

“QUEEN SUGAR” BIOGRAPHIES

AVA DUVERNAY CREATOR/WRITER/DIRECTOR/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Award-winning filmmaker Ava DuVernay is the creator and executive producer of “Queen Sugar.” She directed the first two episodes and wrote the premiere and finale episodes of season one.

Nominated for two Academy Awards and four Golden Globes, DuVernay’s feature “Selma” was one of 2015’s most critically acclaimed films. Winner of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival’s Best Director Prize for her previous feature “Middle of Nowhere,” DuVernay’s earlier directorial work includes “I Will Follow,” “Venus Vs,” “My Mic Sounds Nice” and “This is The Life.” DuVernay is currently directing Disney’s “A Wrinkle in Time” based on the beloved children’s novel of the same name; this marks the first time an African American woman has directed a feature with a budget over \$100 million. Her commitment to activism and reform will soon be seen in the criminal justice documentary “13th,” which has the honor of opening the New York Film Festival before premiering on Netflix.

In 2010, she founded ARRAY, a distribution collective for filmmakers of color and women, named one of Fast Company’s Most Innovative Companies in Hollywood 2016.

DuVernay was born and raised in Los Angeles, California.

OPRAH WINFREY EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Oprah Winfrey is executive producer of OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.”

Winfrey is a global media leader, philanthropist, producer and actress. She has created an unparalleled connection with people around the world for nearly 30 years, making her one of the most respected and admired people today. As Chairman and CEO, she’s guiding her successful cable network, OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network, and is the founder of *O*, *The Oprah Magazine* and Harpo Films.

Winfrey is an Academy Award and Golden Globe-nominated actress for her role in “The Color Purple” and earned critical acclaim in “Lee Daniels’ The Butler.” In 2014, she produced and acted in the Academy Award and Golden Globe-winning film “Selma.” She will soon appear in the anticipated Disney film “A Wrinkle in Time,” directed by Ava DuVernay. Winfrey is also proud to star in and executive produce HBO’s upcoming adaptation of Rebecca Skloot’s “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.”

In October 2015, The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa celebrated its fifth graduating class. Winfrey established the school in 2007 to provide education for academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Graduates of

the school have continued on to higher education both in South Africa and at colleges and universities around the world.

Winfrey was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013, the nation's highest civilian honor. For 25 years, Winfrey was host of the #1 award-winning talk show "The Oprah Winfrey Show."

RUTINA WESLEY
“Nova Bordelon”

Rutina Wesley portrays Nova Bordelon, a journalist, activist and herbal healer who, along with her two estranged siblings, has inherited the family’s failing sugarcane farm, in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.”

Wesley is well known to television audiences for her starring role as Tara Thornton in the long-running hit series “True Blood.” Born in Las Vegas to Ivery Wheeler and Cassandra Wesley, both performers, Wesley earned a BFA in Theatre Performance from the University of Evansville (Indiana), and then went on to complete the four-year actor training program at The Juilliard School Drama Division in New York.

Her first big break came when she was cast opposite Bill Nighy in the Broadway production of the David Hare play “The Vertical Hour,” which was followed by her appearance in the Public Theater production of “In Darfur.” Her first big screen appearance came next, in director Ian Rahid’s dance melodrama “How She Move.” Other feature film performances include The Weinstein Company’s “13 Sins” and Screen Gems’ “The Perfect Guy.”

In addition to starring in all 80 episodes of the breakout hit “True Blood,” Wesley has enjoyed recurring roles on the animated series “The Cleveland Show” and the drama “Hannibal.” In addition, she has guest-starred in episodes of “Numb3rs” and “Arrow.”

DAWN-LYEN GARDNER
“Charley Bordelon West”

Dawn-Lyen Gardner portrays Charley West Bordelon, who relocates to Louisiana following her father’s death to take over the family’s failing sugarcane farm with her two estranged siblings, in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.”

Los Angeles native Gardner has been acting professionally in television and commercials since the age of nine. Those early efforts landed her guest roles in TV series such as “ER,” “The Sinbad Show,” and a recurring role in “Viper,” in addition to work in several commercials.

Certain of her calling to act, Gardner went on to pursue formal training at New York’s prestigious Juilliard School. Since her graduation from Juilliard, Gardner has guest-starred in numerous television series, including “The Mysteries of Laura,” “Castle,” “Heroes,” “Cane,” “Summerland,” “Crossing Jordan,” “Married to the Kellys” and, most recently, “Unforgettable,” “I Love You ... But I Lied,” and Marvel’s “Luke Cage.” She appeared in the feature film “Art School Confidential,” and will be seen next on the big screen in “The Dunning Man,” currently in production. She has been featured in numerous commercials, and has lent her voice to the acclaimed animated series “Star Wars: The Clone Wars.”

An accomplished theater actor, Gardener has originated roles in a number of world premiere productions, including Richard Greenburg's "A Naked Girl on the Appian Way," Nathan Louis Jackson's "Sticky Traps," and Rattlestick Theater's Off-Broadway production of "A Fable." In 2010, she worked alongside Helen Hunt, Grace Gummer and Lyle Lovett in the Los Angeles production of "Much Ado About Nothing," and she spent two seasons at the Tony Award-winning Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

KIRI SIRIBOE
(pronounced Ko-fee See-ree-bow)
"Ralph Angel Bordelon"

Kofi Siriboe portrays Ralph Angel Bordelon, a young man recently released from prison who is facing all the challenges that entails, while raising his 6-year-old son and getting to know his long-estranged siblings once again, in OWN's new drama series "Queen Sugar."

Siriboe began his professional acting career at just six years of age, following a life-changing chance encounter with an agent at a Beverly Hills shopping mall. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Siriboe is a first-generation American with deep roots in West Africa. His great-grandfather was a highly respected Ghanaian King of the Juaben/Ashanti tribe. He is the middle child of three siblings; his brothers Kwame Boateng and Kwesi Boakye are also actors.

Most recently, Siriboe played Tyler Miller in the 2014-'15 season of MTV's popular series "Awkward," and had roles in the big screen hits "Straight Outta Compton" and "Whiplash." He has also guest-starred in episodes of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "Lincoln Heights" and "Entourage." Other feature films in which he has appeared include director Fred Durst's "The Longshots," "Prom," and "40."

Siriboe's upcoming film "Kicks" premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and releases September 2016. He will also be seen in the upcoming film "Girls Trip" with Jada Pinkett Smith and Regina Hall, which just wrapped production in New Orleans.

DONDRÉ WHITFIELD
"Remy Newell"

Three-time Emmy nominee Dondré Whitfield plays Remy Newell, an irrigation specialist who was a friend and confidante to Bordelon patriarch Ernest Bordelon. Whitfield began acting in his teens, with recurring roles in "The Cosby Show" and the daytime drama "Another World," before landing his long-running role as Terence Frye in the hit daytime drama "All My Children." For that role, Whitfield was nominated for the Daytime Emmy as Outstanding Younger Actor in a Drama Series three years in a row. Equally adept at both comedy and drama, he has starred in five comedy series: "The Crew;" "Living in Captivity;" "Between Brothers;" "Secret Agent Man," and "Hidden Hills."

Whitfield is no stranger to big screen audiences either, starring opposite Vivica A. Fox in "The Salon," and in a wide range of major studio and independent films, including director Ava DuVernay's "Middle of Nowhere" with David Oyelowo, "White Man's Burden," "Homeboyz II: Crack City," "Two Can Play That Game," "Pastor Brown," "35 and Ticking," and Helen Mirren-directed "Happy Birthday." A former semi-pro baseball player, Whitfield was tapped to co-star as "Skillet," alongside Bernie Mac, in "Mr. 3000."

The veteran TV actor has had recurring roles in a number of series, including "Mistresses," "Make It or Break It," "The Event," "Cold Case," "Ghost Whisperer," "Jake in Progress" and "Inside Schwartz," among others. The long list of series in which he has guest-starred includes: "Stitchers," "Hart of Dixie," "Eureka," "Grey's Anatomy," "Martin," "Samantha Who?," "Strong Medicine," "Half & Half," "NYPD Blue," and "CSI: Miami."

Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Whitfield is married to actress Salli Richardson-Whitfield, and the couple live in Los Angeles with their two children.

TINA LIFFORD **"Violet Bordelon"**

Veteran actor Tina Lifford portrays Violet Bordelon, aunt to the three estranged Bordelon siblings, in OWN's new drama series "Queen Sugar." Lifford has spent the past 30 years consistently working in film and television, but it was her breakout starring role as Joan Mosely in the critically-acclaimed dramedy series "South Central" that brought her to the attention of audiences and critics alike. Since then, she has had recurring roles in numerous series, including, most recently, "Scandal" and "Minority Report," as well as "Parenthood," "Single Ladies," "Nip/Tuck," "Lincoln Heights," "ER" and "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

Some of Tina's notable feature film credits include leading roles in director Lawrence Kasdan's "Grand Canyon," director Clint Eastwood's "Blood Work," director Dennis Hopper's "Colors," and supporting roles in "Pay It Forward," "Catch and Release," "Panic," "Letters From A Killer" and "Hostage."

She has guest-starred in more than 25 television series, and starred as Winnie Mandela in the groundbreaking made-for-television movie "Mandela and de Klerk," and as Jackie Joyner-Kersey in "Run for the Dream: The Gail Devers Story." She also co-starred in the mini-series "The Temptations" as Mama Haze. Other notable made-for-television movies in which she has appeared include "A Streetcar Named Desire," "Divas," "After Jimmy" and "America's Dream."

She is the founder of Tina Lifford's Inner Fitness Project, an inner health and well-being movement, which strives to help people powerfully navigate life hurts, disappointments

and personal challenges. She is the author of the book *The Little Book of Big Lies and Truths That Set You Free!*

OMAR J. DORSEY
“Hollywood Desonier”

Omar J. Dorsey portrays Hollywood Desonier, Violet Bordelon’s (Tina Lifford) younger lover and a strong supporter of the Bordelon family, in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.” Dorsey is recognizable to both feature film and television audiences from his large body of work in both mediums. From recurring roles in high-profile drama series like “Ray Donovan” (as Cookie Brown), “Rake” (as Roy), “Rizzoli & Isles” (as Big Mo), “Eastbound & Down” (as Dontel) and, most recently, “Aquarius” (as Ralph Church), to guest-starring roles in more than 20 series, Dorsey has worked consistently for the past 15 years. A short list of his guest roles includes the popular shows “NCIS,” “CSI: NY,” “Bones,” “Castle,” “The Mentalist,” “Chuck,” “Lincoln Heights,” “Entourage,” “The Shield,” “Yes, Dear,” and “ER.”

Dorsey has appeared in numerous feature films, including director Ava DuVernay’s acclaimed “Selma,” Quentin Tarantino’s “Django Unchained,” “The Blind Side,” “Starsky & Hutch,” “Drumline,” “Race to Witch Mountain,” “Juwanna Mann,” and “Road Trip.” He was also featured in the made-for-television movies “Americana,” “The Wronged Man,” “Our House,” “The Reading Room” and “Boycott.”

A native of Decatur, Georgia, an Atlanta suburb, Dorsey graduated from the DeKalb Center for the Performing Arts at Avondale High School, where he was voted “Most Likely to Do Anything.”

NICHOLAS L. ASHE
“Micah West”

Nicholas L. Ashe portrays Charley and Davis West’s teenage son Micah in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.”

Originally from Freeport, Long Island, Ashe made his acting debut as the Young Simba in “The Lion King” on Broadway when he was just ten years old. Most recently, he co-starred with Viola Davis in the feature film “Custody,” released this year. He has guest-starred in episodes of the TV series “Are We There Yet?,” “The Divide” and “Songbyrd.”

TIMON KYLE DURRETT
“Davis West”

Timon Kyle Durrett portrays Davis West, a charismatic star basketball player, the husband of Charley Bordelon West (Dawn-Lyen Gardner) and father to Micah (Nicholas L. Ashe), in OWN's new drama series “Queen Sugar.” Nicknamed “Tree” due to his 6'5” height, Durrett had a recurring role as Quinn Davis in the TV series “Single Ladies,” and has co-starred in episodes of numerous comedy and drama series, including: “Zoe Ever After,” “Castle,” “Are You There, Chelsea?,” “Ghost Whisperer,” “Melrose Place,” “Samantha Who?,” “Heroes,” “Las Vegas,” “Vanished,” “CSI: Miami,” “CSI: NY,” and “Girlfriends.”

Durrett co-starred as Henderson in the 20th Century Fox feature film “Like Mike,” portrayed Officer Terrence in “Barbershop: The Next Cut,” and has appeared in numerous other films, including “Zodiac Sign,” “72 Hours,” “The Fix,” “Stiletto” and “Lords of the Underworld.”

Originally from Chicago, he holds a bachelor of arts degree in communications from Mississippi's Alcorn State University.

BIANCA LAWSON
“Darla”

Bianca Lawson portrays Darla, a woman struggling with addiction who desperately seeks reconnection with 6-year-old Blue, her son with Ralph Angel Bordelon, in OWN's new drama series “Queen Sugar.” Lawson was born and raised in Los Angeles and has been acting since the age of nine, scoring early TV success with a starring role in the series “Goode Behavior,” and recurring roles in “Sister, Sister,” “The Steve Harvey Show” and “Buffy The Vampire Slayer.”

She has gone on to appear in more than 25 popular series, with recurring roles in: “Chicago PD,” “The Witches of East End,” “Teen Wolf,” “Pretty Little Liars,” “Vampire Diaries,” “Secret Life of the American Teenager,” “Smart Guy” and “Dawson's Creek.” In addition, she has guest-starred in episodes of: “Two Broke Girls,” “Beauty & the Beast,” “American Horror Story,” “Nikita,” and “Bones.”

Her feature film work includes roles in “Save the Last Dance,” “Don't Fade Away,” “Primary Colors,” and the made-for-cable movie “Feast of All Saints,” based on the Anne Rice novel.

HENRY G. SANDERS
“Prosper Denton”

Veteran actor Henry G. Sanders portrays Prosper Denton, the Bordelon family patriarch’s lifelong friend, in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.” Most recently, Sanders portrayed Cager Lee in Ava DuVernay’s “Selma,” and his long list of film credits stretches back as far as 1970, including roles in: “Whiplash,” “Rocky Balboa,” “Kuffs,” “Child’s Play 3,” “Bull Durham,” “Choose Me,” “Weekend Pass,” “Breathless,” and “Rebel.”

On the small screen, Sanders co-starred for five seasons as Robert E. in the long-running period drama “Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,” and he has had recurring roles in “Hap and Leonard,” “American Horror Story,” “L.A. Law,” “Moonlighting,” “Matlock” and “Highway to Heaven,” to name but a few. Sanders has guest-starred in numerous popular series as well, including; “Grey’s Anatomy,” “The Mentalist,” “Cold Case,” “Heartland,” “Joan of Arcadia,” “The West Wing,” and “NYPD Blue.”

He is a native of Houston, Texas.

GREG VAUGHAN
“Calvin”

Greg Vaughan portrays Calvin, a married cop and Nova Bordelon’s (Rutina Wesley) longtime lover in OWN’s new drama series “Queen Sugar.” Vaughan is very well known to daytime audiences for his long-running starring roles as Lucky Spencer in “General Hospital,” and most recently, as Eric Brady in “Days of Our Lives.” In addition to more than ten years on those two series, Vaughan has had recurring roles in “Charmed,” “Malibu Shores” and “Beverly Hills, 90210.”

Vaughan’s long list of TV guest-starring roles includes: “Lucifer;” “The Closer;” “90210;” “Still Standing;” “Will & Grace;” “Sabrina, The Teenage Witch;” “Nash Bridges;” “Any Day Now;” “Pacific Blue;” “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” and “Baywatch,” among others.

The Dallas native was discovered by a local modeling agent at the age of 16 and, just months after graduating high school, Vaughan ventured to Milan, Italy, where he soon landed campaigns for prestigious designers Gianni Versace and Giorgio Armani. And before the age of 21, he had added Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger and Banana Republic as well. After discovering his true passion, Vaughan left modeling for acting, appearing in numerous commercials before getting his first TV role, and work in small independent films such as “Poison Ivy,” “The Last Seduction,” and “Children of the Corn: Fields of Terror.”

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