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# Tressie Souders

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**Also Known As:**

Tressie Saunders, Tressa Souders

**Lived:**

Unknown - Unknown

**Worked as:**

director, producer, screenwriter

**Worked In:**

United States

**by Kyna Morgan**

It was in 1922 that the Black press named the filmmaker Tressie Souders the first African American woman director. Her film, *A Woman's Error* (1922), was distributed by the Afro-American Film Exhibitors' Company based in Kansas City, Missouri. The company seems to have handled only two titles about African Americans, one of them *A Woman's Error*. To date, the one source that has led scholars to Souders and her film is Henry T. Sampson's *Blacks in Black and White* (188). Sampson's reference book mentions that this obscure figure not only directed but produced and wrote the screenplay for *A Woman's Error* (626). Although in this source her surname appears as Saunders, it is likely that this is the same woman covered in the black press from this era. In her dissertation, "Sisters of Cinema," Yvonne Welbon quotes *The Billboard* which refers proudly in their review of *A Woman's Error* to "the first of its kind to be produced by a young woman of our race" and, most importantly, they see it as a "picture true to Negro life" (40). What little information can be gleaned beyond Sampson's references can be found in the City Directory of Kansas City, Missouri, for 1921, which contains an [entry](#) for a Souders who is listed as "Tressa maid 5500 Ward Parkway." With this we can establish the fact of her existence and are led to want to discover more about both the woman as well as the story told in a film with the intriguing title of *A Woman's Error*.

With additional research by Aimee Dixon.

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## Bibliography

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The bibliography for this essay is included in the “[African-American Women in the Silent Film Industry](#)” overview essay.

## Filmography

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### B. Filmography: Non-Extant Titles:

#### 1. Tressie Souders as Producer, Director, and Screenwriter

*A Woman's Error*, 1922.

## Citation

Morgan, Kyna. "Tressie Souders." In Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta, eds. *Women Film Pioneers Project*. New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2013. <<https://wfpp-test.cul.columbia.edu/pioneer/tressie-souders/>>