

## **Bianca Sams, Playwright**

Bianca Sams has described her plays as being like New York Times articles written in modern beat poetry, shining a light into the darkest recesses of human interaction.

Her plays are investigations of found stories, based on real events from today's headlines and the pages of history, that ask audiences to face their own complex love affair with misery. Her work focuses on the conundrum of whether the stress and pain we inflict upon ourselves and others is actually purifying or destroying the fabric of humanity.

Recurring themes in her work include how trauma affects us on an individual level but also how it ripples outward to loved ones and the larger community. She is fascinated by how each person must choose to either allow their adversity to consume them or rise above the trauma. She often examines the different adaptive and maladaptive ways in which people choose to cope.

As a female playwright of color, Bianca is drawn to stories that question the roles of women, ethnicity, and family in modern society; stories that deal with the search for self in the collective identity and which explore underlying connective threads of mankind.

She approaches each piece with an investigative journalistic eye, while also attempting to go beyond the politics and facts of the original tale, to connect her audiences with the personal story behind what inspires her.

Bianca takes a latticework approach to her pieces, weaving complex story with vivid language, mixed media, and bold imagery to create art that is universally recognizable and emotionally resonant to people across cultural and societal divides.

She weaves hot button social issues into her work because growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area instilled in her a drive to create art that "holds as it 'twere a mirror up to nature" to inflict social change in the world around her.

You can see the fingerprints of her philosophy in her plays, ***At The Rivers End, Battle Cry, Rust On Bone, Rise, Phoenix Rise, and Summer Nights & Fireflies.***

**Battle Cry**, was inspired by the life and travails of an unsung hero in the Black Civil Rights Movement named Claudette Colvin. At 15, Claudette refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus 9 months prior to Rosa Parks' arrest. **Battle Cry** tells the personal story of a naïve but passionate 15-year-old girl whose impact on the world has been left out of history books. The play looks at issues of class, ethnicity, and behind the scenes politics in the fight for Civil Rights in America while also highlighting Claudette's personal courage in the face of injustice.

**At The River's End** is a dark ride through the mind of Former POW Army Captain Brielle Davenport who returns home a war hero with severe brain damage. **At the River's End** explores the plight of modern women struggling to redefine femininity, motherhood and familial loyalty in the context of the contemporary military. The play also questions the difference between being alive and living.

**Summer Nights and Fireflies**, follows Zandra Richards, the current owner of a struggling small eastern Texas bar that has been in her family for generations. She is plagued by the ghost of her long dead mother and tasked with keeping her younger brother Tyrone out of the cross hairs of a shotgun-wielding neighbor, all the while trying balance her own love life, business, and healing her own wounds from a lifetime of abuse. The play explores issues of modern femininity, the cycle of violence, and the power of self love.

Bianca's latest pieces **Rust On Bone** and **Rise, Phoenix Rise**, are a pair of companion plays that explore the subject of Military Sexual Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. **Rust On Bone** looks specifically at the ripple effect of trauma on the family and caregivers. **Rise, Phoenix Rise** focuses on one woman's journey with recovery from mental illness and physical & sexual trauma.

In conjunction with her writing, she is also a classically trained professional actor. Bianca received her Bachelors of Fine Arts at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She has the distinct honor of being Tisch's first ever Triple Major; Acting (Strasberg Theater Institute and Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts London), Dramatic Writing (TV/Film/Play writing), Africana Studies, and a minor in journalism (undeclared). Her writing mentors at NYU included Richard Wesley, Beth Turner, George Malko, John Guerre (Honors), Kenneth Lonergan (Honors) and Daniel Goldfarb.

Since graduating, her written work has been seen on the stages of Karamu House, Tides Theater (SF), Cleveland Public Theater, Old Vic Theater London and Public Theater in New York. She also produces her own web cooking show and blog, [www.fingerlickinkitchen.com](http://www.fingerlickinkitchen.com). She has performed as an actor at Cleveland Public Theater, Florida Studio Theater, Old Vic London, Public Theater NY, and can be seen on film in RENT directed by Chris Columbus. She is a full member of the Old Vic New Voices Network New York under Artistic Director Kevin Spacey.

Bianca is currently a third year MFA candidate in play writing under Charles Smith at Ohio University. Other graduate professors have included Kara Lee Corthron and Erik Ramsey.

Awards and honors include the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Awards Lorraine Hansberry (2<sup>nd</sup> place) and Rosa Parks Award (2<sup>nd</sup> place) (2013), Kennedy Center/Eugene O'Neill New Play Conference fellow (2013), Jane Chambers Student Playwright Award/ATHE (2<sup>nd</sup> Place) (2013), Ohio University Student Enhancement Award (2013), Ohio University Tuition grant/waiver (4x recipient), TRI Research Fellowship at Ohio State University (2013), Ohio University Trisolini Fellowship Finalist (2013), Ohio University Billman Award Finalist (2013)

**One Sentence Artistic Statement:** Bianca's plays are lyrical investigations of found stories, based on today's headlines and the pages of history, that ask audiences to face their own complex love affair with misery.