Preface

William Greaves: Renaissance Man and Race Man

JACQUELINE NAJUMA STEWART AND SCOTT MACDONALD

The complex career of William Greaves remains among the most productive and diverse in the annals of American cultural history. Growing up in a working-class family in Harlem in the apartheid American society of the 1930s–1940s, Greaves, from a young age, seemed able to defy whatever limitations he faced by taking full advantage of the opportunities that Harlem made available to him. He was born in 1926 during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, and by the 1940s he was a successful songwriter whose songs were being recorded by major recording artists, a dancer performing with Pearl Primus at Carnegie Hall, and an actor in Broadway productions. A member of the Actors Studio from 1948, Greaves had featured roles in several of the last independent Black-cast “race movies”—*The Fight Never Ends* (Joseph Lerner, 1948), *Miracle in Harlem* (Jack Kemp, 1948), and *Souls of Sin* (Powell Lindsay, 1949)—and in the Hollywood “problem picture,” *Lost Boundaries* (Alfred L. Werker, 1949), and he would continue to teach acting for many years. Against all odds, he would become one of the most prolific filmmakers of his era and the most prolific African-American documentary filmmaker of all time.

From the beginning, Greaves saw filmmaking, and documentary filmmaking in particular, as a way of channeling his artistic impulse, so evident throughout his youth and young adulthood, into a creative practice that might contribute to a more humane understanding of the realities of American and world history. He hoped to use his artistic gifts not only to help expand the possibilities of documentary filmmaking itself, but to dignify the ways in which modern people, of whatever ethnicity and from whatever background, thought about themselves and others. Greaves was the ultimate humanist, both spiritually

directed and politically aware. For many years he was a devotee of the work of Indian philosopher, poet, and guru Sri Aurobindo. The trajectory of Greaves's filmmaking life, which is echoed by the structure of this book, demonstrates his fundamental commitment to a deepening recognition of immediate political realities and to an expansive and expanding global awareness.

During the late 1940s Greaves became interested in directing films and in documentary filmmaking. Since he could find no opportunities for documentary film training for African Americans in the United States, he moved to Canada to apprentice at the National Film Board, first in Ottawa and then, when the NFB moved to Montreal in 1956, in Montreal, where he honed his filmmaking craft by working in one crew capacity or another on any production he could join. In Canada, Greaves became a member of the first *cinéma-vérité* documentary unit in North America, while also instigating and teaching acting workshops modeled on the Actors Studio in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto.

Though there were considerable opportunities for Greaves at the NFB, as there had been on Broadway, by the early 1960s he had come to understand that his mission as filmmaker was to use filmmaking as part of the American Civil Rights Movement. He had become committed to documentary filmmaking because he believed in its potential for transforming how European Americans understood African-American life, history, and struggle, and for rehabilitating African Americans' senses of identity and pride. In 1959 he married his lifelong partner, Louise Archambault Greaves. They moved to the United States in 1963 and went to work raising a family and producing often award-winning films, first for the United Nations, then for the United States Information Agency. William and Louise established their own production company, William Greaves Productions, in 1964.

Many of the Greaves films explored crucial events, situations, and personalities relating to African-American history, culture, and politics. And when it became clear, in the wake of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) report of 1968, that there was a need for a nationally broadcast television news show focused on African-American issues, Greaves became the executive producer and cohost of the Emmy Award-winning *Black Journal*, while continuing to produce and distribute his own films.

From the outset, Greaves was less interested in becoming a filmmaker than in using filmmaking to create change, and particularly to correct falsehoods and misunderstandings regarding the contributions that African Americans had made to the United States and to the world. As he would say later, "I'd rejected the idea of going out to Hollywood. It felt like working out there would be like working on a plantation: you had to answer to the Man for everything you did.

We had a different mission.” And while his documentaries won many awards and were recognized for their artistry and technical excellence, Greaves was not as interested in becoming known as an auteur or being identified with a particular approach or style as he was in using whatever cinematic options that presented themselves for making the most effectively informational and consciousness-raising films he could.

It is likely that Greaves’s refusal to wed himself to a specific filmmaking mode has played a role in keeping many of his films from receiving the serious attention they deserve. Greaves’s return to the United States coincided with the flowering of *cinéma-vérité* documentary; that is, sync-sound shooting from within events as they develop. This included both the French approach exemplified by Jean Rouch in *Chronique d’un été—Paris 1960* (1961), where shooting was used to provoke revelations about individuals and the world, and what Erik Barnouw called “direct cinema,” where filmmakers like the Maysles brothers and Frederick Wiseman (and Greaves, in *Emergency Ward* [1959]) worked to be “flies on the wall,” recording events, insofar as feasible, without interfering with what they recorded. Whereas the *cinéma-vérité* filmmakers had a preferred method and found topics this method could effectively explore, Greaves decided on what situation or topic needed to be illuminated by a film, then adapted his production process in whatever ways were best suited for that project.

COMMITTED TO EXPERIMENTATION

Given the dearth of documentary films about the history, realities, and complexities of African-American life in the United States when Greaves began making films, the very decision to make a film about one or another aspect of the African-American experience could be considered an experiment. The rare exceptions—for example, *All My Babies: A Midwife’s Own Story* (George Stoney, 1953) and *The Quiet One* (Sidney Meyers, in collaboration with James Agee, Helen Levitt, and Janice Loeb, 1948)—were essentially acts of courage. For Greaves to document a Black psychiatrist and a White psychodramatist exploring how to build bridges between White factory managers and “hard-core unemployed” Black workers in Georgia for *In the Company of Men* (1969), or to face the challenge, on his own, of documenting the first national Black political convention for what became *Nationtime—Gary* (1973), involved a determination to try things that had never been done before: that is, to experiment and see what filmmaking could discover and communicate.

Over the decades, Greaves worked in a wide variety of ways, many of them unusual and experimental, sometimes even when, to modern audiences, aspects of what he did can now seem conventional—in some instances, for example, their use of “voice-of-god” narrators. But even when he used documentary conventions, Greaves often combined them with unusual approaches. In *From These Roots* (1974), he celebrates the accomplishments and impact of the Harlem Renaissance entirely in still photographs, accompanied by actor Brock Peters’s narration and an original score by Eubie Blake. In his documentation of the buildup to the first heavyweight fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, direct cinema seemed the best option, but an innovative multicamera setup allowed the fight itself to be seen in an entirely new way. For *Still a Brother: Inside the Negro Middle Class* (1968), Greaves chose a combination of interviews, narration (by Ossie Davis), on-the-street footage, editorializing music, and even a campy dramatization lampooning Black elitism to illustrate the economic and cultural complexities of middle-class African-American life during the emergence of Black Power consciousness.

During his time with *Black Journal*, Greaves brought a Pan-African sensibility to American television that was entirely novel, producing episodes of the show that dignified the complex history of African peoples and their many contributions to world culture. And for his project on Nobel Peace Prize laureate and diplomat Ralph Bunche, a feature documentary on the diplomat’s epic career, *Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey* (2001), was later accompanied by a multifaceted set of video modules designed for classroom use, along with an elaborate website and study guide.

Though he was always more interested in education than in cine-entertainment, Greaves was not afraid to test the waters of the film industry when he thought it might be open to films that served his fundamental goals. He was executive producer for Universal Pictures’ *Bustin’ Loose* (1981), starring Richard Pryor—an experience that, in the end, returned him to documentary. Greaves’s mission to be, insofar as possible, a changemaker came first, and throughout his career he remained committed to a fierce independence in getting his work done. On most of his films, he was his own producer and director, usually his own writer and cameraperson, and (with Louise Archambault Greaves) his own publicity person and distributor.

It is perhaps the central irony of Greaves’s long, productive career that his experiment in cine-metaphysics, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, seemingly a cine-vacation from more serious documentary filmmaking, has become his best-known film, at least among cineastes and film scholars. For the film (shot in 1968; first edited version, 1971), Greaves employed a virtually unprecedented way

of filming a film being made and constructed a feature docu-entertainment that is simultaneously reflective and critical of American culture and implicitly utopic. Misunderstood and ignored when Greaves attempted to find a distributor and shelved for decades, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* was rediscovered in 1991 and has since become canonical and widely recognized as one of film history's most engaging films about filmmaking. In recent decades it has drawn new attention to Greaves's other work, and its growing reputation instigated *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2½* (2005), made with the support of Steve Buscemi and Steven Soderbergh.

Despite the fact that during the years when Greaves's films were being produced they regularly won awards and were fixtures in public and academic 16mm film libraries across the country, most of his many accomplishments remain under the current cultural and film-historical radar. In some measure, this is a function of the fact that, throughout his career, Greaves believed that whatever experiments he was willing to attempt needed to be accessible to general audiences who would see his films not in commercial theaters or on television, or as part of the New York "underground" where experimental or "avant-garde" film was the order of the day, but in college classrooms, public libraries, community centers, churches, or union gatherings; that is, in circumstances where general audiences could expect culturally and historically informational films to be presented in a relatively predictable manner that was understandable and useful to them. Above all, Greaves was an educator, in the best sense: he was devoted to providing information and broadening the understanding of those who might see his films.

It seems likely that the long-standing lack of scholarly and critical attention to the history of what traditionally have been called "educational films" as well as other forms of "nontheatrical" cinema has worked against Greaves receiving the recognition he deserves. In recent years scholars and archivists have been paying increasing attention to nontheatrical film, as part of the recovery of "orphan" media histories. As more scholars explore the histories of educational and sponsored filmmaking, Greaves seems sure to have a prominent place.

BLACK MEDIA PIONEER

Greaves's focus on nontheatrical spheres for much of his career likely accounts for the lack of attention to his work in histories of African-American filmmaking, focused as they have been on identifying the stereotypical depictions of

African Americans in American commercial media and on recovering and highlighting Black cinematic auteurs. And yet, as Phyllis Klotman observes, Greaves is a crucial bridge between the era of “race movies” and the boom of Black independent filmmaking in the 1980s and 1990s. Reflecting on his work in the 1940s with Black independent feature and newsreel producer William Alexander, Greaves argued that the early Black pioneers (Alexander, Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams) were important forefathers of all American independent filmmakers, creating maverick stylistic and business strategies that could operate outside of the dominant film industry. Under the banner “William Greaves Productions,” Greaves created a structure for his filmmaking that endured for decades, generating films that took ever-fresh approaches to Black subject matter and could be circulated in the comparatively evergreen nontheatrical market. The Williams Greaves Productions website (www.williamgreaves.com) functions now as catalog of his productivity, as testimony of his (and Louise’s) business acumen, and as evidence of their early adoption of online tools for distribution.

On *Black Journal*, Greaves mentored a next generation of Black filmmakers. He directly affected the Black independent film scene on the East coast, including such accomplished figures as St. Clair Bourne, Madeline Anderson, and Kathleen Collins. More indirectly, his approach to filmmaking for social change is evident in the West Coast works of the LA Rebellion, filmmakers training at UCLA between the late 1960s and early 1980s with a mandate to speak of, for, and to the marginalized communities from which they came. We see nods to Greaves’s *vérité* approach to Black life in the realist approaches we find in the fiction films of Charles Burnett, Haile Gerima, and Billy Woodberry shot in South Central Los Angeles. While these filmmakers received international cinephile and festival attention, closer to home they routinely screened their films in community centers, schools, libraries, and other sites where they, like Greaves, would find their intended communities. It is important to note that these and other LA Rebellion filmmakers have also made documentaries. Indeed, the turn to documentary that is routinely made by major Black filmmakers like Spike Lee and Ava DuVernay suggests the importance of tracing the relationships between Greaves’s foundational documentary practice and the styles and circulation of “Black filmmaking” writ large.

Another important lesson Greaves’s career teaches us is to reexamine tendencies to separate theatrical film productions from nontheatrical and television work. While scholars have downplayed works for television made by celebrated Black filmmakers like Burnett and Julie Dash, the contemporary “prestige” television landscape has been a productive space for serious filmmakers of all sorts,

including African-American directors like Lee and DuVernay. Taking in the full scope of Black media making requires a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the realms of television, documentary, sponsored film, and the avant-garde—domains Greaves identified and explored in compelling ways across his career. The stylistic radicalism we see in moving image works by a wide range of contemporary Black artists, including Arthur Jafa, Cauleen Smith, Martine Syms, Kevin Jerome Everson, Ytasha Womack, and Ja'Tovia Gary, picks up on threads Greaves laid out over decades of work: exploring multiple Black temporalities, recording testimonies of everyday Black subjects, detailing intimate dimensions of Black spaces and gestures, turning to Black music as a source of wisdom, reflection, and power.

Later in life, Greaves remembered that he had seen Oscar Micheaux in the flesh, walking down the street in Harlem with film reels under his arm. For Greaves, this childhood memory served to connect him to the wellspring of creative, socially engaged filmmaking and film business practices that Micheaux forged in the crucible of American racial segregation. All in all, Greaves's long career was itself an ongoing experiment in attempting to use filmmaking to make a measurable difference in a troubled society. What might an African-American filmmaker, committed to progressive social change, be able to accomplish in a lifetime?

WILLIAM GREAVES: FILMMAKING AS MISSION

William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission is the first comprehensive attempt to come to terms with Greaves's career and to provide scholars with a foundational context for exploring his many films. The book's structure and design have been conceived in the hope of evoking both the multifaceted nature of his accomplishments and some of the many angles from which these accomplishments can be assessed. We hope to provide a substantial foundation for future scholarship, a "take one" of Greaves's achievements, in the expectation that other scholars will more easily follow our lead. This volume offers a panorama of approaches that deal in a variety of ways with general and specific elements of Greaves's life and career, including interviews; writings by Greaves himself; reminiscences and reviews; reprints of crucial early attempts by scholars to examine the many levels and layers of his career; a range of new explorations by critics and scholars from across the country; an update on the current state and plans for the Greaves archive at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in

Black Culture; and the most detailed Greaves filmography and bibliography to date.

This preface is followed by “William Greaves, Documentary Filmmaking, and the African-American Experience” by Adam Knee and Charles Musser, a reprint of Greaves’s favorite essay about his career and a useful introductory overview. Further context is created by the three interviews that follow. Chapter 2 is a meta-interview with Greaves, constructed by Scott MacDonald from edited versions of a broad range of interviews conducted in various ways by individuals and institutions at nodal points during Greaves’s career. In lieu of a biography or an autobiography, the meta-interview is designed to provide readers with a sense of Greaves’s childhood and maturation, and a record of his thinking during several eras of his film and media production. The meta-interview is followed by interviews with Louise Archambault Greaves (chapter 3) and with David Greaves (chapter 4), his son and sometimes collaborator.

The writings that form the body of the volume, by Greaves himself and by critics and scholars, are arranged as a rough chronological record of his activities. Greaves’s own writings include “POEM/1965” (chapter 6), an unpublished poem that is heard as the final voice-over in his film *Wealth of a Nation*; and “The First World Festival of Negro Arts” (chapter 7), a review of a gathering of artists, musicians, and scholars in Dakar, Senegal, in April 1966, written for *The Crisis* and contextualized by Joseph L. Underwood’s “Views Across the Atlantic: An American Vision of the First World Festival of Negro Arts” (chapter 8). Greaves’s two essays on his experiences and accomplishments as executive producer for *Black Journal* include a report on the successes and challenges of the program during his tenure (chapter 12) and a polemical assessment of the situation of African Americans vis-à-vis television (chapter 13), written for the *New York Times* soon after Greaves left *Black Journal*. These are supplemented by St. Clair Bourne’s “*Black Journal*: A Personal Look Backward” (chapter 14).

Greaves’s review of his experiences (along with Donald Bogle, Ruby Dee, Ivan Dixon, Michelle Parkerson, and Cicely Tyson) at the twelfth annual International Film Festival (1989) in New Delhi, chapter 18, was written for *Black American Literature Forum* (now *African American Review*). Also offered are several previously unpublished writings about the *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* films, including Greaves’s original proposal for what became *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (chapter 20), written on March 9, 1967, and mailed to himself, apparently as a way of documenting and protecting his original concept. Several of the writings were produced during the preparation for and production of what would become *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2½*.

The scholarly essays are wide ranging. Two focus on interests that played key roles in various Greaves films: his expertise as an actor and teacher of actors (Katherine Kinney's "The Efficacy of Acting," chapter 5) and his fascination with psychodrama (J. J. Murphy's "The Documentary as Sociodrama: William Greaves's *In the Company of Men* and *The Deep North*," chapter 10).

Other essays center on particular films or aspects of particular films: the depiction of women in *Still a Brother* (Jacqueline Stewart, "Sisters Inside *Still a Brother: Inside the Negro Middle Class—Black Women Through the Lens of William Greaves*," chapter 9); Greaves's film about Muhammad Ali, in several versions with various titles (Alexander Johnston, "Pugilism and Performance: William Greaves, Muhammad Ali, and the Making of *The Fight*," chapter 11); and Greaves's complex exploration of Latinx life in *Voice of La Raza* (Laura Isabel Serna, "Government-Sponsored Film and *Latinidad: Voice of La Raza*," chapter 17).

Two scholars focus on the significance of Greaves's years with *Black Journal*. Charles Musser's "By, For and About: *Black Journal* and the Rise of Multicultural Documentary in New York City, 1968–1975" (chapter 15) is followed by Celeste Day Moore's "William Greaves, *Black Journal*, and the Long Roots of Black Internationalism" (chapter 16).

Coverage of two other projects completes our foray into Greaves's oeuvre. First, we have assembled a dossier on the two *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* films (1971, 2005), Greaves's two-pronged, microcosmic exploration of the psychophilosophical dimensions of the filmmaking process and his most radical critique of the hierarchical organization of commercial filmmaking and its dedication to the financial bottom line. His own writings about the *Symbio* projects are supplemented by an interview with Dara Meyers-Kingsley (chapter 21), who discovered *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* in a closet while curating a breakthrough retrospective of Greaves's career for the Brooklyn Museum (at the time, Missy Sullivan was manager of public programs and media).

The dossier offers a panorama of critical and scholarly approaches to the *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* films. Scott MacDonald's "The Country in the City: Central Park as Metaphor in Jonas Mekas's *Walden* and William Greaves's *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*" (chapter 22) explores the implications of Greaves's love and knowledge of Central Park, near to which he spent much of his life, within the immigrant context of Mekas's sense of the park as an urban Walden. Akiva Gottlieb, in an excerpt from his "'Just Another Word for Jazz': The Signifying Auteur in William Greaves's *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*" (chapter 23), details, among other things, the doubt of one of Greaves's collaborators, Bob Rosen, that Greaves knew what he was doing as he directed the film.

Richard Brody's *New Yorker* review, "The Daring, Original, and Overlooked: *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*" (chapter 28), expresses the astonishment so many of us have felt when first seeing the film. Brody's critique was written in the wake of a screening of the film as part of "Tell It Like It Is: Black Independents in New York, 1968–1986," presented at Lincoln Center in February 2015 and followed by a discussion of the film with Brody, Su Friedrich, and Shola Lynch at the Brooklyn Historical Society. Amy Taubin's essay, "Still No Answers" (chapter 29), was written for the Criterion release of the two *Symbio* films. (The Criterion DVD, produced by Debra McClutchy, includes the film *Discovering William Greaves*.) In "'We're Not Raping Bill': Race and Gender Politics in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* and *Take 2½*" (chapter 30), Joan Hawkins sees a comment by Bob Rosen at a secret meeting of the crew during the filming of *Symbio* as a punctum for thinking about the political complexity of the *Symbio* films. And in "Symbiopsychotaxiplasticity: Some Takes on William Greaves" (chapter 31), Franklin Cason, Jr., and Tsitsi Jaji make a case for the two *Symbio* films to be understood as a single, ongoing project.

The scholarly essays conclude with "A Guy Who Could Think Around the Corner: *Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey*" (chapter 32), Patricia R. Zimmermann's exploration of Greaves's Ralph Bunche project, the final major undertaking Greaves was able to complete. *Ralph Bunche* and its various satellite videos represent a macrocosmic commitment to the development of a fuller global awareness of racism and colonialism. Greaves understood the project not as an informative and inspiring stand-alone film but as a catalyst for an elaborate, ongoing educational process. From our perspective, nearly two decades later, we can understand the Bunche project as an early attempt at using a transmedia approach to effect change in the world.

The final essay, "Revealing Greaves: Unhiding His Archive," is by Shola Lynch, curator of the Moving Image & Recorded Sound Division at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (a division of the New York Public Library). Lynch describes her adventure in tracking down the Greaves films and papers housed at the Schomburg and elsewhere, and working to make Greaves's archive available to scholars and others committed to a broader awareness of African-American contributions to modern culture. The volume concludes with the most complete filmography of Greaves's work possible at this time, plus a bibliography of writings about his work, both assembled by Aurore Spiers.

In organizing *William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission*, we have attempted to provide a sense of both the evolution of Greaves's career and the various kinds of personal, critical, and scholarly commentary that his work has attracted so

far. In a number of instances, noteworthy attempts to assess Greaves's work have not been included here, or not included completely, because we wanted to avoid repetition. Our apologies for excerpting Akiva Gottlieb's essay and for not including both St. Clair Bourne's eloquent overview of Greaves's career, "An Independent for All Seasons," written in the wake of Greaves's career achievement award from the International Documentary Association (and published in the January 2005 issue of *International Documentary*), and Noelle Griffis's "'This Film Is a Rebellion': Filmmaker, Actor, *Black Journal* Producer and Political Activist William Greaves (1926–2014)," which appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of *Black Journal*.

TAKE ONE

The essays included in this collection reference many elements of Greaves's career, place his work within a wide range of contexts, and provide insight into crucial films. But it will be obvious to those already familiar with Greaves's accomplishments that there are significant gaps in our coverage. For example, there is barely a mention of Greaves's early successes as a songwriter. How did his involvement in songwriting affect other aspects of his career? Did he meet the musicians (Percy Faith, Al Hibler, Donna Hightower, Eartha Kitt, Arthur Prysock, and so on) who recorded his songs?

Many of Greaves's accomplished films are not discussed at length in this volume. His involvement in several of the final "race films" is fertile territory for further exploration, as are the many films he worked on, in various capacities, at the National Film Board of Canada. Greaves's evocation of the Harlem Renaissance, *From These Roots* (1974), which won many awards, deserves attention, as do the dozens of sponsored projects he produced.

Nationtime—*Gary*, originally considered too militant for television broadcast and now available in a 4K restoration, is the only substantive report on the National Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana, in 1972. We hope the premiere of the IndieCollect restoration of the long-lost full-length version of the film (funded by Jane Fonda and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association), which premiered at MoMA in New York City on January 22, 2020, will instigate further interest in a historic event that gathered Black voices from across the political spectrum (Jesse Jackson, Dick Gregory, Coretta Scott King, Richard Hatcher, Amiri Baraka, Charles Diggs, and H. Carl McCall, among others) for a collaborative imagining of the future of Black America.

FIGURE 0.1 Cover of sheet music for “African Lullaby,” composed by William Greaves (copyright 1951). Courtesy Louise Greaves.

Greaves’s explorations of crucial contributors to African-American history—*Booker T. Washington: The Life and Legacy* (1983), *Frederick Douglass: An American Life* (1985), *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice* (1989), *A Tribute to Jackie Robinson* (1990), and “Resurrections: Paul Robeson” (1990)—a project for Black Entertainment Television that was researched but never produced—each

worthy of attention, are represented here by a single essay: “*Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice: Personal Production Notes*” (chapter 19), Michelle Duster’s reminiscence of her work as a production assistant on Greaves’s film about her great-grandmother.

There are also Greaves’s personal/professional relationships with other major contributors to African-American film history, from Spencer Williams, Sidney Poitier, and Harry Belafonte to Melvin Van Peebles, Kathleen Collins, Julie Dash, Stanley Nelson, and Spike Lee: How did his efforts contribute to their work and vice versa? And what about the wider world of filmmaking? What were Greaves’s contacts with and thoughts about American commercial filmmakers and about directors from other cinematic traditions? How does his never-distributed fiction feature *The Marijuana Affair* (1976), produced for Film Jamaica Productions, fit within his career? There is so much to study, so much still to learn.

This book was inspired by and is to some extent modeled on *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle* (Indiana University Press, 2001), edited by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser—among the finest and most crucial books in the

FIGURE 0.2 Greaves, with Elia Kazan and Satyajit Ray, at a “Film India” event, circa 1983, sponsored by New York’s Asia Society, the MoMA film department, and the Indo US Sub-commission (probably at the opening of the Satyajit Ray retrospective, according to Muriel Peters, director of New York’s Asia Society at the time). Photographer unknown. Courtesy Louise Greaves.

field. We hope our book will be understood as a worthy successor to that volume. William Greaves often thought of himself as a filmmaker who had taken the baton from Oscar Micheaux, and, like his predecessor, he was both immensely productive and widely influential. *William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission* only begins to reveal the remarkable networks of filmmakers, television producers, critics, scholars, actors, writers, musicians, activists, and other interlocutors Greaves collaborated with and inspired over the decades. Of course, our dearest hope is that, as was true of *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle*, our efforts will bring the attention to his work that it has always deserved. We have already begun making plans, with the help of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the FilmWatch initiative), for more than one series of events honoring Greaves's immense oeuvre.