

OPENING REMARKS on April 21, 2026

For a More Perfect Rebellion – Darren Star Screening Room,
UCLA TFT



From left to right: TFT FTVDM Associate Professor Ellen Scott, Alumna Amber Payne ('26), Author and NYU Cinema Studies Associate Professor Josslyn Lockett and Dean and Distinguished Professor Celine Parreñas Shimizu

What does it mean to be here, in this building, in 2026, and not know your own history?

We are at TFT. The school that housed the Media Urban Crisis Program and its Mother Muccers. Then Ethnocommunications. Where Elyseo Taylor taught Film and Social Change in 1969 — a course still taught here today. Before he vanished after not getting tenure. When other faculty spoke of his failure as well as of the program. The students told a different story where they transformed themselves, their communities and ultimately world cinema and LA itself. Where Charles Burnett arrived in 1967. Where Bob Nakamura, Sandra Osawa, Larry Clark, Betty Chen, Haile Gerima, and Sylvia Morales made films that belong in the permanent vocabulary of world cinema. Where a multiracial

generation of filmmakers trained together, credited each other, cited each other across racial lines — and built a coalition the institution would spend the next fifty years failing to claim.

This happened here. In our classrooms. In our archives. In these halls.

Josslyn Lockett has written the forensic case — with evidence and rigor — for how institutions erase, and what we lose when they do.

Elyseo Taylor trained the movement that changed American independent cinema. His impact is still alive in this building. His name is largely absent from our official record. Lockett calls it produced forgetting. Memos went unanswered. A colleague claimed on record he had been here one year when the archive shows four. His program was called a stepchild in its own department.

In those same years, Ben Caldwell's classmates — and a professor — booed his work in the classroom. When the trap was laid to provoke him, he saw it and refused. The dignity was in the refusal. The booing and the bureaucratic silence are the same institution operating at two registers simultaneously.

These mechanisms are resonant today. DEI offices are being defunded. The Hollywood Diversity Report — housed here at TFT — documents the continuing decline of authorship by people of color in the industry this school feeds. Ethnocommunications is now in Asian American Studies, not in Theater, Film and Television where it was born — a move Bob Nakamura made thirty years ago for the same reasons of racism Caldwell describes.

Luckett insists the films of the LA Rebellion can only be fully understood relationally — not Black films with Black films alone, not Asian American films with Asian American films alone, but together, in conversation, because that is how they were made. Betty Chen and Julie Dash. Larry Clark citing Nakamura. Toni Cade Bambara writing the foreword to *This Bridge Called My Back* the same year *Ethnocommunications* was at its height. Read them together and they illuminate each other in ways no single-field analysis can reach.

The roadmap is in our own building. The UCLA Film Archive has put these films online. They are available right now. We just have to look. We just have to act.

As the new dean of TFT, who came here myself because of the LA Rebellion as the student of Loni Ding and Trinh T Minh-ha at Cal, traveling here with so many others, the LA Rebellion is my focus as a leader. I asked the school to read this book as a gift, as an inheritance we claim. And I am acting: we shall edify the LA Rebellion in the form of a plaque saying we were here, we are going to paint a mural so the faces and the act of filmmaking from community service and aesthetic revolution are never forgotten and we will hang up the posters of the ten films inaugurated into the National Registry of the Library of Congress—in East Melnitz where our tours begin. The LA Rebellion will not be denied, not forgotten, always remembered and revived as a roadmap for the future of cinema, democracy and our country in the world.

Please welcome Josslyn Luckett. And thank you! You literally embody our banner we fly: Your voice. Our story. In this beautiful book that is a call to action.

Also joining the panel discussion is:

Amber Payne is a writer, director, and multidisciplinary artist from Chicago whose work spans narrative, documentary, and

experimental film. A 2026 graduate of the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, she creates character-driven stories rooted in southern and urban gothic traditions that explore race, gender, class, and mental health from a Black femme perspective. Her work reflects a deep commitment to history, memory, social justice, and the power of art to connect us.

Professor Ellen Scott, today's moderator, is a scholar of media history, African American cultural history, and film and media theory whose work examines the relationship between media and the struggle for racial justice. She is the author of *Cinema Civil Rights* and a passionate teacher and mentor whose research continues to shape conversations around race, censorship, and representation on screen. At UCLA TFT, her scholarship helps deepen our understanding of film history, power, and the stakes of storytelling.

Thank you for being here today to discuss such an important topic.