



from a
Yardie
to a **Yankee**

The dream was America. The truth was survival.

A MARVAJOY PRODUCTIONS FEATURE FILM

From a Yardie to a Yankee

The dream was America. The truth was survival.

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THE STORY

Logline

After her mother leaves for America in search of opportunity, a young Jamaican girl raised by her formidable grandmother navigates colorism, immigration, and the devastating loss of her sister before discovering how storytelling allows her to reclaim her truth and share her voice.

SYNOPSIS

Young India Robinson grows up with her sister Marva beneath the mango trees of rural Jamaica, raised by their formidable grandmother. Climbing trees, watching films in a church hall, and sharing the rhythms of island life, India discovers the power of storytelling.

Years later, the sisters finally reunite with their mother in Chicago. But the America they imagined feels cold and distant, and the family they longed for has been reshaped by years of separation. As India struggles to find her place, Marva searches for belonging in a city that offers little mercy.

When Marva is tragically murdered, India's world collapses. Grief and unanswered questions threaten to swallow her whole. But with encouragement from a mentor, India begins transforming her pain into art.

Drawing on memories of Jamaica, her grandmother's wisdom, and the sister she refuses to forget, India creates a one-woman performance that tells the story of the women who carried her across oceans and loss.



Young India in rural Jamaica.

Standing alone on stage, India finally understands that telling the truth — no matter how painful — can be its own kind of home.



FROM A YARDIE TO A YANKEE

*The dream was America.
The truth was survival.*

Marva and her grandmother, Mrs. Golden — rural Jamaica.

THE ORIGIN

From Stage to Screen

From a Yardie to a Yankee began long before the cameras rolled.

The story was first brought to life as Sardia Robinson's award-winning one-woman show, inspired by her journey from Jamaica to America and the people, memories and losses that shaped her along the way.

The stage production received the BroadwayWorld 2022 Los Angeles Regional Award for Best Solo Production, the Innovative Woman in Theatre Award at the Hollywood Fringe Festival, and was named one of BroadwayWorld's Top Ten Shows to See in Los Angeles.

After years of performing the story on stage, Robinson knew there was another way to tell it.



Robinson takes her bow after a performance of the stage production.

The feature film expands that intimate theatrical experience into a cinematic world—taking audiences from rural Jamaica to Chicago and allowing the people who once lived only through Robinson's performance to finally step onto the screen themselves.

For Robinson, the transition from stage to screen wasn't simply an adaptation. It was an opportunity to preserve a piece of her history while telling a larger story about family, migration, identity, grief and the search for belonging.

PRODUCTION

The Making of the Film

*Authenticity was central to the making of **From a Yardie to a Yankee**.*

Much of the film was shot in Jamaica, bringing India's childhood world to life through the landscapes, homes and communities that surround her.

The production sought to capture Jamaica not simply as a beautiful backdrop, but as a living part of the story—the warmth, humor, hardship, community and resilience that shape India long before she leaves for America.

For Robinson, returning to Jamaica to make the film added another layer of meaning to an already deeply personal project. The story that began with memories could now be told on the land that inspired them.

The result is a film rooted in a distinctly Jamaican experience while exploring something universal: What happens when leaving home changes both the person who leaves and the people left behind?



In the yard, rural Jamaica.

ON SET

Behind the Scenes



Robinson talks through a scene with a young cast member.



Reviewing playback with a young actress.



Directing a scene with the cast.



A quiet moment with a young cast member.

THE DIRECTOR

Director's Statement

From a Yardie to a Yankee is a deeply personal film inspired by my own journey growing up between Jamaica and the United States, and by the sacrifices so many immigrant mothers make when they leave home in search of opportunity for their children.



Director Sardia Robinson.

As a child, I experienced both the hope and heartbreak of migration. Like many Caribbean children, I knew what it felt like to love a parent who was physically absent but emotionally present in every sacrifice they made. Those experiences stayed with me for years and eventually became the foundation for this story.

I wanted the film to feel intimate, honest, and rooted in the rhythms of Jamaican life.

What began as my award-winning one-woman show evolved into a feature film because I realized this story belonged to more than just me. It belongs to countless families who have been shaped by migration, sacrifice, and the search for a better future.

— SARDIA ROBINSON

Writer, Director & Producer

THE PRODUCER

Producer's Statement



A quiet moment on the porch, rural Jamaica.

I didn't grow up thinking I would make a film about immigration. I grew up trying to understand my mother.

I was raised in rural Jamaica, surrounded by community, warmth, and a sense of home that felt unshakable. When my mother left for America, she carried the same hope so many immigrant parents carry: that distance and sacrifice could buy their children a future. As a child, I didn't understand that. I only understood absence.

Years later, when I finally reunited with her in the United States, I expected an emotional homecoming. Instead, I met a woman changed by survival — exhausted, guarded, always working, loving us through responsibility rather than softness. For a long time, I believed she had chosen America over me.

Adulthood taught me the truth: she had chosen me.

— SARDIA ROBINSON

Producer

THE CAST

Principal Cast

**Sardia Robinson***Clara***Fae Ellington***Mrs. Golden***Shernet Swearine***Older India***Kiara Henry***Older Marva***Sherando Ferril***Lynn***Ngozi Muzik Wright***Young India***Amyra-Shai Gordon***Young Marva***Tristan Cunningham***Lavern***Mark Anthony Williams***Ronald*

THE CAST

Cast Biographies

Sardia Robinson — *Clara*

Sardia Robinson is an award-winning Jamaican-American actress, writer, director, and producer dedicated to bringing authentic Jamaican and Caribbean stories to the screen. Her film and television credits include *Migration*, *Me Little Me*, *Double Cross*, *Murder in the Thirst*, *House Out of Order* and *Samir*. A graduate of Columbia College Chicago with a BA in Theatre, Sardia is also the writer and creator of the television drama *Valentine* and feature film *Island Gyal*. She wrote, directed, and produced *From a Yardie to a Yankee*, adapted from her award-winning autobiographical one-woman show, and appears in the film portraying her own mother, Clara.

Fae Ellington — *Mrs. Golden*

Fae Ellington is one of Jamaica's most distinguished broadcasters, actresses, educators and cultural voices. With a career spanning more than five decades in television, radio and theatre, she has become a beloved figure throughout Jamaica and the diaspora. She is also a longtime lecturer in broadcast communication at the University of the West Indies.

Shernet Swearine — *Older India*

Shernet Swearine is a Jamaican actress known for her work in HBO's *Get Millie Black*, where she portrayed Janet Fenton, as well as *Black Cake* and *Stew Peas*. A versatile screen and stage performer, Shernet brings emotional depth and authenticity to her role as Older India in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*.

Kiara Henry — *Older Marva*

Kiara Henry is an emerging Jamaican actress currently studying at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, where she is developing her craft as a performer. She makes her feature film debut in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*, portraying Older Marva. Kiara brings a fresh, natural presence to the screen, marking an exciting first step in what promises to be a bright journey as a young Jamaican talent.

THE CAST

Cast Biographies, cont.

Ngozi Muzik Wright — *Young India*

Ngozi Muzik Wright is a gifted young Jamaican actress, dub poet, singer, and performer who has captivated audiences from an early age. A Jamaica Festival Speech champion, she made history as one of the first children to address Jamaica's Parliament. Ngozi makes her feature-film debut as Young India in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*.

Amyra-Shai Gordon — *Young Marva*

Amyra-Shai Majai Gordon, known online as Fireheart, is a vibrant young Jamaican actor, performer, and songwriter with a natural gift for storytelling through music and movement. A gifted creative with undeniable charisma, rhythm, and expressive energy, Amyra-Shai writes her own original music and brings that same authenticity to her on-screen performances. She makes her feature film debut in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*, portraying Young Marva.

Sherando Ferril — *Lynn*

Sherando Ferril is an award-winning Jamaican actress, filmmaker and producer with more than 25 years of experience across film, television and theatre. Her credits include *Sweet Rind*, *Get Millie Black*, *Chokehold* and *Raw Materials*. An internationally recognized performer and passionate advocate for Caribbean storytelling, Sherando portrays Lynn in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*.

Tristan Cunningham — *Lavern*

Tristan Cunningham is an American actress, producer, and writer whose television credits include *Reasonable Doubt*, *NCIS*, *The Conners*, *S.W.A.T.*, and *Family Reunion*. A graduate of the SUNY Purchase Acting Conservatory, Tristan began performing as a child with *Circus Smirkus* before transitioning to theatre, film and television. She portrays Lavern in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*.

Mark Anthony Williams — *Ronald*

Mark Anthony Williams is a Jamaican-American actor, writer and producer with an extensive career across film, television and theatre. Born in London to Jamaican parents and raised partly in Kingston, Jamaica, Mark's television credits include *The Neighborhood*, *Abbott Elementary*, *Suits LA*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *9-1-1: Lone Star*. An NAACP Theatre Award nominee, he brings decades of experience and a deep connection to his Jamaican heritage to the role of Ronald in *From a Yardie to a Yankee*.

CREDITS

Credits/Key Creative Team

*India and Marva.*

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY	Sardia Robinson
PRODUCED BY	Sardia Robinson
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Cliff Foerster
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Michael Street
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Donna Noble
COSTUME DESIGNER	Nicole Marsh
EDITOR	Steven Nevius, ACE

MUSIC

ORIGINAL SCORE BY	Carlo Siliotto
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ORIGINAL SONG — “STILL ME”

Lyrics by Sardia Robinson

Performed by Siedah Garrett

GALLERY
Stills



On location in Jamaica.



Marva and her grandmother, Mrs. Golden.



A quiet moment.



India at school.

GALLERY

Stills, cont.



Clara leaves for America.



Waiting for the bus.



Older India, in Chicago.

GALLERY

Stills, cont.



At the market.



In Chicago.



India and Marva share a laugh.



Climbing the mango tree.

THE FILMMAKER

Sardia Robinson

Writer • Director • Producer • Actor

Sardia Robinson is an award-winning Jamaican-born actress, writer, director and producer whose work centers culturally rich stories and the experiences of the Caribbean diaspora.

A graduate of Columbia College Chicago with a BA in Theatre, Robinson developed her artistic voice across theater, television and film. Early in her career, she interned at Chicago's Goodman Theatre alongside Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson.



Her acclaimed one-woman show, *From a Yardie to a Yankee*, chronicled her journey from Jamaica to America and ultimately became the foundation for her feature-film directorial debut.

With the film, Robinson takes on four roles—writer, director, producer and actor—bringing a story that began with her own experiences to the screen.

Our most personal stories can also be our most universal.

AT A GLANCE

Quick Facts

TYPE	Feature Film
TAGLINE	The dream was America. The truth was survival.
ORIGIN	Based on the award-winning one-woman show From a Yardie to a Yankee
WRITTEN / DIRECTED / PRODUCED BY	Sardia Robinson
PRODUCTION COMPANY	MarvaJoy Productions
SETTING	Rural Jamaica & Chicago, Illinois
RUNTIME	92 minutes
LANGUAGE	English
ASPECT RATIO	2.39:1
COLOR	Color
SHOOTING FORMAT	Arri Alexa Mini LF
RECOGNITION (STAGE PRODUCTION)	- Featured in the book Black Theater, City Life: African American Art Institutions and Urban Culture Ecologies by Macelle Mahala. - Winner, BroadwayWorld's 2022 Los Angeles Regional Award for Best Solo Production (Theatre West). - Winner, Innovative Woman in Theatre Award, Hollywood Fringe Festival. - Named one of BroadwayWorld's Top Ten Shows to See in Los Angeles.

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