

Gina Prince-Bythewood: Black Woman Film Pioneer



Gina Prince-Bythewood

Gina Maria Prince was born on June 10th, 1969, in New York City, New York. At three weeks old she was adopted by Bob and Maria Prince, Bob was a computer programmer and Maria was a nurse. Gina was a child who grew up in a culturally diverse home, Bob was a white man and Maria was a woman of El Salvadorian and German ancestry. Gina's birth mother was white and her father was a black man; Gina's birth mother gave her up for adoption because her family didn't want her to keep the baby. Growing up as one of five siblings in Pacific Grove, California she was interested in filmmaking as well as track and field. Gina graduated from Pacific Grove High School in 1987 then enrolled in UCLA's film school while running track. Gina was an excellent student, her supreme skills as a film director earned her the Gene Reynolds Scholarship, and she went on to earn the Ray Stark Memorial Scholarship for Outstanding Undergraduates before graduating from UCLA in 1991.

Gina's film career began in 1992 as a writer for the television show "A Different World," three of

On the Shoulders of Giants

We stand on your shoulders

<http://ontheshoulders1.com>

the scripts she wrote for "A Different World" were aired as episodes of the television series. In 1994, she was a story editor and writer for the television show "South Central" before she became the story editor for "Sweet Justice" which was a courtroom drama series. In 1995, Gina began writing and co-producing for a television series titled "Courthouse" on the CBS network. Later in 1995, Gina made her television debut as a director with a CBS special titled "What About Your Friends?" which gave a new look into the lives of black teens growing up in America. The script was so successful that it opened the door for Gina to begin working on the television show "Felicity" as a consulting producer and a writer. All of the work Gina did over the years prepared her for her Hollywood debut that would inspire a generation of movie watchers and future moviemakers.

The film industry was put on notice at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival when Gina debuted her first film "Love and Basketball". The film was a cult classic and won twelve overall awards including best film and best film poster at the Black Reel Awards, the film also won best first screenplay at the Independent Spirit Awards. After the final numbers from the film were totaled it was the ninth highest grossing basketball movie of all-time and earned over \$27,728,000. Later in 2000, Gina directed the HBO movie "Disappearing Acts" starring Wesley Snipes and Sanaa Lathan, which was based on a novel by Terry McMillan. In 2003, she became a producer for the movie "Biker Boys" which went on to gross more than \$25,000,000, later that year she wrote an episode for the television series "The Bernie Mac Show." In 2005, she wrote episodes for the television shows "Everybody Hates Chris" and "Girlfriends", before becoming a producer for the documentary "Daddy's Girl" in 2007.

In 2008, Gina wrote and directed the feature film "The Secret Life of Bees" which grossed over \$42,000,000 in the US and Canada and won three awards. Expanding her career and her filmography she made another splash in Hollywood with the film "Beyond The Lights" in 2014 starring Nate Parker and Gugu Mbatha-Raw. She became a writer for the 2017 film "Before I Fall" and the 2018 film "Nappily Ever After." Information suggests that Gina will be working on creating a film based off of the novel *An Untamed State* that was written by Roxane Gay. Gina met and married her husband Reggie "Rock" Bythewood who is a film writer, director and producer; the two met on the set of "A Different World." In 2017, Gina and Reggie created a show for the Fox network titled *Shots Fired*. Gina Prince-Bythewood was either directly or partially responsible for movies and television shows that directly impacted children growing up in the 1990s and 2000s'. Films such as "Love And Basketball," "Biker Boyz," "The Secret Life of Bees," and "Disappearing Acts" as well as television shows such as "A Different World," "Everybody Hates

On the Shoulders of Giants

We stand on your shoulders

<http://ontheshoulders1.com>

Chris,” “Girlfriends” and “The Bernie Mac Show” literally helped to shape generations of children across cultural, racial, gender and economic lines. Mrs. Gina Prince-Bythewood literally was the voice of a generation and for that, we proudly stand on her shoulders.

J.A. Ward

[Click here to learn more about the On the Shoulders of Giants book series!!!](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ingzn67Q1UQ>

References:

<https://upclosed.com/people/gina-prince-bythewood/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gina_Prince-Bythewood

<http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/369900%7C0/Gina-Prince-Bythewood/biography.html>