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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Kofi Siriboe

talks about Ghana, *Girls Trip*
and his love of Black Women

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Feature Story

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PHOTO CREDIT: JUSTIN AMOAFI; COVER PHOTO: MICIAH CARTER

Meet Kofi Siriboe

Kofi Siriboe exploded on the small screen with the release of OWN's *Queen Sugar* last year. While on the set of this new season, he took some time to talk to the ABFF Insider. Want to know more about Kofi? Keep reading...

When did you know that acting would be your chosen profession?

That's a cool question! I started acting when I was a kid, so this is kind of second nature to me. I started with print work and commercials. Around the age of 18, I made the choice to take it seriously and do what was needed as an individual to be comfortable in my skin when I'd present myself at auditions. I was figuring out what I want to do in the world. Acting is my primary passion right now, but overall I really want to choose something that allows me to speak to a mass of people. This really fits me and I'm hoping to expand into writing, directing, even photography and music—whatever connects me to people is where my passion lies.

New Orleans is one of our biggest tourist spots—what's your impression of the city after spending so much time filming there?

I love it. There is such a great spirit in the city, so much culture—the music, the people, the food. Also, I really love trees—they have some of the best trees I've ever seen. I fell in love immediately and started writing about it. I've said it before; the city, to me, personifies a woman, and I really, really love it.

You spent Christmas in Ghana. What was it like meeting your grandmother, and does she watch *Queen Sugar*?

Ha ha ha! She doesn't watch *Queen Sugar*, but it was amazing just to be able to eat there. My favorite food is fufu and soup, so every single day we would just go over and they had a different version of it. We drank, laughed, chilled, took photos and kind of just did nothing. It kind of set a tone for what I wanted to do this year, which is "less." Last year was a big year for me and I felt like I had to keep up with the wave; but

this year I'm allowing it to just carry me. I think I got that from being in Ghana for those two weeks and being around my grandma. Seeing how content and full of spirit they were there, just doing less and actually enjoying life was really inspiring. It was my first time meeting my grandma and cousins. It was my first time being in Ghana as an adult—last time I was in my mom's stomach! So it was a lot to take in, but it was the perfect amount of time because we got to take our time and see a lot. It was nice and it was necessary.

How are you dealing with all the attention you get from being one of the new black faces of Black Hollywood?

Honestly, I am in awe of people being in awe of me. It's just so humbling and I'm learning to embrace it. I have to just take it one step at a time. At the end of the day, you just have to know yourself, know what you are and what you want to be. You can't allow the attention, positive or negative, to define you. I've been trying to keep myself grounded by being around the people that I grew up with, the people that were here before all the media. "Love is love is love is love," so I appreciate it for what it is.

We love that you chose to tweet about your love for black women but how do you feel about the backlash from it?

It was somewhat expected. I know the world we live in. As black people, when we actually love ourselves and are vocal about it, there seems to be a problem. But that doesn't change my perspective and it will not dim my voice. I'm going to speak on my love for black women because of who I am and that is who I come from. I feel like I owe it to my mom, I owe it to myself and I owe it to my community to just be what I am—which is a proud black man. So for me it was no big deal; it was kind of expected and that was a tweet. There are a lot more things that I have in my repertoire that I will be bringing out. Backlash doesn't scare me. As long as I stay true to myself, I think I'll be just fine.

Who was your first celebrity crush?

I loved the leading ladies in our black love stories and I've always been a fan of Sanaa Lathan. She's the ideal black woman to me. I watched her when I was growing up and she's still so beautiful, intelligent, real and vulnerable, and she embodies everything that makes black women special. It's Sanaa.

You played Jada's love interest, Malk, in the upcoming film *Girls Trip*. How did you handle your first nude scene on the big screen? (Laughs) A lot of running and a lot of push-ups! It was nice though. Everyone on set made it extremely comfortable for me, so it didn't feel like work. The atmosphere was created for it to feel very natural.



What types of projects can we expect to see you writing and directing?

Definitely stories about our community. I love being on a show like *Queen Sugar*, working with people like Ava and Oprah who find great ways to tell stories about us. It's about the perspective from which the story is being told and the pace of the story. I want to continue in that era of black love stories like *Brown Sugar*, *Jason's Lyric*, *Love Jones* and beyond that; introduce the different aspects of being young and black in America in 2017. I don't see myself represented on TV that often. I live a somewhat peculiar life and I'd like to show all the variations of being a young black man because there are so many of us. There is so much in my mind that I want to get out. I'm going through the process of defining that voice and figuring out exactly what I want to say. It's a process and a journey. I am learning to fall in love with the journey.

Kofi's Favorite Five:

- Favorite Classic Black Film:** *Love Jones*
- Favorite Food as a kid:** Fufu and Peanut Butter Soup. It's a West African dish.
- Favorite Author:** Eckhart Tolle
- Favorite Recording Artist right now:** Frank Ocean
- Favorite Summer Activity:** Chillin'

-Story by Lamonia Deanne Brown



Keep watching Season 2 of OWN's hit show *Queen Sugar*, Wednesdays at 10PM. Watch as RalphAngel, played by Kofi Siriboe stands his ground in the quest to fulfill his father's wishes. **Don't miss it!**



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BEING MARY JANE
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Part 1 of Season 4, left us wondering if Kara will rebound after being ousted from her gig on *Great Day USA*, which of those two sexy men Mary Jane will choose and what will happen next with her family in Atlanta. Tune in to catch up on all of Mary Jane's drama this summer as Part 2 of Season 4 airs weekly with new hot episodes.



STEP
In Theaters August 4

STEP is the true-life story of a girls' high-school step team set against the background of the heart of Baltimore. These young women learn to laugh, love and thrive – on and off the stage – even when the world seems to work against them. Empowered by their teachers, teammates, counselors, coaches and families, they chase their ultimate dreams: to win a step championship and to be accepted into college.



THE DARK TOWER
In Theaters August 4

Idris Elba stars as Roland Deschain, the last Gunslinger, is locked in an eternal battle with Walter O'Dim, also known as the Man in Black. The Gunslinger must prevent the Man in Black from toppling the Dark Tower, the key that holds the universe together. With the fate of worlds at stake, two men collide in the ultimate battle between good and evil.



DETROIT
In Theaters August 4

A police raid in Detroit in 1967 results in one of the largest race riots in United States history. The story is centered around the Algiers Motel incident, which occurred in Detroit, Michigan on July 25, 1967, during the racially charged 12th Street Riot. It involves the death of three black men and the brutal beatings of nine other people: seven black men and two white women. The film is being released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the event.



MARLON
NBC
Series premiere Wednesday, August 16 at:00 PM

Loosely inspired by the real life of star Marlon Wayans, this update to the classic family comedy centers on a loving, but immature, father committed to co-parenting his two kids with his very-together ex-wife. For Marlon, family really always does come first - even if he's the biggest kid of all.



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Michael D. Armstrong
General Manager
BET NETWORKS

Michael D. Armstrong has been appointed to the newly created position of general manager of BET Networks. Prior to his new role at BET, Armstrong was executive vice president and general manager of revenue and emerging brands at Viacom International Media Networks

(VIMN). In his new role, Armstrong will be based in New York and report directly to Lee. He will drive strategy and operations, with direct oversight of content strategy and multiplatform scheduling, marketing, corporate communications and operations. He will also liaise with teams across Viacom's Media Networks, including strategy, finance and research & audience science.



Candi Castleberry-Singleton
VP, Inclusion and Diversity
TWITTER

Twitter has hired Candi Castleberry-Singleton as its new vice president of inclusion and diversity. Castleberry-Singleton has years of experience in the field of inclusion and diversity—previously working as the vice president of global inclusion and diversity at Motorola, then at Sun

Microsystems, where she led the Global Inclusion Center of Expertise, according to USA Today. Most recently, however, she was founder and CEO of the Dignity and Respect Campaign, which helps organizations and communities build cultural awareness and promote inclusion.

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