

"A witty, compassionate ode to immigrant daughters and the Bronx."

-The Hollywood Reporter

"A winning indie."

-Variety

Queen of Glory

A FILM BY
NANA MENSAH





QUEEN OF GLORY

A film by Nana Mensah



RUNNING TIME: 78 minutes

OFFICIAL SELECTION:

2021 Tribeca Film Festival – US Narrative Competition - World Premiere

CONTACTS

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LOGLINE

Ghanaian-American Sarah is all set to abandon her Ivy League doctoral program to follow her married lover across the country when her mother dies suddenly and makes her the owner of a neighborhood bookshop in the Bronx.

SYNOPSIS

'Queen of Glory' is the story of Sarah Obeng, the brilliant child of Ghanaian immigrants, who is quitting her Ivy League PhD program to follow her married lover to Ohio. When her mother dies suddenly, she bequeaths her daughter a Christian bookstore in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx where Sarah was raised. A follow-up on the classic immigrant's tale, Queen of Glory provokes laughter and empathy, as its heroine is reborn through her inheritance.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I chose to tell this story because both I, and Sarah Obeng, the main character, are tenacious. We both also exist in the hyphen between African-American. I grew up watching American movies that documented the Black American experience and I also grew up watching the movies of Nollywood, but the subject matters rarely crossed over (save for in *Coming to America*). There seemed to be only two ways of being Black and I wasn't quite either of them. But there was no time for existential crises, there was rent to figure out. So I graduated with a relatively useless Ivy League undergraduate degree and while my friends went into finance, I decided to pursue acting. And pursue I did. I spammed every casting director in New York, attended every cattle call, maxxed out my credit card to attend pay-for-play sessions with agents and managers who never followed up. I did everything around acting except act. But I would not be told 'no.'

Sarah Obeng also hates a 'no.' She is stubborn, insistent on a fresh start with her boyfriend in Ohio, and is willing to delude herself repeatedly and painfully to get there. What Ohio represents is an escape from her past: her unhappy parents

and her middle-class Bronx upbringing where she grew up surrounded by Ghanaian immigrants, but always feeling like an outsider.

Queen of Glory is about Sarah Obeng confronting her past when everything falls apart, enduring the pain that follows, and allowing herself to be surprised— even delighted— by what she finds there. I had no idea how much endurance would factor in realizing this film. And how much endurance would matter in 2021, when the creative team and I decided this film was ready for the world.

I thought the world needed this story because I simply hadn't seen it anywhere. West African stories don't quite fit in the boxes western audiences want to fit them into. In Asante culture— my parents' culture and that of Sarah's parents, depicted in *Queen of Glory*— great joy and celebration can exist right alongside pain and loss. Asante stories show life as a symbiosis of drama and comedy, each stepping in when the other swells too wildly, needing to be checked.

My producers and I initially wanted to make this film when we needed it desperately— we needed to see ourselves, to actualize, to nurture nascent careers. Then success beckoned, and perhaps, in the dead of night, we might have tried to convince ourselves that we didn't need this film anymore. But we did. Tenacity reared her head: the need to grow, to withstand, to finish what we started. After a hiatus, we all invested financially and reinvested emotionally. We finished it for ourselves, we finished it for those who couldn't, and we are so proud of it.

It started innocently enough: with two actors putting their heads together to start a production company and make projects where we didn't feel sidelined because of our race/gender/ethnicity. Our dreamy ideals were challenged almost immediately by the 'no's of investors and production partners, but we were tenacious. This, above all, is a New York story-- the neighborhood in the Bronx where my family owns a Christian bookstore was particularly integral for its vibrancy. For me, coming off the train in that neighborhood is cinematic to the point where when I'm walking down the block I look over my shoulder for cameras because it feels like I'm on a set. That essence was so important for us to capture in the film-- that that energy should be another character. When all was lost, the spirit of New York infused our hustle and we rolled our sleeves up and got creative. We bootstrapped and figured out a way-- in true immigrant fashion!-- to finish this film, and we are so proud of each other and what we made.

Thank you for watching.

- Nana Mensah

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

QUEEN OF GLORY is a movie we are incredibly proud of due to its authenticity, originality and incisive, insightful humour. These qualities mirror the traits of our powerhouse director/writer/lead actor Nana Mensah which originally attracted each of us individually to her script and vision for the film.

The producing partnership we've formed with Nana to make QUEEN OF GLORY has taken us all on an unbelievable journey of tenacious growth which none of us could have predicted. The resulting movie is a testament to this - as well as a remarkably fresh reinvention of the New York indie movie for the 2020s and beyond.

- Jamund Washington, Kelley Robins Hicks, Baff Akoto

BIOGRAPHIES - CAST

Russell G. Jones – Hezekiah Falusi

Russell G. Jones is an Auldeco, Obie and SAG Award-winning actor. A fixture on New York City stages since the 90's Russell is proud to have originated roles in Lynn Nottage's "Ruined", Suzan-Lori Parks' "Father Comes Home From The Wars Parts 1, 2 & 3", Tanya Barfield's "The Call", Fernanda Coppel's "King Liz" and two by Stephen Adly Guirgis "Our Lady of 121st Street" and "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings". Some film highlights include Motherless Brooklyn, Detroit, Side Effects, Traffic & Robert Patton Spruill's Squeeze. Recent TV includes Tommy, Orange Is The New Black, The Last OG, Godless, and The Americans.

Mr. Jones has been a member of The Labyrinth Theater Co. since 1995 where he has worn many theatermaker hats including actor, director, producer, writer, facilitator, moderator, and teacher in the Master Class, Ensemble Workshop, and

Intensive Ensemble. He is an Equity Consultant for Be The Change Consulting and is the founder and Chief of Pedagogy at BLIND SPOT EXPERIENCE a campaign that facilitates cross-cultural dialogue and critical thinking by providing context and tools for perceiving racial inequity. In addition to serving on [HB Studio's](#) Artistic Advisory Council, the Advisory Council for [Developing Artists Theater Co.](#), and being a member of [Ensemble Studio Theatre's](#) board, he is happily a partner to Elz Jones and a father to Bolden and Kekoa.

Oberon K.A. Adjepong – Godwin Obeng

Oberon K. A. Adjepong is a Ghanaian- American movie, stage, TV and voice actor. He is known for his roles in NBC's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, ABC's *Hope & Faith* and IFC's *Onion News Network*. He provided the voice of Richards Majestic Productions' film director Anton Beaudelaire in *Grand Theft Auto V*.

Meeko Gattuso – Pitt

Meeko Gattuso is an actor and producer known for *The Monster* (2016), *King Jack* (2015) and *Gimme the Loot* (2012). He portrays Mouse on HBO's *Euphoria*.

Adam Leon - Lyle Cummins

Adam Leon is an American film director and writer working in New York City. His first feature film, *Gimme the Loot*, won the Grand Jury Prize at South by Southwest and premiered internationally at the Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard) in 2012. Leon's second feature, *Tramps*, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016, where Netflix acquired worldwide rights. His upcoming film, *Italian Studies*, stars Vanessa Kirby and is having it's world premiere at 2021 Tribeca Film Festival

BIOGRAPHIES & CREDITS - CREW

Nana Mensah – Director / Writer / “Sarah Obeng”

Nana Mensah is a Ghanaian-American writer, director, producer, and actress. Upcoming, Mensah will star in *Queen of Glory*, which she also wrote, produced, and directed. *Queen of Glory* will premiere in the U.S. Narrative Competition lineup at the Tribeca Film Festival on June 15, 2021 as a part of their Juneteenth programming. This film also marks Mensah's directorial feature debut. On August 20, 2021, Mensah will appear in a series regular role opposite Sandra Oh and Bob Balaban in Netflix's upcoming six-episode half hour comedy series *The Chair*. This

Fall, Mensah is attached to reprise her role in the Off-Broadway play *Nollywood Dreams*. Most recently, Mensah was a staff writer on Season 2 of *Random Acts of Flyness* at HBO and is currently staff writing on Amazon's *The Power*. She also co-wrote and co-starred in Season 2 of Netflix's *Bonding*. Previous film credits include: IFC's *Farewell Amor* (which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival), *Like Father*, *The King of Staten Island*, and the upcoming A24 film *After Yang*. Previous TV credits include: *Madame Secretary*, *Evil*, *Little America*, *New Amsterdam* and *13 Reasons Why*.

Jamund Washington – Producer

Jamund Washington (producer) is a filmmaker based in NYC and Austin, TX. His producing work includes the 2016 Emmy Award nominated television film, *Silenced*, the SXSW Grand Jury Prize winner and Independent Spirit nominated, *Gimme the Loot*, and the Netflix original, *Tramps*, which he also co-wrote. Washington is an Executive Producer, Writer, and Director on the Peabody award-winning television series *Random Acts of Flyness*. Jamund is currently an Executive Producer and Head Writer on the upcoming Showtime series *Ziwe*, scheduled to premiere on May 4.

Kelley Robins Hicks - Producer

Kelley Robins Hicks is a filmmaker born in Houston, TX and based in NYC. After an award winning college swimming career, she worked as an actor with work featured on *Californication*, *Castle* and the *Avengers* before moving to the producing side of the industry. Her film producing work has been featured at Tribeca (*Queen of Glory*), Toronto (*Tramps*) and Sundance (*How to Tell You're a Douchebag*) Film Festivals. She is an Executive Producer of the Peabody award winning HBO series *Random Acts of Flyness* and she is member of the producing team of the upcoming Warner Bros film *Space Jam: A New Legacy*.

Baff Akoto – Producer

Baff Akoto is an artist and filmmaker. Baff's work has exhibited at London's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) and British Film Institute (BFI) in their Experimental strand for "works by artists that revolutionise and reshape our vision of the cinematic moving image". As a director and producer Baff began in documentary, before going on to direct network TV drama at Channel 4 (UK) and the BBC (UK) leading to his inclusion on Idris Elba's BBC New Talent Hotlist. In 2018 Screen International tipped Baff as a "Star of Tomorrow".

Cybel Martin – Cinematographer

Cybel Martin (cinematographer) is an award winning Director of Photography for feature films, commercials and television programs. Currently, Martin is shooting a new series for Ryan Murphy Productions. Cybel's other camera credits include "Black as Night" a vampire film for Blumhouse that will premiere on Amazon Prime, ABC's THE ROOKIE, CBS's ALL RISE, Shonda Rhymes' FOR THE PEOPLE and Netflix's series SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT based on the Spike Lee film. She's included in Variety's "10 Cinematographers to Watch 2020" and American Cinematographer Magazine's "Rising Stars of Cinematography, 2020". Her films have premiered at Sundance, TriBeCa, Toronto and Berlin Film Festivals. She's shot commercials for Timberland Apparel, Reebok, Sony and L'Oreal.. Cybel received her MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is a proud member of the International Cinematographers Guild.

CAST

Sarah Obeng Nana Mensah

Pitt Meeko Gattuso

Godwin Obeng Oberon K.A. Adjepong

Lyle Cummings Adam Leon

Hezekiah Falusi Russell G. Jones

Tanya Malinova Anya Migdal

FULL CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Sarah Obeng Nana Mensah

Auntie Christie Christie Mensah

Cousin Jennifer Jennifer Mensah

Emma Emma Kaye

Lyle Commons Adam Leon
Caitlin Madeline Weinstein
Pizza Delivery Joseph Lamour
Godwin Obeng Oberon Adjepong
Raja Singh Alok Tewari
Pitt Meeko Gattuso

Hezekiah Russell G. Jones
Xiomara Arlene Chico-Lugo
Xavier Xavier Stone
Auntie Patience Alice Ewurabena Parker
Earl's Mom Shirley Kuntu-Blankson
Uncle Ike Nana Osei 'Ike' Mensah

Tanya Malinova-Thayer Anya Migdal
Mama Malinova Tanya Migdal
Julia Horton Tarina Milo
Nana Bempong Emmanuel Kuntu-Blankson
Real Estate Agent Richard Toth
Alice Thayer Alice Lebedev-Migdal
Eric Thayer Ian Lassiter
Lebene Lebene Ayivor
Tashi Tashiana Washington
Josh Josh Williams
Hostess Lisa Forero
Waiter Sam Soghor
Prof. Sangita Goel Purva Bedi

Prof. Christina Hastings-Goel Sharina Martin

Mrs. Lewis Rhonda McLean-Nur

Auntie Josephine Heather Alicia Simms

Real Estate Developer Philip Reynolds

Auntie Gertrude Stephanie Berry

CREDITS

Directed by Nana Mensah

Written by Nana Mensah

Produced by Jamund Washington

Kelley Robins Hicks

Baff Akoto

Anyah Migdal

Lead Cast Nana Mensah

Supporting Cast Meeko Gattuso

Adam Leon

Oberon K.A. Adjepong

Director of Photography Cybel Martin

Additional Photography Jason Chau

Production Designer Katie Hickman

Editor Cooper Troxell

Associate Producer Loryn Lopes

Casting Consultant Judy Bowman, CSA

Unit Production Manager Loryn Lopes

First Assistant Director Arckii Mun Jong Kim

Art Director Katie Hickman

Set Dresser Lori White

2nd AC/Camera PA Michael Frye

Sound Mixer Anthony Thompson

Lighting Director Al Rivera

Grip Calen Cooper

Makeup Department Head Lisa Thai

Stills Photographer Anthony Thompson

Accountant Kim Williams

Production Assistants WillyAnn King

Lebene Aviyor

Joshua Williams

Alejandra Parisi

Additional Editing Jessica Landaw

Assistant Editor David Stoller

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

UPM Eloise Montgomery

First Assistant Director Annalise Lockhart

Chelsea Smith

Art Director Austin Ashamole

1st AC Darnell McDonald

Rob Ko

Haitao Zeng

Maxwell Gately

2nd AC Kris Kinlock

Rachel Batashivili

Sahid Limon

Sound Mixer Chase Bennett

Martisse Hill

Gaffer Phil Thompson

Jordan Collins

Make-Up Artist Mandisa Duperval

Janis Marino

Phoenix

Hamid Vijay

Janis Marino

Very Special Thanks Comfort Mensah & Melvin Poku

Special Thanks The Viardo Family

Emily Abt

Dave Gotay (1972 - 2015)

Caitlin Fitzgerald

Sharina Martin

Donal Brophy

Emily Belmont

Jasvinder Khaira

George Kuntu-Blankson

Gene Pritsker

Conn Gantman



The People of the Bronx NY