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We Carry These Memories Inside of We: Celebrating the 20th Year Anniversary of Daughters of the Dust

College of Charleston, September 16-17, 2011

Twenty years ago, filmmaker Julie Dash broke through racial and gender boundaries to become the first African American woman to debut a film with wide release across the country. Daughters of the Dust is a highly artistic film that introduced many Americans to the history, opulence, and complexity of the South Carolina Gullah-Geechee culture and contextualizes it within wider discourses on race, class, gender, and skin-color at the turn of last century. Here Dash turns the camera's gaze onto her ancestors and their rich culture that thrived for centuries and continues to do so today.

The College of Charleston's Avery Research Center, Carolina Low Country and Atlantic World (CLAW) Program, and African American Studies Program (ASST), The International African American Museum (IAAM) and the South Carolina Historical Society plan to examine the lessons learned from Daughters of the Dust and its influence in the academy and society. The 20th Year anniversary of Daughters of the Dust provides the space and opportunity to reflect on converging discourses of race, gender, and class and the impact they had on Black women's lives, identities, and agency at the turn of the 19th century. Furthermore, we hope to give thoughtful consideration to the special place Daughters of the Dust occupies within the academy—as a source of inspiration to African American scholars, students, and artists, an homage to the Black art aesthetic in the post-modern and post-Black arts eras, a creative expression of Black feminist criticism, and the untold story of a rich, but forgotten cultural legacy of our shared American heritage. During this two-day retrospective we hope to examine the following themes: Black female identity:
On screen and Behind the lens; Civil Rights, Black Women's Rights, and Human Rights; The Black Art Aesthetic—Creative expression in the post-Black arts eras; Daughters of the Dust and African American Studies; Julie Dash and African American Women's Literary Expression; Their Eyes Were Watching Us: African American Women Filmmakers and Actresses; The Legacy of Slavery and Colonial Sensibilities in 21st Century Charleston; In Search of Agency: Literacy and Freedom; Migration and opportunity.

We welcome papers and complete panel sessions related to these themes and others from faculty, artists, filmmakers, graduate students, and public history professionals. Because of the overlapping nature of themes portrayed in the film, we expect that some presentations will be inter-disciplinary in nature, and we encourage proposals that examine the film from many intersections such as race and sexuality, Black identity and regional identity, or Women's Rights and Human Rights. All papers accepted for the symposium will be considered for inclusion in an anthology of essays examining Daughters of the Dust and its place in African American Studies, Film Studies, and Black Feminist Criticism edited by Patricia Williams Lessane and Dr. Conseula Francis. The deadline for proposals is March 4, 2011; complete papers due by August 1, 2011. Please send all paper and panel proposals to lessanepw@cofc.edu with your name, institution, title, email address, presentation title and format, along with a 150 word abstract, brief bio, and recent cv. Please put "Daughters proposal" in your subject line. Selected papers should follow MLA guidelines and have a maximum of ten pages, not including endnotes and/or bibliography. Presentations will be limited to twenty minutes. Visual artists wishing to display work that commemorates Julie Dash and Daughters of the Dust should send a high-resolution image of their work, along with a brief bio, and artist's statement by May 2, 2011. Artists are responsible for getting their work to Avery, and then we will insure the safe return for all accepted pieces. Information regarding registration, lodging, and symposium schedule will be available on the Avery Research Center's website beginning in March 2011. Contact information: Patricia Williams Lessane PhD, Executive Director, The Avery Research Center at The College of Charleston, 125 Bull Street, Charleston, South Carolina 29424, (p) 843-953-7234.