

INDIECOLLECT



IndieCollect Mourns and Celebrates

CAROL SUTTON
[1946-2020]



Photo courtesy WireImage

We are so sorry to report that the brilliant actress Carol Dickerson Sutton died of Covid-19 on December 10 at Touro Infirmary in New Orleans — the city she loved. Carol had turned 76 a few days before.

You can see photos of her in various productions and read [John Pope's excellent obituary](#), but the article omits mention of her extraordinary performance in our recent restoration of CANE RIVER — one of the best roles of her prestigious career. As our readers know, Horace Jenkins's movie was lost from view for nearly 40 years, but now her performance is immortalized.

See Carol Sutton in CANE RIVER

Thanks to Oscilloscope, you can see Carol Sutton's talent on screen in [this amazing movie](#).

As Mrs. Mathis, she practically steals the movie from the two young lovers at the heart of the story, playing a woman who is fierce, fearful, devoted and proud — a performance of many colors. Yet even at her most dictatorial, we understand that her behavior is motivated by deep love for her daughter Maria, played by Tommye Myrick. Although she and Maria are in constant conflict, they both want the same thing — the tools to survive without having to depend on a man. As proto-feminists from different generations, Carol and Tommye's artistry and spontaneity shine through the movie.



Photo of Tommye Myrick and Carol Sutton, courtesy of Tommye.

Tommye Myrick Recalls her Co-Star

Tommye writes: "I first met Carol on the set of CANE RIVER 40 years ago. She played my mother in that long lost film. On the last day of the shoot, our director, Horace Jenkins, realized belatedly that he needed a major confrontation between us. But we had already wrapped and cameraman Gideon Manasseh was out the door. So Horace set the camera on a tripod and just had us improvise."

The result is an indelible match of wills that crystallizes the mother's fears and hopes for her daughter and pivots the entire story. "That scene works because Carol had SUCH PASSION. We became close friends after that. She would later act in 13 shows I directed. Both early risers, she and I would many times be texting or talking to each other [at 4:30](#) in the morning. No one else to talk to that time of morning. We were kindred spirits."

Again, to watch Carol, Tommye and their co-stars in CANE RIVER, click [HERE](#).

More Condolences

Rhea Combs writes: "I would like to add my condolences to this chorus of praises for the incredible and important life of Carol Sutton. It was truly an honor to present this incredible film at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture film festival. Knowing the commitment Carol Sutton had to the arts community writ large, and this film in particular, is a particularly moving memory."

And Sacha Jenkins writes: "I am thankful that Carol was around to experience the appreciation that so many people have for her performance in CANE RIVER now. She and Horace are probably laughing together about all of this as we speak. I can hear him saying, 'See. I told you CANE RIVER was going to be seen! Our release date just got bumped a little...'



Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison with his mother, Clida, at his side. Photo courtesy Anthony Souffle, Star Tribune.

We Also Remember Clida Martinez Ellison

When the Walker Art Center showed CANE RIVER in Minneapolis in 2019, we learned that Keith Ellison is a direct descendant of the Coin-Coin / Metoyer union that first populated Cane River's free community of color before the Civil War. Keith brought his mother, Clida, to the Walker stage. Her recollections of Cane River, where she grew up, brought the setting alive for all of us in the audience that night.

Sadly, Clida Ellison also died of the Coronavirus. In addition to the [Star Tribune obituary](#), you may be interested to read the [family's own memorial](#).

It is so sad to lose these two remarkable women.

The Early Champions of CANE RIVER

"It takes a village" to revive such an important cultural treasure as this movie has turned out to be. The New York Times and The New Yorker have both credited CANE RIVER with changing our understanding of the history of Black cinema. We are proud of this and thank you early advocates who helped put it on the map.

- Our Academy Film Archive collaborators (especially Ed Carter, Mike Pogorzelski, Josef Lindner & Randy Haberkamp) adopted the movie from the outset and showcased it with such love years later;
- Chaz Ebert championed it early on, helped fund the 4K version, and showed it at EbertFest;
- Darren Walker & Cara Mertes of the Ford Foundation also provided crucial funding;
- Kara Oridge at Amistad Research Center made a grant to underwrite the 4K version too;
- Glen Pitre & Michelle Benoit hosted the New Orleans reunion of cast & crew back in 2018, including Tommye Myrick, Richard Romain, Carol Sutton, Barbara Tasker, Debi Moore et al;
- Rhea Combs hosted the Washington DC premiere at the National Museum of African American History & Culture, facilitated by Ina Archer;
- Sheryl Mousley, now retired, hosted the Twin Cities premiere at the Walker Art Center;
- Our MoMA colleagues (with thanks especially to Raj Roy, Josh Siegel, Dave Kehr, Ron Magliozzi) hosted the New York premiere;
- Horace's heirs, Dominique & Sacha Jenkins, bolstered us at every step;
- Dan Berger, head of Oscilloscope, got the movie into theaters, launching it at BAM Rose Cinemas, thanks to Ashley Clark, just before the shutdown;
- Special thanks to the IndieCollect Board of Directors, past and present, and to the restoration team, especially Oskar Miarka;
- And let us always remember the Rhodes family who financed the original production.

Sincerely,
Sandra Schulberg and the IndieCollect Team



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