



Tony Brown's COMMENTS

Blacks Answer Pryor

For two weeks in a row on television with me, superstar Richard Pryor opened himself up and let the American public in on his most intimate feelings and experiences.

The millions who watched were obviously moved by what he had to say.

We've all laughed with Richard Pryor. Now it's time for some of us to cry with him. Listen: "If there's a hell, I've been there. There is a hell. And the devil turned out to be me."

He also reveals the depth of his unhappiness. "Look at the opportunity I've been given to do so much. And what do I end up doing? I've got a (free) base pipe in one hand and a fifth of Courvoisier in the other—in a room all alone, by myself. Loving no one. And doubting if anyone loved me," he said about that night in June of 1980 when over half of his body was burned.

"My heart went out to you. Your eyes mirrored such profound sadness. This hurt me very much, you, who brought so much humor to the American people. You are handsome, have money, but not love. My family and I love you," a viewer from Shreveport, Louisiana wrote.

From New York, a lady wrote, "I was moved to tears by your candid, honest and open revelation of your inner feelings on the Tony Brown Show. At first, I thought it was staged, but later I changed my opinion and was captivated by the hurt in your eyes. I could feel that you have experienced much pain. Your eyes show how unfair life has been and how tiring and difficult it has been when you were trying to be funny and 'on stage' all of the time. I like the new person you have become. You are now a man who is satisfied and can live with himself."

"I could never explain what has possessed me to write this letter, but I have, and may it be God's will for me to write many more. Whatever triggered this off was while I was watching you on Tony Brown's Rap Show. Please don't get me wrong, I'm not feeling so much as pity for you, but understanding exactly what you are going through," came from Brooklyn, New York.

One woman from Parkersburg, West Virginia remembered meeting Pryor in New York in 1979. She had just had her

purse stolen and he gave her cab fare to get back to her hotel. "There's so much sadness and pain in your eyes. I hope it soon disappears. I just wanted to say thank you again for your kindness when I was so frightened. And I'm glad you're finally finding happiness. Be good to yourself. You deserve it."

"I felt compelled to write, although I'm frankly not certain why. One can suppose that while I have certainly admitted your talent in the past, I have never felt you were 'for real.' This was not the case, however, when viewing this most recent interview. You displayed an inkling of depth and sensitivity that was quite moving," was the message from Schaumburg, Illinois.

One viewer from Arlington Heights, Illinois said: "I felt so sad for you. You have made such wonderfully funny, yet touching, movies and yet now you are so unhappy. It made me wish I could just give you a big hug. You should know that a lot of people really do love you, not just because you're funny, or have a lot of money, but because you're a special person."

Another letter from Davenport, Iowa echoed that thought. "I just wanted him to know someone loves and cares for him, because he's Richard. Not because he's rich and famous. He needs to know money can't buy true friends."

Richard Pryor told me that the letters he received when he was in the hospital helped him get through that awful ordeal. Although this brother is rich and famous, he's still our brother and he needs our good thoughts and letters.

Pryor closed by saying: "I look at it like this: a 44-year-old, burnt-up—literally, burnt-up—Black, uneducated man, living in racist, so-called 'racist America'; how is it possible that I am where I am unless there's a God? What purpose is God? I have no idea. It's just that I'm grateful. There's nothing I could have done to make this happen. It's not just my doing."

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL TV series can be seen on public television Sunday, on channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on channels 58, Sunday at 6:30 p.m. and channel 30, Thursday at 10:30 p.m. Please consult listings.

Ideological Warfare Challenges Legal Minds

The late 1980s will require the "moral and professional leadership of legal minds to defend this nation in the ideological warfare that challenges our personal values and our system of government and law," spring graduates of Tulane Law School were told.

Dr. Norman Francis, president of Xavier University of Louisiana, addressed the 271 Tulane law graduates, including his son Tim, who received a juris doctor degree.

The remaining years of this century will demand "an unusual degree of leadership" from the legal profession to prick the conscience of this country and to lead us to a new level of human understanding and practice. The role will be similar, he said, to that of the country's religious leadership in the '60s and '70s.

"We are losing the common touch in our cities and this nation," Francis noted. "We are forgetting how dependent we are upon each other as people. We are becoming paranoid

about difference and becoming reluctant to work together across social, political, racial, economic and even religious lines."

The result, he pointed out, is that we see polarizations that suggest "if it is good for you, it must be detrimental to me. We are fearful of sharing either political or economic benefits."

"If there is a starting and simple objective for each member of this class of professionals," he told the group, "it is, in addition to

any other endeavors, to work to develop a coalition of understanding that will bring people together."

One of the major private universities in the country, Tulane has more than 10,000 students, more than 700 faculty members, and 11 schools in law, business, architecture, engineering, social work, medicine and public health and tropical medicine; The Graduate School and University College, which offers continuing education programs for the public.

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