian Graney through the development of this project and will provide valuable guidance for the film-to-film preservation work to be conducted at Rockville, Maryland’s Colorlab. On first receiving news of the award from NFPE, she wrote:

I am so very delighted that this work will be preserved and that ‘Rainbow Black: Poet Sarah W. Fabio’ will continue to contribute to the ongoing legacy of my mother and her work.

Now, as an older woman and after having witnessed both my mother’s personal life and her career life – I am astounded by the feats she accomplished. In addition to making a difficult career choice, she raised the five of us relentlessly fighting for us during a difficult transition in history. I am also in awe of the fact that she trusted this documentation to me. I was only 22 years old at the time. When I realized that this film might be among the few or, even only, visual moving documents of my mother I was touched again by the honor she bestowed on me.

The newly preserved film will have its IU Cinema premiere on April 22, 2013, as part of the BFC/A-sponsored film series, A Change Is Gonna Come: Black Revolutionary Poets.
The (W)rap-Sheet

The BFC/A maintains an extensive collection on Jessie Maple – the first African-American woman to direct an independent feature film in the post-civil rights era – whose contributions to independent black cinema are as great as they are underrated. The collection includes seven of her films, articles, a book authored by Maple, grant proposals, and materials pertaining to a discrimination lawsuit she filed with a camera operators’ union in New York. Jessie Maple’s feature films include Will (1981) and Twice as Nice (1988). Will, the film for which Maple came to prominence (it’s also the cinematic debut of Loretta Devine), tells the story of Will, who works to overcome his heroin addiction with the support of his wife. In documentaries like Methadone: Wonder Drug or Evil Spirit and Black Economic Power: Reality or Fantasy Maple and her husband, Leroy Patton, explored many different facets of the African-American urban experience. While featuring many of the finished products, the Jessie Maple Collection at the BFC/A features many items that tell the backstory of Maple’s work, and her struggles to make it in an industry desperately wanting of Black women.

Into the Archive:
Exploring the Jessie Maple Collection

The original script of Will (above), titled Higher Ground at the time of writing, provided to the Archive by Jessie Maple. And at right, a copy of How to Become a Union Camerawoman, written by Maple about her experiences becoming a union camerawoman, from the collection.
Images taken from the February 1976 issue of Ebony magazine, featuring an in depth article on Maple’s work and her partnership with her husband, LeRoy Patton

A LADY BEHIND THE LENS
Jessie Maple cracks tough cinematographers union in New York

At left, an application that Maple put it to The Film Fund for her documentary Black Economic Power: Reality or Fantasy. Below, an article from The Amsterdam News that discusses the film Burning an Illusion by Menelik Shabazz before discussing the 20 West Theater in Harlem, run by Maple and Patton.
The Black Film Center/Archive

The BFC/A was founded in 1981 and was the first repository in the United States for the collection and preservation of films and related materials by and about African Americans. Since that time, its collections have grown and its scope has broadened to include films from other geographical sites in the African Diaspora. Our collections, which feature many independent filmmakers, highlights the work of black writers, actors, producers, directors, and musicians in all aspects of film production.

Objectives

- To promote scholarship on black film and serve as a resource for scholars, researchers, students, and the general public.
- To preserve and expand the collection of historically and culturally significant films by and about black people.
- To encourage film activity by independent black filmmakers.
- To undertake and encourage research on the history, impact, theory and aesthetics of black film traditions.

Spring 2012 at the BFC/A (continued from page 2)

In March, Steffan Horowitz, a master’s student in African Studies, and the BFC/A’s Nzingha Kendall curated the New Directions in African Cinema series. This event was co-sponsored by Graduate Students in African Studies and the BFC/A. The first evening included both a selection of short films as well as a panel discussion. The first installment of the series, “African/American?”, explored the experiences of first-generation African-Americans with three films, *Bronx Princess*, *African Booty Scratcher* and *Me Broni Ba*. Although different in their styles, all three films tackle the challenges of reconciling both African and American identities. Three graduate students, Nana Amoah (African American and African Diaspora Studies), Rudo Mudiwa (Communication and Culture) and Moussa Thiao (Comparative Literature), participated in a lively and emotional panel after the film, recounting their own migration stories as well as their experiences of cultural mishaps and misunderstandings. The series continued with two short science fiction films, Wanuri Kahu’s post-apocalyptic fable *Pumzi*, and the District 9 precursor, *Alive in Joburg*. The final film in the series was the Congolese caper film *Viva Riva*, with a discussion from visiting Professor Walton Muyumba.

Through these fruitful collaborations the BFC/A continues to contribute to the vibrant film culture in and around the IU campus; the promotion and exhibition of these films and the resulting conversations bear witness to the rich diversity which marks black filmmaking.

The Winter 2012 issue of *Black Camera* (4.1) is out now. It features articles by Abigail Horne, Benjamin Wiggins, and Olivier Barlet, as well as a special close-up on the film *Precious*. The issue can be read through JSTOR; a link can be found on the Black Camera site.