

# New Directions

---

Volume 10  
Issue 3 *10th Year Anniversary Special Double*  
*Issue Numbers 3 and 4*

Article 3

---

4-1-1983

## The Inheritors

Editorial Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections>

---

### Recommended Citation

Staff, Editorial (1983) "The Inheritors," *New Directions*: Vol. 10: Iss. 3, Article 3.  
Available at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol10/iss3/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Directions by an authorized editor of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact [digitalservices@howard.edu](mailto:digitalservices@howard.edu).

## The Inheritors

**T**he Department of Radio, Television and Film has not produced a huge number of graduates concentrating in film, about 50 or so, but they are forging important paths. Many have attended or are enrolled in graduate school. Others hold jobs as cameramen, editors and production managers for various television stations and as independent film producers. The experiences of Serena Ferguson (class of '79) and Norbert Bain, III (class of '75) are typical.

Ferguson is an editor in the Washington bureau of Satellite News Channel, a cable network formed by ABC and Westinghouse. Using editing machines, she puts together 60-second news pieces highlighting Washington events of national import. Previously, she worked as a cinematographer in the marketing department of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., where she produced, directed, shot and edited commercials and marketing spots.

Bain is program development manager for Cable Atlanta, Channel 16, a community television channel with a predominantly-Black staff and a commitment to Black-oriented programming. His job involves developing programs for the station through production workshops which teach community members to produce their own shows. Before that, he worked in Philadelphia for an independent film company, a PBS program and two radio stations. He's also produced two films of his own. "Injun," about the American Indian Movement, has been shown on television in Philadelphia. The other, based on a Richard Wright poem about a lynching, is waiting to be edited.

"Howard did prepare me for what I'm doing now but in a roundabout way," Ferguson says. "It prepared me not so much in terms of learning how to operate the [editing] machines, because the state of the art is constantly changing, but in terms of what makes a good story, how to edit and how to shoot. What Howard also did for me was to make me more able to put into words exactly what it was I was seeing on television or in film and why I objected to seeing certain images."

The philosophical orientation he was provided by his instructors at Howard, says Bain, has had a lasting influence on his career. He especially cites "Haile Gerima's view on the responsibility of the filmmaker to recognize that every time you put an image on the screen for people to see there is a political dimension to that whether you want to acknowledge it or not."

The kind of film study he received at Howard is essential, he believes. "If you're not familiar enough with the medium or with the aesthetics or with the philosophy or with the dynamics that exist between the audience and the medium then you're just sort of doing it [working in film] like an automaton," he observes. "That's one of the things I left Howard University knowing I would never become."

Nor is that likely to happen to Arthur Jafa Fielder, III, better known as "A.J.," a Howard junior from Mississippi with a fondness for telling "epic-length stories" and giving epic-length answers to questions.

Fielder makes experimental films and videotapes, has designed his own movie camera, which he's trying to market, and considers film a "voodoo kind of thing" to be used to combat negative images of Black people. He's already assisted Howard's three film teachers with their films and worked as an assistant cameraman on a Camera News documentary on Black-Asian relations and on a film by noted Black independent filmmaker Charles Burnett.

After Howard, he plans to travel and then go to graduate school. Eventually, he'd like to teach, "maybe for a film department at a Black college in the South." He wants to teach because that way he'll have access to equipment and editing facilities so he can more readily make his own films. But he also wants to teach for another reason, one that would make "Grandma" in "Ashes and Embers" feel proud: "I'm into this thing about tradition, passing certain things down, influencing people." □