

THE BLACK FILM AMBASSADOR: THE ECSTATIC WORLD OF ALBERT JOHNSON

Josslyn Lockett



Albert Johnson circa 1954.

Courtesy Albert J Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library.

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In 1958, when Ernest Callenbach was seeking “co-conspirators” to create a “serious American film magazine,” Pauline Kael directed him to Albert Johnson. Together, the two of them and Colin Young, then a UCLA professor, dreamed up and brought into being the journal before you now.¹ Knowing that a Black film critic and professor, Pacific Film Archive (PFA) collaborator, and long-time San Francisco International Film Festival (SFIFF) programmer was part of this journal’s origin story is enough to make me—a recently arrived Black contributing editor to this journal—pause and offer a deep bow of gratitude and indebtedness to Mr. Albert Johnson. But: as his Third World Cinema student and undergrad thesis advisee, circa 1990, my thanks to Professor Johnson run much deeper.

That the celebrations of the PFA at fifty and of Satyajit Ray at one hundred should overlap this year represents a poignant symmetry for these reflections, because one of my first memories was of an event linking Johnson and Ray. I’m not sure when I’d purchased my ticket to the San Francisco International Film Festival’s ceremony to honor Ray with the Akira Kurosawa Award on May 5, 1992, but everyone was crushed to receive word that Ray had died just days before the start of the festival—and that the legendary actress Sharmila Tagore would accept the award in her mentor’s honor.

Tagore, in her pink sari, was both gracious and clearly still shaken: her first director and lifelong mentor was gone. She shared just how emotional the evening was for her: “I know I won’t be able to visit with him—to see him in his armchair, surrounded by his books and his piano, and to have him say to me, ‘So Sharmila, tell me everything you saw and heard in San Francisco.’”² I don’t know if there was a dry eye at the Kabuki Theater that night. I do know the point in her comments that moved me the most: when she singled out Albert Johnson for his decades of support of Ray’s work and assured the audience that Johnson and his work were deeply appreciated in India. The reach of this African American film scholar—extending beyond

the grateful minds of his young film students, beyond the wider community of Bay Area film enthusiasts, all the way to India—represented a different kind of Black Power than the one I was learning about as an ethnic studies major at UC Berkeley.

I had first “met” Tagore in her film debut as Apu’s precious young bride, Aparna, in *The World of Apu* (1959), introduced by Professor Johnson in his life-changing course, titled *Third World Cinema*, held with screenings at the Pacific Film Archive. Nothing from my suburban high school days could have prepared me for these PFA nights under Johnson’s curation, under Johnson’s spell. Imagine the steady stream of introductions by Johnson to Ousmane Sembene’s *La Noire de . . .* (*Black Girl*, 1966), Humberto Solás’s *Lucía* (1968), Euzhan Palcy’s *Sugar Cane Alley* (1983), and Mira Nair’s *Salaam Bombay* (1988). These works—visually, thematically, politically—seemed to my undergrad eyes not only from another country but from another planet. And who was this elegant, intergalactic traveler beaming these gifts onto the screen in the futuristic University Art Museum week after week?

Reflecting here briefly on Albert Johnson now, nearly thirty years after the Sharmila Tagore acknowledgment and over two decades since his death, there are two key areas that stand out in terms of his tremendous career and legacy: his engagement with India; and his underreported/underappreciated championing of Black independent directors. Both areas merit much more research—the kind that was impossible at the BAMPFA Film Library and Study Center and the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library (the two places that house Johnson’s papers and film memorabilia) in COVID times. However, the bouquet of digital links I received from those who have spent countless hours with Johnson’s archival materials helped tremendously in the preparation of these lines and inspired an insatiable thirst for more.³

Born in 1925, this Harlem-raised son of a Cotton Club dancer eventually made his way to California, where he received his BA in English from Berkeley in 1954. While plenty of Berkeley students became predictably enamored with the “Far East” in the 1960s and 1970s, Albert Johnson’s deep interest in South Asia, according to his archived résumé, dates back to his undergrad days. Listed under “College Activities,” between writing film reviews and directing and performing in his own original musical revues, he was a member of “P.I.C.”—a project focused on Pakistan, India, and Ceylon: “Traveled throughout Southeast Asia on this first cultural exchange between American students and those in these Asian countries.”

By 1960, he was “Leader of the first Experiment in International Living group to India.”⁴ In his papers, a letter on United States Information Service (USIS) letterhead from Robert C. Goodman, Public Affairs Officer of Delhi Consular District, written to Johnson in August 1960, thanks him for his recent lecture/performance at the United States Information Agency (USIA) library in New Delhi:

I refer to your talk as a performance because the song and dance interpolations in your sage discourse on American popular music made your appearance the most engaging by any visiting American lecturer during my three years in India.

For Johnson’s students who especially remember his penchant for breaking out into song when he programmed musicals at the PFA, it is satisfying to hear that this lecture style developed much earlier and was appreciated across the globe.

Between 1960 and 1968, Johnson was a film lecturer and consultant for the “Committee for Arts and Lectures” series at UC Berkeley, where he presented both American



Gotta Sing! Johnson in performance mode.

Courtesy of the University of California Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Film Library & Study Center.

and international films.⁵ Then in 1965, Johnson became program director for the San Francisco International Film Festival, the first Black programmer to hold a position for a festival of this stature. In one of the longest entries of his résumé, Johnson emphasizes its stature and his transformational role at the festival: “Reorganized this event, the oldest (since 1958) American film festival, and worked to maintain highest cultural standards. The festival was considered the most important in the United States during this period.”⁶

While maintaining his post at SFIFF until 1972, Johnson was sought out by festivals abroad, including the International Film Festival of India in New Delhi, where he served as a member of the film jury in 1969. Perhaps it was this trip that planted the seed for his invitation to Satyajit Ray to attend “The Craft of Cinema,” Johnson’s trailblazing tribute series for SFIFF, in 1970. A “series of

annual in-person tributes honoring notable artists of world cinema,” it brought to San Francisco a long list of US and international figures including artists as diverse as Gene Kelly, Agnès Varda, Shu Shuen, Arthur Freed, Melvin Van Peebles, Lillian Gish, Bette Davis, Gordon Parks, and, yes, Satyajit Ray.⁷ John Williams, writing for the *Black Scholar*, points out that Johnson’s innovation “has now become standard fare at most film festivals throughout the country,” thereby transforming “the American film festival into an international cultural event, rivaling others abroad in places such as Cannes, Berlin and Venice.”⁸

Attendees sat for hours watching rare clips and beloved feature films of the honorees, expertly curated by Johnson. They were then invited to ask questions of these legends, in long sessions warmly facilitated by Johnson. What a joy to hear Fred Astaire greet the SFIFF audience by saying



Johnson with Bette Davis in 1969.

Courtesy of the University of California Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Film Library & Study Center.

of Johnson, “This fellow knows more about a lot of things that I’ve done than I do myself. I mean it. He’s amazing. . . . Thank you so much, Albert.” And no disrespect to *Feud* creator Ryan Murphy, but all that could be learned over the eight episodes of his FX series is brilliantly distilled into about three minutes of hilarious conversation between Bette Davis and Albert Johnson on her “special” relationship with Joan Crawford and the production of “Jane.”⁹ How did this cinema polymath swing so effortlessly between Robert Aldrich’s *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962) and Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (*How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, 1971)?

The word *swing* is hardly incidental. The itinerary for the 1972 edition of Johnson’s USIA tour, “Films of Social Comment,” ran from India and Pakistan to Cyprus, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Turkey—just like Duke Ellington’s earlier State Department tour of 1963 that informed his *Far East Suite*.¹⁰ In conversation with a growing body of literature on the African American engagement with India—from political organizing to jazz, from Howard Thurman to Alice Coltrane—the friendship of Albert Johnson and Satyajit Ray that stretched from India to the Pacific Film Archive warrants serious investigation. It may make sense to include it alongside the activities and influences of Thurman, Coltrane, and many others.¹¹

Johnson traveled many places beyond South Asia and brought countless filmmakers from all over the world to the PFA. The 1970s were an especially dazzling time. With “Senegal: Fifteen Years of an African Cinema,” Johnson welcomed Ousmane Sembene, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, and Ben Diogaye Beye to the same stage, shared also by Angela Davis, who stepped in as Sembene’s French-to-English translator. Sharing the unearthed audio files of these talks with NYU colleagues, I made further discoveries. I learned that Ed Guerrero, then co-teaching with Angela Davis at the San Francisco Art Institute, was instrumental in arranging her last-minute translation gig. Robert Stam, who was Johnson’s Dwight Street neighbor in Berkeley, recalled translating for visiting Brazilian filmmakers Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and Maria do Rosário, when Johnson hosted them at the PFA. Finally, Howard Besser worked in the 1970s as one of Johnson’s favorite projectionists there and remembers how popular his courses were with all kinds of Berkeley students, emphasizing that students who might never take another film studies class would take Johnson’s courses, as would students who might never take another Afro-American studies course.

Johnson was constantly traveling. He programmed a festival in Tunisia in the 1970s, “On Being Black: A Week

of Films by or about American Negroes . . . with commentary by Albert Johnson,” in which he shared John Cassavetes’s *Shadows* (1958), Melvin Van Peebles’s *The Story of a Three Day Pass* (1968), and Dick Gregory’s acting debut in the jazz film *Sweet Love, Bitter* (Herbert Danska, 1967).¹² Whether intentional or not, some bebop diplomacy was certainly offered up by programming these films internationally. Johnson was dubbed the “Bay Area Film World’s Bright-Eyed Ambassador” by *San Francisco Chronicle* film critic Judy Stone around this time.

In a 1974 piece attempting to keep track of Johnson’s dizzying travel schedule, Stone does not hold back from the obvious question: might he . . . could he . . . be a spy? She wrote that the “Bay Area’s roving ambassador in the movie world” showed admirable fortitude after fifteen-hour days of “non-stop movie watching” but reported that “when he turned up in both Syria and Israel not too long after the last Middle East war, it was the final straw. People talked. ‘Albert,’ they asked in Tel Aviv, Beirut and Berkeley, ‘are you trying to steal Kissinger’s act?’”¹³ Robert Stam remembers Johnson returning from trips abroad and sharing tales of Israelis spying on him in airports in very obvious ways. The Cold War—era mystery lingers.

Johnson’s twenty-four-year run on the faculty of Berkeley’s Department of African American Studies began in 1974, as the USIA tours appear to wane. The teaching appointment did not preclude further travel, however. According to Abdosh Abdulhafiz—an Ethiopian film student who spent three years in the 1970s studying film with Johnson and would later be associated with the L.A. Rebellion film movement—whenever the term was over, Johnson would travel abroad to international festivals. Then, “when he’d come in the fall to teach, he’d come every year with a new group of films . . . and a lot of times also the filmmakers.”¹⁴

Abdulhafiz credited the difference between his education in Berkeley and in Los Angeles to the presence of the Pacific Film Archive, where Johnson was a reigning force. “Albert . . . ask him any question and he will answer it . . . you couldn’t find anywhere in LA that kind of film. Pacific Film Archive was [the] one before our archive was developed.” He emphasized that the films that Johnson brought to class may have been seen only at the Pacific Film Archive and nowhere else in the United States: “Albert was instrumental.”

The citation of Abdulhafiz’s connection to Johnson is a critical contribution, ensuring that Johnson’s connection with key figures of the Black independent film movement



Johnson on campus at Berkeley in the 1970s.

Courtesy of the University of California Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Film Library & Study Center.

is not lost.¹⁵ Upon discovering in the archive just how much writing on and programming of films by Haile Gerima, Charles Burnett, Larry Clark, and others was done by Johnson, I'd suggest that the omission of his connection to this group of directors warrants rethinking. Johnson's Northern California base could explain his distance from the UCLA-trained filmmakers, but by the mid-1970s, neither Clyde Taylor nor Toni Cade Bambara were based in Los Angeles, either.

It was Taylor who first gave this group their "L.A. Rebellion" name in the title to the Whitney Museum show "L.A. Rebellion: A Turning Point in Black Cinema" (1986). Interestingly, his preface to the later *L.A. Rebellion* anthology recalls a 1970s screening at the Pacific Film Archive of Haile Gerima's *Harvest: 3000 Years* (1976). Taylor writes: "I was blown away." He credits the experience at the Pacific

Film Archive for at least partially launching his own deep dive into the work of the UCLA filmmakers.¹⁶

Was it Albert Johnson who presented that screening? Reading through Johnson's vast archives, I found *Harvest: 3000 Years* in his report on the Cannes Film Festival of 1976, and the PFA archives document a screening in 1979. It is clear from Johnson's writing on the film that he, too, was blown away: "In terms of its emotional impact, Gerima's film is close to Ray's *Pather Panchali*—we observe one family's struggles and grow sympathetically accustomed to their faces and their hopes that burn in spite of the drudgery and poverty of their existence." He calls the film the "major surprise" of the *Semaine de la Critique* at Cannes that year and says it "introduced a wondrous talent in Haile Gerima."¹⁷

The BAMPFA Film Library and Study Center has digitized a number of "talkbacks" with Charles Burnett

and Haile Gerima hosted by Johnson in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While much critical attention has been given to Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1977), Johnson wrote quite a bit about Burnett's less recognized second feature, *My Brother's Wedding* (1983); in *Film Quarterly*, he described Burnett's work as capturing "a certain lonely cityscape-by-night, quite timeless and gentle."¹⁸ Assessing another L.A. Rebellion piece that has not received much attention, Gerima's documentary *After Winter: Sterling Brown* (1985), Johnson described it as "one of the strongest, most evocative works about an enduring Black American poet."¹⁹

In another piece in *Film Quarterly*, describing the success or failure of several narrative films about jazz, Johnson judged Larry Clark's *Passing Through* (1977) to be altogether more successful in presenting a satisfying portrait of real jazz musicians than the more famous films that followed: Clint Eastwood's *Bird* (1988) and Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* (1990). On *Bird* he writes: "The characterizations of the musicians themselves, in look, style, and language of the postwar period were so remote that the character of Parker's white wife, Chan, became most vivid: it was the tale of Mrs. Bird, with Parker in the background—a jazz-tease for devotees of the genre." He judged *Mo' Better* as stronger, "[o]nce one is resigned to not seeing a true film about the world of jazz." Johnson praises Clark's debut feature for its "dynamic, cleverly imaged presentation of a black saxophonist, Warmack (Nathaniel Taylor), and his struggle to maintain his artistic integrity in the corrupt world of recording companies. . . . As a first feature, *Passing Through* attempted to encompass both the burgeoning creative consciousness of Warmack, as well as the sounds of authentic jazz by Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane . . . it remains an invaluable film-outcry."²⁰

Lamenting the state of Black film representation coming out of the studios, Johnson again raises the example of the filmmakers now known as the L.A. Rebellion in a 1982 interview with an evidently long-defunct journal, *The Berkeley Graduate*: "Jamaa Fanaka's work, Charles Burnett, and Larry Clark—these are artists who are ploughing ahead and doing it with artistic integrity. There's still hope."²¹

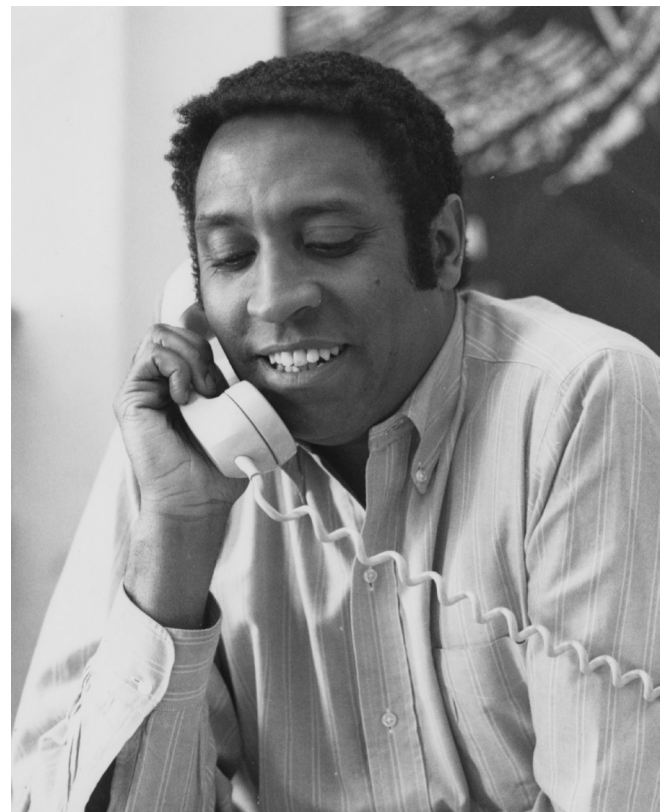
One of my favorite memories of Albert Johnson was of his work with the Black Filmmakers' Hall of Fame in Oakland, where I once had the enormous thrill of witnessing his presentation of an early screening of Julie Dash's triumph, *Daughters of the Dust*. It was 1991, and Dash was being honored with the organization's Oscar Micheaux Award. As dumbfounded as I was by the film—I was a teary mess, tears of joy, tears of recognition, tears of arrival—looking up at the stage at my professor standing next to that Geechee

filmmaker magician, a still and knowing voice inside me said: yep, that intergalactic film ambassador did it again.

This is what Albert Johnson did in my life: he delivered films and filmmakers who changed my world and "empowered my eyes," as Toni Cade Bambara would say, to see new signs, globally gorgeous and transformative signs, transporting me from the Bay to Ibo Landing, from Ethiopia to India, from Dakar to Havana and back again.

It is difficult for some to make sense of a scholar who programmed tributes for iconic movie stars like Bette Davis and Giulietta Masina with the same passion that he brought to hosting screenings of devastating films like Héctor Babenco's *Pixote* (1981) or Norman Loftis's *Small Time* (1990). I think it is this breadth that made him enigmatic to some and a dazzling portrait of freedom for others. When I mentioned to a friend and former classmate that I was writing this piece, he highlighted the fact that, for him as a young Black man, it had been expansive to see a grown Black man do what he loved, to truly love what he did for a living.

As for his other loves? I have been gently and repeatedly reminded that Johnson was born in the generation where a private life was kept private. Respecting this privacy, I do



Johnson at the office.

Courtesy of the University of California Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Film Library & Study Center.

still wonder if perhaps a new generation of filmmakers—inspired by the speculative Black queer elder recovery work of Cheryl Dunye’s *The Watermelon Woman* (1996) or Isaac Julien’s *Looking for Langston* (1989)—might look afresh at the fullness of Johnson’s life, work, and travels and create just the kind of movie magic my late professor would have jumped at the chance to premiere at the PFA.²²

Albert Johnson died “with his film boots on,” as Ernest Callenbach, *FQ*’s founding editor, wrote in this journal’s pages, describing Johnson’s fatal heart attack in 1998, while at the Chicago Film Festival, where he’d traveled to present a tribute to Pam Grier.²³ After his death, the PFA presented a tribute, in the form of a series of his favorite films, that included *My Brother’s Wedding* along with Federico Fellini’s *Le notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria*, 1957), Ousmane Sembene’s *Mandabi* (1968), and Satyajit Ray’s *Charulata* (1964). They also screened George Stevens’s *Swing Time* (1936), a film Johnson had shown to audiences across the globe.

I smile when I think of the World of Albert Johnson and feel so grateful to have caught as many live glimpses of it as I did. But every now and then, as a contributor to the journal he helped to launch and as a cinema studies professor who has the profound privilege of sharing some of the films he first shared with me, I find myself feeling a pang not unlike that of Sharmila Tagore, knowing I can’t run back to his office in Dwinelle Hall and see Professor Johnson, surrounded by his books and films and notebooks, and tell him all about it.

Notes

1. Ernest Callenbach, “In Memoriam: Albert Johnson,” *Film Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (Winter 1998–1999). Just under his name, Johnson’s titles are listed as “Assistant Editor, 1958–1962, Editorial Board Member, 1962–1998.”
2. Thanks to Edward Guthmann’s reporting on this event, which described Tagore’s sari and provided several quotes from her speech. See Guthmann, “Festival Honors Satyajit Ray,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1992. Unfortunately, he did not mention Albert Johnson in his report, and my thirty-year-old memories are a little foggy. I’m still in pursuit of a full transcript of Tagore’s speech.
3. Both Jason Sanders at the BAMPFA Film Library and Study Center and Marc Francis here at *Film Quarterly* have my deepest thanks for their tremendous research on Johnson and the generosity with which they shared multiple digital files. I also want to express my deep thanks to Ms. Coretta Greaux, Albert Johnson’s sister, for making his papers available to UC

Berkeley’s Bancroft Library. Thanks also for multiple helpful emails from Ishmael Reed, Julie Dash, Larry Clark, and Billy Woodberry.

4. This lengthy résumé is part of the Albert J. Johnson papers housed in the Bancroft Library. He also lists two musical reviews he wrote, directed, and performed: *Starstruck* and *Walking on Air*. From the Albert J. Johnson papers, BANC MSS 2002/064 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. For information on the history of the Experiment in International Living organization, see www.experiment.org/about-the-experiment/history-mission/.
5. The Committee for Arts and Lectures evolved into CAL Performances at UC Berkeley, while the screenings predated the establishment of the PFA.
6. In his papers, there are countless thank-you letters and correspondence from illustrious Hollywood and global film-industry guests of the SFIFF. One in particular from Paul Newman (November 21, 1969) explains that he and Joanne Woodward “are deeply sympathetic to the objectives of your festival . . . both of us know what you have accomplished and are trying to accomplish in San Francisco.” Correspondence 1954–1998, Albert J. Johnson papers, The Bancroft Library.
7. This description and partial list come from Johnson’s résumé in the Bancroft Library.
8. John Williams, “Remembering Albert Johnson: Black Scholar, Critic, and Academician,” *Black Scholar* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 54.
9. The audio recordings of many of these *Craft of Cinema* sessions with Fred Astaire, Bette Davis, and others can be found online along with other tapes digitized by the BAMPFA Film Library and Study Center. The Astaire session is accessible at https://archive.org/details/bampfa-audio_03695 and the Bette Davis session at https://archive.org/details/bampfa-audio_03709.
10. See Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); see also Hugo Berkeley’s PBS documentary *The Jazz Ambassadors* (2018), which details these Cold War–era jazz-diplomacy tours first dreamed up by Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and featuring such musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Melba Liston, Dave Brubeck, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington.
11. See Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), which details Howard and Sue Bailey Thurman’s 1935 pilgrimage to India as well as Bayard Rustin’s and Mordecai Johnson’s subsequent travels there. For more on Alice Coltrane and India, see Franya Berkman, *Monument Eternal: The Music of Alice Coltrane* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan

- University Press, 2010); and Tammy Kernodle, "Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Alice Coltrane and the Redefining of the Jazz Avant-Garde," in *John Coltrane and Black America's Quest for Freedom*, ed. Leonard Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73–98.
12. The festival flyer also lists *The Member of the Wedding* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), *The Learning Tree* (Gordon Parks, 1969), and the underappreciated, Sidney Poitier–produced, *Brother John* (James Goldstone, 1971).
 13. Judy Stone, "Bay Area Film World's Bright-Eyed Ambassador," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 27, 1974.
 14. Abdosh Abdulhafiz, oral history interview by Allyson Field, L.A. Rebellion Collection, UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles, October 15, 2010. All further quotations from Abdulhafiz are drawn from this interview.
 15. Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, "Introduction: Emancipating the Image—The L.A. Rebellion of Black Filmmakers," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, ed. Field, Horak, and Stewart (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 15.
 16. Clyde Taylor, "Preface: Once upon a Time in the West . . . L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, ed. Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), ix.
 17. Albert Johnson, *Cannes 1976*. Jason Sanders at BAMPFA shared the self-published, self-bound booklets/cinematic chapbooks Johnson created several years in a row in the 1970s after his visits to Cannes.
 18. Albert Johnson, "Moods Indigo: A Long View, Part 2," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Spring 1991), 27. Johnson notes in his résumé that these essays were "excerpts" of a "work-in-progress" to be called "Moods Indigo: Observations on Black American Cinema, 1950–1992."
 19. Albert Johnson, *After Winter: Sterling Brown*, program notes, San Francisco International Film Festival, 1986.
 20. Albert Johnson, "Moods Indigo: A Long View," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (Winter 1990–1991): 24.
 21. Stuart Drown, "Revelations and Discoveries: An Interview with Albert Johnson," *Berkeley Graduate*, March 1982, in Albert J. Johnson papers, Bancroft Library.
 22. And of course, as soon as BAMPFA and the Bancroft Library reopen for research there will surely be scholars who, inspired by the speculative, fabulating, and fabulous work of Allyson Nadia Field and Saidiya Hartman, will be able to uncover more about the fullness of Johnson's life, making sense of the gaps and silences. See Field's *Uplift Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015) and Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (New York: Norton, 2019).
 23. Ernest Callenbach, "In Memoriam: Albert Johnson," *Film Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (Winter 1998–1999). The detail of the Pam Grier tribute is from John Williams, "Remembering Albert Johnson: Black Scholar, Critic, and Academician," *Black Scholar* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 54–55.