



ASK DEANNA!
*Real People,
Real Advice*

Ask Deanna! is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

My grandmother raised me because my parents were crack addicts. Now that I'm older, I want to see my mother. I'm in the middle of a war because my grandmother feels betrayed and my mother wants a second chance. I'm grateful and appreciative, but I can't hate my mother. I'm trying to do the right thing but my grandmother has threatened to evict me and disown me if I reach out to my mother. What do I do?

Anonymous,
Omaha, NE

Dear Anonymous:

You're the baby of the bunch that can teach growth and wisdom to these ladies. Your grandmother wants to protect you from further harm but she's taking the wrong approach. She's possessive because with a mother on crack, there are plenty of things you were too young to see or remember. Ask your grandmother to partner with you as you reach out and seek to seal and heal the triangle together.

Dear Deanna!

I tossed my future wife out of the house in the middle of the night. My family is taking her side because she told them about an old affair I had. However, she failed to mention I walked in and a strange man was asleep in my bed. I only wanted her to be honest about this man right then and there. She never came up with a good reason so I kicked her out immediately. I'm confused because she wants to return. Should I give her another chance?

Tony
Orlando, FL

Dear Tony:

She's playing you left and right and that's why you can't see straight. Unless you just fell off the turnip truck, the man in your bed was there for a reason. You did the right thing by getting her out of the house on the spot. You always have the option of staying and faking it since you're both cheaters. But you should keep it real and get out of this relationship with the lottery approach and tell your fiancée, "Don't play me, play Lotto!"

Dear Deanna!

I have a small habit of hitting my husband. It's always playful but recently, he said he's going to start hitting back. I didn't think anything of it until I slapped him in the back because he wasn't listening to me. He caught me off guard and hit me so hard that I lost my breath. This has caused a problem because he won't apologize and I feel abused. I'm looking at him differently and wonder is this a warning my husband is physically abusive?

Camille
Pasadena, CA

Dear Camille:

He's not abusive. As a matter of fact, he's tired of you beating on him and taking it lightly because you're a woman. He gave you fair warning but when he put your lights out you wanted to cry because you didn't get your way. If he wasn't physical before, during or after marriage, there's not much there. If it was that bad, you would've called the authorities. In the future, remember and respect his warning and keep your hands to yourself.

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'Soul Train' chief marks 20 years

LOS ANGELES (AP) - If any businessman can lay claim to soul, it's Don Cornelius.

It's in the baritone rumble of his ex-disc jockey's voice, his coolly unflappable manner and, most of all, in his "Soul Train" franchise that brought a slice of Black culture and music to the snow-white TV landscape more than three decades ago.

Even in the midst of mild chaos, while the staff at his Sunset Boulevard office scurried to finish plans for this year's Soul Train Music Awards, Cornelius looked and sounded relaxed.

But if his tone didn't reflect excitement over the stellar 20th anniversary ceremony, his words did.

"We can't make it important to anybody else," Cornelius said. "Some of the audience we serve doesn't really care about what you did yesterday and you have to be cognizant of that ... But it's important to us."

The ceremony, taped recently will air in syndication. The show was hosted by Vivica A. Fox and Tyrese Gibson and celebrated the work of artists in R&B, hip-hop and gospel with a host of celebrity nominees and award-winning entertainers, including Jamie Foxx, Mariah Carey, Kanye West and Stevie Wonder.

"We just seem to be surrounded on this anniversary [Soul Train Music Awards] show by all of our personal favorites," Cornelius said. "I have to say that in the first person, because they're my personal favorites."

Using first-person singular is rare for Cornelius, who tends to prefer "we" when he's referring to himself and his achievements. It's a verbal tick that comes off more protective than pretentious, especially in light of his cautious approach to an interview.

Although it took years for major advertisers including Coca-Cola and McDonald's to board "Soul Train" after the Black version of "American Bandstand" debuted, Cornelius declines to criticize their slowness.

Major companies weren't

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— Don Cornelius
Executive Director
of "Soul Train"



"big fans of syndication," he said, rejecting the idea that racial bias might have been involved. (He doesn't shy away from calling out discrimination when it's "hard-core" and malicious, he said.)

He'd like to see more support from record companies and Madison Avenue for his awards show, but again is measured in his remarks. "It could be stronger" but expectations have to be "realistic," he said.

Cornelius, 69, is far more direct when he talks about the start of "Soul Train" on Chicago TV station WCIU in 1970. It went into syndication the following year.

"There was not programming that targeted any particular ethnicity," he said, then added: "I'm trying to use euphemisms here, trying to avoid saying there was no television for Black folks, which they knew was for them."

"Soul Train," with its trademark animated train opening, chugged gradually onto TV screens nationwide: Only a handful of stations initially were receptive to the newcomer.

Johnson Products Co., maker of Afro Sheen and other hair-care goods, was its major sponsor.

(Cornelius calls Johnson his "Black angel"; Tribune Entertainment, which has distributed his shows since the mid-1980s, "is the predominantly White angel.")

"When we rolled it out, there were only eight takers," he recalled. "Which was somewhere between a little disappointing and a whole lot disappointing."

The reasons he heard? "There was just, 'We don't want it. We pass,'" he said, with race going unmen-

tioned. "No one was blatant enough to say that."

Audience reaction to the show and the high-powered talent it attracted helped it spread; "Soul Train," now the longest-running show in first-run syndication (as opposed to network repeats), reaches 85 percent of TV markets.

Besides the series and the Soul Train Music Awards, the brand includes the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards and the Soul Train Christmas Starfest. Cornelius, who remains executive producer but stepped down as "Soul Train" host in 1993 (Dorian Gregory has the job now), toyed with the idea of a Soul Train cable channel.

"We came to the conclusion that we came along a little late to make it happen. There's also the problem of whether or not I had the energy to start something of that magnitude from scratch," he said.

Besides, Cornelius said, the Internet can reach a mass

audience without the hassle of building a cable channel from scratch.

He drops intriguing hints that his never-released treasure trove of "Soul Train" tapes could, theoretically, end up online.

Among the many legendary artists on the tapes: Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and Barry White. Filmmaker Spike Lee called the collection "an urban music time capsule," Cornelius said.

The tapes are jealously guarded by Cornelius, who refuses to say if or how the public might get a peek at them. There may be rights questions, he indicates, but says integrity is the real issue.

"It's not my art. The footage, the tape stock and what's recorded on the tape belongs to us. But the art does not," he said.

Cornelius, who was inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame in 1995 and has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, said he remains grateful to the musicians who made "Soul Train" the destination for the best and latest in Black-oriented music.

The show remains vibrant because the songs are, he said.

"I figured as long as the music stayed hot and important and good, that there would always be a reason for 'Soul Train,'" Cornelius said.

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