

# Vereen Grins On Broadway

New York City - Ben Vereen belongs to that rare group of performers who can do it all whether on a Broadway stage, TV, film, or in nightclubs. He can sing, dance or act.

As the star of the new Broadway hit musical, "Grind," at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, he's making his first Big Apple appearance since "Pippin", a show that won him the coveted Tony and Drama Desk Awards, plus past performances in "Hair," and "Jesus Christ Superstar." And who can ever forget his memorable

performance as Chicken George in "Roots?"

A two-hour musical in which he lights up the stage and displays his trademark, spectacular footwork, "Grind" revolves around an interracial romance that takes place in a Chicago burlesque house in 1933. Vereen as Leroy, Hawaiian-born brownskin beauty Leilani Jones as Satin and Timothy Nolen as the Irish tenor make up the trio and comedian Stubby Kaye supplies the laughter.

It's been a long time

since Broadway audiences cast their eyes upon such a talented brownskin, high stepping chorus. Featured in several dance numbers with Vereen, they garner their share of applause.

But it's Ben Vereen whom the crowds come to see nightly. And their generous rounds of applause seem to say to him, "Don't stay away so long, we missed you."

## Black And Red Allies

By Tony Brown  
Special To The Post  
Afro-American scientists Dr. Allen Counter and David Evans of Harvard University have spent the last decade studying the missing cultural link between the Bush Afro-Americans of Surinam, South America, and the Afro-Americans in the United States.

After countless hours researching rare book collections and many dangerous trips deep into the Amazon jungles, these black expeditioners uncovered a secret history between the African and Indian tribes that have lived free of Western civilization in the South American jungle for centuries.

In Part II of a two-part special examining the historical relationship between the Bush Afro-Americans of Surinam, South America, and the indigen-

ous Bush Indians of the Amazon region, "Tony Brown's Journal" delves deeper into this fascinating exploration with rare film footage showing the customs and secret rituals of these ancient tribes.

Dr. Counter calls it "one of the most fascinating stories that one can imagine."

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## Tony Brown's COMMENTS

### Justice Is Not Black Or White

I predict that by the time you read this column, one of the three men convicted of killing Malcolm X will be free on parole after serving 20 years of a life sentence.

Muhammad Abdul Aziz, known as Norman Butler when he was convicted, has convinced many—if not most—of the 14 members of the New York State Parole Board that he has paid his debt to society and is rehabilitated. Conspicuously, however, the only black member of the board behaved as a zealot—not an impartial witness—in his attempts to keep Aziz in jail for the rest of his life.

Commissioner Ted Kirkland, who will not be reappointed to his job by New York's governor, has been accused of practicing his own brand of racism by Senator Christopher Mega, head of New York's Crime and Correction Committee, and a most admired and respected black state official, Senator Leon Bogues.

Kirkland's questioning of Aziz and his behavior during a parole hearing before a three-member panel not only shocked many state officials, but moved the full parole commission to the unprecedented action of picking a new panel to hear Aziz's case. The new panel will exclude Kirkland and the other two members of his panel.

Before Kirkland's panel saw Aziz in February, a previous parole panel of three ruled in December that it had no objection to his parole; a psychiatric report was also favorable. However, Kirkland abandoned the legitimate charge of the parole board to evaluate a convict's ability to lead a productive life and focused rather on Aziz's racial views.

Kirkland's questions were not only insulting and groundless, but suggested that he was more concerned about his own personal "blackness" than the convict's fitness. In fact, the climate smacked of racial paranoia. Although the parole panel's job is not to determine guilt or innocence, but how a convict has used his time in jail, you would never know it to read the official transcript and the statements of this black commissioner.

Kirkland began his assault with his version of history. Malcolm was "psychologically uplifting...a Nat Turner...Harriet Tubman...Frederick Douglass...Marcus Garvey...." Malcolm was helping black people gain their identity. "Today I think most may very well be lost from lack of identity," the interrogator said.

He clearly suggested that had Malcolm lived, blacks would have no identity problems today and Aziz, as "one of his killers," is, by virtue of this convoluted logic, responsible for the pathetic black condition today as observed by Kirkland.

Kirkland was also obviously bothered by Aziz's outstanding performance as a prisoner: a master's degree; a calming force at the Attica prison riot in 1971 and at Sing Sing in 1983; a counselor to other inmates; an Imam for the American Muslim Mission in prison; and an excellent record on a nine-month work release program in which he lived in the community, held a job, paid taxes, fed his family and reduced society's burden by that amount of production.

As a result of his record, support for his release came from all quarters, including black politicians, New York's black police commissioner, Jewish leaders, and journalists. But surprisingly, this support infuriated Kirkland: "Would the Congressman and all the rest of them be recommending your parole if you had killed a white person of a similar status?"

"I didn't kill him," Aziz offered and added, "I think it (Malcolm's murder) was a tragedy." But that didn't satisfy Kirkland.

The CIA, Kirkland said, is suspected of killing Malcolm and it represents the law enforcement establishment. "Why do you think they (law enforcement officials) look so favorably upon you?" Guilt, Kirkland seemed to think, made Aziz a model prisoner.

"Tony Brown's Journal" TV series can be seen on public television Sundays on Channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58 on Sundays at 6:30 p.m. Please consult listings.



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