

Tony Brown's Comments



The Tear On The Face Of Black America

The 4th of July celebration is a reminder of the greatness and beauty of the concept of freedom, justice and equality. When we look up to the Statue of Liberty, we can feel this concept.

But if one of those who was involuntarily brought to these shores from Africa was an ancestor, you might have the feelings of regret mingling alongside the feelings of pride. You might even have a tear trickling down your face, because of a disappointing love affair with America.

African-Americans have fought for the right to die for a country that called them "cowards" and members of a "sub-species" in an official military document. Always, when the nation's interest was at stake, the second-class put country before race.

It reminds me of my seventh grade "love" affair, if it can be called that. For sure, I was in love with her (and I had an accelerated heartbeat to prove it), but she was tolerant of me at best. Even after the truth hit me like a two-ton truck, I still had this unmanageable heartbeat in her presence.

My country does that to me because of its benevolence to the foreign born; the personal dignity that a citizen can enjoy; and, most of all, the Constitutional right and guarantee of free speech.

But on July 4th, 1986, while the country celebrated the 100th birthday of the Statue of Liberty and all that these two great institutions represent, I was once again reminded that in spite of my love for them, they only tolerate me - and those of my ancestry - at best.

Artis Lane is a great painter of African descent. Of a series of 12 paintings, she produced 12

poster-sized pictures in four colors. One of those 12 shows the head of a young black boy, draped in the American flag, with the Statue of Liberty overseeing the scene.

The boy has a tear streaming down his left cheek. That's my tear and your tear, if you've not had the dream fulfilled. That's the tear of disappointment in love, the same tear I shed in the seventh grade.

But the whites who distribute Lane's other 11 pictures won't touch "Liberty I." They want Lane, a Santa Monica resident, to remove the tear from the face. She refuses.

Like most of us who are black and American, we refuse to compromise our integrity and tell a lie of convenience. Many whites believe if we do, the truth will go away.

These distributors will only allow the world to see their concept of America, based on their white privilege. By stamping out dissent, they believe that they can guarantee the rule of White racism.

They should understand that you can paint wings on a pig, but if you throw him off a building, he still can't fly. Truth crushed to earth, it is said, will rise again.

The truth is that African-Americans are not free in their own land. That doesn't mean you can't love your country, but it does mean that you are aware that she does not love you.

The relationship, at best, between blacks and America is one of love and hate. And the tear will stain our faces until racism is destroyed.

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL TV series can be seen on public television on Sunday, Channel 42 at 5pm. Also on Sunday, Channel 58 at 6:30 pm.



Gil Gerard (center) plays racer Bobby Atkins in *STORMIN' HOME*, a motion picture for television amid the thrill a minute world of motorcycle racing, to be

rebroadcast on "The CBS Saturday Night Movies," Saturday, July 26 at 9:00 P.M. On WBTV, Channel 3.

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