



PARTY GIRLS

“It’s hard to rebel when you’re being raised by rebels.”

- Ericka Brown

LOG LINE

A precocious young girl struggles to fit into her new school, which happens to be run by the Black Panther Party. But no matter the political climate (in 1973 or 2017), when you’re 10 years old, your priorities are the same - a kid just wants to be a kid.

THE PREMISE

All Ericka Brown ever wanted was to fit in. Despite being one of the only black girls at St. Gertrude’s, she was doing a pretty good job of it. Just like her besties, Ericka loves ABBA, Donnie and Marie, and all things Barbie. So when Ericka’s mom suddenly pulls her out of her conservative private school and plops her down at the noisy, seemingly chaotic Oakland Community School, her world is turned upside down. The students may look more like her, but they sure don't share her taste in clothes, music, or TV, *and* they’re practicing karate! It’s enough to freak out any 10 year-old. To make things even more confusing, Ericka finds herself in the eye of a revolution she doesn’t really understand. While the world sees her mom and her comrades as a bunch of agitators (and her grandmother sees a bunch of “black militant hippies”), from Ericka’s 10 year-old’s perspective it’s a lot simpler: protests are field trips, rules are made to be broken, and that capitalist pig propaganda is just a Barbie doll she absolutely *must have* for Christmas this year.

What drives the show week to week is a simple, universal contradiction: while every mom wants what’s best for her daughter, that daughter’s childish demands are often diametrically opposed. Ericka is just like any typical kid, obsessed with pop culture and desperate to fit in. A little revolutionary in her own right, Ericka will disrupt the new world order every week, in pursuit of a kid’s ‘inalienable’ rights: toys, music, fun.

This show provides a unique opportunity to bring our audience into the story of the Black Panther Party through a universally relatable lens - the eyes of a child and the love of a mother. Though the movement was fueled by ideals, it was run by people - who had great intentions, but were also fallible like anyone else. Neither heroes, nor villains, the most compelling approach to this world is one that addresses the successes and failings of the Party with equal respect, giving the audience a chance to more deeply understand a history that is shrouded in myth and mystery. Throughout the series we can continue to peek into the inner workings of a para-military organization, complete with celebrity sightings and FBI informants, as it appears to a child - a helluva fun ride.

Li’l Revolutionaries is inspired by the first hand account of Ericka Brown, who attended the Oakland Community School (founded and run by the Black Panther Party) in the late 70s. Her mother, Elaine Brown, became the only woman in US history to lead a paramilitary organization when she became the head of the Black Panther Party.



THE TONE

Li'l Revolutionaries is a single camera comedy told from Ericka's point of view. While set in a radical time, at its heart, *Li'l Revolutionaries* is a relatable, multi-generational family comedy, focusing on the complex relationship between a daughter and a working mother. Though set in the 70s, our show will have a very current feel, finding the balance between expressing a unique voice and exploring culturally relevant issues that still resonate with today's audience. The comedy will be played real and relatable. Our show is an excellent companion piece to *'black-ish*, allowing space to more deeply explore themes rarely seen on TV.



THE SCHOOL

The central setting for *Li'l Revolutionaries* is the Oakland Community School - and it *is* a unique environment, even by today's standards. In 1973, the Black Panther Party founded the OCS in order to "provide youth with a culturally relevant education and challenge the public school system's perceptions of what it meant to be Black and poor." At OCS, the students were all encouraged to learn how - not what - to think. There were typical classes like math, science and reading, but instead of gym, students did Tai Chi. A free breakfast program and a student Justice Council were other unique aspects - it was truly a utopian environment that paved the way for some of today's nontraditional teaching methods.



What made the OCS even more unique is that it was the center of operations for the Black Panthers - teachers were outspoken activists, organizers worked in the same building, sharing meals with the children. Celebrities and cultural icons regularly stopped in to lend support and snag a photo op. And yet at the center of this dynamic setting are a group of wide eyed kids with an innocent perspective on the revolution going on all around them.

"Most people saw a scary looking guy in black leather. We saw a guy that always had extra bubblegum." - Ericka Brown

THE FAMILY

ERICKA BROWN (10) - Ericka desperately wants to live a “normal” life, just like her favorite TV sitcom families: together all the time and without a care in the world. Unfortunately for Ericka, nothing about her world is normal. Her mom works for some weird ‘Party’, her new schoolmates have never heard of ABBA, and for some inexplicable reason, she’s not allowed to eat grapes at school. But as Ericka becomes more exposed to the revolution, she begins to discover her own inner rebel. Of course, she’s still just ten, so for the moment her protests are more about which radio station to listen to, and her manifesto is the TV Guide.

Ericka is a classic only child, so when her mother starts spending more time with the ‘Party,’ Ericka is reluctant to share. *“I don’t care if your comrades are boycotting Safeway! I wanna go see The Lovebug with my mommy!”* The more things begin to feel different in her life, the more Ericka will fight to keep things the way they were. After all, it’s in every kid’s nature to rebel, and the only way to rebel against a rebel... is to go straight.



At the request of Huey P. Newton, Elaine (a classically trained musician) wrote protest music for the Party at Motown.

ELAINE BROWN (early 30s. Think Janelle Monae, Tiffany Haddish) Like any mom, Elaine’s strongest wish is to make the world a better, safer place for her daughter. Her drive will eventually land her the job as Chairwoman of the Party. When we first meet her in the series however, she’s just getting started. As a woman in a man’s world, Elaine struggles to have her voice heard, and much like her daughter, to fit in. But that struggle isn’t new for Elaine - she’s balanced two different realities her entire life. She was raised in the projects, but got sent to private school to become a good “cultured Negro,” just like her mother wanted. With her perfect diction, she may come across as prim and proper, but folks learn quickly never to cross her. Now she’s raising her daughter with the help of her old-school mom Cornelia, who does not approve of the ‘black militant hippies’ that Elaine has begun working for. Yet despite her dedication to the party’s ideals, Elaine is well aware that she is raising a real little girl, with real little girl wishes. If those wishes include a blonde Barbie doll, so be it. *“Just don’t bring it to school!”*

An only child herself, Elaine was raised to take care of her mother, Cornelia, so in an odd way, her mother’s selfishness made Elaine more fit to serve humanity.

CORNELIA BROWN, (late 50s. Think Pam Grier, Whoopi Goldberg) Loving yet hard, Cornelia is a traditional, church-going grandmother who is of the assimilationist mindset: *“If you dress nice and get yourself a good education, you can be better than white folk.”* She loves her granddaughter, but she ain’t one of them cuddly, cookie-baking types. Dinner may not taste good, but it’s gonna be on time and you *“betta’ eat it.”* Cornelia is suspicious of the Black Panthers, and is even more displeased now that Elaine has gotten little Ericka involved. She constantly pushes back, reminding the younger generation that she’s still around for a reason. She distrusts white people, black people, and, well... everyone. The only ones she’d ever invite into her house are the characters from her favorite daytime soap opera, or Gene Kelly - she likes him. Because she only gets to see Ericka on the weekends, she uses that precious time to wash away as much of that pesky Commie nonsense as she can.

THE STUDENTS

The students that attended Oakland Community School comprised of:

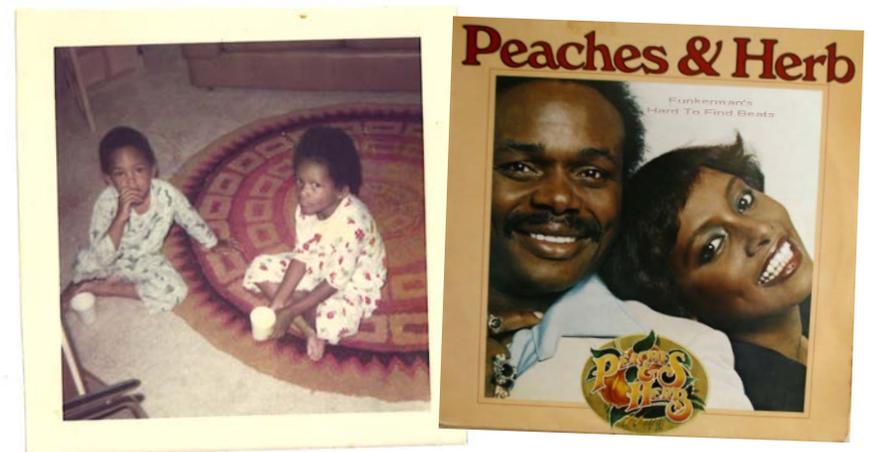
- Students whose parents were upper level Party members - These students stayed full time at the campus dorms during the week and went home over the weekends. **(Ericka moves into the dorms early in the season, staying with her mom and grandma on the weekends)**
- Students whose parents were low to mid-level Party members who went to the school but did NOT live in the dorms.
- Students whose parents were NOT Party members but lived in the community that wanted to give their kids a private school education on a public school budget. These students attended the school but went home daily.

LEILAH (10) The Mischief-maker - is Ericka's partner in crime and an instigator of mischief. A short girl with giant afro puffs and a "take no shit" kind of attitude, Leilah loves to dare people to do all sorts of things - leap from one top bunk bed to another (knowing they can't make it), smoke a found cigarette or change the TV channel after the dorm mother falls asleep. The adults have given her the nickname Rock Steady (like the Aretha Franklin song).

GERONIMO (11) The Tiny Intellectual - is the son of a central committee member and a true revolutionary whose age hasn't caught up with his soul (picture Huey from The Boondocks.) If OCS had grades, he would be a straight A student, (but here his report card is filled with gold power fists). His steely resolve is easily swayed by Ericka's influence - doing anything from being her personal taste tester to standing under Huey's portrait singing Rock the Boat while doing "the bump." Together they are a pint-sized, militarized, Peaches & Herb... with berets.

DAMION (9) The Streetwise Kid - represents the kids who would be swallowed up by the streets without the BPP. He comes from the projects next to the school and is always down to claim his former street gang the 'Six-Deuce Vets' (62nd street vets). Young "Dami" is respected by all the other kids for his commitment to his crew, he just takes it a bit too far sometimes. If anyone needs contraband he can get it from his street connections. You need a BB gun or nunchucks? Dami got you. Strawberry Shortcake or Chocolate Eclair ice cream bars? Meet him 'round back. He LOVES the image of the party. Black leather jackets, guns and sticking it to the pig...? Yeah, he's all about that life.

KEISHA (12) The Drama Queen - She is proud to go to OCS and really understands what the BPP means to the people in her neighborhood. If she does well here, maybe she could go to college one day and be a lawyer or a teacher... but what she really wants to be is an actress. She and Ericka bond over watching TV, but get into arguments over which show - Ericka prefers corny old Donny and Marie while Keisha is into sexy, sophisticated Sonny and Cher. They both like American Bandstand as much as Soul Train, though, so no arguments there.



Geronimo and Ericka: ("a pint-sized, militarized Peaches & Herb")

THE OCS FACULTY/STAFF

SHARON (30s) Director of OCS who runs the school with firm love. Not always perfect at delivering the message, she tries to keep it clear and respectful, but sometimes her emotions overtake her - She will take the children to the Great America amusement park where she politely reminds them not to touch any “patriotic bullshit.”

ROSA (20s) - School Nurse/Nutritionist who wants to be everyone’s best friend. Passionate about nutrition: “You can never have too much wheat germ!” Open and approachable, the students will often stop in and see her anytime for any reason, even if just to ask “When will I get boobs?”

SUNDIATA (20s) A history teacher who is dedicated to the Party. His delivery is often too matter-of-fact for the little brothas and sistas cause he can’t help but keep it real. His enthusiasm for the “real history” causes him to forget his audience sometimes: “Sure Thomas Edison invented the lightbulb, but what about the young workers that died from the mercury in the bulb during the testing process, little comrades?!? What about them?? HUH??”

CHRIS (late 20s) As a full-blooded Irish-American, Chris proved the misconception that the BPP was anti-white to be false. That said, he had a pretty sweet red afro. This former Peace Corps volunteer feels the world is his science lab, preferring tactile teaching methods to traditional textbooks. He’s the kind of guy who would reference his time in Bujumbura when on the subject of butterflies. He’s one of those “woke” white boys before woke was a term.

SIFU TED (20s) Martial Arts instructor and all around calm dude... so calm that he seems to appear out of nowhere like a Ninja. He is well-versed in Eastern philosophy, Buddhism, all of the fighting arts, and everything Bruce Lee. After he lost the World Championship to Jim Kelly in 1971, he gave up the glory of the kung-fu world to bring the discipline of martial arts to the youth. Gives sage (albeit often inapplicable) advice.

BIG JOLLY (30s) The biggest, most physically intimidating member of the entire Black Panther Party. The muscle, and not afraid to get tough, but when he’s around the kids he’s a total softy and a bottomless candy dispenser. Nicknamed Big Jolly (as in Jolly Ranchers) as a result.



OTHER LOCATIONS

With about 30-40% of the show taking place at OCS, additional locations will include:

- **The neighborhood** - The school was located in the Havenscourt neighborhood on the notorious E 14th street that ran the length of the city. It was a majority black working poor area that was densely populated. Filled with housing projects, lots of foot traffic, houses with 5 “broke-down” cars on the lawn, liquor stores, schools, food spots, barber shops and funeral parlors.
- **Grandma’s House** - Ericka spent many a weekend with Elaine’s mother Cornelia
- **OCS Dormitories** - For Ericka, this is where friendships formed, rivalries started, and general hijinks ensued.
- **“Panther Pads”** - Most Party members lived communally in small groups. Most locations were secretive, well armed and guarded. Elaine eventually moved into one with a few fellow female members - The women in her clique became very close and always had each other’s back.
- **Kim’s Corner Store** - a favorite hangout where the kids would buy contraband candy forbidden by the health conscious BPP. The owner was the lovable Mrs. Kim who liked the kids but did not understand why their parents *choose* to be Communist, after she fled North Korea with her family several years prior.
- **Field Trips** - The types of places all kids wanted to attend but would conflict with the Party’s strong anti-



“The Party worked with people who were Hispanic, Asian, disabled, Native American, Elderly. I remember thinking what an adventure life was meeting people who were like me, but didn’t look like me. And there would be good food I’d never tried or good music I’d never heard.”

- Ericka Brown

SAMPLE EPISODES

PILOT - There’s friction in the family when Elaine decides to pull Ericka out of St Gertrudes to go to the Oakland Community School. “Why on Earth would you take my granddaughter out of a perfectly good white people school?!” Ericka’s first day at school is anything but smooth, as she endures awkward stares from her classmates (“What’s an ABBA?”), confusing history lessons (the Indians were the good guys?), and Tai Chi at PE. Ericka hits her boiling point when she learns that grapes are forbidden at the OCS (In solidarity with the United Farm Workers grape strike). Ericka finds her inner revolutionary when she organizes the students and leads a BPP style protest against the school’s anti-grape agenda. When it is discovered that Ericka is behind this noisy disruption, Elaine can’t help but feel a little pride.

JUST LIKE CAMP - Struggling to manage single motherhood with her newly promoted position in the Party, Elaine makes the decision to have Ericka live in the campus dorms (She’ll get to sleep at home on the weekends still). Ericka actually loves this idea. “It’ll be like having a sleepover every night!” But when it comes time for Donnie and Marie to air, Ericka discovers that there is only ONE television, and since the boys outnumber the girls, it’s Godzilla time. To make matters worse, the dorm mother’s idea of a “bedtime story” is reading the newspaper and highlighting all the atrocities going on in the world. “Can you at least throw a Fairy in there somewhere?”

BOY CRUSH - Every girl at OCS was in love with Kevin Keys. He looked better than the Sylvers and Jacksons combined. So when Kevin kisses Ericka AND gives her a Hot Wheels car, she naturally assumes that they are engaged... until Ericka learns that that he’d also given one to Leilah and some other girl! When confronted and asked to make a choice, Kevin coolly smiles at the three of them and replies “I like you all. You all like me. What’s the problem?” Damn. He’s got a point. After some bickering, the girls finally agree not to compete for his affection. But when that third girl shows up with freshly baked cookies for him the next day, the truce is off, big time.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Skillfully and comically navigating political issues is what Karen and André have been doing their entire lives. From activist roots to HBCU educations to comedy writing and performing careers, these writers are poised to bring a unique spin on family, politics and race to a complex yet relatable cast of characters. With the support and collaboration of Ericka, who originally met and befriended Karen when they were both students at Spelman, this team is able to bring the passion and authenticity this story deserves.



Karen Ceesay (Writer) - A Philadelphia native, Karen was raised by a school teacher mother and union leader father, and was taught to always speak up for herself. She went on to graduate from Spelman College. A career performer and comedian, Karen has written, produced and performed sketch & improv comedy in both Atlanta and Los Angeles, honing a comedic POV that pokes holes in the societal norms of race, politics & gender. As an active member of the Atlanta Entertainment community, she has served on the board of Women in Film & Television Atlanta for six years. Karen lives in Atlanta with her husband and 12 year-old son.



André Brooks (Writer) - Smart black comedy is who André is, and it's what he's been doing for the last 15 years. In the early 2000's he co-founded *The Sure Shot Guerrilla Film Company*, establishing himself as a pioneer in the DIY digital revolution and attracting the attention of BET (a pilot deal), New Line Cinema (punch-up writer) and ultimately a staff writing job on *The Boondocks*. His comedic style can be described as "a mix of intelligent hood shit." André grew up in East Oakland, where his parents were involved in the movement and he attended an elementary school inspired by the OCS. André is a graduate of Howard University.



Ericka Brown (Consultant) - Ericka Brown was raised in Oakland, and later Beverly Hills, the daughter of Elaine Brown, the only female leader of the Black Panther Party. She attended college at Spelman, where she befriended Karen Ceesay. Ericka has made activism and service her life's work, sharing her experience through speaking engagements with students across the country. She now works with mentally challenged and disabled people, continuing a heritage of building a community for our underserved populations.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

We became frustrated while researching the Black Panther Party and Elaine Brown for this project. A question haunted us: Why do I have the same fear for my twelve-year-old son that Elaine's peers had for their sons back in the 60s and 70s? We are still fighting the same fight - only the clothes have changed. Li'l Revolutionaries can serve as a reminder that contemporary issues are nothing new. Ericka's story about not understanding why she couldn't have "delicious grapes" during the Chavez Grape Strike was the initial inspiration for our approach to this story - after giggling for hours over Ericka's conundrum, we realized that this was not just an inside joke - anyone can relate to this child's perspective. And if we can start from a place of laughter and connection, we may have a chance to help heal a divide that seems to widen by the week. The more we listened to Ericka's reflections, the more we recognized that our points of view are affected by so much more than just race - issues of class, age, gender, etc all come into play, forcing us to consider our own assumptions about each other. We get to explore this concept in the show by introducing various family members, other organizations, members of the community and of course, the Hollywood elite. Li'l Revolutionaries examines how to break out of what society deems normal, an acceptable standard... and then celebrate and nurture those differences.

