

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

Restored by the Yale Film Archive and The Film Foundation, with funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation

LOSING GROUND

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11
7 P.M. • HUMANITIES
QUADRANGLE
LECTURE HALL

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



Born and raised in New Jersey, Kathleen Collins (1942-1988) studied religion and philosophy at Skidmore College before traveling to Paris to study literature at the Sorbonne. While she always considered herself a writer, it was not until she got to France that she became interested in cinema. A veritable renaissance woman, Collins edited films professionally and was a professor of film at City College of New York; she also wrote award-winning plays and short stories. *LOSING GROUND* was her only feature film.

LOSING GROUND is a deeply introspective film that depicts the struggle of Sara (Seret Scott), a philosophy professor, to find ecstasy and incorporate it into her life. Sara is married to Victor (Bill Gunn), a successful painter, who has a history of infidelity. Sara begins research on notions of ecstasy, which eventually leads her to act in a student film adaptation of "Frankie and Johnny" that uncannily mirrors her own life. These actions lead to disequilibrium in Sara's relationships with her mother and with her husband, yet it is through these actions that she finally experiences the ecstatic.

During a 1984 master class at Howard University, Collins expressed her frustrations with white distributors who just could not understand the film. She rejected their tone-deaf interpretations, insisting, "I posit that [*LOSING GROUND*] has so many racial angles. But what it starts from, the premise of the movie—and I take this back to the experience of love—the premise of the movie is that no one ultimately is going to mythologize my life. No one is going to refuse me the right to explore my experiences as normal experiences. Human experiences...When it comes down to actually telling stories...how do we divest ourselves of the need to make ourselves extraordinary?"

With Collins's fierce commitment to telling "ordinary" Black stories, *LOSING GROUND* still circulated despite its lack of initial theatrical distribution. In 1983, curator June Givanni brought the film to Third Eye: London Third World Cinema Festival; it received the prize for First Feature at the Portuguese International Film Festival. The film also screened in Berlin, Munich, and Paris. Collins traveled to universities around the US, screening *LOSING GROUND* and giving master classes. In addition to Howard University, she visited Indiana University's Black Film Center/Archive, the University of Delaware, and Spelman College, amongst others. She was greatly admired by her students, such as Ronald Gray (cinematographer for *LOSING GROUND* and Ayoka Chenzira's *ALMA'S RAINBOW*) and Joseph B. Vásquez (director, *HANGIN' WITH THE HOMEBOYS*), who went on to work on their own and others' films. Zeinabu irene Davis includes a dedication to Collins in her acclaimed short *CYCLES*. In 1992, Yvonne Welbon included *LOSING GROUND* in Chicago's Women in the Director's Chair program "Mosaic in Black."

In 2015, *LOSING GROUND* began its theatrical release with Milestone Films after a successful premiere of the rediscovered film at Lincoln Center's "Tell It Like It Is: Black Independents in New York, 1968-1986" program. The film finally received long-overdue attention in mainstream publications like the *New York Times* and *The New Yorker*. With this recent success, it is important to underscore the Black filmmakers, curators, and educators who kept *LOSING GROUND* alive until its recent resurgence into wider recognition.

No. 9
SEASON 7

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **KATHLEEN COLLINS**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **RONALD K. GRAY**
MUSIC BY **MICHAEL MINARD**
EDITING **RONALD K. GRAY, KATHLEEN COLLINS**
PRODUCED BY **LOSING GROUND PRODUCTIONS** (1982) 86 MINS.
STARRING **SERET SCOTT, BILL GUNN, DUANE JONES, BILLIE ALLEN, GARY BOLLING, NORBERTO KERNER, AND MARTIZA RIVERA**

FILM NOTES BY **NZINGHA KENDALL**

PRESERVATION PREVIEW: THANKS TO A DONATION FROM FILMMAKER KATHLEEN COLLINS' DAUGHTER NINA, SHEPHERDED BY FACULTY MEMBER TERRI FRANCIS IN 2012, THE ORIGINAL 16MM CAMERA NEGATIVE FOR *LOSING GROUND* IS PART OF THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE COLLECTION. A GRANT BY THE FILM FOUNDATION, WITH FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE HOBSON/LUCAS FAMILY FOUNDATION, SUPPORTED THE FILM ARCHIVE'S WORK TO PRESERVE AND RESTORE THE FILM BY CREATING A 4K DIGITAL SCAN OF THE ORIGINAL NEGATIVE AT COLORLAB IN ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND. THE FILES WERE THEN COLOR-CORRECTED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF CINEMATOGRAPHER RONALD K. GRAY. MEANWHILE, THE FILM'S OPTICAL SOUNDTRACK, AUGMENTED BY ORIGINAL MAGNETIC AUDIO RECORDINGS COURTESY OF THE FILM'S COMPOSER, MICHAEL MINARD, WERE TRANSFERRED AND RESTORED BY AUDIO MECHANICS IN BURBANK, CALIFORNIA. FINALLY, COLORLAB CREATED A NEW 35MM INTERNEGATIVE, AND DJ AUDIO IN BURBANK CREATED A NEW 35MM TRACK NEGATIVE FROM AUDIO MECHANICS' RESTORED FILES. TOGETHER, THEY WERE USED TO CREATE THE 35MM PRINT THAT SCREENS TO TONIGHT, THE FIRST AND ONLY SUCH PRINT IN EXISTENCE.

NEXT UP: A MASTERPIECE OF FRENCH CINEMA, JEAN RENOIR'S 1937 FILM *GRAND ILLUSION* TELLS THE STORY OF A GROUP OF FRENCH OFFICERS IN WORLD WAR I (PLAYED BY JEAN GABIN AND MARCEL DALIO, AMONG OTHERS) WHO PLOT TO ESCAPE FROM A PRISONER OF WAR CAMP RUN BY THE ARTISTOCRATIC RITTEMEISTER VON RAUFFENSTEIN (ERICH VON STROHEIM), THE FILM SCREENS IN 35MM ON **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17 AT 7 PM**