



The Devil Finds Work: James Baldwin on Film

By [Ashley Clark](#) on September 11, 2015

In 1989, two years after Baldwin's passing, Karen Thorson released the gorgeous, profoundly moving documentary tribute, *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (its title is a reference to a collection of Baldwin's writings from 1985). Thorson deploys evocative archival footage to conjure the atmosphere of Baldwin's formative years, from 1930s Harlem, to the cauldron of his father's fundamentalist church, and the languidly cool émigré haven of Paris in the postwar years. She also integrates scenes from his funeral service, a panoply of newsreel clips (many of which are dotted throughout the FSLC program), and collects insightful testimony from an array of black literary legends (Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, Ishmael Reed). With its gentle, muted tone and raft of information, *The Price of the Ticket* coheres to constitute a fitting tribute to a public figure of unparalleled range and influence.