



## Black Dreams and Silver Screens: Black Film Posters, 1921–2004

### About the Collection

The Alden and Mary Kimbrough Collection, based in the Leimert Park area of Los Angeles, is one of the most extensive collections of historically significant documentary materials on the lives, culture and history of African-Americans held in private hands. Their collection began in 1932 with a gift to their father, the late Dr. Jack Kimbrough, a copy of *Paul Robeson, Negro*, written by Robeson's wife, Eslanda, signed and dated by Robeson. The collection is exceptionally rich in material on the life of Paul Robeson, the works of Emory Douglas, Amiri Baraka and on the Black Panther Part for Self-Defense. *Black Dreams and Silver Screens* includes selected items from the Kimbrough Collection's extensive list of posters, lobby cards and memorabilia on the Black presence in film.

### About the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

The Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History is dedicated to the enrichment of visual culture on campus and in the community. The Brown Gallery supports the Stone Center's commitment to the critical examination of all dimensions of African-American and African diaspora cultures through the formal exhibition of works of art, artifacts and forms of material culture.



### History and Overview of Center

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History is part of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a center within the University's Academic Affairs Division, we have a central role in supporting the University's academic mission. We have a commitment to broaden the range of intellectual discourse about African-Americans and to encourage better understanding of the peoples of the African diaspora and their perspectives on important social and cultural issues.



**UNC**  
THE SONJA HAYNES STONE  
CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURE  
AND HISTORY



## Black Dreams and Silver Screens: Black Film Posters, 1921–2004

From the Alden and Mary Kimbrough Collection

October 9, 2008–December 5, 2008

The Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum  
The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History

# Black Dreams and Silver Screens: Black Film Posters, 1921–2004

## About the Exhibition

The exhibition of *Black Dreams and Silver Screens: Black Film Posters, 1921-2004*, at the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History, is the first east coast showing of these items selected from the collection of Alden and Mary Kimbrough of Los Angeles, California. The exhibition consists of over 60 items including vintage posters, photographs, and lobby cards that, although initially used as public relations and publicity material, have recently been seen as important historical documents that chronicle the development and social perspectives expressed in Black films over the years.

Black film came about out of necessity and developed during a period when Hollywood films were first becoming a cultural staple and when roles for Black performers were few. The roles that were available were usually the stereotyped and limited portrayals that reflected the racism of U.S. society. Many talented and gifted Black performers were consigned to play the most demeaning roles in Hollywood films and were often seen, as one author wrote, as mammies, coons, bucks and mulattoes.



Early on, beginning around 1916, Black entrepreneurs, including brothers Noble and George Johnson, Emmet J. Scott and Oscar Micheaux, began to produce their own films that sought to challenge the limited and denigrating images purveyed in Hollywood fare. Others followed their general example and, according to Kisch and Mapp, the Norman Film Manufacturing Company, the Frederick Douglass Film Company, the Unique Film Company and Reol Productions were founded using either the Black owned or white controlled model to serve a Black movie-going audience that was hungry for images that truly reflected their community.

*Black Dreams and Silver Screens* chronicles this early history, beginning with the 1921 production of *Lure of a Woman*, a Progress Picture Producing Association film that co-starred Regina Cohee, Dr. A. Porter Davis, and Charles Allen. Other films documented in the exhibit are *The Bull-Dogger* (1923) with noted cultural icon of the period Bill Pickett, billed as the 'World Colored Champion'.



The exhibition works its way through the 1930's and the emergence of Micheaux and underappreciated producer, director and actor Spencer Williams, better known for his role as Andy in the 1950's TV series *Amos n' Andy*. The 1940's list includes now well-known titles like *Stormy Weather* (1943), *Am I Guilty* (1940), as well as lesser known names like *The Betrayal* (1948) and *Take My Life* (1941). Although the 1950's and 1960's may seem to be lean years, they saw important and groundbreaking work as well.

The 1970's are well represented and many of the titles associated with the so-call Blaxploitation era are included in the exhibition. The rise and rebirth of the independent Black filmmaker during the 1980's and 90's provides a sense of continuity between the audacious and courageous spirit of the early pioneers and the unflinching vision transmitted in films like *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987), *Sankofa* (1993) and *Boyz n' the Hood* (1991). Entries from contemporary filmmakers bring us up to the present and feature the surprise favorite *Drumline* (2002) and the earthy tour de-force, *Lackawanna Blues* (2005).