

## Remembering Richard Pryor

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comedy," comedian Chris Rock said in a statement. "He took risks and chances that made it possible for a whole generation of comics to exist."

Pryor brought the wit and wisdom of poor urban blacks to life through the characters he presented in his stand-up routines. His life, like the lives of the characters he embodied onstage, was a reflection of America, particularly black male America.

Born in Peoria, Ill., on Dec. 1, 1940, Pryor was schooled by the drunks and hustlers he grew up around. He began doing stand-up on the chitlin' circuit in the early 1960s, but it wasn't long before he took his talents to New York and was appearing in legendary Manhattan venues like The Bitter End and the Apollo Theatre.

That led to gigs on nationally televised programs like "The Ed Sullivan Show," and historic gatherings like Wattstax, also known as the Black Woodstock.

Although Pryor began his brilliant career by following in the footsteps of Bill Cosby, Redd Foxx, Dick Gregory and other successful black comedians, he soon became frustrated with the limitations of telling standard jokes.

"There was a world of junkies and

winos, pool hustlers and prostitutes, women and family screaming inside my head, trying to be heard," Pryor wrote in his 1995 autobiography "Pryor Convictions."

Pryor's focus on the unseemly side of black urban life alienated some audience members, both black and white. Others found it uniquely refreshing and freeing. Pryor was also able to characterize issues of privilege and power in away that resonated with blacks and opened the eyes of many naive whites.

He was no saint. His acts were often laced with obscenities and black urban vernaculars, including the "n" word. His words and actions toward women were often offensive, to say the least. He made as many headlines for his wild personal life as he did with his career successes, most notably when he set himself aflame while freebasing cocaine in 1980.

But Pryor's comic genius could not be denied. He won numerous Grammy awards, an Emmy and, in 1998, he received the Kennedy Center's award for humor, the Mark Twain Prize.

"A lie is profanity," he explained in his autobiography. "A lie is the worst thing in the world. Art is the ability to tell the truth, especially about oneself."

I'll always remember Richard Pryor as a man who managed to tell the truth while making you laugh until it hurt.

## Scale obstacle to balanced life

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stood 5 foot 6 inches and weighed a lifetime high of 135 pounds (excluding pregnancy). In college, I starved myself to get to 118 pounds and looked so unnaturally thin that my best friend confronted me about my health.

Weight fluctuates. And a host of factors \_ hormonal changes and menstrual cycles, clothes, medications, muscle mass, salt and fluid retention \_ can affect the scales' reading on a daily, even hourly, basis. Both Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig recognize this and recommend weekly \_ not daily \_ weigh-ins.

Frankly, even weekly monitoring is a bit much for most people. When I checked with friends and colleagues who lead healthy lifestyles, they all had two things in common: They exercise and never or rarely weigh themselves.

One 5-foot-3-inch, 115-pound friend who weighed herself religiously from age 13 to her mid-20s \_ and was laid low every time she gained a pound \_

found her weight stabilized when she stopped weighing, stopped counting calories and made sure she exercised every day. For her, scales do little to help achieve the goal they're ostensibly used for: to reach a healthy, stable weight.

"If you get acquainted with your body, you recognize the creep without scales," said the woman, a yoga teacher. "And if you're not (in touch with your body), the scales just make you so depressed you reach for a handful of Oreos every time you gain half a pound."

Another friend, who doesn't own a scale, participated in last year's fitness center competition and has vowed never to do it again.

"I was constantly thinking about dieting and weighing myself and that's generally not an urgent issue for me," she said. "I never felt as bad about my weight as when I did that program."

Make a liberating resolution this year: Throw away your scale. Or change the setting from pounds to kilograms so the number will be meaningless data, rather than a judgment.

## Bush increases power

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"We know the textbook story of how government works.

Essentially what this has done is attempt to upset that," said Christopher Kelley, a presidential scholar at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, who generally shares Bush's expansive view of executive authority.

"These are directives to executive branch agencies saying that whenever something requires interpretation, you should interpret it the way the president wants you to."

Other presidents have used similar tactics.

For example, Jimmy Carter rebuffed congressional efforts to block his amnesty program for Vietnam-era draft dodgers. But experts say Bush has taken claims of presidential power to a whole new level.

In the case of the torture ban, Bush said he would interpret the law "in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the president," with the goal of "protecting the American people from further terrorist attacks."

Because Bush has already claimed broad powers in the war on terror, including the right to bypass existing laws restricting domestic surveillance, legal experts and some members of Congress interpreted the statement to mean that he would ignore the torture ban if he felt it would harm national security.

Opponents of the ban say torture should not be ruled out in a case where abusive interrogation might prevent an imminent terrorist attack.

White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said Bush was defending a principle, not signaling his intention to ignore the torture prohibition.

"The president has said that we follow the law. Of course we will follow this law as well," she said.

Some members of Congress aren't so sure.

"He issues a signing statement that says he retains all of the inherent power that will permit him to go out and torture just the way they've gone ahead and tortured before," said Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.

"That process is an arrogance of power."

## 21 Questions to Consider

By the students of Fayetteville State University

1. How many pounds did you gain over the break?
2. Did you know that The Voice student newspaper is online now?
3. What did Santa Claus bring you for Christmas?
4. Aren't you a little too old to believe in Santa Claus?
5. Did Stanley "Tookie" Williams really deserve to die?
6. Why do your snow boots look like bear feet?
7. Isn't Ms. Tamara Taylor in Student Activities the greatest?
8. Is your roommate "working your nerves" yet?
9. Hey fellas! Doesn't your butt get cold during the winter when you sag?
10. Who are you supposed to be with this curly hair made with a texturizer? Puff Daddy?
11. Why are you so quick to call someone you have never met stuck up?
12. Are you still wearing "Sneaker Boots"?
13. Did you get your refund check on the first day of class?
14. Why did you put the blame on Financial Aid when you couldn't get aid because you had a 1.5 GPA?
15. Did Facebook ruin your GPA?
16. Are you using Financial Aid as a means of making a living, or are you really trying to get an education?
17. When can we hang Mr. FSU's portrait in the Student Center?
18. Wow! Isn't Mary J. Blige really in love on her new album?
19. Did you go to church before or after you partied on New Years?
20. Aren't New Year's Resolutions overrated?
21. How do you like the new look of The Voice?

Do you have any questions you'd like to see in the paper?  
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