

ENTERTAINMENT

Radio talk show host receives honorary doctorate

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The president of Edward Waters College awarded a doctorate of humane letters to talk radio personality Tom Joyner May 8th during a live V101.5 Radio broadcast ceremony on campus.

Dr. Jimmy Jenkins said the degree is the university's way of thanking the talk show host for creating the Tom Joyner Foundation "Dollars For Scholars" program to help United Negro College Fund member schools provide financial assistance to young people who want to attend college.

Jenkins was joined by state officials as the school celebrated the first anniversary of V101.5 with a picnic and barbecue.

During his acceptance speech, "Dr. Tom 'Flyjock' Joyner," as he likes to be called, joked with Jenkins: "Are you sure you know what you're doing by giving me a Doctorate?" later adding that, "I am deeply honored, this is my first (doctorate), and I will always be a strong

supporter of Black Colleges, because I come from a family that is pro Black colleges. I believe my mother has history with Edward Waters College, if I'm not mistaken I believe she was a former professor."

Nicole McGill, columnist for Florida Times Union Newspaper and president of The First Coast Black Communicators Alliance, a division of NABJ, also presented Joyner with an honorary membership to the FCBCA. The crew of Joyner's talk show was also in Jacksonville and took part in a live broadcast featuring Jay Anthony Brown, Myra J., and Sybil Wilkes. The Ohio Players were featured during the morning show. Tamia and H-Town performed in a benefit concert for the college.

Jenkins also presented special community service awards to Ralph Christian, general manager of V101.5, and Charles Scantling, publisher of Intertainment Magazine and owner of Jazzco.

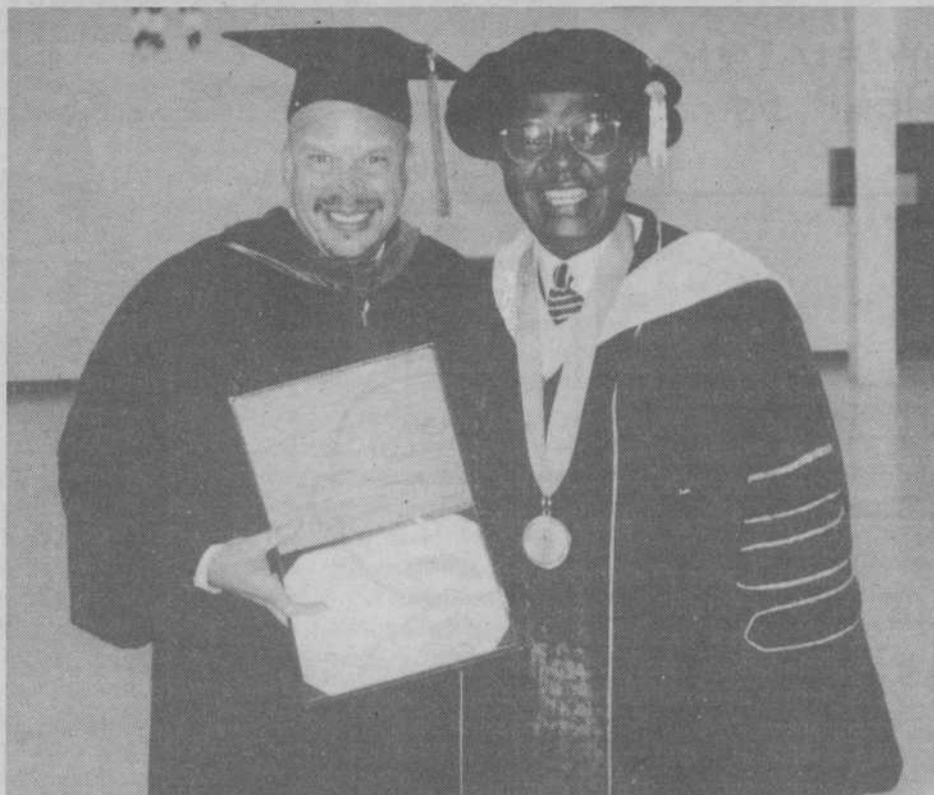


Photo special to the Sentinel-Voice

Tom Joyner receives Doctorate of Humane Letters from Dr. Jimmy Jenkins, President of Edward Waters College.

BOOK REVIEW

Out of America Denied: A Critique of "Out of America"

By E. Ablorh-Odjidja
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Perhaps, it is not by coincidence that Keith B. Richburg's book is titled "Out Of America," or that I feel compelled to critique it. Richburg, is African-American and I am African. I thought that we both shared a common ancestry until this book.

The book is based on Richburg's experience in Africa, between 1991 and 1994, covering the war in Somalia and Rwanda as a reporter for the *Washington Post*. Richburg's account is riveting, provocative and sad. Just as we think we have seen enough carnage in Somalia, we turn a page to meet more in Rwanda.

In the end, his travels in Africa become an extraordinary journey of discovery for him. He has come to Africa naive about what to expect, and returns completely disappointed, at least so he says.

But for the theme of an African-American rejecting his ancestry, this book would have stirred modest commercial interest. The stories of Somalia and Rwanda have already gained worldwide press notoriety.

And the cyclical epidemics of disease and starvation on the continent have long been the public face of Africa, before the publication of this book. The difference, however, is that for the first time, and in bold print, an African-American turns his back on mother Africa!

"Out of America" is not

journalism, it is moral judgment. Richburg has seen Africa, and walks away disenchanted.

The slaughter of Africans by Africans, the anarchy, the corruption, and the bizarre tribal politics are all too much for him. "Thank God" he concludes "that my nameless ancestor, brought across the ocean in leg irons, made it out alive."

He must be commended for the brutal honesty of his appraisal. He also deserves an award for the avoidance of the brotherly orthodoxy trap that allows praise for all things African; saints, dictators and miscreants and all. True, he has clear insight about the problem in Africa, "what is happening in Africa isn't about food.... it is about power and control in a country where security has broken down."

His description of military thugs "who take power and thwart the continent's fledgling efforts to move towards democracy" cannot be stated better. Yes, there is something wrong about governance in Africa. It must be condemned. And Richburg has done that well. But must he reject his ancestry too?

No matter how heavy the burden of life is in Africa today, one must not allow that to give slavery respect. Unfortunately, Richburg does so. The Africa of Richburg's experience is one of turmoil, and the logic of turmoil is chaos. No excuse intended here. The killings and the wars and the political instability are about struggle for power as he correctly

discerns. But, not to recognize that the continent has also been shaped by other influences, in addition to those of her own, is to over estimate the nature of the continent's dictators.

Why was Richburg asked by the *Washington Post* to go to Africa? Obviously, because he is a competent reporter. But at the time he seemed very little prepared for Africa. For briefing and inspiration for the trip, he had to travel to Thailand to seek out Kevin Cooney, "a big, hard-drinking Irish American reporter...who had spent several months working in the Reuters office in Nairobi." The Africanists, whose counsel he sought, were

only acknowledged as an after-thought. The opinion of his alma mater, the University of Michigan, "where prominent black professors taught, including Dr. Ali Mazrui, perhaps the best-known African scholar in the West," was never invited. Obviously, Richburg, whose first remark on location in Nairobi, Kenya is to ask "What's that smell?" does not show much affection for the subject of Africa.

Richburg's conclusion is also corrosive. His us (African-American) versus them (African) interpretation of the story of the slave trade does not factor in the sense of our shared tragedy. And this is

wrong. Slavery was not selective, and not by progeny either as to who went and who was left behind. That Richburg is in America and Idi Amin remained in Africa is sheer coincidence. Turn it around, and Idi Amin could have been born in Detroit, worked in an automobile factory as a Union leader, and perhaps, could have sired Richburg. The slave trade was the most horrific aspect of our history. We must not be divided by it. Never again.

For those who are ready to rebel against mother Africa

because of Richburg's ill-advised conclusion, I offer this African proverb: Chasing after a mad man in the streets, butt naked, can only serve as a sufficient commentary on one's own sanity. For myself, I will read Ernest Gaines' "A Lesson Before Dying" again. It will help as a reminder of the obligation we owe each other, and also shelter my psyche against this assault on our common ancestry.

E Ablorh-Odjidja is a Washington, D.C.-based writer.

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