



# **Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity**

*Allyson Nadia Field*

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In *Uplift Cinema*, Allyson Nadia Field recovers the significant yet forgotten legacy of African American filmmaking in the 1910s. Like the racial uplift project, this cinema emphasized economic self-sufficiency, education, and respectability as the keys to African American progress. Field discusses films made at the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes to promote education, as well as the controversial *The New Era*, which was an antiracist response to D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. She also shows how Black filmmakers in New York and Chicago engaged with uplift through the promotion of Black modernity. Uplift cinema developed not just as a response to onscreen racism, but constituted an original engagement with the new medium that has had a deep and lasting significance for African American cinema. Although none of these films survived, Field's examination of archival film ephemera presents a method for studying lost films that opens up new frontiers for exploring early film culture.

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