A MILESTONE FILM RELEASE DIRECTED, PRODUCED AND EDITED BY BILLY WOODBERRY SCRIPT AND CINEMATOGRAPHY CHARLES BURNETT ADDITIONAL CAMERA PATRICK MELLY
SOUND RICHARD CERVANTES WITH NATE HARDMAN KAYCEE MOORE ANGELA BURNETT RONALD BURNETT KIMBERLY BURNETT EUGENE CHERRY
RESTORED BY UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE RESTORATIONIST ROSS LIPMAN IN CONSULTATION WITH BILLY WOODBERRY
35MM PICTURE RESTORATION BY THE STANFORD THEATER FILM LABORATORY AND FOTOKEM SOUND RESTORATION BY AUDIO MECHANICS
RESTORATION FUNDING BY THE NATIONAL FILM PRESERVATION FOUNDATION AND THE PACKARD HUMANITIES INSTITUTE DIGITAL RESTORATION BY RE-KINO
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MILESTONE FILM PRESENTS

BLESS THEIR LITTLE HEARTS

Directed by BILLY WOODBERRY

Screenplay and Cinematography by CHARLES BURNETT

Selected for the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress

BLESS THEIR LITTLE HEARTS

Director: BILLY WOODBERRY
Named to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 2013
Filmed in 16mm, 1984. 82 minutes. 1.33:1. Restored to 35mm and 2K DCP

Cast

Nate Hardman .... Charlie Banks
Kaycee Moore .... Andais Banks
Angela, Ronald & Kimberly Burnett .... The Banks Children
Eugene Cherry .... Gene
Lawrence Pierott .... John
Ernest Knight .... Duck
Ellis Griffin .... Pasquale

Also

Sammy "Sumi" Neal, Minnie Miles, Dorothy Banks, Mr. Jet, Crystal Miles,
Tony & Girlfriend, and Langston Woodberry (as Mistresses' son)

Crew

Directed, Produced, and Edited by .... Billy Woodberry
Screenplay .... Charles Burnett
Cinematography .... Charles Burnett
Additional Camera .... Patrick Melly
Sound .... Richard Cervantes
In consultation with .... Alan Kondo, Tom Penick

Billy Woodberry would also like to credit the following crew members

Alile Sharon Larkin, Frances Espana, Javier Silva, Abdul Hafiz, William McKinney,
Barbara McCullough, Bernard Nicolas, Vera Da Silva, Melicha Delone,
Gay Abel Bey, Joy Rencher, Bill Harris, Tim Hinkel

and express special thanks to

Nailah Nicolas, Jadi and Kisha Nicolas, Art Hesselink, Guiseppe Sacchi, Ed Landler, Shirley Bowen, Bobby Roth, Edward Olmos, Richard Smith, Robert M. Young, Ed Brokaw, Julie Dash, David Sandoval, Frances Hollis, Peter Belsito, Lindy Laub, Harriet and Sam Robbins, Susan Anderson

Restoration Credits

Restoration by UCLA Film & Television Archive.
Restored by Ross Lipman in consultation with Billy Woodberry
35mm Picture Restoration by The Stanford Theater Film Laboratory and Fotokem
Restored from the original 16mm b/w negative A/B rolls and the original 16mm optical soundtrack
With funding by The National Film Preservation Foundation and The Packard Humanities Institute
Sound Restoration by Audio Mechanics
Sound Transfers by NT Picture and Sound
Special Thanks: Charles Burnett, Allyson Field, Sean Hewitt, Jan-Christopher Horak, Shawn Jones, John Polito, Jacqueline Stewart, Dave Tucker, Danielle Faye, Todd Wiener
Digital restoration (cleanup, stabilization, de-flicker) by Re-Kino, Warsaw, Poland. DCP by DI Factory, Warsaw.
Funding by Milestone Film & Video

From restorationist Ross Lipman

Bless Their Little Hearts represents the closure and pinnacle of a neorealist strand within what's now described as the L.A. Rebellion, which dates to Charles Burnett's *Several Friends* (1969). Billy Woodberry's film chronicles the devastating effects of underemployment on a family in the same Los Angeles community depicted in *Killer of Sheep* (1977), and it pays witness to the ravages of time in the short years since its predecessor. Nate Hardman and Kaycee Moore deliver gut-wrenching performances as the couple whose family is torn apart by events beyond their control. If salvation remains, it's in the sensitive depiction of everyday life, which persists throughout.

By 1978, when *Bless*' production began, Burnett, then 34, was already an elder statesman and mentor to many within the UCLA film community, and it was he who encouraged Woodberry to pursue a feature-length work. In a telling act of trust, Burnett offered the newcomer a startlingly intimate 70-page original scenario and also shot the film. He furthermore connected Woodberry with his cast of friends and relatives, many of whom had appeared in *Killer of Sheep*, solidifying the two films' connections.

Yet critically, he then held back further instruction, leaving Woodberry to develop the material, direct and edit. As Woodberry reveals, "He would deliberately restrain himself from giving me the solution to things." The first-time feature director delivered brilliantly, and the result is an ensemble work that represents the cumulative visions of Woodberry, Burnett and their excellent cast.

Whereas Burnett's original scenario placed emphasis on the spiritual crisis of Hardman's Charlie Banks, the then-married Woodberry, alongside Moore and Hardman, further developed the domestic relationships within the film and articulated the depiction of a family struggling to stay alive in a world of rapidly vanishing prospects.

In retrospect, the film's ending can be seen as a spiritual goodbye not just for Banks, but for Burnett, who would move away from his neorealist work with his next film, the classic *To Sleep With Anger* (1990); for Woodberry, who moved into documentary; and for Hardman, who left cinema shortly after. The film remains an unforgettable landmark in American cinema.

Billy Woodberry

Incorporating the oral history of Billy Woodberry, courtesy of UCLA Film & Television Archive.

Born in Dallas in 1948, Billy Woodberry is one of the founders of the L.A. Rebellion film movement.

I was born in a big county hospital — Parkland… They were thinking of maybe knocking it down, but they decided to preserve it. So I'm glad. And when I was born, we lived in North Dallas on Roseland and that's important to me because shortly after, I think, we moved to a big housing project on the far, south side of town, the end of the street corner. So I actually grew up there, but I kind of imagined what it would have been like if I would have stayed in North Dallas with my original people, you know? (Laughs) North Dallas is an old part of town. The first high school was in that part of town, my mother's from that — when she came to Dallas, she lived in that part of town. It was a smaller kind of place in a sort of important part of the city, and the black part of the city… My mother was maybe 16, 17, so she couldn't manage to work and have me … so she took me to her grandparents — her father's parents — in East Texas … when I was maybe nine months old or something like that… I spent the first six years there on a farm in the country. I joined them later when it was time to go to school… In the first grade, I went to the school in the country with all of the kids I knew and my cousins and took the bus. I was fine with it, but my mother was not hearing that, so I had to come [back] to the city. Every summer I went [back to the country]. I knew that world and because they were older and from a different generation, I knew those people, and I knew my great aunt, who was a bit older than them. And I remember when they got social security … I remember when they got electricity, when we got a television and the mystery about that, like what happens if it storms and the TV is on [and] this kind of stuff. So I remember a lot of things that others, even people my age, don't know.

Then I went to Dallas in the second grade and I lived in my big housing project and that was a notorious part of town, the tough part of town. That project was new and you can't think of it like now; now I joke, I tell my cousins and my friends, all those people you're trying to run away from in the projects, they've got their own TV show (laughs). But it's a different thing, because when we lived in there it was young families, right off, making their way, and they weren't always like the poorest people, and they were ambitious people, and that was a transition for them until they could manage… So I lived there for nine years and then we moved — I think nine — well, I was going into the eighth grade and we moved to upper South Dallas because my uncle had a nice place and he died, and so my aunt inherited it. We spent a year there and then we moved across the river to a place called Oak Cliff.

In *Black Film Review*, (Volume 1, No. 4), Woodberry said about his childhood living on that small farm, *"I think I absorbed the stories, the sensibilities, the sounds of that generation, born not so long ago after the end of slavery and Reconstruction."*

At Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School in Oak Cliff, Woodberry played football and saw movies down the street at the Lincoln as well as the Forest Avenue Theater — the latter now owned by Erykah Badu. He had offers from black colleges (Morgan State in Baltimore being one of them), but he decided to go west to California and went first to Santa Barbara City College.

Santa Barbara used to be a kind of weigh station for the Black Panthers because it was a very pleasant interlude before you entered Los Angeles County, where you encountered a very different police response than you did even in the Bay Area, so they liked that respite…They could kind of walk around and relax and be admired by young students, so I got to see that… My real heroes were the SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] people, many of whom I didn't know until later, but I knew it from reading about them because those campaigns to raise support for the work in the South. And the Berkeley people; I didn't know Berkeley or go to Berkeley until the 70s. I just knew their work and the people that passed through. And I picked that stuff up… I connected with that once I decided that, you know what, I really do want to finish school and see where that goes.

[After graduation] I went home, I got married, I didn't want to stay there, so I stayed there for a total of two months, and I came to California March 1970. And I landed at my friend and his roommate's house and I slept in his room on the floor and… She would wait. I would get a place, I would get things going. So I needed to get a job, I needed to see about school, and I probably accomplished all of it by summer with my friends. I got a job in a factory in Vernon. It's a lithography plant. They printed all the album covers, if you remember that phenomenon… My wife came. She was here for some months, then she was gonna have a baby. She was pregnant. She wanted to be back in her place, so in about six months, she moved back to have her baby and I stayed and I did a summer program at Cal State, which I didn't have to do, but I'm actually incredibly happy… that I did it. Most of the people went to school at night because they worked during the day. And those guys, they had a kind of third-world consciousness because of the politics of the Panthers and the Chicano Moratorium… and they knew that these groups need to know each other and they need to cooperate and respect each other, so they gave you the history and they gave you the analysis and the sociology and all of that, relating to that, and you got exposed to it and it became a part of your thing. There's no conflict, competition, and that kind of thing. You were interested in the other people and the issues, so very helpful, very useful things about how to study and how to organize your time and you direct yourself and how to ask for help if you need it and how to get support financially and otherwise — to do what you needed to do.

Woodberry continued his studies and Cal State Los Angeles, becoming a serious student as well as looking outside of his course work to grow intellectually. It was the time of the black consciousness movement; the black arts movement and he saw the large increase of black students at the top UC campuses post-1968.

It was exciting and it was easy to be excited about it and to be stimulated by it. So [in] 1972, I decide I want my degree. I found a receptive and hospitable and stimulating department in Pan-African studies, so I did my B.A. in African-American history and studies. In between graduating and the fall, I took a summer course in Latin American studies… there was this political scientist named Donald Bray who was a political scientist… That summer, Bray did a class on Cuba, but it was a class that was partly through film. And we saw all of the Cuban documentary films and the History Of A Battle *[Historia de una batalla by Manuel Octavio Gómez]— the film about the literacy campaign and the brigadistas, the*

young ones who go in the countryside, volunteer with sleeping bags, and they wanted to teach every peasant how to at least how to read and write their name. It was a whole campaign. So you got to see all of [these] kind[s] of films. I found it really exciting and, along with starting to try to understand issues of history and political economy and philosophy and political organization and commitment, what it meant – I was excited by that… That was a part of the way that I was sort of taken with film.

My teachers, Harding and Bray, they knew I had a growing interest in that, and they mentioned to me — I had learned about UCLA Film School, but it was not something that I was committed to or sure I could. I was very tentative, but they knew I was interested, so one time, Paul Offredi, this Brazilian pedagogue, was meeting up at La Paz, the center and retreat for the United Farm Workers. This was 1970 — early 72. And they asked me would I like to go to see him because they knew I was [interested] and they said you can meet a guy, a Brazilian guy, who studies at UCLA — Mario DeSilva. He was in graduate school at UCLA. I said, "Sure." I went, I didn't wear warm enough clothes, I didn't realize how cold it got. We took a van, I met him, I talked with him, I spent time with him, I went up, I saw Paul Offredi in an act with the farm workers and César Chávez, and I came back, and Mario told me, "Sure, make the application, you can do that and I will take you around." Then, I made the application, they wrote me wonderful letters.

I was teaching myself as a part of learning about — wanting to learn about — film. And the other thing is I had made an 8mm film in my history of jazz and blues class for a guy I really love. He went to school here, did his Ph.D. in anthropology. His name was Lance Williams and he's a real Los Angeles guy, he went to Mt. Carmel High School, he went to Cal State L.A., he came here, he knew a lot about jazz and music. He had been tutored by Quincy Jones and all those people. He's a nice, brilliant, Catholic boy, you know what I mean? And really smart and [a] good teacher. I made this film based on a song by John Lee Hooker, "Whiskey and Women." It was just a free-form kind of little film I made on Super 8, but I made it myself and edited in the camera. So I must've been interested, and he still talks about that. I made the first film in his class. [Now lost.]

I came over to visit before I got in, I think, with Mario and my then girlfriend because I had gotten a divorce and I had a new girlfriend… I came for his thesis screening. That's where I met Charles Burnett. He was playing with a yo-yo (laughs) and being unassuming, not really showing you who he was, but Mario told me that, "that's the guy you want to know and that's the guy you [want to] really check out because he doesn't do all the yapping and the posturing that the others [do], but I'm telling you, his is the real deal. I've worked with him, I've been in Watts with him. I know. He's the real guy." Now it took two years of something before we became friends, three almost. That was how I met him, though.

Going to UCLA was not the only film education Woodberry received. He remember a bookstore/café named the Long March where he watched *The Mother* by Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein's *Old and New*, and G. W. Pabst's version of the *Threepenny Opera*. It was also a golden age of repertory cinemas in Los Angeles — Woodberry remembers seeing a retrospective of Jean-Luc Godard movies at the Vanguard. At the Vagabond, (programmed by William Moritz an important historian of animation and experimental films) Woodberry saw Glauber Rocha's *Antonio das Mortes*. His first date with the woman that became his second wife, was at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to see Brazilian films. They also would take the bus down to the Fox Venice Theater where one Saturday they saw Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* and Godard's *Tout va Bien*.

It's good to see, for me to remember, that part of my film culture was formed in the context of the cultural and political world of the time and not just in the classroom.

That's not to dismiss at all the importance of UCLA.

This was a wonderful, wonderful place because it was a world where you were inundated with film, with the talk about it, the smell of it, the young people getting their hands on equipment for the first time… and you had the requirements that you do three film history sections, that you do two seminars, and so you were able to… see all kinds of films that I might avoid… If I have to do the history of silent film, I can't avoid it. And the fact [is] that I'm interested in it and I will buy books and read books about it. I don't know [if] that's everybody's temperament or experience, but for me, it was… It's interesting, too, that a number of my friends, including Geoffrey Gilmore, who's at Tribeca now, but was [for] years at Sundance and did his studies here in film theory, film studies, film history, and others. A number of those people, we've remained friends since school because I'm genuinely interested in what they do and what they think about.

I remember the first discussion me and Charles [Burnett] had was: Pudovkin or Eisenstein? (laughs) He says Pudovkin because he's more humanist. As I learned about his things, how he acquired his interest, his taste and over the years we've shared those things, and I really admire, and I was enriched by learning what his interests were and what informed what he did.

In *Black Film Review,* (Volume 1, No. 4, 1984), Woodberry added, *"It was a very fertile time for the film school. Haile Gerima was there; Larry Clark was there, Charles Burnett was there. They were ahead of me and beginning to make their films. So it was a very dynamic and fertile environment…They organized screenings in the evenings. There were constant debates and arguments. And they were all very hardworking and set the standards… In that environment, I think one could do less, but only with a lot of discomfort; you didn't have many excuses for not striving to say something more. We all felt the dearth of images, of films that expressed what we thought, what we knew."*

About his own first attempts to make film, in that same magazine, Woodberry noted, *"I was exposed to films that had a social dimension…In sort of a backwards way, from these films, I started to search for films that somehow demonstrated a possibility of expressing my concern with social and political issues. At a certain point, I wanted to make films. To try."* His first student film is now lost, but his next short film, *The Pocketbook* exists and it's a small masterpiece.

With a small grant from the American Film Institute, Woodberry attempted the very ambitious *Bless Their Little Hearts* in 1979. But in that year, he had to stop for six months. Over the next three years, he was able to shoot approximately four-fifths of the film. Woodberry received his MFA from UCLA in 1982. It had taken a while to get through school

since he had to make money to support himself and to produce *Bless Their Little Hearts*. In September of 1983, he had the film's first screening at the Independent Feature Market in New York. The film is now considered a pioneering and essential work of the L.A. Rebellion — influenced by Italian neo-realism and the work of Third Cinema filmmakers. *Bless Their Little Hearts* was awarded with an OCIC and Ecumenical Jury awards at the Berlin International Film Festival and was added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 2013. For some years after graduation, Woodberry taught at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

Currently, Woodberry is a permanent faculty member of the School of Film/Video and the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts, where he has taught since 1989. Over the years, Woodberry has also been an established video and multimedia installation artist, his works appearing at the Viennale, DocLisboa, Amiens International Film Festival, Camera Austria Symposium, Harvard Film Archive, Human Rights Watch Film Festival and Museum of Modern Art.

Woodberry's film portrait of black beat poet Bob Kaufman*, And When I Die, I Won't Stay Dead* (2015) was the opening film of MoMA's Doc Fortnight in 2016. It was a film long in the making:

I've been researching him for about twelve, fourteen years. I knew about him before, since the seventies, from people who introduced me to his books. I always had his books, and I was impressed, but I didn't know so much at the time. And then in 1986, I went to the City Lights bookstore and saw this magazine, Poetry Flash, and the cover [story] was about his death. At the time, I thought, "Maybe I should make a short movie about him. A kind of tribute." But when I looked at it, I couldn't figure out how to do it. I didn't really grasp the tragic dimensions of his life. I was too naive — I didn't know enough about life, enough about tragedy, enough about much. So I put it aside. In the early aughts, I took it up again. I spent six or seven years researching it, another four or five years shooting it, and I spent two years editing it. — Interview by Danny King, *Village Voice*, February 19, 2016.

The film premiered at the 53rd Viennale, Vienna International Film Festival (2015), and has been featured at festivals nationally and internationally, including the 13th Doclisboa, Documentary International Film Festival – International Competition, Lisbon (2015); 45th International Film Festival Rotterdam – Signatures, (2016); 59th San Francisco International Film Festival (2016); Courtisane Film Festival, Ghent (2016); and The Flaherty Film Seminar, New York (2016).

"And When I Die, I Won't Stay Dead — title lifted from a line in one of Kaufman's poems — is director Woodberry's inspired, moving meditation on Kaufman's work and legacy. A seamless marriage of director and subject, the film is not only scored by but also moves to the rhythms of jazz and is itself a kind of poetry. Fans of Woodberry's masterful 1984 film *Bless Their Little Hearts* (selected for preservation in the National Film Registry) won't be surprised at the taut intelligence and rich artfulness of *And When I Die*, in which the director upends many bio-doc conventions. He opens the film by dropping the viewer into Kaufman's narrative at its boiling point – after he has already made waves and a name for himself in San Francisco's fecund poetry scene of the mid-twentieth century." -For *CraveOnline*, Ernest Hardy, 2016

Woodberry's short documentary, *Marseille Après La Guerre* (2016), is a portrait of dock workers in

post-WWII Marseille, many of whom were of African descent, and pays homage to Senegalese film director, Ousmane Sembéne:

“These photographs [that make up the short] were found in the collection of the National Maritime Union, in their archives at the NYU library. They are views and photographs of the docks of Marseilles after the Second World War. The film is also a kind of tribute to Ousmane Sembène, the Senegalese writer and filmmaker, because in ’47, he made his way back to France after serving in the war. He went back to Marseilles, where he worked and lived as a dockworker and joined the CGT [General Confederation of Labor]. So it’s a tribute to him, and a tribute those dock people, and to Marseilles at the time. It’s also a tribute to a group of young musicians who kind of reclaimed this heritage. They were very responsive to a book by Claude McKay, a Jamaican writer who lived in the United States. He wrote a book in Marseilles called Banjo*, about life in the old ports of Marseilles. It’s quite a book. These young musicians — they said if their band was a book, it would be called Banjo. I liked their music, so we used it. So it’s a way of promoting my affection for Sembène and for that world and also for finding that material.”* — Interview by Danny King, *Village Voice*, February 19, 2016.

Marseille Après La Guerre received acclaim after its screenings at the Roy and Edna Disney Theater CalArts’ Downtown Center for Contemporary Arts, Los Angeles (2016), Courtisane Film Festival, Gent (2016), and Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro (2016).

Woodberry’s films have been screened at the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, Viennale, Rotterdam, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Harvard Film Archive, Camera Austria Symposium, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, Tate Modern and Centre Pompidou.

He has also appeared in Charles Burnett’s *When It Rains* (1995) and provided narration for Thom Andersen’s *Red Hollywood* (1996) and James Benning’s *Four Corners* (1998).

In March of 2017, Woodberry was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellows for “individuals who have already demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts.”

Interview Completed on: Thursday, June 24, 2010; July 6, 2010
Interviewee: Billy Woodberry (BW)
Interviewers: Jacqueline Stewart (JS), Dr. Allyson Field (AF), and Robyn Charles (RC)
Cameraman: Andy (ANDY). Transcribers: Kelly Lake, Michael Kmet

JS: Well, you haven't talked about *Bless Their Little Hearts* yet. How that project came together, and what that experience was like making that film.

BW: After that short movie [*The Pocketbook*], I applied for the Independent Filmmakers Grant, which was administered by the American Film Institute. And that film, that little film, was maybe easy to love for some people because… it was, I hope, unpretentious, but it had something, it had some feeling to it… It was maybe crude, but people were really responsive… It's not so much they're acting, they're just sort of being, and that's something that one admires, and it's kind of theory, a Brechtian thing and all that they read into it… And then other people kind of liked it and it seemed, I don't know, maybe unthreatening or not offensive, but I don't think of it like [that]. I think it's just soulful and it's not trying to prove anything, it's not sort of trying to show off, and it's not about me or my age group or my preoccupations. It's like a sort of little lesson about life among working class women and a little kid, and I liked that. It has a few moments.

So, I applied for that AFI thing and I got it, and it was like, $10,000. Now in the meantime I had been trying to come up with another film, a third film, and I thought I would make a story Charles had gotten me onto — William Faulkner and his short stories. I had this one, "Evening," and it's a story that's kind of structured after the St. Louis Blues, really… So me and Charles used to drive to Bakersfield and all kind of place[s] trying to find, figure out, and at a certain point he told me, "Oh, I have a story for you. It's a story about those people you like, these kind of working class characters, so I'll give it to you. Yeah, you could do that. It was kind of long, but you could do that."

…He told me it was about these guys – he saw these guys selling fish on the side of the road, and he thought about that, and … he wrote this script and he gave it to me… And I thought $10,000 was, like, a lot of money — lot of money. So that film took time. It started and it stopped for two months because [after the first day] an actor quit, so I had to convince him because I didn't want to give up on him. It might have been three months, but eventually he came back and he agreed.

JS: Why?

BW: I don't know. He had his reasons, but he… well, we made him paint that whole garage (laughs) and he didn't know if that was acting. And also, he thought Kaycee Moore had told private things about his life and they were in the script (chuckles). It had nothing to do with him. Charles imagined that thing. But, anyway, eventually I got him back. And we did, say, 65–70% of that shooting, and then, no money. For a time, I was just editing what I had, but I figured out what I had was real good. And then for over a year and a half or more, I couldn't find a single person to put money in. I had to protect my stuff, which was in the lab… I had to pay the bill and that kind of thing… After two and a

half years, I figured out how, I got the money, and I finished it. But then I used another guy [cinematographer] because Charles was working on his own film and couldn't finish it. But that was good, probably, because I was determined to finish it and to honor his trust and the whole thing, so I did it.

[In another interview, Billy tells the story that the house they used for *Bless* was owned by Nailah and Bernard Nicolas. Since Billy had not finished the film, Nailah kept the house *exactly* as it was for those two and a half years, waiting for the crew's return to continue shooting. Bernard (center in photo) was one of the MFA students at UCLA, part of what is now known as the L.A. Rebellion.

JS: Did the vision change at all and the intro when you had to stop and pick up again?

BW: No, the only thing that happened was how to do something… Some things get dropped. Then the other thing that happened — and it happened when he was there — you had an idea when you came up with this scenario, and you had an idea when you give it to the actors, but then when you actually shoot it, it can assume a tone and quality that you didn't suppose. And then it's sort of important to recognize that and to build with that, to go with that… to enhance that, maybe don't make it one note, but to allow that tone, because that's the strength of the thing. So, that happened. The other thing is he [Charles] had the idea to be maybe more comic and near-comic, but kind of pathetic, because [the ending of the film], the guys were going to paint their face and have kind of clownish [make-up] to get people's attention. [In an earlier interview, it was just Charles Banks who would end up as a clown.] And I thought that didn't accord with what we had for that particular guy, and I couldn't imagine it, really, in that way. I came up with a synthetic way that's quite good. Lawrence, the guy who does the shouting in the thing, he gives enough of that. But then I see people. Charles said this, he imagined this, and for the last twenty years, I've seen people reduced to being [carrying] signs, and grown people in a bear suit and it's 100 degrees and they're out there with sandwich or real estate [signs] or whatever, so he was prescient in that way.

The other thing is that the actors were so good and the shooting was so good. At first we had a lot of people, then we had a few… A lot of friends worked on that film and helped, and the big push, 65% or so, we had it. But then to convince anybody, any funding people… that it was anything worthwhile was certainly not easy, and we were not professionals, and we were not hustlers, and we were not sophisticated about raising money, and we were not *inside*. And those people gave us some sharp rebukes and ignored [us]… So I stuck to it because it was a commitment and I finished. And it wasn't for school, because after my committee saw twenty minutes, they said, "You can have the degree." And I said, … "I don't care about that." … Unless I finish what I started [and produced] some acceptable version for my peers and my friends and myself, then I have failed, so that was the motivating thing.

JS: I was hoping you could talk a little but about the music in that film.

BW: Oh, that music… There's one source of music. It's a disc, a recording by Archie Shepp and Horace Parlan called "Trouble in Mind," and then there's another one called "Going Home," and one is classic blues, and the other is spirituals; slave songs, as Archie calls them. But that's pure classical, American music and black music. It's foundational, right? And I had that music. I'd been listening to it and I was always looking. And then my former wife told me, "Why don't you try it?" Because I had the machine at my house and I'm editing. So I transferred it, and I started to try it at her insistence. And…it started to give a lot. It gave fullness and foundational things to that thing, so then, that's how I came to it. And also it's the thing the characters [are] sort of speaking about, sacred and profane, pleasure and duty, material and spiritual kind of thing, and so that's central to human experience and the black experience is often implied in that music, and realized in that. That's how I came to that music, and because Archie was a man — he was 44 or 45 when he recorded that music — and he had been a free-jazz, fire-brand revolutionary man. He said that when he played, at 44 he starts to reflect on things at a deeper level, and he said, "When I played those songs, I was in tears, and I didn't know why, but I just felt them." It was just there, you know, slave songs. It's really the stuff, and its classic, it's two of them honoring that thing and speaking to each other.

JS: So why did you feel that they worked well with the images that you guys shot?

BW: Because I think the images … have a kind of classic thing to them, and also it's a story … in the present. People … sometimes they're confused because these people are not fashionable, they don't follow fashion… Their idea of fashion was formed long before, or they're not into that, their ideas [of] what's acceptable and what's presentable, is to be clean and neat and that thing. But Mario DeSilva taught me that. He said in a film, "You always simplify the costume, otherwise you obligate yourself to stay current, and you distract the people with this. So [if] you go classic, you don't have to worry." The other thing is the shirts. That the guy has … my shirts. The [dresses] that she has were my wife's dresses, and my wife got them from thrift stores and things like that, so they were right (laughs).

JS: Classic.

BW: … You make it simple. You don't have to worry too much…and because it was black and white, maybe that gives the sense of it. At the time, that black and white stock … was maybe less expensive. The other thing is Charlie [left] had shot thousands of feet of it and knew it completely and what it could do, so that's the one we used. In the midst of all this breaking down of funding and all that, the Hunt Brothers monopolized the silver, so that [film] stock went up in price, and you had to pay more for it. But that's fun. That's just a lesson, you know?

JS: …Can you talk a little about where it was shown, especially what happens when your work goes to Europe, when you get attention from different people? Because I'm curious about who you thought about in terms of your audience for your films and maybe how you reach that audience, to reach different audiences?

BW: I can talk about that. One thing is I thought it was a film in part about unemployment, and I had associates in left-wing groups and political organizations who organized unemployed people. And my friends helped me. We talked about, what is unemployed? What is the reserve army of labor and Marxist concept, right? And where this guy fits in? You have the floating, the latent, and the stagnant. And you don't want to reach stagnant. And all of this reserve armies, this out of work people, unemployed people, they act as discipline on even the people who have work, because they will take your job. But do you want to be one of them? That's part of it, but my friends, my political friends and thoughtful friends, they had their thoughts and analysis about it.

What I thought is, okay, the people who were interested in this issue, and this problem, and we were suffering a lot of deindustrialization, that was a time in the area. I said, okay, they may want to show the film in the church. There was this media arts centers projects funded by the federal government, and there were agencies throughout the country and they were showing these films. I thought, okay, it could place there. The other little film [*The Pocketbook*] and Charles' and the other guys' films were starting to circulate. I didn't finish the film until '83, so it took time, even for them. But people were starting to see [them], so I said, okay, it could play in those places that they've already played. We have three possible audiences and that is acceptable for us and anything else will be great, but that's not the way it's going. But we know there's three groups at least who would want to see and use the film and could be interested by it. And also, if people who like film, they might want to see it. But then, to tell you the truth, we didn't think so much about it. We just thought, yeah, people like film, but even the people who think films are an organizing tool, we thought, they're cool too. So that was it. No other big suspicions or whatever, right?

But then Julie and some other friends, there was a sort of growing interest in these colleges, universities, and different things, you could expect to maybe show the thing. But we didn't know. All right, so that's what happened. Except that when it was finished, there was another thing. Around the time of *Bush Mama* and … *Passing Through* – less *Killer of Sheep* – those movies went to the Independent Feature Project market in New York. And European programmers and curators of festivals and groups, they came to … see American independent films, and they discovered [these] black films. And they were intrigued by and struck by them, and suspected there may be more. So in 1980, two things happened: Pearl Bowser and this friend in Paris, Catherine Ruelle (now she's a friend for all these years), they made a project in '81 …Where a lot of the people they invited were friends from here — Charles, Ben, Larry, and others. They went to Paris and they showed the film to a young audience at the FNAC Center, so I knew that thing existed. [In] 1981 Charles went to [the] Berlin Film Festival. I knew that existed. But I couldn't suppose, you know what I mean? I was doing that thing, that I was that good, or whatever, but I knew that, yeah, they opened the way, and my job is to try to continue so that it's open. And maybe realize the possibilities of that thing.

Okay, so, when that film is finished, already they've gone out in the world and they've made a way. So it was a matter of, okay, if they're interested, if it's good enough… So in '83, we sent it to the independent feature [screening], and … Catherine Ruelle came to that representing a festival [in] …France, north of Paris. Amiens. And they wanted the film, but they weren't sure they wanted it for competition. But they wanted it, and they wanted to invite me. [It was] my first time, so I said, "okay." And so it went there and then there was another festival in Nantes, Festival of Three Continents, and

Charles was going there, and Hudlin and Van Peebles and a number of them had been there before… An Algerian friend who worked on [Julie Dash's) *Illusions*, Omar, contacted them or somehow got them the film, and so they invited me to come there after the other festival. And they actually were competitors and one tried to keep the film if they won't pay my ticket and all this kind of stuff.

So that's the way it got there, and in Nantes, the main director of the Forum of International Young Cinema in Berlin was there, Ulrich Gregor. He was looking and thinking about films. And Catherine and other people insisted that he should take it and he was open about it, but then he came to a talk. He came to the press conference to talk. And I talked about our experience here, and I talked about how the group I had… Larry, Charlie, Haile, and all the rest… How they organized within the school, almost another cause for us, and how they sort of oversaw you surviving doing your work and how they set the standard and how cinema for us was the cinema of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and how important that was. How important imperfect cinema by Julio Garcia Espinosa, Third Cinema, Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino. And how we had since '74, with Teshome Gabriel, we had a whole series of programs and we organized within the school. To see after our own interests and our own interest in our own idea about film culture and what was of value. He liked that, so he sent an invitation and he published that in the catalog and it's [been] published in a lot of different places. Some other people took it directly from him.

Berlin was important … People were generous. It went to a lot of places. I didn't imagine. But Julie [Dash] said, "Okay, this will change your life." That's what she used to say when I was stuck — you just do it… What was unusual about it, and I tell you because I was joking with Haile [Gerima] about it, it was unusual for a film to play in Berlin *and* to be accepted for Cannes…

I don't see that as a big deal about me, but what that did, is that extended for us another place that we reached. And I say we; why do I say we? …But what happened is Haile went to Cannes, and then Larry [Clark] went to Le Carnot and then Charlie [Burnett] went to [the] first Oberhausen. And that's an interesting story, because that came through a classmate's brother, who asked me… I didn't have the thing ready. I didn't finish the post on that *Pocketbook* movie, so Charlie had this horse movie [*The Horse*], and I said, Charlie, you need to send the thing, so Charlie sends the thing and then he calls me, "Guess who won?" (Laughs). … He was in a lot of places — Rotterdam, and all those places, right? But what happens is if you add another contact … then it's good. That's the part of the collective project. Individually, it can be okay, but it belongs to that project … and without this thing, it wouldn't have been done… We had the situation, the contacts, we had the means, and we had the example, and we had each other, and we had the privilege of being in a place where we could think about things that had no reason to exist except we wanted to do it.

JS: And you kind of raise it when talking about the "we," because I think that's one of the difficult things that we as scholars have when we try to figure out how to talk about you all as a group, and so maybe one way of asking that would be to ask you about this term, L.A. Rebellion, and how you respond to it, because that's the term that has seemed to get the most, sort of, mileage in terms of how people think about you all as a collective.

BW: …This is the thing… If you research *nouvelle vague*, if you research new German cinema, if you research L.A. Rebellion …what you find is that these terms and ideas and kind of unifying names or

designations, a lot of times, derive from critics, scholars, people who were thinking about and trying to conceive of connection and relationship between things that are alike — that may be different in particulars, but there's something coherent or they seem to be together. Or it becomes a useful way of orienting the public or future people toward it. And then they come up with it, and then it becomes useful or it sticks, as they say. In this case, what happened, as you know the origin of the term, but it also [is] sometimes the cultural landscape, the moment, and the context [that] is important. It might've been 1986, '87, I'm not sure when this happened, but John Hanhardt, who was the curator at the Whitney and connected to Rockefeller Foundation… it was a moment in this so-called independent experiment or avant-garde kind of thinking — a way for them to conceive and think about the project of film and video… So Clyde had been writing about — he wrote about Larry, he wrote about Haile, and he did it in *Black Collegian* I think, where he had a kind of column. I think it was there, not *Black Scholar,* right?

JS: In *Black Collegian*, that's right.

BW: He did kind of profiles like that. And then he was a teacher at Tufts. And he had run a film society, he and his wife and friends in Berkeley, for a time. So he had been thinking about film … Clyde and Manthia Diawara, and all of them, they used to come… Teshome was the guy who was one of the early people in film theory and film studies who published and who was influential. And they were in English literature, comparative lit, and they wanted to be in film, which is their right. But they used to come and go to the coffee place with Teshome, like a lot of other people, and absorb things and find ideas provocative, and that's sort of how they were encouraged to join and to engage with this kind of thing. And he was not about to chase publication and also to lock down in a safe all of his ideas and concepts, right? And other people in some ways took some of those things to market, really (laughs). And that's okay. I think he's big enough that that happened, but people should be informed, okay, because they did not and they don't have a formation in this, and sometime it's reflected in errors that they make in terms of conceptions about cinema. And this good sister actually had a big battle with him in a journal, but she could tell you about that.

…So what do I say? I say fine, because what happens? … That's his concept, okay? It turned out to be a useful concept, not only for him, but it was at least a way that what happened was recorded or acknowledged in some way. And suspicion that it might be of interest or significant was established by him and that document that exists, that can be consulted, and that can be used, and programmers and other people, and other scholars, have pursued their interest in it… so it proves somewhat useful. Then we jump forward all these years, nearly 30 years, and it's being used at least to frame and organize and communicate to the somewhat informed foundation in art and film world; a project that you propose, right? It seems to do that work…

Q: Are you happy with it?

BW: Yes. In some ways we realized a good portion of the original intent and concept of the film. I think the film could have been much longer and maybe the scope would have boon broader-more characters. But in terms of the central things that it has to say. I'm happy. And I'm happy — after the difficulty being turned down by different sources — to have made that kind of film.

Q: I was talking with Charles Burnett, and he said the ending in the script is much different from the ending in the film. In the script the main character, Charlie Banks, is transformed into a clown. Burnett said it was a problem of money and time.

BW: It was a time problem. But maybe, with all due love and respect, temperamentally for me, this ending is what I saw as organic to the material. I think the flight into another sort of realm — the grotesque, the ironic — that he wrote was wonderful in some ways. But I think the current ending, not necessarily better, but better for what the film is now. It's an organic ending. I tried to make a synthesis of the original concept and the tone and the reality of the film, as it was realized, as it was accomplished.

Q: I thought it was too open ended. I didn't know what was going to happen to Charlie.

BW: You don't. I've had people say to me, "I'm concerned that this guy is going to commit suicide." Then I've had people argue vigorously that he's going home. You see his wife comfort him. You see a portrait of a family with pain, with problems. His wife is steadfast and he's almost childlike. But you know that man is concerned with his family. So the ending had to be open. This man is asphyxiated. And the only way to deal with asphyxiation sometimes is to move.

Q: It was shown in Washington with two films that are similar in theme. Burnett's *My Brother's Wedding* and Alonzo Crawford's *Dirt, Ground, Earth, and Land*. I told some people I'd seen it with that we have to put aside our middle-class prejudices and realize these filmmakers are saying something valuable about people we don't often see in films.

BW: Among black people in the Sixties, there was a certain amount of populism and a striving for unity, but a unity that in some ways was always imposed by segregation. There was always a differentiation in that. And sometimes we don't like to acknowledge the differentiation, the varied experience, the stratification, the conflicts, or anything that deal with that. We have to be very careful with that notion of stereotypes. A film that deals with working-class people, then people feel it's stereotyped, because it's poor folks.

My concern, and Charles' concern at that particular time with that film, was to speak about these people and their relationship to the world. Because they are very numerous in our community. Their

problems are in many ways the defining ones — not the only ones — but some of the defining ones: the massive unemployment, the difficulty of male-female relationships — which seems to be universal — the maintenance of the family. These are big problems. But they aren't unique to black people, because they are problems in advanced capitalistic countries as well as underdeveloped countries.

Q: Was it a conscious decision to shoot it in black-and-white with a relatively static camera?

BW: Yes. Inherent in that film and in the text and narrative is the notion that you have to look to learn, you have to work to know. That's true in reality, and I tried to put it into that film. Black-and-white was right for that material. I've seen some films where the color-coordinated poverty was astonishing. I wasn't prepared at that point to work out a rigorous scheme.

Q: You shot it almost as if we were eavesdropping or Peeping Toms. People go about their business, and the filmmaker seems to choose certain aspects or instances in their lives. We have to be observant as we watch.

BW: You must bring something to the film. You must fill in certain things, I think. There's a kind of selectivity in the framing and the choice of what scenes to include. That comes partly in the editing and the shooting. It's the revealing details. Much of that detail was in the script. Some people want melodrama or high drama, but perhaps the lives of these people are not overly dramatic on a daily basis. Perhaps the drama exists on a level that we have to work to see — small nuances, telling details, tone, gestures, actions that are not so broad or overt.

Q: Where did you shoot the film?

BW: We shot it in south central LA, southwest LA, a little bit on the Long Beach pier, and in Watts. The barbershop is in Watts. He's been there since 1933. He knows everything about the place. That's Charles' barber; he's over 70 years old.

Q: What's in store for you?

BW: At this point, I can't really say what project I will do next. I am considering a number of them and a number of approaches. I hope that the possibilities of working will include a broader canvas in terms of the kinds of films that I can make in my lifetime. One does not necessarily have to make the same kind of film over and over.

At the same time, I am concerned with the reality of black people and our situation. Because not only does the black population not have its reality reflected in media--because we are not empowered to give expression to what we know and feel — but the larger audience and the larger public in this country are also not aware. People say my film is like a foreign film, it's like a foreign country. But it's 20 blocks from their homes and they haven't been sensitized to want to look at it, to have the curiosity about it and come to know the reality.

Thank you to Indiana University Black Film Archives, Brian Graney and Rhonda Sewald for providing the interview.

Synopsis

Charlie Banks is looking for work… searching for it every day. But there are no jobs and the day in and day out of being unemployed is taking a toll on him and his family. His wife Andais is worn out working and taking of their young children. The kids are called on to help with the household chores in their small rundown apartment — even when baby Kim has to stand on a chair to help with the dishes. Angie, the oldest at about age eight, starts dinner most nights. Ronnie, the middle kid, helps too, but both his parents constantly find fault with him. When Ronnie's nails are too long, Charlie cuts them and asks the crying boy if he is a little girl or a little sissy.

And manhood is always in question when the man of the house can't provide… when Andais tells the kids that their daddy will give them money for the collection plate at church, she then has to go into the hall and give her husband the coins. Charlie takes day jobs whenever he can, cutting weeds and painting houses. At night, he falls asleep in the bathtub.

Passing by a laundromat, Charlie notices Rose, a woman he hasn't seen in some years. Soon he is spending time at her home after work. Andais bitterly tells her friend that she knows all about Charlie's other woman. Later, when Charlie hands over his earnings from his day labor jobs, she asks him about missing money. Charlie just tells her that a couple of days they went out but didn't find work. One night, arriving home sad and exhausted from her job, Andais breaks down, telling the kids "Your silly ass daddy gives less than a damn if you starve to death." Crying, she hurls the chicken she was about to cook for the family dinner across the room.

Rose confronts Charlie, telling him that her kids need a man around the house. When he tells her that he can't even find work to provide for his own children, she replies that she is not offering any freebies and tells him to leave.

At home, Andais asks her husband where he is coming from, smelling like ten-cent perfume? She tells him that she knows that for months he has been leaving part of his earnings crosstown while she has been working like a dog and everyone has been laughing at her. "I can't make people give me a job," he screams back at her, "I try everyday." "Don't try, do it, do it!" Andais wails. Their intensity builds and soon both husband and wife are crying. "I'm tired, tired, tired," Andais tells him, "start trying to be a man." Charlie tells her he understands, he does care about her and it won't always be this way. "When wasn't it this way?" she asks. "Quite dreaming your pipe dreams."

Charlie asks the local barber for advice on how to find a job, but the older man just tells him that many young folks are too lazy to get up early and make sacrifices. So instead Charlie digs out his old fishing rod and stays up late, tying hooks.

Sitting at the table with Angela, whose broken arm is in a cast, Charlie weeps bitterly, telling her he is sorry he "ain't able to let you live in a better neighborhood." As he sobs, Andais comforts him.

As his friends try to hawk their fresh fish on the side of the road, Charlie watches and then, walks away, waving them off.

Billy Woodberry's 'Bless Their Little Hearts' by film director Brandon Wilson

Billy Woodberry's 1984 feature *Bless Their Little Hearts* is a film more admired than seen and more's the pity. To my knowledge, the film has never been issued either on VHS or DVD, but the exquisite 35mm blowup I saw last Saturday gives one hope that a DVD release is in the offing.

It won awards at the Berlin Film Festival when it debuted and was cited by no less than Thom Anderson in his epic documentary about my hometown's portrayal in cinema *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. It is also somewhat cursed to be the little brother to Charles Burnett's much-lauded masterwork *Killer of Sheep*.

There is good reason for this. Both films focus on embattled Black families in South Central Los Angeles in roughly the same time period. Both films are shot in black and white and bear the influence of both Italian Neo-Realism and so-called Third World Cinema. Burnett wrote the screenplay and shot the film in 16mm. But it was Woodberry, who was one of the younger members of the L.A. Rebellion or the "Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers" (as it is called on Wikipedia) who produced, directed and edited *Bless Their Little Hearts*.

In discussing the film I'm afraid I cannot resist the temptation to further compare the two, but not to show how Woodberry's film is lacking compared to *Killer of Sheep*, but instead to identify the unique strengths that Woodberry brought to bear in interpreting Burnett's script.

The differences between the Banks family in *Bless Their Little Hearts* and Stan's family in *Killer of Sheep* are critical. Where Stan's job in a slaughterhouse is full of metaphorical import and takes a spiritual toll on him, Charlie Banks' cross to bear is not having a job at all. His joblessness also is full of metaphorical import and takes a spiritual toll on him. In beautifully directed sequences we see Charlie struggle to both find work and keep his sense of manhood intact simultaneously, and all the while the ruins of industrial labor (shuttered and collapsing Firestone and Goodyear factories) become Charlie's backdrop thanks to Woodberry's *mise-en-scene*. The buildings speak eloquent volumes.

Aside from his Renoirian empathy, and his deft handling of subtle moments, Woodberry displays a great gift for directing actors. Nate Hardman does a fine job conveying Charlie's anguish. It stays bottled up inside of him, and it comes out in bursts, either in small moments or in his disastrous flirtation with an old flame. Nate is more downtrodden than Stan in *Killer of Sheep*, who proudly enumerates the ways in which his family is still at least

lower middle class. Charlie is slowly succumbing to the temptations surrounding him: the allure of easy money from crime, playing house in his largely chaste dalliance with an old girlfriend, and of course, the unspoken option to just leave everything.

Bless Their Little Hearts is a subtly bleaker vision than *Killer of Sheep*. Set only a few years after the earlier film, it is clear the ravages that will afflict the Black community as the 1980's continue are more advanced as evidenced by the gang graffiti Charlie at one point paints over. Where the earlier film devoted much time to images of children frolicking in their less than idyllic setting, those images are absent here. Moreover, we see the aftermath of an off-screen incident late in the film that suggests those same streets have become dangerous for children.

As the title suggests, *Bless Their Little Hearts* is hugely concerned with how the economic strife and the attendant marital turmoil affects those children. Charlie and his wife Andais (played by the incomparable Kaycee Moore, more on her in a bit) try to shield their children from the dark side of their marriage, but the children nevertheless pick up on signs obvious and subtle that all is not right.

Charlie is a complex character, at once the victim of his circumstance but undeniably his own antagonist. His impotence, poor choices and boundless self-pity make us incredibly sympathetic to his wife. The truth captured in how this paterfamilias is simultaneously important to and part of the family's woes is searing. We also witness time and again how self-pity and dishonesty reduce Charlie (more even than his joblessness) to being one more child Andais has to care for.

When Charlie and Andais finally have it out in a bravura handheld long take scene that is difficult to watch for all of its emotional intensity, it finally dawned on me that this film is a distant cousin to Bergman's *Scenes From A Marriage*. Woodberry's film is more like Bergman's than *Killer of Sheep* in that *Bless Their Little Hearts* is largely a chamber piece, one in which each member of the family plays an important part in the ensemble. The slow burn, buildup and conflagration between Johan and Marianne could almost be thought of as cultural stereotyping of the famously saturnine Swedes. But it is not something we are given to associating with African-American characters. But Charlie and Andais, beset by day-to-day struggles have also become pressure cookers. The details (cultural and class-wise) in each respective fictional marriage may differ, but human truth is universal.

Kaycee Moore also played Stan's unnamed wife in *Killer of Sheep*. And she has a crucial part in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, thereby making her one of the great leading ladies of the L.A. Rebellion. It is stating the obvious that Kaycee Moore, in a more just world, would have been a major star and famous. She has a power in her performances that does not come at the expense of her character's humanity or complexity. She is more sympathetic here than in Burnett's film. The scene of her talking to her daughter about the nature of courtship is priceless. It's simple yet gives the character a great deal of shading.

Those moments in the end are really where Woodberry's directing shines (belated full disclosure: as a UCLA student, Woodberry was one of my most important mentors). His film is less a portrait of a community than a look at how one family can serve as a microcosm.

I can't give anything away about the final image, but it stays in your mind after you've seen the film. It doesn't allow us to have any false hope about the future of the Banks family, and it is unclear how deeply the act merely reflects Charlie's exasperation with the present or his family's long-range prospects.

It is common to think of the L.A. Rebellion directors as unsung heroes, especially Woodberry who has not received the accolades some of his comrades have. So it is very telling that he devoted so much of his Q&A after the film to recognizing the unsung amongst the unsung: the critics and academics who he believed created an environment at international festivals that was receptive to his work and the other Rebellion directors.

This is important. Without people like the late Albert Johnson (5/9/1925 – 10/17/1998; an African American Studies professor at UC Berkeley who co-founded the San Francisco International Film Festival & and the journal *Film Quarterly*) who quietly advocated for the filmmakers all over the world, movements like the L.A. Rebellion may happen but they won't achieve critical mass.

The enormous generosity Woodberry demonstrates as a director also motivates him to remind us not to buy into the *Great Auteur* approach to understanding the movement he participated in. When decrying the state of things in cinema, let's remember that it took many people to create the L.A. Rebellion. And not all of them were behind or anywhere near the camera.

Charles Burnett, Cinematographer/Scriptwriter

Born in Vicksburg, Mississippi on April 13, 1944, Charles Burnett moved with his family to Los Angeles at an early age. He describes Watts, the community he grew up in, as having a strong mythical connection with the South thanks to the many Southern transplants who settled there — an atmosphere that has informed much of Burnett's work. He attended John C. Fremont High School, where he ran track. As a member of the electronics club, Burnett befriended fellow electronics enthusiast and secretly aspiring actor Charles Bracy (*The Million Dollar Rip-off,* 1976), who would later work on and act in a number of Burnett's films, including *Killer of Sheep*. Burnett and Bracy graduated in the same class and both went on to study as electricians at Los Angeles City College. Bracy left school early to take a full-time job and Burnett soon lost interest with the idea of being a professional electrician. "They were very strange people," Burnett says of his electrician-to-be peers, "They told awful jokes. They were dull people. Didn't want that. I was always interested in photography and looked into being a cinematographer and started taking creative writing at UCLA."

Burnett decided to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in filmmaking at UCLA, where he was greatly influenced by his professors Basil Wright, the English documentary filmmaker famous for *Night Mail* and *Song of Ceylon*, and Elyseo Taylor, creator of the Ethno-Communications program and professor of Third World cinema. Burnett cites Jean Renoir, Satyajit Ray, Federico Fellini and Sidney Lumet as other important cinematic influences.

Burnett worked and studied at UCLA alongside Julie Dash, Haile Gerima, Billy Woodbury, Larry Clark, and Jamaa Fanaka (then known as Walter Gordon). He describes the UCLA film school as an "anti-Hollywood" environment with a "kind of anarchistic flavor to it." The UCLA filmmakers shared a disdain for the Blaxploitation vogue of the day and a propensity toward filmmaking that was "relevant or extremely well done, original." Clyde Taylor of New York University would later label this group of radical black film contemporaries the "L.A. Rebellion." Although there was no conscious impetus among these filmmakers to declare themselves part of a "rebellion," there was much camaraderie and exchange of ideas and labor between them. Burnett was the cinematographer for

Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1979), worked crew and camera and edited Dash's *Illusions* (1982) and was the screenwriter and cinematographer for Woodbury's *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984).

Burnett and his contemporaries took their time at UCLA, staying in the program as long as they could in order to take advantage of the free film equipment and making film after film. Burnett made a number of seminal films at this time, the most notably his thesis film and first feature, *Killer of Sheep*. The precursor to *Killer of Sheep*, *Several Friends* (1969), was originally planned as a feature but ended up a short. *Several Friends* was a series of loose, documentary-style vignettes sketching the lives of a handful of characters, mostly played by amateurs (Burnett's friends) living in Watts. Much of the film's theme and aesthetic (and many of its actors) ended up in *Killer of Sheep*.

Several Friends is included in Milestone's DVD release of *Killer of Sheep*, along with another student short *The Horse* (1973), the critically acclaimed short *When It Rains* (1995), his portrait of a family in post-Katrina New Orleans, *Quiet as Kept,* and both original release and the director's cut of Burnett's second feature, a long-neglected landmark of independent cinema, *My Brother's Wedding* (1984).

My Brother's Wedding began production in 1983. Burnett wrote, directed and produced this low budget independent film that examines the family connections and personal obligations facing Pierce, a young man trying to keep his best friend from going back to jail while dealing with his older brother's approaching marriage into a bourgeois black family. *My Brother's Wedding* uses both comedy and tragedy to explore the way that class figures into the American black experience. Burnett submitted a rough cut of the film to its producers, who against his wishes, accepted it as the final cut. The unfinished film was shown at the New Directors/New Films festival to mixed reviews, discouraging distributors and tragically relegating the film to relative obscurity.

In 1990, Burnett wrote and directed the haunting, malicious, and darkly funny family drama, *To Sleep With Anger.* Danny Glover, parlaying his recent stardom in *Lethal Weapon* to get funding, co-produced and starred in this critically lauded film as Harry, a charming, mischievous, and possibly supernatural Southern family friend. As he insinuates himself into the home of a prosperous black family, Harry, like another snaky charmer, threatens to spoil their domestic paradise. Burnett received acclaim in America and abroad for the film. In 1991, *To Sleep With Anger* won Independent Spirit Awards for Best Director and Best Screenplay for Burnett and Best Actor for Glover. The Library of Congress later selected this film (in addition to *Killer of Sheep*) for its prestigious National Film Registry. The National Society of Film Critics honored Burnett for best screenplay for *To Sleep With Anger*, making him the first black filmmaker to win in this category in the group's 25-year history. While the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Burnett's movie reminded viewers of Anton Chekov, *Time* magazine wrote: "If Spike Lee's films are the equivalent of rap music — urgent, explosive, profane, then Burnett's movie is good, old urban blues." The film also received a Special Jury Recognition Award at the 1990 Sundance Film Festival and a Special Award from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Both Burnett and Glover were nominated for New York Film Critics Circle Awards.

Burnett's next film, *The Glass Shield,* (1994, starring Lori Petty, Michael Boatman and Ice Cube) was a police drama based on a true story of corruption and racism within the Los Angeles police force. While the film went over well with critics, it was not a commercial success. Terrence Rafferty explains: "[*The Glass* Shield is] a thoughtful, lucid moral drama with a deeply conflicted hero and no gunplay whatsoever. Miramax's fabled marketing department tried to sell it as a hood movie, dumping it in a few urban theaters with the support of miniscule ads whose most prominent feature was the glowering face of Ice Cube (who has a small role in the picture)."

Burnett followed this feature with the short, *When It Rains* (1995), which was chosen as one of the ten best films of 1990s by the *Chicago Reader's* Jonathan Rosenbaum. Rosenbaum went on to choose *Killer of Sheep* and *To Sleep with Anger* as two of the Top 100 American Films as *Alternate to the American Film Institute Top 100.*

Working with movie stars James Earl Jones and Lynn Redgrave, Burnett directed the surreal interracial romantic comedy *The Annihilation of Fish* (1999), which won awards at the Newport Beach, Sarasota, and Worldfest Houston Film Festivals.

Burnett traveled to Africa to make *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* (2007), a powerful, epic biography of Sam Nujoma, the leader of the South West Africa People's Movement and the nation's first president. Based on Nujoma's memoirs, the film stars Carl Lumbly and Danny Glover.

Throughout his career, Burnett has also embraced the documentary form — many of his earliest film efforts walk the line between fiction and nonfiction cinema. He directed the 1991 documentary about U.S. immigration, *America Becoming; Dr. Endesha Ida Mae Holland* (1998), a portrait of a civil rights activist, playwright, and teacher; and *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property* (2003) about the leader of an important slave rebellion.

Burnett made his television debut directing his acclaimed 1996 Disney Channel film, *Nightjohn*. Based on the Gary Paulsen's novel, the film tells the story of a slave's risky attempt to teach an orphaned slave girl to read and write. *New Yorker* film critic Terrence Rafferty called *Nightjohn* the "best American movie of 1996." The TV film received a 1997 Special Citation Award from the National Society of Film Critics "for a film whose exceptional quality and origin challenge strictures of the movie marketplace."

Burnett's television work also includes the 1998 ABC two-part mini-series *Oprah Winfrey Presents: The Wedding,* starring Halle Barry and Lynn Whitfield; *Selma, Lord, Selma* (1999), about the infamous 1965 "Bloody Sunday" civil rights march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge; a film about Negro League Baseball, *Finding Buck McHenry* (2000); *Relative Stranger* (2009), a drama about a painful family reunion; and "Warming By the Devil's Fire" (2003), an episode in Martin Scorsese's six-part documentary *The Blues* for PBS. Burnett also worked on the PBS miniseries *American Family: The Journey of Dreams*, which debuted in 2002.

In 1997, the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival honored Burnett with a retrospective, *Witnessing For Everyday Heroes*, presented at New York's Walter Reade Theater of Lincoln Center. Burnett has been awarded grants from the Guggenheim

Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the J. P. Getty Foundation, as well as a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship (a.k.a. "the genius grant").

Burnett is also the winner of the American Film Institute's Maya Deren Award, and one of the very few people ever to be honored with Howard University's Paul Robeson Award for achievement in cinema. The *Chicago Tribune* has called him "one of America's very best filmmakers" and the *New York Times* named him "the nation's least-known great filmmaker and most gifted black director." Burnett has even had a day named after him — in 1997, the mayor of Seattle declared February 20 to be Charles Burnett Day.

Burnett has been cited as a major influence by many current artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers, including Barry Jenkins, Sherman Alexie, Lance Hammer, Matthew David Wilder, Bill Jennings. David Gordon Green, Nelson Kim, Kahlil Joseph, Ava DuVernay, Lynne Ramsay, Monona Wali, Mos Def, Pamela J. Peters, and hip hop duo Shabazz Palaces.

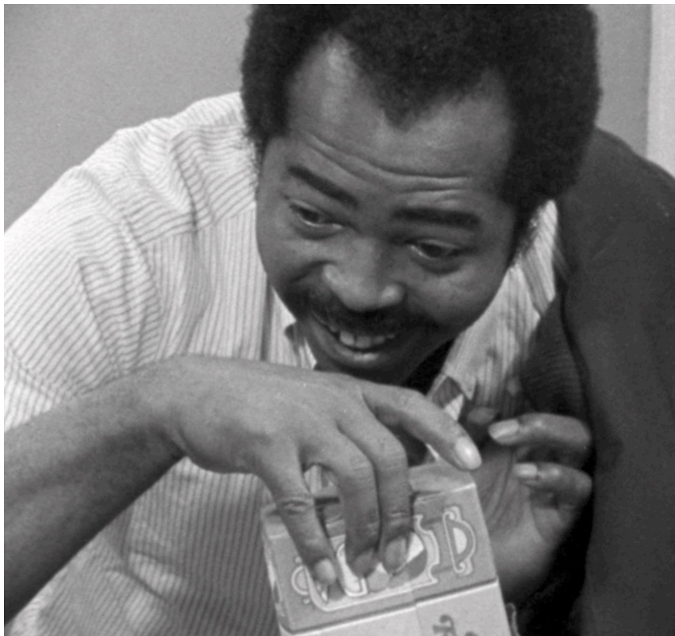
Burnett's next feature film project, *Tanner's Song*, pays homage from Bobby Kimball — original lead singer of the Grammy Award-winning band, Toto — to the wise man who mentored him. Danny Glover has expressed interest in playing the role of Tanner.

Charles Burnett lives Los Angeles. He is the father of two sons, Jonathan and Steven, and the grandfather of Malia and Leila Burnett.

Kaycee Moore

Kaycee Moore had only acted in live theater before starring in *Killer of Sheep* and *Bless Their Little Hearts.* In 1984 she went back home to Missouri for a few months to help her mother start up the Kansas City chapter of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America., Moore ended up staying on, acting as Executive Director after her mother's death in 1990. In 1991, filmmaker Julie Dash, wowed by Moore's performance in *Killer of Sheep* — particularly the improvised scene in which she is yelling at the characters Smoke and Scooter on the front porch — cast Moore in her 1991 film *Daughters of the Dust*. After filming, Moore returned to Kansas City to continue her work fighting Sickle Cell Disease. In 1994, she shared the screen with Isaac Hayes and Martin Sheen in the Kansas City independent film *Ninth Street*, adapted from a play of the same name. She continues to work at the Kansas City SCDAA as a grant writer and has finished a screenplay entitled *Track 14*, a historical drama about the Kansas City area.

Nate Hardman



Nate Hardman is known for the roles of Charlie Banks in *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984) and Baby Brother in Charles Burnett's *My Brother's Wedding* (1984). He also appeared in Bob Chinn's *Panama Red* (1976), Bobby Roth's *The Boss' Son* (1978), and Bill Brame's *Baby Needs a New Pair of Shoes* (1974). He lives in Corvina, California with his wife Shirley.

"I consider myself very lucky to have met Billy and Charles in the early '80's while they were beginning to create this film, Bless Their Little Hearts, *a story about a black family that was positive and contained no cussing, killing and robbery. A film, which appears to have a long life. I am happy to have been a part of this film."* — Nate Hardman, April 25, 2017

Kaycee Moore on the making of BLESS THEIR LITTLE HEARTS

Those were wonderful times. I got a late start in the filmmaking business and being in front of the camera. One day I may tell how and why. I only did two other films after *Bless Their Little Hearts*. There was *Ninth Street* in which my character was a bag lady named Pop Bottle Ruby. She was a little mentally challenged and traumatized because she had lost her son in the Vietnam War. The other film was *Daughters of the Dust*. My character was Haagar Peazant, a stately woman with 3 children. She had married into the Peazant family and wanted to leave the island where they lived so that her daughters could become educated.

My first film was for Charles Burnett — *Killer of Sheep*. I did not have a name in that film. I was just Stan's wife.

Bless Their Little Hearts was kind of written for me. Having worked for Charles Burnett in the past, one of my sayings was "Bless your heart." Coming from a Jesus-led home, I would hear that said several times a day as a child growing up. Charles Burnett told me about a script he had written for Billy. I did not know just how much my old saying had stuck in Charles's mind. He had named the film *Bless Their Little Hearts*. For the most part, it was a film set that was full of love. This was my first time working with Billy Woodbury. The children I worked with were loving and always took direction perfectly. Over the years, my mind always went back to Angie (my "daughter") because I figured that one day she might stay in front or behind the camera. It all came so easy for her.

Charles asked me if I knew someone I liked working with who could play the part of my husband in the film. We first thought of one of my good friends who was a fantastic actor. But I was thinking I needed someone who had a strong personality to bring to the part. I had just finished a stage play at USC. That was where I met Nate Hartman. I warned both Charles and Billy that Nate would continue on in any action unless there was something to stop him. They met Nate and liked him, and so the family portion was set.

Some days filming were so much fun, such as with one scene in the kitchen where my character was crying and venting to my children while cleaning a chicken. My action was to throw the chicken. Well … I threw the chicken. I was not really trying to hit Charles with the chicken, but I did. Even after rehearsing the scene a few more times, where would the chicken go? Right into Charlie and his camera! As you may already know, Charles Burnett loves reality (in film). I remember after everyone was finished laughing (about Charles being hit with the chicken), I asked, "Charlie, are you going to leave THAT in?"

Back to Nate and the stage play we had just finished. My character was a lady trained in martial arts. All throughout the rehearsals — over a month or so — I would "throw" Nate as scripted. So on opening night and for the next two nights, I threw Nate according to the script. Then on the third night, out of nowhere, Nate decided to grab me. Not only did he grab me, he lifted me out of my shoes in front of all those people. What's a girl to do? We made it through that night, but I never let

my guard down around Nate ever again. Even if we were not on the stage or in front of a camera. I never let my guard down.

So remembering all this, I pulled Charles aside and told him "Now you want an argument scene in the kitchen…. " Just before shooting the angry kitchen scene, Charles said he wanted it real and to try to do it on script would mess with the flow of the scene. He told us to just ad-lib. After pulling, Charles aside, I then went to Billy Woodbury and begged both him and Charles to leave the kitchen table in the kitchen so that I would have a way to stay away from Nate, and to keep him from (physically) getting to me. I knew I needed a way to keep Nate off me. I had told Charles long ago about my first marriage, that I had been battered every day.

Well, they got the kitchen ready for the ad-lib argument scene. Charles came out and called both Nate and me into set, saying he was all ready for the argument scene. I don't know if it was done as a prank, or if maybe if I had done something to offend somebody. My mind raced. What my panic was all about was when I walked into the kitchen; *there was no kitchen table*. I would have nowhere to hide and no way to keep Nate off of me. I began to sweat. I thought should I make a big deal out of this, or just what should I do? I tried to look Charles in the face, but he would not let our eyes meet. When I looked for Billy, he was looking at the floor, the ceiling, his fingers — everywhere except at me. So I decided, "OK… if this is the way they want to do this … if this man hurts me, I am going to tear up everything and everybody!" This was to be the only scene in the movie unscripted.

I was so scared for real. I did not know if I could do this. I was panicked, afraid and downright scared to death, and it was no act. It was taking me back to my late teens when a man who was supposed to love me would beat me for nothing. I never did one thing for him to try to kill me, nevertheless he did.

By this time, I got it through my mind that this was a setup and they did this so that Nate would hurt me and they could get it on film. Nate did hurt me, and they let him. But my best acting was after the scene had been shot. Charles got it all in one take — a long take at that. It was enough to leave a lot on the editing room floor and still have too much. Where my good acting came in: I did not let those three men (Charles, Billy and Nate) know how I really felt. There were no breaks in the shooting. It was one camera and Charles just kept shooting … until I broke down. When it was over I never let them know — even to this day — how I felt. I never brought the matter up again.

Mostly all I have are good memories. If I had to pick one thing I do regret, it would be that there were no scenes with Nate and me dancing. Months after the film wrapped, one day Nate came by my house to visit. I don't know how we got on the subject of dance, but I told Nate how much I loved to dance. I was saying how I did not like the dancing of the day, but I loved the dance of the '60s. Come to find out, so did he. He said, "Come on girl!" and we started to dance. We spent the whole night dancing.

That was the last time I saw Nate. He was one of the best dance partners I ever had, before or since. That was what? — about 40 years ago. I have been looking at old movies on TV and I have seen him there.

It has also been about 40 years since I have seen Billy Woodbury. He promised to pay me one day. I am glad I did not hold my breath! I have seen Charles more recently than 40 years ago.

… But those were the days!! I would not trade any of it for anything in the world.

If there could have been a tag on *Bless Their Little Hearts*, it would be Nate and me dancing at the age we are now!!

— Kaycee Moore, May 8, 2017 with thanks to her sister Frances Collier.

The Pocketbook

A film by Billy Woodberry.
Production Assistance: Bobby Roth
Slate: Sonja Bocha
With: Ella "Simi" Nelson, Ray Cherry, David Jenkins, Al Williams, Christopher Thompson, and Phillip Weatherspoon
Camera: Mario da Silva [elsewhere credited as DeSilva], Gary Gaston and Charles Burnett
Assistant Camera: Ciro Cesar
Sound: Vera da Silva
Dedicated to Langston Hughes, Sidney Meyers, Helen Levitt and Gladys Woodberry.
Special Thanks: Ed Brokaw, Derek Scott and Phil Keretski [elsewhere credited as Kuretsky]
US 1980, 35mm, b/w, 13 min
Restored by UCLA Film & Television Archive
With funding by The Andy Warhol Foundation
Restored by Ross Lipman in consultation with Billy Woodberry
35mm Picture Restoration by The Stanford Theater Film Laboratory and Fotokem
Sound Restoration by Audio Mechanics
Sound Transfers by NT Picture and Sound
Digital restoration (cleanup, stabilization, deflicker) by ReKINO, Warsaw, Poland
Digital Funding by Milestone Film & Video

In the course of a botched purse snatching, a boy questions the course of his life in this adaptation of Langston Hughes' "Thank You, M'am."

Interview Completed on: Thursday, June 24, 2010; July 6, 2010
Interviewee: Billy Woodberry (BW)
Interviewers: Jacqueline Stewart (JS), Dr. Allyson Field (AF), and Robyn Charles (RC)
Cameraman: Andy (ANDY). Transcribers: Kelly Lake, Michael Kmet

BW: The other thing I learned, at least I came to believe and accept, [is] that if you want to talk about politics in film, at least for me, it was not so interesting to be so direct. I remember this Japanese director, he was a Communist guy, but he was a successful and big director. He said, "In politics, yeah, I'm radical, but in cinema, I want to be like Chekhov. I don't want to be overt about that thing. I want to be observant, precise, calm, [and] human." Reading that, thinking about it, and then I started to read a lot. Of course, in that recovery of black literature, you're bound to encounter Langston Hughes a lot, and he has a tremendous appeal and charm and because he's clear, he's lyrical, he's beautiful, he's the blues, he's painful, and so I started to really like him. And then after Peter [Blue] made that movie about the shoes; about the little kid who has to go to court and he's trying to sneak off and if he sneaks off, he runs away from his problem and perhaps he continues that life, and his mother, Cora [Lee Day], her role is to make sure that that boy goes to court and face whatever you have to face, is the theory, then we face it, but we don't run away. I liked that. It was simple, it was beautiful, it was strong, it was black, without a whole bunch of declaration. It was just real. I thought, yeah, I like that.

So I found the story of the "Thank You, M'am" and I thought, I'm gonna make that thing about a boy who snatches a woman's purse and the woman turns out not to be who he thinks she is, and she knows who he is, but he doesn't know. There's no way he can know what's gonna happen because of this encounter, and it just moved me. I wanted to recover something from my childhood and our growing up and our dangerous ways of playing. And I liked that industrial landscape down Alameda Boulevard, because I worked… in a factory on Santa Fe Boulevard down in the heart of the industrial belt like that. I always loved that landscape, so when it came time to make that film, I knew that there was an abandoned railway yard, and I knew there were railroad tracks, and there was places to play, and I knew that in those boxcars you could find this tin and you could make whistles, which the kids in my area used to do. There was a railroad yard behind my big elementary school, and it was dangerous, and the more adventurous kids would do that, and I knew it had a kind of tension. So I wanted to do that.

I needed a boy and I needed a woman — older woman — so, where did I get them? I got the woman because of Haile, Larry Clark, and the rest. Simi was her name, and she was not such an older woman in style. She was, I think, maybe a practical nurse or something, but she studied acting at PASLA [Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles]. That's where they ran their workshops, and these guys used to teach film down there, and that was a big part of the Los Angeles performing arts culture and training ground. She had done those films, and so when I needed her, I asked her, and then there was another guy who was in school with us here named Bobby Roth and he had made a film called *Independence Day* about some black worker in his life and his girlfriend, and that woman — the girlfriend of his main character — had a son, and he was twelve. I got him, because I think he

appeared briefly in that film, but he had the face, the personality, and I got him, but I got a lot of friends with him. Actually, I took the kids, I had them play, and we shot the scene. Mario [DeSilva] shot the first part for me and he helped me think about the mise-en-scène and the dramaturgy and yelled. But I figured it out, I got up to speed, and he shot it. And I said, okay, the main kid who will do the dialogue and who will do the rest of the film will emerge if I set them to doing things. And he came with a little derby hat that day, and he had the ability to be present and withdrawn at the same time. Something was going on with him that was good. And so we made [it] and from that material, I chose him. And then I had the thing where he snatches her pocket book and then she catches him and they go to the house, and he thinks that she's gonna maybe turn him in, but then she handles it another way. She give him a big talk, but she confesses to him that she's not perfect and she did things that she wouldn't tell him about and the whole beautiful dialogue he wrote.

Now I had — I was thinking about it — I had three cameramen for that film because Mario went back to Brazil and he wasn't gonna do the whole thing anyway, and then I had Gary, who was okay… Gary Gaston; he was here when I got here. …He did it, but he was not the best. It was not his best kind of thing to shoot, and then Charles finished it. We redid some stuff, but that one, it turned out okay…

Now, the other thing is, our peers, the context, the people that were here when we were here — we weren't the only people who were trying to do anything, and we weren't alone, and we weren't without interaction with fellow students. It might've been more select, and at personal decisions, and evolve relations with various people, but that was important, too. We had a group who decided to make films collectively. Phil Kuretsky was the source of that thing, and then those people made a film in the lead factory in South Los Angeles called *Lead Smelter* with a revolutionary group that was working with those trade unions. The workers and their wives, the women, good friend of Haile's, Mickey Gleason, one of the films that she and a group of women made, was about women in prison. And these young people were thinking, studying, and practicing — and that film, they decided to do together. And the others were making up. But I'm saying if you were in that kind of context, you can… and there were debates and exchange and desire[s] to maybe treat something differently. I remember that Charles says that in part, *Killer of Sheep* originates with the idea that the colleagues at school thought that, okay, if you see the worker at the factory and you can convince him, then you can change things. And he said, "But I wanted to suggest that it's not that simple." Thus, the whole thing that I tried to show [was that] it was a dialogue, in a way, but actualized through film and not reduced to a lesson or illustration.

JS: And did you call that film *Thank you M'am*, or did you have a different title?

BW: No, I called it *The Pocketbook*. I thought in some ways I made the film mine because I thought of my grandmother, and even I gave the woman a job that she had one time working in a laundry… And I thought of the boy, I thought, like I told you, I thought of the environment near my house and near my project and my school. And the railway cars and all of that, that's the way I thought of it, that's the images I had. And very simply, I did — it's very simple, maybe too simple for some people. But what happened is… okay, where do I stage the theft? There was a big Bekins store on Crenshaw and Pico, and that Bekins store had a display window, which meant that you got light coming out, which meant she might walk by and admire some things in there. And in her distraction, this boy would come out

of the thing and try to grab her bag, but because it's largely in silhouette, it's like Chaplin's walking away. That was my thought; it's like Chaplin walking away at the end of *City Lights*… That's exactly what I thought, and that's exactly how I did it. I don't have to bring a single light; I don't have to do any elaborate asking of permission or anything like that. I used the bus, I used the bus lights (claps), and I got it, so that was what I learned, that's what I did. Then the ending, you sort of feel…I was learning everything, so I learned how to direct in that kind of acting, where they're not doing a lot of method and all that kind of stuff. They have very simple things to do, but there needs to be something behind them. And that boy could do that; he was sensitive. He was sensitive to the circumstances you put him in, and he would respond… tears or something, but you put him in a situation where he can't talk, and he could feel. He was an interesting kid.

JS: Is that something that you got from your classes, learning how to work with actors?

BW: I got that from watching films and I got that from friends. And I learned some things from Charles. I never took that directing actors for film. I got it from watching films and I think, because I was maybe slow, I took all those things about the theory [of] the close-up that you see in early Soviet movies, and early silent movies. I sort of took that to heart, and naively believed, why not show it instead of trying to make them talk about it, so, in some ways, I wish the images were as flat and as wonderful sometimes, but I loved that.

I remember working on the other film with Charles and working on [*Bless Their Little Hearts*]. My former wife used to always remind me that it's a plastic form and it's characters; [if] they're not the guy, you remove it. He's a character, he's not going to feel anything. He's not that guy. He's a character. And in that is what makes it a film; it makes it the old film that you saw. That it's not of your time [and] you can't bring it back. That allows you – even if you're working in the present – that allows you to establish the formal thing, the distance. But, you know, at least it's a way of thinking about it, and in some ways, yeah, I aspire to that, but I don't always know. Sometimes when it's really a flat image, it's two-dimensional, but somehow, something is coming out of it, or you can read something onto it, but just that, the eyes or something. Yeah, that's good.

I read all those books: Béla Balázs, the history of the close-up, and the role of the close-up, silent film theory, and all that. I thought, why not? I learned a lot of practical and useful things from Charlie, from Haile, from the others, and from working on other people's films, and watching how they do it and that kind of thing. Yeah, that's pretty much it. What did I leave out?

Milestone Film & Video

Milestone celebrates 27 years in business with a reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to the company's work in rediscovering and releasing important films such as Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep,* Kent Mackenzie's, *The Exiles*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity,* the Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country's most influential independent distributors.

In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award "to Dennis Doros and Amy Heller of Milestone Film & Video for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone became an Anthology Film Archive's Film Preservation honoree. From 2008 to 2014, Dennis Doros was elected three times as one of the Directors of the Board of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists and established the organization's press office in 2010. In 2016, AMIA awarded Doros the William O'Farrell Award for his volunteer work and his contribution to the field.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I Am Cuba*. Manohla Dargis, then at the *LA Weekly,* chose Milestone as the 1999 "Indie Distributor of the Year." In 2004, the National Society of Film Critics again awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award. That same year the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award *and* the New York Film Critics Circle voted a Special Award "in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films." In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. Milestone/Milliarium won Best Rediscovery from the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards for its release of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and again in 2010 for *The Exiles*. In 2015, the Il Cinema Ritrovato again awarded Milestone, this time for Best Blu-ray, for their series, *Project Shirley* (Clarke).

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In December 2012, Milestone became the first-ever two-time winner of the prestigious New York Film Critics' Circle's Special Award as well as another National Society of Film Critics Film Heritage Award, this time for its work in restoring, preserving and distributing the films of iconoclast director

Shirley Clarke. Important contemporary artists who have co-presented Milestone restorations include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Barbara Kopple, Woody Allen, Steven Soderbergh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Jonathan Demme, Dustin Hoffman, Charles Burnett and Sherman Alexie.

More recently, Milestone premiered Lois Weber's *Shoes* and *The Dumb Girl of Portici*, Ross Lipman's *Notfilm*, Kathleen Collins' *Losing Ground*. They are currently restoring the great documentary films of George Nierenberg.

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— Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

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