

## Jasmine Guy: The 'October Baby' Interview

Born in Boston on March 10, 1962, Jasmine Guy is a Renaissance woman with dancer, actress, singer, director, and writer on her resume. She performed in the Broadway productions of "The Wiz,"



**CELEBRITY INTERVIEW**

by Kam Williams

"Leader of the Pack," "Grease," and "Chicago," and she has also served as a stage director and choreographer on numerous occasions.

Still, the versatile entertainer remains best known for her work in television, especially for creating the iconic character Whitley Gilbert on "A Different World." Her other TV credits include recurring roles on "The Vampire Diaries," "Fame," "Touched by an Angel," "Melrose Place" and "Dead Like Me."

On the big screen, Jasmine appeared in such movies as "School Daze," "Harlem Nights" and "Stomp the Yard 2." She is the author of "Evolution of a Revolutionary," a book about the life and journey of Afeni Shakur, and she released an eponymous record album on Warner Brothers Records in 1990.

She is currently producing director of Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, where she resides



"October Baby," a faith-based morality play inspired by the true story of a troubled teenager who discovered she survived an attempted abortion as a 24 week-old fetus.

**KW:** Hi, Jasmine. Thanks for the time.

**JG:** Thanks.

**KW:** Did you do anything different to prepare for this role?

**JG:** I knew Nurse Mary. There was little to prepare, just my own experience lent myself to the character.

**KW:** Was there anything dif-

ferent about working on "October Baby" from other films you've done?

**JG:** The cast and crew were very positive, warm, and inviting. I felt comfortable and embraced in set.

**KW:** Children's book author Irene Smalls says: This very dramatic role is very different from the comedies you are known for? What attracted you to "October Baby?"

**JG:** I was attracted to Nurse Mary because she was older and alone, full of stories to share and secrets she had harbored for many years.

**KW:** What's your secret to embodying memorable characters?

**JG:** I always try to honor a character by being honest and truthful to who they are, in spite of my own personality and beliefs. I also like to embody them physically and remove my own thoughts, walk and mannerisms from their portrayal.

**KW:** What message do you think people will take away from "October Baby?"

**JG:** I think people will be reminded to be safe and thoughtful in their intimate relationships and not just use sex for recreational purposes.

**KW:** Larry Greenberg asks: How did co-directors Jon and Andrew Erwin protect the subtle emotional drama from the politics that surround the movie's incendiary topic?

**JG:** In my one scene in the movie I felt Jon and Andrew left me to interpret Nurse Mary as I saw her. They created a freedom on the set that was uplifting and created a confidence that was contagious.

**KW:** Editor/legist Patricia Turnier says: I looove your work. I am an Afro-Canadian who used to dream of attending an African-American college when I watched "A Different World." Studies mention that when the show was on TV in the late 80s and 90s, it created a positive impact on the African-American community in terms of college enrollment. In addition, it was the first time in American TV history that young African-Americans were showcased in a college environment.

What is your assessment of today's images representing the African-Americans in the media? Do you think that there is a need to have more TV shows and movies which present black people in intellectual settings?

**JG:** I've always known the greatness of black people. We come from intellectuals, philosophers, educators and activists. We are not a monolithic group of people bound by color. It is up to us as individuals, parents, teachers and communicators to teach that to our people and our broader community. I think it's dangerous to depend on the media or the entertainment industry to facilitate that knowledge.

**KW:** Patricia also says: You directed the musical "I Dream" and the play "The Colored Museum." Would you consider directing a movie in the future?

**JG:** I would love to direct a movie, something I really like with a great cast. What a dream!

**KW:** Thanks again for the time, Jasmine.

**JG:** Thank you, Kam.

'I always try to honor a character by being honest and truthful to who they are, in spite of my own personality and beliefs'

with her daughter. Here, she talks about her new movie,

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