

OPENING REMARKS on Apr 10, 2026

LA Rebellion Screening & Filmmaker Q&A — James Bridges Theater, UCLA TFT



From left to right: FTVDM Chair and Professor Fabian Wagmister; panelists Reem Jubran, Bryant Griffin, and Alile Sharon Larkin; Dean and Distinguished Professor Celine Parreñas Shimizu; and John Christopher Horak.

Welcome! I am Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Dean of the School of Theater, Film and Television. Thank you for joining us here at our James Bridges

Theater. Tonight's two films — *L.A. Rebellion: A Cinematic Movement* and *Don't Be Long, Little Bird* — are in dialogue with each other and with history as well as the historical moment. Together, they ask: what does cinema do, who does it serve, and who gets to speak through it?

Opening Provocation

“I start with a question — What does it mean to not know your own history?”

We are sitting right now in the building where one of the most radical, multiracial, politically consequential film movements in American history was born. The LA Rebellion. And so many people do not know it, including at TFT . Not because they're incurious. Because this history has been suppressed and actively forgotten. That forgetting is not an accident. It is a symptom of how power shapes what we know — it is a subjugated knowledge towards the deprivation of an abundant inheritance, particularly, the cinematic practice we need now—coalition-based, new and needed underrepresented voices.

What the LA Rebellion Was

From the late 1960s through the 1980s, filmmakers of color — Black, Latino/a, Asian American, Indigenous — made films here at UCLA that did not look like Hollywood and its designation of worthlessness for people of color. They weren't supposed to. UCLA was deliberately independent for filmmakers here like Ray Manzarek and Jim Morrison (Francis Ford Coppola was the exception); the curriculum pointed outward to world cinema, ethnographic film, the French New Wave...

The program's first Black professor, Elyseo Taylor, built the Ethnocommunications Program as a multiracial initiative rooted in courses like Film and Social Change — with community accountability, Ford Foundation funding, and a mandate to make films for communities Hollywood refused to see. The films were made within a scholarly, critical and theoretical context with the teaching of Teshome Gabriel, on Third Cinema.

The result was rebellion — against Hollywood content in seeking alternative form. These filmmakers told different stories that remade the grammar, structure and vocabulary of cinema itself.

The Multiracial Frame

Josslyn Lockett's book *Towards a More Perfect Rebellion* insists this was not a Black film movement. The name was coined by Clyde Taylor and the archive at UCLA TFT collected and preserved the work. It was a multiracial original movement.

LA Rebellion filmmaker Haile Gerima himself says it: to reduce the Rebellion to one group is unfair to the people who were there. When you collapse it into a single-group story, the cross-racial solidarity disappears, the shared structures of oppression disappear, the political power disappears. The multiracial framing is not a historical correction. It is an argument about coalition—in the deepest sense of knowing and

needing each other to compose our shared realities and representations.

The Epistemological Stakes

Tonight we are acquiring knowledge with weight — knowledge that carries a charge and a responsibility. The suppression of this history is itself a political act— as is its undoing.

The Present Moment

“We are in April 2026. DEI commitments built after 2020 are being dismantled across studios and tech companies. There are exceptional successes when it comes to Hollywood cinema such as Ryan Coogler and Jordan Peele as well as the successes of Shonda Rhimes and Ava DuVernay. We stand upon a knife’s edge of contradiction tonight that we can better map about the place of Rebellion inheritance and the goals of commercial cinema.”

Rebellion vs. Resistance

One working distinction I wish to make: resistance says I refuse this assignation of devaluation in an interior battle, that externalizes

new belief in the self as evidenced in the films. Rebellion says I am remaking the conditions under which refusal becomes possible. The LA Rebellion films do both. It is not enough to tell different stories. The form has to rebel too, so as to create the conditions for more production and more creativity.

The Question for Tonight

What did this movement require — structurally— to happen? And what does it mean to inherit this history, in this building, in 2026, in the age of AI and the collapse of DEI infrastructure?

**Rebellion or resistance — and what do you need to make either one possible today?
Our guests will help us answer.**

PANELIST BIOS

Alile Sharon Larkin

Alile Sharon Larkin (born May 6, 1953) is an American film producer, writer, and director associated with the L.A. Rebellion, a movement that reimagined Black cinema outside Hollywood

conventions. She is part of the second generation of this influential group and co-founded the Black Filmmakers Collective. While at UCLA, she directed several notable short films, including *The Kitchen* (1975) and *Your Children Come Back to You* (1979), which explore themes of mental health, inequality, and assimilation. She is best known for her 1982 film *A Different Image*, which examines complex interpersonal relationships and identity. Beyond filmmaking, Larkin is also a published writer and continues to contribute to film culture through projects, retrospectives, and scholarship.

Bryant Griffin

Bryant Griffin is an Emmy Award–winning Los Angeles-based writer and director with an MFA in directing from UCLA. Before filmmaking, he spent 12 years at Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), contributing to over 40 studio feature films. His debut narrative feature, *Young King*, screened at the Austin Film Festival and won Best Narrative Feature at the Pan African Film Festival, among other honors. Griffin also directed the

documentary *L.A. Rebellion: A Cinematic Movement*, which premiered on PBS Artbound and earned a Los Angeles Area Emmy Award. His work reflects both technical expertise and a commitment to storytelling rooted in cultural history.

Reem Jubran

Reem Jubran is a Palestinian-American producer, director, and writer working between Palestine and Los Angeles on narrative films. She has collaborated on major productions such as *Wajib* and *It Must Be Heaven*, gaining experience within the Palestinian film industry. A graduate of UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television, she has written, produced, and directed several short films. Her current projects include *Mariam*, about an Arab-American drag queen teen, and *Sou-Sou*, to be filmed in Jericho, Palestine. Jubran aims to amplify underrepresented voices, particularly Arab women, and is developing Arabish Films to support emerging Arab storytellers.

Question 1 — Inheritance

What we have to say is so personal, and so very different, and there is no way anyone else can say it for us. And when they do, it is more of an external statement made about us and our external condition. When we say it, it is very personal and very different... Being at UCLA, you are very free with what you want to do with no one standing over you, telling you this can be done or not be done... Beyond UCLA, to be able to raise more money to make these films to tackle this problem, it is about money more than anything else.”

”

— Julie Dash in conversation with Barbara McCullough at UCLA for the public tv show “The View” in the 1970s

What does it mean to inherit the authorship of the LA Rebellion—as a form of speaking for oneself within the context of the external imposition Dash

identifies? What are the obstacles now in claiming the inheritance of the LA Rebellion?

Question 2 — The Multiracial Frame

Luckett argues the Rebellion's power came from its cross-racial solidarity — that collapsing it into a single-group story loses political force. Reem, you are making Palestinian stories at an institution where this multiracial movement happened. What does that lineage mean to you — is it a resource, a responsibility, something else?

And Alile, Bryant — do you recognize the movement you were part of in that multiracial framing, or does it complicate how you understood it from inside?

Question 3 — Rebellion vs. Resistance in 2026

I drew a distinction tonight: resistance entails refusal, rebellion remakes the conditions. In April 2026 — with DEI infrastructure dismantled, AI reshaping authorship, Hollywood contracting — where are you each locating your work on that

spectrum? And what do you actually need, structurally, to make rebellion rather than just resistance possible right now?

Please join us tomorrow at the Hammer Museum for the films of Robert Nakamura and on April 21 at the Darren Star, for our collective reading of the book Towards A More Perfect Rebellion by Josslynn Luckett in conversation with FTVDM Professor Ellen Scott and UCLA TFT Black Film and Theater Initiative Founder and alumna Amber Payne.

Curtain Call

tft.ucla.edu/give

UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television — Dean Celine Parreñas Shimizu