

VISION

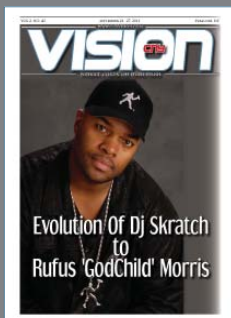
CNY

WITHOUT A VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH

A portrait of Rufus 'GodChild' Morris, a Black man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a black baseball cap with a white logo, a black leather jacket, and a silver chain with a large pendant. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.

Evolution Of Dj Skratch to Rufus 'GodChild' Morris

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CALENDAR

September

28
GED Classes
Time: 9:00a.m.
Location: White Branch Library
Catch these free study sessions designed to help those who are interested in obtaining their GED.

28
Family Story Time
Time: 6:00p.m.
Location: The Galleries of Syracuse
Sotries, finger plays, songs, dancing and fun for all ages. Don't forget to wear your pajamas!

28
Computer Instruction
Time: 4:30-7:00p.m.
Location: Mundy Branch Library
Learn how to use your computer for writing a letter, applying for a job online or setting up an e-mail account. Appointment, please call (315-435-3797)

28
Merengue Dance Workshop
Time: 4:30p.m.
Location: Mundy Branch Library
Have fun and learn how to dance the merengue with professionals dancer Jorge Cuevas. For school age children.

29
Farmers' Market at the CNY Regional Market
Time: 2pm-10pm
Time: 2100 Park St., Syracuse, NY

29
Exhibit: African Diasporan Treasures - 40 Years of Community Folk Art Center
Time: 10:00am
Location: Community Folk Art Center, 805 E Genesee St.
This special exhibition features art from our permanent collection and will provide a unique opportunity for the community to see work by a variety of artists who have passed through CFAC's doors over the years.

30
DinoMania at the MOST
Time: 10:00am-5:00 pm
Location: Museum of Science & Technology, 500 S. Franklin St.
Experience a time when Earth was a prehistoric landscape filled with creatures of gigantic proportions with DINOMANIA! Gape at a 15-foot tall Tyrannosaurus Rex as it towers over guests! Hear a Pteranodon scream as it soars with its 25-foot wingspan! Interact with more than a dozen robotic dinosaurs as they snort and roar to greet guests.

30
Computer Tutoring
Location: Betts Branch Library
Free one-to-one computer training is available by appointment only. Use our computers, or bring your own laptop. Please call to schedule an appointment.(315-435-1940).

30
Wii & Game Fun
Time: 3:00p.m.
Location: Beauchamp Branch Library
Test your skills on the Nintendo Wii and enjoy an assortment of games. Ages

6-12

October

1
Exhibit: Beautiful and Exotic Orchids
Location: Beaver Lake Nature Center, 8477 East Mud Lake Rd. Baldwinsville, NY

Orchids are not simply a traditional adornment for prom dresses: they are also a widely varied group of plants sporting exotic shares, flashy colors, and tempting perfume-like scents. Info: 315-638-2519

2
A Perfect Bridal Show - Fall Edition
Time: noon - 4:00pm
Location: Holiday Inn Liverpool, 441 Electronics Parkway Liverpool, NY
Syracuse's most elegant bridal show! Come see, taste and experience the best source for planning your Syracuse Wedding. Don't miss the Great Diamond Dash! Enjoy great food, fun & prizes. This is the fashion show of the year for the bride-to-be! (315-487-9333)

2
Syracuse Festival of Races
Time: You can run in our Men's 5K (8:50 a.m.) or Women's 5K (9:50 a.m.), Location: Manley Field House, Syracuse, Description Runners and walkers of all ages and abilities are invited to join and welcome runners from 30 or more states and Canada who are coming to Syracuse for the 19th annual Syracuse Festival of Races. Visit www.festivalofraces.com to register or find more information, or call 446-6285

4
Teen Book Club
Time: 4:00 pm-5:00 pm
Location: Downtown Central Library, 447 S. Salina Street
The Teen Book Club is for teens in grades 7-12. Join us and we'll discuss great reads and have fun. It's a great way to socialize and discuss your favorite books.

8
Northside COMMUNITY Festival
Time: 11am-4pm
Location: Farmer St. & Whitwell Dr., In and around the Bova Center at Schiller Park. Northside TNT, the Butternut Community Police Center and the CNY Community Foundation present an event showcasing the agencies and organizations serving the Northside, the food and music of new and old communities that add diversity and interest, a soccer match between the Bhutanese and Burundi teams . information, visit <http://www.butternutcenter.org>

12
Fiesta Latina For Kids
Time: 3:30p.m.
Location: Mundy Branch Library
Sotries, crafts, snacks and music. Ages 6 and up

VISION

LOCAL OFFICE:
2331 South Salina Street
Syracuse, NY 13205
PH: 315-849-2461
HEADQUARTERS:
17 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14614
TOLL-FREE: 1-888-792-9303
FAX: 1-888-796-6292
EMAIL: info@cnyvision.com
WEBSITE: www.cnyvision.com

PUBLISHER
Dave McCleary
davemc@cnyvision.com

BUSINESS MANAGER
Pauline McCleary
pmccleary@minorityreporter.net

EDITOR
Saundra Smokes
SaundraSmokes@cnyvision.com

ART DIRECTOR
Catie Fiscus
artdirector@MinorityReporter.net

PHOTOGRAPHER
La Vergne Harden
lharden@cnyvision.com

ADVERTISING
Dave McCleary
Lucy Smith
advertising@cnyvision.com

REPORTERS
Rodney Brown
Shereese Hardaway
Sharlene McKenzie

CONTRIBUTORS
Kofi Quay
James Haywood Rolling
Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Boyce Watkins

ADVISORY BOARD
Corey Mitchell
Khalid Bey
LaVergne Harden
LaVonda Reed-Huff
Mike Atkins
Sharon Owens
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CNY Vision is a publication of Minority Reporter, Inc. We are a family of publications and other media formats committed to fostering self awareness, building community and empowering people of color to reach their greatest potential. Further, CNY Vision seeks to present a balanced view of relevant issues, utilizing its resources to build bridges among diverse populations; taking them from information to understanding.

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or email
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LOCAL



Fight continues to keep Benderson Center open

The Ida Benderson Senior Center in Syracuse is scheduled to close Saturday, despite protests from community groups, Common Councilors and the son of the woman for whom the facility is named.

Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Minor says that she has not changed her mind about shuttering the 36-year-old center, located on Salina Street, in the heart of downtown. She says the city can no longer afford the \$150,000 annual rent on the facility. She is proposing that seniors who use the Benderson Center go to the Salvation Army's adult day program.

To accommodate the added population, the city would have to pay the Salvation Army an additional \$60,000 over two years – money that Minor is trying to raise privately after the Common Council refused to authorize the payment. It wants the mayor to renegotiate the lease agreement with the landlord on the building.

But Minor has said that cuts in federal and state aide have made it impossible to continue operating the center.

The council reportedly has delayed acting on tax deal sought by the landlord, Tony Fiorito, who wants a 10-year payment in lieu of taxes on a property he plans to develop in Franklin Square. William Ryan, the mayor's chief of staff, accused the council of holding the deal "hostage."

Bruce Benderson, the son of Ida Benderson, who devoted much of her life advocating on behalf of the elderly, traveled to Syracuse last week to add his voice to those who object to the closing of the facility, one of four senior centers under the supervision of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

He announced the formation of a Friends of Ida Benderson Center, whose mission would be to secure resources to keep the center going – even if has to be moved to another building – which he said were plentiful in downtown Syracuse.

"I find it incredibly grotesque that Mayor Miner intends to fundraise for the Salvation Army, which already has a staff of professional fundraisers. Instead of what seem like duplicitous strategies to destroy the center dedicated to my mother's name, Miner should have asked the community to pitch in," Benderson said in a release.

Sally Johnston of Disabled In Action said the fight would continue to keep Ida Benderson open. "We're supposed to be an inclusive community. And our mayor needs to listen to us on this, because we're not going to go away. We are going to fight until we get that center back," Johnston told YNN.

Centro's bus hub Is just down the road

The new Centro Bus hub is almost 50 percent completed and is scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2012.

The hub will sit at the corner of Adams, South Salina and South Warren Streets, in the former site of the Red Cross building, which was demolished last fall to make way for the transportation center.

The hub will have 22 passenger loading bays, which will be covered by a 53,000

square foot canopy that will stretch over the entire passenger loading areas.

The facility also will feature an enclosed passenger waiting area that will include a customer service area, public restrooms, bus pass vending machines and an electronic bus departure information center.

Centro's website www.Centro.org offers an animated aerial view of the new facility.

Commissioner will not take away Syracuse's win over Toledo

The Associated Press

The head of the Mid-American Conference says there's no way to take away Syracuse's overtime win over Toledo despite a blown call on an extra point.

Mid-American Commissioner Jon Steinbrecher said Monday that NCAA rules say there's no route to reverse the outcome once the game is declared over.

Toledo Athletic Director Mike O'Brien asked the MAC to call for the Big East Conference to give Toledo the victory after a Big East official admitted that replay officials made a mistake in the Orange's 33-30 victory Saturday.

Video shows that Syracuse missed a late extra point but the officials ruled it good. Replay officials allowed it to stand. Toledo then kicked a tying field goal to force overtime, but the Orange came back with a field goal to win.

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COVER STORY

Former rapper's spiritual and entrepreneurial metamorphosis into a multimedia ministry

By Sandra Smokes

Back in the days of Run DMC, the Fat Boys and Big Daddy Kane, a young music producer was making a name for himself around Syracuse.

"DJ Skratch," aka Rufus Morris Jr., although few knew him by his birth name, had been captivated by music and rap since he was 10 years old. By the time he was 16 and a student at Corcoran High School, he had cut his first rap record.

DJ Skratch, who grew up on the city's South Side, would fast become a "neighborhood celebrity," producing his own and other artists' work.

"I had a very competitive spirit," he said, noting that he would stage rap battles. "It was almost like a sport to me. You wanted to know who was the hottest DJ...who was the hottest rapper and you wanted your mc to go against them."

He recalled how he would buy a brand new pair of Jordans and would have local artists battle for them, using his original beats in the contests. It was a heady time.

"We would do parties and concerts at Southwest Center, at Dunbar, Kirk Park, the Bricks. I still remember a lot of good times even in the midst of growing up in the hood with all the drama." But DJ Skratch wasn't content with local celebrity -- the adulation of the crowd or his name on everybody's lips. He understood early on that music had a business side and it was necessary to embrace it if an artist wanted to survive and thrive.

He would tell other artists that "while you're trying to get on the radio. I want to own my own radio station."

"I learned that there really is a discipline side of the arts and you have to take care of business in order to play a lot. He saw that other artists neglected the books and suffered. He also recognized that 'promoters would book you as an artist and you would be the last one to get paid.'"

"Part of my heart was to be a resource for my peers," he said.

DJ Skratch was creative, but he was also an entrepreneur. Maybe it was in his blood.

He was raised by his mother, Anna, who has owned a beauty salon for nearly forty years on Midland and Colvin Streets. "My aunts are entrepreneurs. I kind of grew up in an entrepreneurial family -- that's where I get it from."

DJ Skratch pursued his business interests as hard as he turned out and produced beats for other rappers. He became part owner of the local FM station, Power 102.1. He opened up a small chain of record stores called Radio Underground. He operated the club Nowhere City in East Syracuse and Nahjae's, named after his oldest daughter, on Salina Street in the city -- a facility that was part club and part banquet hall.

The money? It was good -- very good.

Some nights the business owner would make more than \$15,000 from his ventures -- clubs, concerts, music. As DJ

Skratch, he could rake in \$3000 to \$5,000 for three hours work. "Promoters knew ...I had a following."

On the outside DJ Skratch was "ghetto fabulous." He and his wife, Altra "Nikki" Morris, who had been a rapper with her own CD, had the money, the cars, the lifestyle.

Internally, however, a war was raging.

Hip-hop was changing with the emergence of Gansta rap.

In the early days of Hip Hop, DJ Skratch's audiences were mostly made up of adults. "But the more negative the music got, the younger the clientele," he said. Shootouts were happening at his clubs, and he could not shake the feeling that what he was doing as an artist and entrepreneur played a part. He began to wonder whether the violence in the music and the violence in the neighborhood were intertwined.

DJ Skratch was going through his own metamorphosis -- that would draw him back to his Christian roots. "What happened, honestly, was a veil was lifted when the Lord started having me looking at the business. Okay, you're running a business, everything is legal, but it was by the world's standards. I looked at the fruit I was bearing."

The internal war raged on.

If he walked away from it all, how would he take care of his family? He had people connected to his business "in his ear." This was his livelihood. "Where you going to legally make \$3,000 to \$5,000 in a couple of hours?" he reasoned.

Then he read a Scripture -- Mark: 10:29.

"Jesus said whatever you let go -- be it cattle, land, houses...whatever you lose for the sake of the gospel or following Christ, it will be returned one hundred fold."

"I decided to put faith to the action. By faith, I started shutting things down."

Gone were the record stores, the clubs, the radio station -- and "DJ Skratch." In the dumpster in the parking lot of Nahjae's, he would throw out crates of records still in plastic.

"DJ Skratch died and Godchild was resurrected," Morris would say. But the death of DJ Skratch meant the death of a lifestyle.

His commercial property was foreclosed on -- as was his house, which he almost lost. His Lexus truck was repossessed. He had to turn in his wife's Mercedes -- a birthday gift -- because he no longer could afford the payments. At one point, when he and his wife were thanking the Lord for their meal, it wasn't just a reflective prayer of grace, he said. They meant it.

While DJ Skratch had spawned one kind of entertainment, Godchild created another: Kingdom Entertainment. Its mission is to provide what Morris calls "edutainment" that positively impacts young and older people

"I wastrusting the Lord for restoration and he gave me other business ideas

or different things to do through music and production. -- things that didn't compromise my walk," Morris said.

One idea was for the School of the Hearts, an afterschool multimedia and performing arts center where high-school aged students could learn film, video and music production, theater and acting -- among other artistic disciplines. The school, now located at Plymouth Congregational Church in Syracuse, is in its 11th year. More than a thousand students have participated, Morris said. There is no fee and students can also receive academic tutoring in the program.

Morris, who will turn 40 Sunday, said he realized he could use his influence "in a positive way -- to be an asset to the community, not a liability. That's why I called it the School of the Hearts... it is really about the hearts of the youth we serve."

Progressively and almost miraculously, he might say, "Godchild" has steadily moved upward -- toward the hundredfold blessings upon which he staked his future. He has risen from rap artist/producer to multimedia producer. His wife, Nikki, owns a spa in Cicero. "It's as if God has been watching over his word to perform it," said Morris, who has three daughters.

Ever the creator and entrepreneur, Morris is embarking on his biggest venture to date: "Nineveh," a multimedia project, which he created, wrote and produced. It includes a feature-length film that tells the story of Michael, who lives in an urban neighborhood with all of its challenges. He goes out in search of Nineveh -- a mystical place talked about by his father, who died of alcoholism -- the disease that also claimed Morris' father's life.

Morris has already shot a 30-minute version of the film -- all done on location in Los Angeles. (www.rufusmorris.com and [Nineveh link](http://Ninevehlink.com)).

It stars Esther Scott (Dreamgirls), Kellita Smith (The Bernie Mac Show), Rockmond Dunbar (Tyler Perry's Family That Preys Together) and Nadj Jeter (Grown Ups).

When he gave a casting call for the movie, he got over 1800 responses in only three days. These days, he is looking for a distributor for the film -- in the way Tyler Perry creates his own productions and then uses a distributor -- Lionsgate -- to move them in the marketplace.

"The story came out of a place in my heart. I was born and raised in the hood. You have good friends getting locked up for various reasons; different ones I know have died from gun violence in our communities. One day I was in prayer after watching the movie, 'Hotel Rwanda.' I felt compassion for inner city people -- not just black people, but people facing oppression. I started praying a heartfelt prayer. I said I wished I could take my people to a place away from all of this..."

Then the dreams started. He would be awakened abruptly. "The Lord started leading me to write...showing me that I could take people to this place in my music and film through the imagination -- and I could give them a vision to help them defeat the enemies of their dreams."

The Nineveh project also includes an

audio and printed book series, a stage and television show, based around Nineveh's characters -- in particular, Mr. Herbert who lives in the treehouse village with the children of Nineveh. They and Michael must fight enemies who would steal their dreams.

Morris already is working with overseas manufacturers to create Nineveh products -- such as action figures -- and his Nineveh online store is up and running.

He recently signed a contract with Shoppingtown Mall to open up a Nineveh Treehouse Learning Center, where children can actually build treehouses like the ones in the Nineveh stories -- as well as do arts and crafts projects. They also will be able to create a treehouse village where they will deal with issues like homelessness and poverty. Morris has even added a green element, where children learn about sustainable communities.

Every aspect of the project will be supported by curriculum and materials that can be used in the classroom. Morris hopes to open the center by Christmas. Eventually, he would like to franchise the concept. Godchild has referred to himself as someone who is in the ministry of multimedia.

"I am called to do this," he acknowledges. "The Lord has called me to this."

Ironically, rapper TI may have captured the essence of the Rufus Morris evolution.

"That part of me left yesterday"

"The heart of me is strong today"

"No regrets, I'm blessed to say"

"Because the old me is dead and gone away"

(Rufus Morris' School of the Hearts, a multimedia and performance center, has room for 75 additional high-school aged students. Tuition is free and academic tutoring is available. For more information, call Ms. Tabby Simpson at 876-6020).





Colin Powell Leadership Book Due Out In 2012



NEW YORK (AP) -- Colin Powell's new book is a story of success.

The retired four-star general and former Secretary of State has a deal with HarperCollins for "It Worked for Me: Lessons in Leadership and Life."

According to HarperCollins, the book will include his 13 rules of leadership and "revealing personal stories."

Financial terms have not been disclosed. HarperCollins announced Sunday that the book is to be published in May 2012.

HarperCollins spokeswoman Tina Andreadis has declined to comment on whether Powell would respond to criticisms in recent memoirs by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld or former Vice President Dick Cheney.

Cheney's "In My Time" notes their differences about the Iraq War and alleges that Powell was reluctant to express himself in Cabinet meetings. Powell has said Cheney's book included "cheap shots."

Banks Reflects On Her First Fiction Book, "Modelland"

By ALICIA RANCILIO

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) _ A tweet doesn't usually make a person cry.

But when Tyra Banks recently saw a photo posted by a fan promoting the release of her book, it meant so much that the tears started flowing when she talked about it.

"You forget that people are gonna be excited about (the book) and are gonna read it," she said. "That was really touching to see that ... especially for something new. I'm new at this. I've never written a fiction book before and that really touched me."

"Modelland," which is now in stores, is the first of a three-book young adult series. It follows an awkward teen named Tookie De La Creme who gets invited to attend an elite academy called Modelland.

It makes sense why Banks would want to write a book for young adults. The 37-year-old Banks has an affinity toward empowering young women.

"That's an audience that I personally am passionate about. I feel like young girls in particular are going through that transition into adulthood and there's a lot of self-doubt, there's a lot of insecurity, there's a lot of self-acceptance issues when they look in the mirror at their reflection and they don't necessarily feel good enough or that they measure up," Banks said.

"Modelland" isn't a tell-all about the industry. There are some parallels to

Banks' own experience in the business.

"It's inspired by my life and experiences in fashion and modeling," she said. "My successes as well as a lot of pain I had to go through."

The book also addresses topics that Banks featured on daytime's "The Tyra Banks Show," which ran for five seasons and wrapped in 2010.

"I still talk about insecurities. I have a girl in 'Modelland' who is a cutter. I had many shows about that," Banks said. "There's bulimia, anorexia, all these things that are touched upon in 'Modelland' that I used to touch upon on my talk show."

Hollywood is already interested in the series. Banks said she was approached by a successful film producer shortly after it was announced that she was publishing the book.

"I would love to open up the 'Modelland' casting to the world," she said. "I'm looking for an Everygirl to possibly play one of the characters in the story."

Banks, who is enrolled at Harvard Business School, said she'd love to produce films one day.

"That's what I was going to go to college for," she said. "I've done the TV thing and will continue to do so, but the idea of films is pretty amazing."

Banks' other TV show, "America's Next Top Model," recently premiered its 17th season as an All-Star edition.

VISION CNY

Cuomo Says New Website Will Give Citizens Window Into Government



Gov. Andrew Cuomo

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) -- Gov. Andrew Cuomo held his first online chat with New Yorkers to solicit comments on how he's leading the state.

In one of his first exchanges, he defended the state's 2-percent cap in the growth of local property taxes in response to a question submitted in advance by a retired Broome County teacher.

The idea of the weekly events with top state officials is to solicit ideas and

comments on how he's leading the state in an effort to involve citizens in their state government.

It's part of Cuomo's new CitizenConnects website designed to provide more information and which has drawn raves from good-government groups.

Cuomo has said he wants to promote his initiatives directly to the public to avoid what he calls the "beltway politics" of those who oppose his measures and news

organizations.

Cuomo's press office has been aggressive when faced with opposing views in news stories. His administration has also been criticized for blacking out material in state records sought by reporters under the state Freedom of Information Law.

"Democracy works when the voice of the people rings strong and citizens participate in government," Cuomo said in a statement released last week. "It will be a place New Yorkers can visit to communicate with their leaders and sign up for community activities; and it will allow New Yorkers to have a direct window into the workings of their government ... It's time government gets up to date."

The schedules of past months released last week by Cuomo portray the Democrat as a tireless executive with frequent public policy meetings followed by business dinners with lawmakers in the governor's mansion. They replace what was long presented to the public as the governor's official schedule, but which is now being called a "proposed schedule."

The schedules released last week also note a meeting he had with New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie just days before each governor would claim they knew nothing of the Port Authority's proposed toll increases and detail Cuomo's response to the recent tropical storms.

Cuomo used private aircraft of political backers twice to events, which Cuomo reported as "in-kind services" in campaign contributions. Cuomo said he hasn't yet

used state aircraft for a "mixed use" of political activity and government work, but his administration makes it clear Albany's rules for use of aircraft allow governors to fly to political events if they reimburse for the cost and there is some legitimate government purpose to part of the trip.

In one trip to Syracuse that was to include a campaign fundraiser, the political supporter who provided the plane isn't identified and won't be until campaign filings are released months from now.

The information Cuomo now provides, however, comes with a caveat that "unofficial or personal events" aren't included and information has been withheld that "might tend to compromise security."

That security issue has been used by Cuomo to redact the destinations for his past use of state aircraft in a request under the state Freedom of Information Law by The Associated Press in August. The AP reported that Cuomo used state aircraft at times to take him to his home in Westchester County and pick up him to start his day, requiring state police to fly the aircraft to or from Albany where the aircraft must be kept overnight.

The administration had no cost for the new website, but said it was compiled with state workers, not outside consultants. The administration isn't certain how quickly the schedules and use of aircraft will be updated.

-Being THE Leader for the Future-



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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA) is requesting bids from qualified independent individuals or firms to provide signage for the new downtown transfer hub in Syracuse, New York.

Individuals or firms who desire to submit a bid may request an "Invitation for Bid Package" from Nairn J. Tait the Designated Contact in writing at fax number: 315-442-3301, mailing address: Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, PO Box 820, Syracuse, New York 13205 or e-mail: ntait@centro.org.

Bids must be received in the offices of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, attention Nairn J. Tait no later than 1PM EST on October 17, 2011. Bids received after this time and date will be returned, unopened.

Firms wishing to submit Bids do so entirely at their own risk. There is not an express or implied obligation on the part of the CNYRTA to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing and submitting Bids in response to this request. The CNYRTA reserves the right to reject any and all Bids for any reason.

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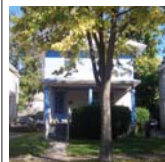
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NATIONAL



Waters Finds President's Remarks "Curious"



Representative Maxine Waters

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Maxine Waters says she's not sure who President Barack Obama was talking to when he told black Americans to quit complaining and follow him into the battle for jobs and opportunity.

The California Democrat, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, says she found the president's language "a bit curious." She says Obama didn't address Hispanics in such a blunt manner and would never use that language in a speech to a gathering of gays or Jews.

Interviewed Monday on CBS' "Early Show," Waters said black Americans fully support Obama and are working to promote his agenda. She says African-Americans want voters to be enthusiastic about Obama in 2012.

In Saturday's fiery speech to the caucus, Obama told blacks to "put on your marching shoes" and "stop grumbling."

Michael Jackson's Doctor: Killer or Protector?

(AP) LOS ANGELES — In the small crowded Los Angeles courtroom, 6-foot-5 Dr. Conrad Murray is an imposing figure. Another imposing figure will loom over the room on Tuesday: the persona of the man he is accused of killing, Michael Jackson.

One of the most famous pop stars of all time will be present in the words of those who knew him, in snippets of video and in the faces of his famous family watching from the courtroom.

The somber-faced Murray has said little in public, except that he most definitely did not cause Jackson's death.

"Your honor, I am an innocent man," Murray said quietly at his arraignment last January. "I definitely plead not guilty."

Murray, 58, is charged with involuntary manslaughter, could face four years in prison and lose his medical license.

Prosecutors will portray him as a greedy, incompetent doctor with a messy personal life who signed on as Jackson's personal physician for \$150,000 a month to save himself from financial ruin. The defense says he was Jackson's friend, a capable protector of the singer's health, prepared to travel with him to Europe on his tour, and is still mourning the death.

One of Murray's greatest assets may be what prosecutors say he wasn't good at: being a doctor.

"Jurors generally believe doctors," said attorney Harland Braun, who has defended many doctors in court. "They have had to trust doctors over a lifetime. What the defense has to do is wrap him in the general feeling that doctors are good people. They care about their patients and he was not indifferent to Michael's

welfare."

When the trial starts, Jackson's family will sit in a row in the courtroom. They wanted Murray charged with murder.

Edward Chernoff, the lead defense lawyer, said Murray feels the pressure.

"He feels like David in the David and Goliath story but he doesn't have a slingshot because of the rulings that took his slingshot away," said Chernoff, reacting last month to decisions barring chunks of evidence the defense wanted to present about Jackson's history of drug use.

Superior Court Judge Michael Pastor, who is presiding over the trial, has since instructed lawyers to refrain from commenting on his rulings.

While witnesses will come and go, Chernoff is aware that the superstar's shadow will be hanging over the trial. He's concerned too about the fans who have demonized Murray and are expected to demonstrate outside the courthouse.

"If they love Michael Jackson, what do they think Michael would say about all this?" he asked. "I think he would say, 'Leave the man alone.' And that's one of the reasons they love Michael."

Following opening statements by both sides, the first prosecution witness, choreographer and director Kenny Ortega, will take jurors into Jackson's life during the crucial weeks he was rehearsing for his landmark "This Is It" concert. Video clips from the posthumous rehearsal film could be included in his testimony.

Will Murray testify in his own defense? Nobody is saying. Although considered a dangerous strategy, it might be the only way for him to show jurors his personality.

Money Woes Drive Black Smokers' Rates Down

(TriceEdneyWire.com) — A new report in the American Journal of Public Health suggests that increasing cigarette prices combined with other social and economic factors appear to be behind the steep decline in smoking rates among Black youth that occurred between 1970s and the mid-1990s. The report argues that racial differences in parental attitudes, religious ties, negative health perceptions (and experiences), worsening poverty, increased food stamp use and price sensitivity were major factors contributing to the more rapid decrease and continuing lower rate of smoking among Black youth than among other groups.

"Some have suggested that African-American youth substituted other forms of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs for cigarettes," said Tyree Oredein, the corresponding author of the report and a doctoral student at the UMDNJ-School of Public Health. "However, there was an overall decline in the use of both licit and illicit drugs among Black high school seniors from the mid 1970s through the early 1990s alongside the fall of cigarette use." Oredein is also an adjunct professor of health and nutrition sciences at Montclair State University.

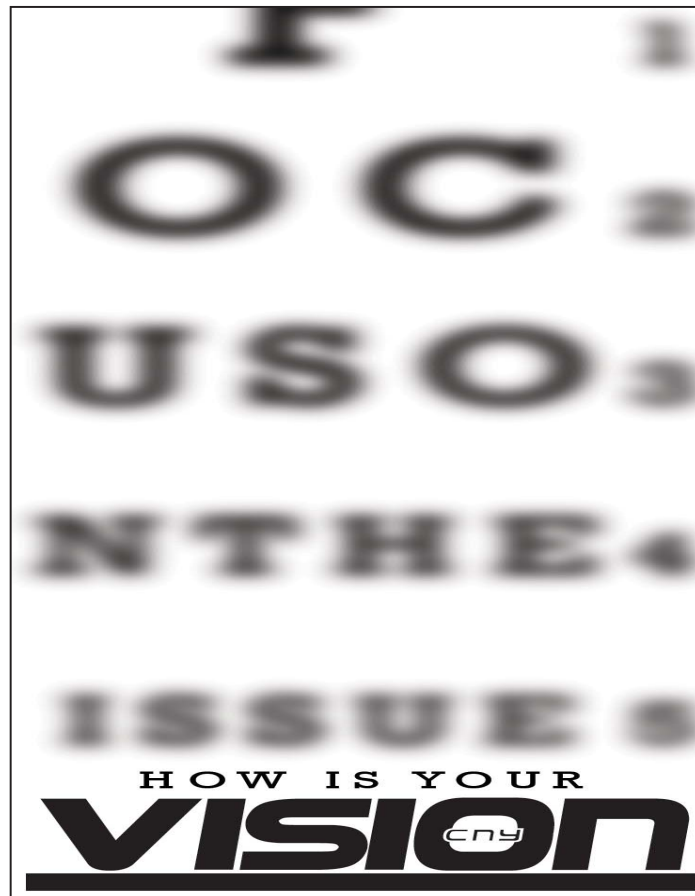
In the early 1970s, smoking prevalence among Black youth was similar to that of whites. Around 1976, smoking among both groups began to decline, but studies have shown that Black youth experienced a much steeper decline. By the early 1990s, white students were more than four times

more likely to have reported smoking cigarettes within the previous 30 days than their Black counterparts. Understanding the reasons behind this differential decline could help public health experts shape more effective tobacco prevention policies and programming.

"Some have questioned the validity of the statistics on the decline in African American youth smoking, but between 1992 and 2006, there was a marked drop in lung cancer incidence and death rates among 20- to 39-year-olds," Oredein added. "At the same time, a significantly steeper reduction in these same rates among African-American adults mirrored the observed drop in African-American youth smoking."

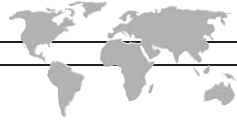
Jonathan Foulds, PhD, a co-author of the report and professor of public health sciences and psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine, added, "This provides strong evidence for an actual decline in smoking among African-American youth during the 1970s through the 1990s. The reduction in young adult lung cancer cases in this group is highly likely to be due to the differential decline in smoking among African American youth 10 to 20 years earlier."

The authors highlight a policy implication of the data, suggesting that, "Increases in cigarette price due to increased federal and state excise taxes have become and continue to be an effective tool in reducing cigarette use, especially African-American youth"



VISION

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WORLD

Saudi Women Will Get Right To Vote in Four Years



(AP) RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, considered a reformer by the standards of his own ultraconservative kingdom, decreed on Sunday that women will for the first time have the right to vote and run in local elections due in 2015. It is a "Saudi Spring" of sorts.

* Ahmandinejad: Talks with Russia on nuclear power

For the nation's women, it is a giant leap forward, though they remain unable to serve as Cabinet ministers, drive or travel

abroad without permission from a male guardian.

Saudi women bear the brunt of their nation's deeply conservative values, often finding themselves the target of the unwanted attention of the kingdom's intrusive religious police, who enforce a rigid interpretation of Islamic Shariah law on the streets and public places like shopping malls and university campuses. In itself, Sunday's decision to give the women the right to vote and run in

municipal elections may not be enough to satisfy the growing ambition of the kingdom's women who, after years of lavish state spending on education and vocational training, significantly improved their standing but could not secure the same place in society as that of their male compatriots.

That women must wait four more years to exercise their newly acquired right to vote adds insult to injury since Sunday's announcement was already a long time coming — and the next local elections are in fact scheduled for this Thursday.

"Why not tomorrow?" asked prominent Saudi feminist Wajeha al-Hawaidar. "I think the king doesn't want to shake the country, but we look around us and we think it is a shame ... when we are still pondering how to meet simple women's rights."

The announcement by King Abdullah came in an annual speech before his advisory assembly, or Shura Council. It was made after he consulted with the nation's top religious clerics, whose advice carries great weight in the kingdom.

It is an attempt at "Saudi style" reform, moves that avoid antagonizing the powerful clergy and a conservative

segment of the population. Additionally, it seems to be part of the king's drive to insulate his vast, oil-rich country from the upheavals sweeping other Arab nations, with popular uprisings toppling regimes that once looked as secure as his own.

Fearing unrest at home, the king in March announced a staggering \$93 billion package of incentives, jobs and services to ease the hardships experienced by some Saudis. In the meantime, he sent troops to neighbor and close ally Bahrain to help the tiny nation's Sunni ruling family crush an uprising by majority Shiites pressing for equal rights and far-reaching reforms.

In contrast, King Abdullah in August withdrew the Saudi ambassador from Syria to protest President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on a seven-month uprising that calls for his ouster and the establishment of a democratic government.

"We didn't ask for politics, we asked for our basic rights. We demanded that we be treated as equal citizens and lift the male guardianship over us," said Saudi activist Maha al-Qahtani, an Education Ministry employee who defied the ban on women driving earlier this year. "We have many problems that need to be addressed immediately."

Advertorial

Helping Others is Something Each of Us Can Do



Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez

For many of us, part of the journey of living life to its fullest is the desire to leave a legacy, to make certain we have marked our passage through life by making the world a better place.

AARP's founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, began with this mission in mind. She summed it up as "To serve, not to be served" — words that guide our work more than 50 years later.

Helping others, being of service, especially to those who have had fewer opportunities or whose circumstances place them in need, is something each of us can do. You don't have to be rich, or be a celebrity, and you don't need to be a hero.

Each of us has something to contribute. Each of us can ease the way for someone else.

AARP has been dedicated to serving others

for more than 50 years. But times change. We knew that if AARP were to continue being a powerful force for social change, we needed to redefine volunteerism and to create new volunteer opportunities. Today, time-challenged individuals need volunteer opportunities that are flexible and adaptable to fit within their active lifestyle. Given our increasingly diverse nation, AARP also sought to expand our engagement with multicultural volunteers and communities. It is an important step, since Dr. Andrus also said, "What we do, we do for all." She wanted to insure no one was left behind. Today, AARP continues to fulfill her mission.

According to an AARP survey of Americans ages 44 to 79, about four in ten people expect to spend more time volunteering when they retire, and about four in ten retirees actually volunteer more. Among the most likely to say they want to increase their volunteer service are African Americans and Hispanics.

Yet, many said they hadn't volunteered, simply because no one had asked them to give of their time to help. If asked, they said, they would volunteer.

AARP is asking! Join us. We have flexible, adaptable opportunities to suit every schedule and capacity. And we are eagerly seeking volunteers to connect with diverse communities to reach individuals with needs we can help address. Join us.

We need you, and your neighbors and communities need you, to volunteer for AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide Program, the nation's largest free, volunteer-run tax preparation and assistance service available to low- and moderate-income taxpayers. Please visit www.aarp.org/tavolunteer8 for more information.

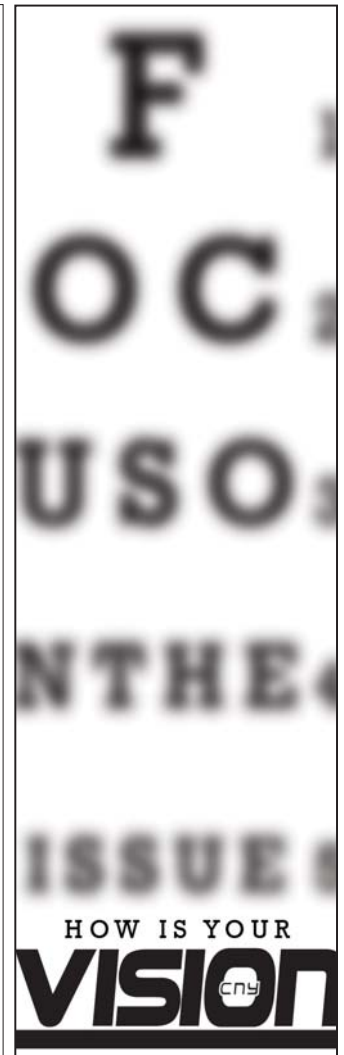
We need you to help alleviate hunger among Americans age 50+, which has spiked nearly 80 percent since 2001, hitting the middle class, Hispanics, and African Americans hardest. Through Drive to End Hunger, AARP Foundation has donated more than three million meals through local hunger relief organizations. Please visit www.drivetoendhunger.org to find out how you can help.

We also invite you to visit www.createthegood.org (Compartir es Vivir), a destination to connect people to ways to make a difference in their communities. Among other tools, the site links to local volunteer opportunities to suit whatever time you have available — even if it's only five minutes.

Service to others is another step toward creating your legacy. Let's give life to Dr. Andrus's words, "What we do, we do for all." She was a teacher who saw someone in need and helped. Each of us can do this. Join us!

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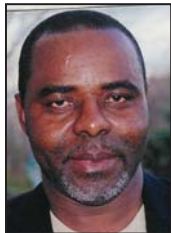
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OPINION/EDITORIAL

The views expressed on our opinion pages are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position or viewpoint of Minority Reporter.

Is Political Expediency More Important Than Plight Of Senior Citizens?



KOFI QUAYE

The past few weeks have focused immense attention over a senior citizen center in Syracuse in ways that have revealed how uncertain the future is for all of us near to or old enough to fall under the category of the senior citizen. The furor erupted over a decision by City Hall to close the center that has been in existence for decades.

The Ida Benderson Center has become the center that a lot of senior citizens go to everyday for meals, recreational activities and other services. It is downtown, in what was once a thriving business district. The main bus terminal is right across the street, making it convenient for seniors who are too old to drive, think it is wise to take the bus or who just can't drive. It was named after a Syracuse resident who is still held in high esteem. It was in recognition for the great work she did on behalf of the less-privileged when she was alive. The city cites budgetary considerations as the main reason for the decision to close the center. Many don't buy it and have made every effort to try to force

the Mayor Stephanie Minor to back off. It hasn't worked. The mayor appears to have decided not to give in to any kind of pressure.

The question that has been asked is why would City Hall make the decision to close a center that is needed, in spite of protests from senior citizens, city residents and a number of politicians? Are the budgetary constraints on the city so pressing that a senior citizen center has to be closed to save some dollars to be used elsewhere? The firestorm which erupted in the wake of the mayor's decision has not died down. If anything, it is gathering momentum. Reaction to the announcement that the center will be closed came in all forms and from various groups, including the Common Council. At one point, it looked as though City Hall was about to have a confrontation with the Council over the decision to close the center. Ali Muhammad will definitely be hurt if the center closes. Unemployed, close to senility and short on resources, he has found going to the center a convenient substitute for the life he led before discovering that the center could help him. The center has helped him to get on the right track; they have helped him straighten out a few problems he had with obtaining the right documents that will make it possible for him to get into public housing or be provided with housing

benefits in the future.

He goes there everyday for breakfast, lunch and exits late afternoon when the center closes. He doesn't want the center to close. He won't have another place to go.

Interestingly enough, the debate over the decision to close the center has not become a race-driven issue. It has not turned into a black against white issue. It's not about a decision made by a powerful few whites who can't seem to be sensitive to the plight of less-privileged African-Americans who have to be deprived of their dependency on the system. It is more of a case about the loss of a senior citizen center used by many who find it useful.

The more determined the people are to force the mayor to reverse the decision, the less likely it seems that she would back off.

It makes me ponder even deeper about the fate of senior citizens in this city and elsewhere. Have we come to the point where political expediency matters more than the welfare and safety of senior citizens?

Kofi Quaye has been a Syracuse resident for more than 30 years. He is a writer, author and publisher. Over the years, he has been involved with the publication of several African American focused newspapers in Syracuse.



What Happened to America's Commitment To The Poor



REV. JESSE JACKSON, SR.

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Poor people are invisible in our nation's capital. Republicans defend the affluent, calling them "job creators," Democrats champion the middle class and those boldest stand with "working families." The poor go without mention.

Yet the most recent census reveals that a stunning one in six Americans lives in poverty, more than 46 million, the highest number since the government began keeping track. Poverty is rising across all races and all regions.

The Great Recession is the immediate cause. Twenty-five million people are in need of full-time work; 49 million go without health insurance. A good many of the poor have jobs, but receive too little pay to lift their family up from poverty. But poverty was rising even before the latest economic collapse; the middle class has been losing ground for more than 30 years.

Poverty is destructive. The poor are more likely to be sick, vulnerable from hunger, to lack prenatal and infant care and to contract diseases that go undiagnosed. But if being poor makes Americans sick,

getting sick too often makes them poor. Serious illness is the leading cause of bankruptcy.

Poverty destroys hope. A hungry child finds it hard to learn. A toothache drowns out a teacher's voice. As poverty rates increase, test scores decline and the number of dropouts rises.

Poverty destroys neighborhoods. Foreclosed homes become drug dens. The desperate turn to crime. Exploiters — the payday lenders, the sub-prime peddlers — target the vulnerable.

The poor are less likely to have access to transportation that might take them to a job. They are less likely to have access to affordable groceries with fresh vegetables and fruit. They are more likely to go to an under-funded school, from which the best teachers have fled. The working poor are more likely to be in debt, more likely to live paycheck to paycheck with no savings, no family wealth, no safety net to fall back on.

The poor, we're taught to believe, will always be with us. But we know how to reduce poverty. When Lyndon Johnson launched the war on poverty, millions were given hope. The Job Corps, Head Start, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, the Teacher Corps, a rising minimum wage, and much more — these programs worked.

As Joseph A. Califano Jr., former secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare summarizes: "...from 1963 when Lyndon Johnson took office until

1970 as the impact of his Great Society programs were felt, the portion of Americans living below the poverty line dropped from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent, the most dramatic decline over such a brief period in this century."

Yet today Johnson is forgotten, even among Democrats. The war on poverty was lost in the jungles of Vietnam. As Dr. King warned, the bombs dropped on Vietnam exploded in the streets of America's cities.

And we've made that same disastrous choice over and over again. So politicians in both parties supported the wrong war in Iraq, which has cost more than \$1 trillion and counting, while dismissing programs for the poor here at home as a waste. There is no better measure of a country that has lost its way.

Now the Super Committee in Washington is meeting to figure out how to reduce the deficit. Republican House Speaker John Boehner dismissed the president's call for raising taxes on millionaires, insisting that the committee should focus on rolling back Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid — the essential programs that have succeeded dramatically in reducing misery among the elderly, the widowed and the disabled. We have a health-care

and the insurance and private hospital industries — and instead of taking on those interests, Boehner wants to argue about how to cut protection for the most vulnerable.

The debate is too limited. The focus is too narrow. The pain is intensifying. We need a White House Commission on poverty, malnutrition and human need. Only the president has the platform to ignite this debate and Congress has the moral burden to close ranks behind his leadership and lift millions out of the sinking sand of poverty. We profess to be a moral nation, moreover a Christian nation, our character measured by how we treat the lost, least and left behind. We need to stop fighting unnecessary wars in the far corners of the world and start feeding children in our cities. We need to go back to Appalachia where Lyndon Baines Johnson launched the war on poverty and from that place go to the zones of human need across the country. Let's honor the American promise to provide for the huddled masses that are tired, poor and yearn to breathe free.

The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, is one of America's foremost civil rights, religious and political figures.

VISION
CNY

The CBC Had An Important Agenda Beyond Throwing A Good Party



**DR. JULIANNE
MALVEZUX**

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - I don't know how many African-American people came to Washington for the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference, but there were more than 5000 gathered at the dinner that featured President Obama as a speaker. Though the halls of the Washington Convention Center were full, and it did my eyes good to see people lined up to buy books, some say that the economy may have dampened attendance. To be sure, the corporate presence did not seem as strong as it has been in the past, yet it is always gratifying to see Ingrid Sanders Jones and the Coca-Cola company sponsoring the prayer breakfast, which sizzled this year when the Rev. Freddy Haynes totally threw down. The high point of the conference may have been President Obama's strident and almost angry speech, challenging Congress to pass the jobs bill, and explaining why it must pass. Watching the President, he appeared to be undaunted, but certainly

frustrated, by the legislative gridlock and the total lack of cooperation he has been experiencing from Congress. If those assembled reach out to their legislative representatives, not all of who are CBC members; perhaps it will make some difference.

Another high point of the dinner was the range of wonderful honorees present. They included EPA administrator Lisa Jackson, and also the indomitable Rev. Joe Lowery, who at nearly 90 has as much fire in his belly as he did 50 years ago. He lifted his fist, roused the crowd, and exhorted us to keep fighting injustice. He is an amazing example of a civil rights warrior, and he deserves every honor that is bestowed on him.

That may have been the highest point but, from my perspective, the legislative conference contained many highs. There were more than one hundred brain trusts, panels, or other gatherings both at the convention center and in nearby places, as several organizations also use the legislative conference week as a time to organize their own meetings. The White House HBCU initiative, for example, held its conference on the Monday and Tuesday before the CBC legislative conference. With everything that is going on, the ALC is a cross between a policy conference, a

family reunion, with a few evening parties thrown in for good measure.

Somehow the majority press gets away with focusing only on the party aspect of the gathering. The Washington Post printed a piece that talked about the ingredients for a successful CBC party. Ho, hum. Why not a piece about the ingredients for a successful brain trust? Why not some reporting on the range of issues addressed. There were panels on the environment, the foster care system, education, wealth, business development, criminal justice, global affairs and more. A highlight for me was visiting with students from four elementary and high schools that were organized by Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX).

Our panel's task was to encourage them to consider careers in math and science. With a NASA astronaut, a math educator, an engineer, and this economist on the panel, the students got lots of reinforcement to consider untraditional careers. It was great to see young people gathered and open to learning. Too, Congressman Elijah Cummings always puts together a panel on youth, which is attended by young people from his congressional district in Baltimore. This year, Cora Masters Barry moderated the panel and brought her young people from DC's Southeast

Tennis and learning center. Four Bennett students, and hundreds of college students from other campuses, were in attendance. While the cynical may say that the CBC conference is the "same old, same old", it is interesting to view the ALC through the fresh eyes of our young people who are so eager to learn and to make a difference. Women's issues were well represented. Melanie Campbell convened the Black Women's Roundtable with an overflow crowd. Congresswoman Karen Bass (D-Cal.) convened the International Black Women's Policy Forum to explore the issue of health disparities.

Tony Brown once said that if the ALC were cancelled for just one year, that money could be used to fund significant initiatives in Black America. He may be right. At the same time, I'd like to challenge the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation to document some of the outcomes of the ALC, which might include legislation inspired, business deals closed, scholarships funded, students exposed. If the accomplishments were clearly documented, perhaps the mainstream press would talk purpose, not party, when they reference next year's ALC.

Dr. Julianne Malvezux is President of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Tyler Perry Recently Topped Off The List Of The Highest Paid in Entertainment



**DR. BOYCE
WATKINS**

Perry raked in an estimated \$130 million last year between his films and two TBS television shows, House of Payne and Meet the Browns. The list was compiled by Forbes magazine and helps Perry stake his claim as a serious power player among Hollywood big shots.

Perry wasn't the only African American on the list. Tiger Woods, in spite of being scandal-plagued and only a shadow of his former self, also pulled in \$75 million last year. No black actors or actresses were on the list, showing that production and business models reign supreme. If there is any lesson for aspiring young actors, actresses, athletes and entertainers to learn, it's that you gain wealth and power by owning things, and not by working for other people.

Perry's obvious financial success leads some to wonder just how far a man should go in order to find his way to riches. Perry's films have been criticized as being stereotypical, degrading and emasculating. At the same time, there are those who believe that Perry is "playing the game" in a way that has created jobs for hundreds of previously out-of-work

actors, actresses, producers, directors, and make-up artists. Both sides have a point, since having plenty of money in the bank is an easy way to get people to forgive almost any professional sin, just ask Bob Johnson at BET.

When Spike Lee screamed his critique of Perry from the rooftops, I didn't agree with him. Lee went out of his way to say that Perry has been engaging in "coonery" in order to sell tickets. Lee was over the top in his remarks about Perry, and Spike seemed unwilling to give Tyler credit for his achievements. Additionally, some have been critical of Spike's treatment of black actors, including actor Clifton Powell, who said he would love to "whoop Spike's ass" for the way he treats his employees.

With that being said, it is important for us to view Perry movies with an eye of balance. Perry's southern roots may lead him to believe that it's not so bad to have a chicken and grits eatin' Aunt Jemima character dancing for white folks, as long as you're making money while you're doing it. But the truth is that money cannot and should not be the trump card justification for behavior that undermines the dignity of your people. So, those who see Perry's financial success as a big "I told you so" in the face of Spike Lee are dead wrong.

Tyler Perry comes off as a man with tremendous compassion, an everlasting love of black folks and a productive sense of humor. While America laughs at the man in a dress, there is a smarter man

behind the scenes working to produce a positive and empowering message. In nearly every Perry film, there are a slew of conscientious and inspiring black characters who project all dimensions of the black experience; these characters help to water down those images that might be better fit for a minstrel show. This balance is what gives Perry a license to make us all laugh by putting on a dress. The point is that black people have every right to be as silly and ridiculous as any white man we might see on the MTV show, "Jackass." The problem with having a predominantly white media is that these are typically the only images provided to us, which puts us into a discriminatory box. Films like "The Help," and shows like "Basketball Wives" might provide popular and profitable entertainment, but the broader concern is that Hollywood has a troubling history of casting African Americans in subservient and humiliating ways. A man like Perry can tell the story of the black maid, because it would likely be fused with that of the black police officer,

attorney, astronaut and prostitute. Perry does a reasonably good job of mixing it up and provides a message of love, family and faith at the end. You can't get too mad at that.

While I am quick to defend Perry, I caution him to use his power responsibly. After reading the Forbes article, there are thousands of young black film makers who are tempted to put on a dress and Aunt Jemima costume in order to make their first million. The point that must be kept in mind is that there are things more important than money, and having "a grip" of cash in your bank account does not excuse all forms of ridiculous behavior. In fact, you can't put a price on your self-respect.

But I'm sure Perry knows this already.

Dr. Boyce Watkins is a professor at Syracuse University and founder of Your Black World Coalition

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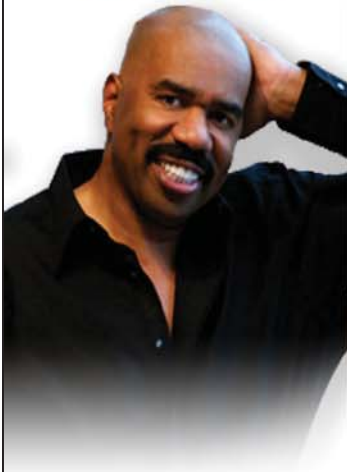
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