

Weekend

The Arts, Leisure, Music, Columns

Commentary

Vanessa: This society's ethics violated you

Essence magazine Editor-in-Chief Susan L. Taylor suggests that Vanessa Williams, who resigned earlier this month as Miss America, was the victim of a hypocritical society. "One that is obsessed with and exploits female sexuality." She makes the remarks in an open letter to Ms. Williams in the October edition of the 15-year-old magazine for black women. The complete text of Ms. Taylor's column follows:

By SUSAN L. TAYLOR
Guest Columnist

Often in our effort to move our lives forward we stumble. Most of us, though, are lucky to falter in private. I doubt that any one of us would want to be held accountable for everything we ever said or did, far less for any indiscretion. Unfortunately for you, your misstep was documented in pictures for all the world to see.

Okay, by now the world knows you were photographed nude with another woman in sexually explicit poses. Wrong move for sure. But it was your desire to succeed as a model in a marketplace of limited legitimate opportunities that made you vulnerable to this particular kind of sexual exploitation. The men who brought to light the photographs of you understand that vulnerability too. They prey on it. Make their livings pimping off of attractive young women. So many young women -- men too -- with their sights set on a career in modeling or show business are lured into leaving their good sense and moral upbringing behind in their enthusiasm for stardom.

You were pressured to resign as Miss America 1984. You made a mistake and you paid for it. Dearly. But you did not violate this

society's ethics. This society's ethics violated you. Vanessa, there is something gravely wrong in America. Something seriously wrong in the world today. We've created a system of values in which material worth takes precedence over human worth. The controversy surrounding you serves as a potent reminder that a double standard of morality is at work in America. We expect our young to flower in a twisted society that degrades sex, the act that sparks life. The sexual lyrics in popular music, the sexually explicit references that invade our living rooms on prime-time sit-coms and the sex-

"Okay, by now the world knows you were photographed nude with another woman in sexually explicit poses. Wrong move for sure. But it was your desire to succeed in a marketplace of limited legitimate opportunities that made you vulnerable to this particular kind of sexual exploitation."

ploitation and violent treatment of women in films and rock videos are a very real part of the culture that you, all of our children and we, too, are shaped by. You were treated like a criminal, lambasted for posing nude. Yet pornography is an acceptable and lucrative business in this country. It grosses upwards of \$7 billion a year, with child pornography commanding the biggest bucks because it's underground.

Your gender and your beauty have been exploited. Ours is a hypocritical society. One that purports to love and
Please see page B5



Essence Editor Susan L. Taylor: Vanessa Williams was a victim of America's hypocrisy.

Ask Yolonda

Her husband's proud of the daughter he fathered during extra-marital fling

By YOLONDA GAYLES
Syndicated Columnist

Dear Yolonda: For the last 11 years, I've been in a marriage that I thought was fulfilling and satisfying for both me and my husband. We have a beautiful home, and two beautiful boys.

Recently, however, my husband came home and confessed to me that he had been having an affair for a year and a half, and the young lady had gotten pregnant and refused to have an abortion. She had a little girl, who is now three months old. My husband didn't want to tell me, but it seems as though the young lady's mother is going to sue him for paternity, so he figured that he should tell me before someone else does.

I'm sure you can imagine the pain that my husband's little admissions caused me. I have been giving everything to this marriage. Now what?

Even worse, since this is out in the open, my husband is acting kind of proud of his daughter. I have seen a picture of the little girl in his wallet, and he has told me that he plans to pay child sup-

port even if no one takes him to court. He has also told me that when his daughter gets older, he plans to have her come to visit.

This is tearing up my insides: I feel betrayed, and I really don't know what to do. I have no one to talk to about this. My family members, if they knew, would tell me to leave him, but I'm not so sure that I'm prepared to do that. I have two boys to think about; besides, I still love my husband. What should I do?

Kitty

Dear Kitty: I think you answered your own question: Since you say that you still love him, and you're not prepared to leave him, the only solution is to wait a little while to see what new turns your marriage takes.

Meanwhile, base your future moves on what would be in your own personal self-interest.

Please see page B5



Prime Chuck

Chuck Mangione, Emmy and Grammy award-winner and composer of such hit tunes as "Feels So Good," "Chase the Clouds Away" and "Give It All You Got," will appear in concert in "An Evening With The Chuck Mangione Quintet" on Friday, Nov. 2, at Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. The concert is co-sponsored by the Stevens Center and the Wake Forest College Union, and tickets can be ordered from the Stevens Center Box Office. Phone 721-1945 weekdays for information.

Broadway Is My Beat

Lena Horne will join 'Dynasty,' say rumors

By JOEY SASSO
Syndicated Columnist

Observations in covering the Night Beat:

Lena Horne -- one of the great ladies of showbiz -- is about to join the cast of "Dynasty" as **Diahann Carroll's** witchy mother. That's the incredible report from Hollywood insiders who say the gorgeous actress, 65, would be just what "Dynasty" needs to beat out "Dallas" and "Falcon Crest" once and for all as TV's No. 1 prime-time soap.

"I think it would be fun to play Diahann's mother -- or grandmother -- on the show," the sultry black singer told me. "I could teach her all those really bad things. I can be more evil than anybody."

Hollywood insiders agree. Says one observer: "Lena Horne on 'Dynasty' -- fantastic."

"Who could beat that show with a female cast of **Joan Collins, Linda Evans, Diahann Carroll** and **Lena Horne**? Lena could be the tough matriarch the show needs -- just like **Jane Wyman** is on 'Falcon Crest.'"

But another insider predicts that sparks would likely fly between all the vixen on the hit prime-time soap opera.

"Joan Collins is no pushover," reveals the insider. "She's not going to take a back seat to Diahann Carroll's character, **Domini-que Devereaux**. But Diahann's also got a strong personality, so there will be some real tension between them to see who will be the arch-temptress of the Carrington clan. Add to that the outspoken, tough approach of **Lena Horne** and, believe me, the fur will fly on 'Dynasty.'"

Indeed, Lena's half-century in show business has prepared her for the role of a fighter since it's been a battle almost from the start....

Dethroned Miss America **Vanessa Williams** could pop up as one of the supporting female leads in Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival production of "La Boheme," in which **Linda Ronstadt** will star in October.

Vanessa auditioned for the role just a short time before her

graphic nude *Penthouse* layout became public. And she has been scheduled to return for a second audition, though Williams is not saying whether she will show up.

In fact, since the press conference in which she announced she would return her Miss America crown, she hasn't been saying much of anything for the record.

Meanwhile, new Miss America **Suzette Charles** could end up a singing star soon. She has been appearing on stage with **Lou Rawls** and had some headlining dates in Atlantic City lined up before she assumed the title.

She's also recently cut an album. No recording label was involved, but you can be sure she'll have a much easier time finding one now....

Bill Cosby, who went to the South of France with wife **Camille** to relax for a while before production on his new NBC series, ended

"I think it would be fun to play Diahann's mother -- or grandmother -- on the show. I could teach her all those really bad things. I can be more evil than anybody."

-- Lena Horne

up spending much of his time signing autographs, chatting with fans and coaching youngsters on some of the finer points of track and field.

Meanwhile, requests for interviews have been piling up, not only for him, but for **Camille** -- from writers who want to talk to her about the series that will tell the tale of a gynecologist and his attorney-wife and their four children, but is drawing heavily on the experiences of the **Cosbys** and their five children....

Chubby Checker, who made *The Twist* the dance craze of the early '60s, said in a recent interview that he had had a greater impact on popular music than **Elvis Presley, The Beatles** or **Michael Jackson**.

"Everything that anyone has done since I came along has been because of me," he says. "The Beatles, Michael, everybody. Whenever there's been a beat in the music, and everyone starts to dance, it's because of me."...



They're Back

The Brothers Johnson have released their first set of all-new songs in three years on their new album, "Out of Control." The LP features a hit single, "You Keep Coming Back," and a trio of producers, including **Leon Sylvers, Keg Johnson** and **Dave Wolinski**.