

Streaming Video Titles Addressing the African-American Experience ...from the Duke University Libraries

The following is an alphabetical list of selected films compiled by Danette Pachtner, Librarian for Film, Video & Digital Media and Women's Studies. These films are available to current Duke students, staff and faculty on streaming video platforms that the Duke University Libraries subscribes to or licenses. To find these films and more, search in our [online catalog](#).

[4 Little Girls](#) (HBO documentary in Films on Demand/FOD)

In his documentary (and HBO) debut, renowned director/producer Spike Lee takes an in-depth look at one of America's most heinous crimes, a racially motivated bombing that may have been caused by -- and most definitely helped define -- the emerging civil-rights movement championed by Dr. Martin Luther King and others. *4 Little Girls* is at once a moving human account by family members and friends of the four girls who perished in the September 15, 1963 bombing, as well as an important historical account of the forces that shaped race relations in Birmingham (called by King "the most thoroughly segregated city in the U.S.") and the nation in the 1960s.

[African-Americans: Many Rivers to Cross](#) (PBS documentary series in Academic Video Online/AVON)

Noted Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. recounts the full trajectory of African-American history in his groundbreaking new six-part series.

[America to Me](#) (Kartemquin Films documentary in Film Platform/AVON)

Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*, *Life Itself*) examines racial, economic and class issues in contemporary American education in this multipart unscripted documentary series. "America to Me" spends an academic year at Chicagoland's elite Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRF), allowing its students, families, faculty and administration to tell stories of the pressures and challenges teens face today in their own words.

[Baadasssss!](#) (Sony Pictures Classics feature film in AVON)

A candid portrait of Melvin Van Peebles' struggles as a young, black director during the society-shifting 70's. Determined to make a film that matters, Melvin deals with two-faced backers, a rag-tag crew, threatening creditors, and various shades of Hollywood hypocrisy. With everything on the line, his only choice is to stick to his guns and do whatever it takes to get his neo-blaxploitation epic to the audience for which it was envisioned. Directed by the subject's son, Mario Van Peebles.

[Bamboozled](#) (New Line Cinema feature film in Swank Digital Campus)

Spike Lee's searing parody of American television, it takes a humorous look at how race, ratings and the pursuit of power lead to a network executive's stunning rise and tragic downfall.

[**Banished: How Whites Drove Blacks Out of Town in America**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

A look at three U.S. cities, which were part of many communities that violently forced African American families to flee in post-reconstruction America by Marco Williams.

[**bell hooks: Cultural Criticism & Transformation**](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

bell hooks is one of America's most accessible public intellectuals. In this two-part video, extensively illustrated with many of the images under analysis, she makes a compelling argument for the transformative power of cultural criticism.

[**Birth of a Movement**](#) (PBS documentary in FOD)

In 1915, Boston-based African American newspaper editor and activist William M. Trotter waged a battle against D.W. Griffith's technically groundbreaking but notoriously Ku Klux Klan-friendly THE BIRTH OF A NATION, that still rages today about race relations, media representation, and the power and influence of Hollywood. Nominated for an ****Image Award**** for Outstanding Television Documentary.

[**Black is, Black Ain't**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

The final film by director Marlon Riggs examines diversity within the Black community and questions the notion of an essential Black identity.

[**Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution**](#) (Firelight Films/PBS documentary in FOD)

More than 40 years after the Black Panther Party was founded the group and its leadership remains powerful and enduring images in our popular imagination. This will weave together the voices of those who lived this story-police informants journalists white supporters and detractors those who remained loyal to the party and those who left it. Directed by Stanley Nelson.

[**The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in FOD)

Archival footage and interviews trace the history of African-American newspapers and journalism from the 19th century to the Civil Rights movement.

[**Boss: the Black Experience in Business**](#) (Firelight Films/PBS documentary in FOD)

From award-winning filmmaker Stanley Nelson comes a film that educates, informs, and examines more than 150 years of African-American men and women who have embodied the qualities that are the heart of the American entrepreneurial spirit.

[**Brick by Brick: A Civil Rights Story**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

Tracks the landmark case, U.S. vs Yonkers, which challenged housing and educational discrimination in the North and pushed for desegregation.

[**Capturing the Flag**](#) (Bullfrog Films documentary in Docuseek)

A tight-knit group of friends travel to Cumberland County, North Carolina - the 2016

'posterchild' for voter suppression - intent on proving that the big idea of American democracy can be defended by small acts of individual citizens. What they find at the polls serves as both a warning and a call to action for anyone interested in protecting the 'One Man, One Vote' fundamental of our democracy.

[**A Class Divided**](#) (Frontline/PBS documentary in FOD).

Film about Jane Elliot, Iowa schoolteacher who developed the "blue eyes" "brown eyes" classroom experiment.

[**Color Adjustment**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

An award-winning film from Marlon Riggs, the director of ***Ethnic Notions***. This film traces the development of stereotypes through 40 years of prime time television.

[**Considering Reparations: Paying the Debt for Slavery**](#) (Newshour/PBS documentary in FOD)

Explores the subject of reparations, including discussion of horrors of slavery, post-traumatic slavery syndrome, and forms of reparations.

[**A Dangerous Idea**](#) (Bullfrog Films documentary in Docuseek)

There is a dangerous idea that has threatened the American Dream from the very beginning. It is a strong current of biological determinism which views some groups, races and individuals as inherently superior to others and more deserving of fundamental rights. Despite the founders' assertion that 'all are created equal,' this idea was used to justify disenfranchising women, blacks and Native Americans from the earliest days of the Republic.

[**Daughters of the Dust**](#) (feature film in Avon)

At the dawn of the 20th century, a family in the Gullah community of coastal South Carolina -- former West African slaves who adopted many of their ancestors' Yoruba traditions -- suffers a generational split. Directed by Julie Dash, this was the first feature film directed by an African-American woman that was distributed theatrically in the United States.

[**Do the Right Thing**](#) (feature film in Swank Digital Campus)

Spike Lee's 1989 film depicting racial tensions that ignite around an Italian-owned pizzeria in Brooklyn's Bed-Stuy neighborhood on the hottest day of the year.

[**Ethnic Notions**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

Directed by Marlon Riggs, this Emmy award-winning documentary analyzes the deep-rooted stereotypes which have shaped the evolution of racial consciousness in America.

[**Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years**](#) (PBS documentary series in FOD).

Groundbreaking, award-winning series on America's Civil Rights movement, 1954-1985.

[February One](#) (documentary in Films on Demand)

On February 1st, 1960, four men dressed in their Sunday best sat down at a lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C. but were refused service because of the color of their skin. In this inspiring documentary, the Greensboro Four themselves tell the story of the lunch counter sit-in that revitalized the civil rights movement and established a model of student activism for the coming decade. In addition, Prof. William Chafe places the sit-in within the context of Brown v. Board of Education and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Prof. Vincent Harding discusses the role of television in helping to spread word of the events in Greensboro.

[Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask](#) (documentary in AVON)

Explores for the first time on film the pre-eminent theorist of the anti-colonial movements of this century. Fanon's two major works, Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth, were pioneering studies of the psychological impact of racism on both colonized and colonizer.

[Freedom Riders](#) (Firelight Films/PBS documentary in AVON and FOD)

This documentary series by Stanley Nelson is about a band of courageous civil-rights activists calling themselves the Freedom Riders. Gaining impressive access to influential figures on both sides of the issue, it chronicles a chapter of American history that stands as an astonishing testament to the accomplishment of youth and what can result from the incredible combination of personal conviction and the courage to organize against all odds.

[Get Out](#) (Universal Pictures feature film in Swank Digital Campus)

A young African-American man visits his white girlfriend's family estate, he becomes ensnared in a more sinister real reason for the invitation. Directed by Jordan Peele.

[The Great White Hoax](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

Featuring acclaimed anti-racism educator Tim Wise, this film looks at the long history of racial scapegoating in American politics. From Nixon's Southern Strategy in the 1960s to Charlottesville and the rise of white nationalism today, the film offers a stunning look at how American politicians have stoked white anxiety and resentment and scapegoated people of color to divide and conquer working class voters.

[Greensboro: Closer to the Truth](#) (Filmmakers Library documentary in AVON)

This documentary explores the Greensboro Massacre of 1979 and its aftermath. Members of the Communist Workers Party massed for a "Death to the Klan" rally in Greensboro, North Carolina when a caravan of Ku Klux Klan and American Nazis arrived. As the police assigned to protect the rally inexplicably disappeared, the Klansmen opened fire, killing five demonstrators and injuring eleven others.

[Guilty Until Proven Guilty](#) (First Run Features in Docuseek)

Explores Louisiana's criminal justice system through the story of Tim Conerly, a young African-American man who was arrested in the wake of an armed robbery in New Orleans and waited 28 months for a trial for a crime he says he did not commit. After more than two years in the

Orleans Parish Jail, Conerly must choose between accepting a plea bargain of seven years or risking a sentence of 49½ to 198 years if he is convicted at trial.

[*Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

This quick-paced, carefully researched documentary traces Herskovits' development as a scholar to the shared African American and Jewish experiences of exile, exclusion and political oppression.

[*HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats & Rhymes*](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

Byron Hurt's "loving critique" of misogyny and homophobia in hip-hop; useful for illustrating the racism of the 70% white audience for hip-hop music.

[*HistoryMakers Digital Archive*](#)

The largest African American oral history video collection in the U.S. Individual interviews can be found in the Duke Libraries online catalog.

[*Horror Noire: a History of Black Horror*](#) (Icarus Films in Docuseek)

Starting with *The Birth of a Nation*, this film traces the history of African Americans in horror, from roles as passive victims, to terrifying monsters, to full-fledged protagonists. Filled with clips, sometimes juxtaposed with powerful images from civil rights marches to Rodney King, to Black Lives Matter protests, the film shows how popular horror films of each era reflect changing social norms.

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[*How Racism Harms White Americans*](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

Distinguished historian John H. Bracey Jr. offers a provocative analysis of the devastating economic, political, and social effects of racism on white Americans. In a departure from analyses of racism that have focused primarily on white power and privilege, Bracey trains his focus on the high price that white people, especially working class whites, have paid for more than two centuries of divisive race-based policies and attitudes.

[*I Am Not Your Negro*](#) (Kino Lorber documentary in Kanopy)

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO explores the continued peril America faces from institutionalized racism. In 1979, James Baldwin wrote a letter to his literary agent describing his next project, *Remember This House*. The book was to be a revolutionary, personal account of the lives and successive assassinations of three of his close friends--Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time of Baldwin's death in 1987, he left behind only thirty completed pages of his manuscript. Now, in his incendiary new documentary, master filmmaker Raoul Peck envisions the book James Baldwin never finished.

[*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*](#) (HBO feature film in FOD)

Based on Rebecca Skloot's critically acclaimed 2010 nonfiction best-seller of the same name, this HBO Films drama tells the true story of Henrietta Lacks, an African- American woman whose cells were used to create the first immortal human cell line, known as HeLa.

[**Killer of Sheep**](#) (feature film in AVON)

Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* was one of the first 50 films to be selected for the Library of Congress' National Film Registry and was chosen by the National Society of Film Critics as one of the 100 Essential Films. The protagonist, employed at the slaughterhouse, is suffering from the emotional side effects of his bloody occupation to such a degree that his entire life unhinges.

[**The Last Interview: Stuart Hall on the Politics of Cultural Studies**](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

In this interview conducted shortly before his death in 2014, Stuart Hall, one of the seminal figures in cultural studies, talks about his classic work *Policing the Crisis*. He offers a critical assessment of the field today and then turns his attention to the always shifting terrain of race and identity in the United States and Britain, offering fascinating cultural and political insights into the presidency of Barack Obama and the 2012 Olympics in London.

[**Losing Ground**](#) (Milestone Films feature film in AVON)

Her second film, director Kathleen Collins described *Losing Ground* as a comedy about a young woman who takes herself too seriously. One of the very first fictional features by an African-American woman, *Losing Ground* remains a stunning and powerful work of art. Brilliant and personal, *Losing Ground* should have ranked high in the canon of indie cinema. But the early 1980s was not an easy time for women or independent filmmakers and the film was never theatrically released. It was shown once on PBS's American Playhouse, and then it effectively disappeared.

[**The Loving Story**](#) (HBO documentary in Docuseek)

Oscar-shortlist selection THE LOVING STORY, the debut feature by Full Frame Documentary Film Festival founder Nancy Buirski, is the definitive account of Loving v. Virginia-the landmark 1967 Supreme Court decision that legalized interracial marriage.

[**Malcolm X**](#) (Warner Bros. feature film in Swank Digital Campus)

Spike Lee's screen version of the life of Malcolm X, who through his religious conversion to Islam, found the strength to rise up from a criminal past to become an influential civil rights leader.

[**Moonlight**](#) (feature film in Swank Digital Campus)

A look at three defining chapters in the life of Chiron, a young black man growing up in Miami. His epic journey to manhood is guided by the kindness, support and love of the community that helps raise him. Directed by Barry Jenkins and academy award winner for best film of 2017.

[**The Murder of Emmett Till**](#) (Firelight Films/PBS documentary in AVON and FOD)

The murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black boy who whistled at a white woman in a Mississippi grocery store in 1955, was a catalyst for the civil rights movement. Directed by Stanley Nelson.

[Portrait of Jason](#) (Milestone Films documentary in AVON)

The subject and constant object of this film is male prostitute Jason Holliday giving a stream-of-consciousness "confession" of his life. Directed by experimental filmmaker, Shirley Clarke, the film was shot over a twelve-hour period. Jason recounts tales from his life that define his identity.

[Power to Heal: Medicare and the Civil Rights Revolution](#) (Bullfrog Films documentary in Docuseek)

Power To Heal tells a poignant chapter in the historic struggle to secure equal and adequate access to healthcare for all Americans. Central to the story is the tale of how a new national program, Medicare, was used to mount a dramatic, coordinated effort that desegregated thousands of hospitals across the country in a matter of months. The film illustrates how Movement leaders and grass-roots volunteers pressed and worked with the federal government to achieve justice and fairness for African-Americans. Directed by Charles Burnett.

[Race: The Power of an Illusion](#) (California Newsreel documentary in FOD)

A three-part series exploring the origins, beliefs and consequences of what we call race. Online companion resources can be found at <https://www.racepowerofanillusion.org/>.

[Race to Execution](#) (Filmmakers Library documentary in AVON)

Explores the deep and disturbing link between race and the death penalty in America.

[Race, the Floating Signifier](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

Arguing against the biological interpretation of racial difference, Hall asks us to pay close attention to the cultural processes by which the visible differences of appearance come to stand for natural or biological properties of human beings. Drawing upon the work of writers such as Frantz Fanon, he shows how race is a "discursive construct" and, because its meaning is never fixed, can be described as a "floating signifier." Produced by Media Education Foundation (MEF).

[Requiem for the American Dream](#) (FilmRise documentary in Kanopy)

This award-winning documentary features Noam Chomsky on one of the defining political issues of our time: accelerating economic inequality. Combining Chomsky's rare explanatory powers with breathtaking visuals and stunning motion graphics, the film dissects a long line of government policies that have benefited corporations and the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the vast majority of the population, and traces the corrosive impact of these policies on our democracy. The result is a remarkable piece of cinema and an extraordinary teaching tool.

[The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow](#) (California Newsreel documentary in FOD)

Four-part series offers an extensive look at racial oppression in the U.S. between the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement.

[Say Her Name: the Life and Death of Sandra Bland](#) (HBO documentary in Films on Demand)

On July 10, 2015, Sandra Bland, a vibrant 28-year-old African American from Chicago, was arrested for a traffic violation in a small Texas town. After three days in custody, she was found hanging from a noose in her cell. From the Oscar®-nominated, Emmy®- and Peabody Award-winning team of directors/producers Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, *Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland* examines this story in depth, revealing previously unknown details.

[*Skin Deep*](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON).

Directed by Academy Award nominated filmmaker Frances Reid follows students from different colleges and universities to a challenging racial awareness then follows them back to their campuses.

[*Soundtrack for a Revolution*](#) (Films for the Humanities & Sciences documentary in FOD)

On picket lines, in organizational meetings, even in police wagons and jail cells, songs of protest and inspiration helped drive the civil rights movement. Showcasing many of these songs, this stirring documentary explores the history of the era through archival footage, interviews with key civil rights activists, and performances by contemporary artists assembled specifically for the film.

[*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*](#) (Criterion Collection film in Kanopy)

In his one-of-a-kind fiction/documentary hybrid *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm, Take one*, director William Greaves presides over a beleaguered film crew in New York's Central Park, leaving them to try to figure out what kind of movie they're making. A couple enacts a break-up scenario over and over, a documentary crew films a crew filming the crew, locals wander casually into the frame: the project defies easy description. Yet this wildly innovative sixties counterculture landmark remains one of the most tightly focused and insightful movies ever made about making movies.

[*Tell Them We Are Rising*](#) (Firelight Films/PBS documentary in AVON)

Black colleges and universities are a haven for Black intellectuals, artists and revolutionaries and have educated the architects of freedom movements and cultivated leaders in every field. Stanley Nelson and Marco Williams team up on this examination of the impact these institutions have had on American history, culture, and national identity.

[*Through a Lens Darkly*](#) (First Run Features documentary in AVON and FOD)

The first documentary to explore the American family photo album through the eyes of black photographers, *Through a Lens Darkly* probes the recesses of American history to discover images that have been suppressed, forgotten and lost.

[*Toni Morrison: the Pieces I Am*](#) (Magnolia Films documentary in Swank Digital Campus)

This documentary reflects on the life and work of American novelist Toni Morrison. It includes discussions about many of her critically acclaimed novels and her career as an editor.

[*Tongues Untied*](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

1989 film by Marlon Riggs. In an experimental amalgam of rap music, street poetry,

documentary film, and dance, a gay African-American man expresses what it is like to be gay and black in the United States.

[**Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

Filmmaker Katrina Browne discovers that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. She and nine cousins retrace the Triangle Trade and gain a powerful new perspective on the black/white divide.

[**Traffic Stop**](#) (HBO documentary in FOD)

This haunting and compelling Academy Award®-nominated, 30-minute, documentary short tells the story of Breiaion King, a 26-year-old African-American school teacher from Austin, Texas, who was stopped in 2015 for a routine traffic violation—an encounter that escalated into a dramatic and violent arrest.

[**True Justice**](#) (HBO documentary in Kanopy)

This feature documentary follows Bryan Stevenson - lawyer and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative - through his experiences as a capital defense attorney and advocate for community-based reform.

[**Tulia, Texas**](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

Through its scrupulous investigation of a landmark case, this documentary uncovers the deep-rooted assumptions about race and crime that still permeate our society and undermines our justice system.

[**Two Towns of Jasper**](#) (Documentary Educational Resources documentary in Kanopy)

This remarkable film production featured segregated production crews — one black and one white — each filming the white and black communities of Jasper, Texas, the site of one of the most notorious racially-motivated murders in recent memory.

[**Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?**](#) (PBS documentary in AVON and FOD)

This series offers an overview of the ways that racial and economic inequality are not abstract concepts but hospitalize and kill even more people each year than cigarettes. The segment on the impact of racism on African American infant mortality is particularly compelling.

[**Watermelon Woman**](#) (feature film in Kanopy)

Winner of Best Feature Film at the Berlin International Film Festival, director Cheryl Dunye plays a version of herself in this witty, nimble landmark of New Queer Cinema.

[**What's My Name: Muhammad Ali**](#) (HBO documentary in FOD)

Filmmaker Antoine Fuqua examines the extraordinary life and career of Muhammad Ali -- from his days as a champion boxer to his legacy as a social activist and cultural icon in this two part

film.

[What's Race Got to Do With It?](#) (California Newsreel documentary in AVON and FOD)

Directed by Frances Reid, she follows up on her earlier film, "Skin Deep," with this documentary about an optional class dealing with race at Berkley in a post-affirmative action world.

[When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts](#) (HBO Documentary in FOD)

Spike Lee's take on the disaster in New Orleans. See also the curriculum developed to go with this film.

[White Like Me: Race, Racism & White Privilege in America](#) (MEF documentary in Kanopy)

Based on the work of acclaimed anti-racist educator and author Tim Wise, explores race and racism in the US through the lens of whiteness and white privilege. In a stunning reassessment of the American ideal of meritocracy and claims that we've entered a post-racial society, Wise offers a fascinating look back at the race-based white entitlement programs that built the American middle class, and argues that our failure as a society to come to terms with this legacy of white privilege continues to perpetuate racial inequality and race-driven political resentments today.

[Whose Streets?](#) (Magnolia Pictures documentary in Kanopy)

Told by the activists and leaders who live and breathe the Black Lives Matter movement, *Whose Streets?* is an unflinching look at the Ferguson uprising. For this generation, the battle is not for civil rights, but for the right to live.