

Got A Problem?

By Gwendolyn Baines

Dear Gwendolyn:

My son just recently turned 16 and for his birthday celebration my husband took him into a burlesque bar. He is large in size and almost touching 6 ft. tall. I must admit he does not look like a teenager, but rather an adult. When he came home, he was drunk and missed an examination at school. My husband was also drunk and missed a day at work. I am concerned about the future of my son. My husband claims he should not have to wait until he is 21, but to jump out and meet the world now. I am glad that the bar was not raided. My son does not need this. I have asked my husband of 22 years to leave. My husband says our son is now in love with one of the strippers.

Gwendolyn, what should I do?

Josephine

Dear Josephine:

I am sorry to know that you are such an intelligent woman to be married to a man of such character. This is a good example of parents not being good parents and, an example where the mother is decent and intelligent and the father is low-class trash. It happens. Let me tell you this: Until your husband leaves, let him know he is not to take your son anywhere — and be stern about it. Also, have a talk with your son and let him know that his dating should be with a school girl and, becoming entangled with the wrong woman can destroy his future. Josephine, I feel your husband may have used your son merely as a decoy. Think about it. Your son didn't say he was in love. Your husband said he was. There is a possibility your husband is the one with interest in the stripper. I would suggest you go to the strip bar, but it really makes no sense to try and trap a man. A place of that type is not for you. I do hope you can get your message to your son and he understands. Until your husband shapes up, then he is off-limits to your son. I was just thinking about something. Many women are married to ignorant men. It's funny. These are the women who are always asking single women, "You ain't married yet?" I guess these 'sorry women' want other women to be walking — in their shoes.

Dear Gwendolyn:

I recently retired and moved into a new apartment for senior citizens. The apartment is nice and affordable. However, there is one big drawback. This is the problem: I gave my neighbor a ride to the bank. I explained to her that I had several errands to attend — and besides, I was going to the open market and to a thrift store. She was delighted to go. When going to the store a few more times, I informed her that she could ride. Again, she was thankful and delighted to be getting out. A few days later she started calling me just to say, "I don't want anything. Just wanted to know you are doing okay." I immediately knew I had to put a stop to my kindness. She seems to want to be my friend. I do not intend to have someone always riding every time I leave my apartment. I am writing a stage play and her constant calling is disturbing. What can I do?

Gloria

Dear Gloria:

For the problem you are now having is the main reason people cannot be kind even if they wanted to. First of all, she is not calling to see how you are doing. She is calling hoping you will offer her a ride whenever and to wherever you intend to go. It is different when you have a friend who had a car and for whatever reason is temporarily without a car. To offer your kindness would be proper. You may have to let this neighbor know you are busy and cannot be disturbed. Change the greeting on your telephone to say, "I am currently working on a major project and have a deadline. Leave a message and I will return your call at my convenience." Gloria, people have to respect your schedule. If they don't, then disassociate yourself entirely. Think about it. Some people without cars have a little con in their character. Take caution. Do not let yourself be misused. This lady is not seeking a friend. What she is seeking is a ride. Money and cars attract false friends. This is why so many successful people quickly go from rags to riches — back to rags.

Biopic relives Biggie's rise, fall

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Christopher Wallace (1972-1997) aka Biggie Smalls aka Notorious B.I.G. was a Brooklyn-born gangsta' rapper who passed away at just 24 years of age, a casualty of the infamous East Coast-West Coast turf war which first claimed the life of his primary rival Tupac Shakur (Anthony Mackie). Tupac had dissed Biggie by claiming in a song to have slept with his wife, fellow hip-hop star Faith Evans (Antonique Smith). Neither Biggie nor Tupac were exactly altar boys, with both boasting about their street cred and yay-long rap sheets.

But the bloody feud was much bigger than these two icons. On one side, you had L.A. producer Suge Knight (Sean Ringgold) and his stable of artists at Death Row Records; on the other, there were the upstarts from New York who Sean "Puffy" Combs (Derek Luke) had recently signed to his new label, Bad Boy. And although everybody knew that their crews were packing heat and hated each other, the murders went unsolved, probably because of the "no snitch" mindset adhered to by these thugs as a code of honor.

Unfortunately, "Notorious" sheds little light on the mystery of who killed Biggie and Tupac. Nonetheless, director George Tillman Jr. has crafted a very absorbing, cradle-to-the-grave bio-pic which does vividly recount



"Notorious" recounts the hectic life and fast times of Brooklyn rap legend Biggie Smalls.

exactly how a latchkey kid being raised by an immigrant single-mom (Angela Bassett) in the slums of Bed-Stuy could have overcome the odds only to be slain at the height of his fame in a seemingly senseless drive-by shooting in Hollywood.

Much credit for the success of the flick must go to Jamal Woolard who makes an impressive screen debut in the title role. The talented rapper-turned-actor achieves no mean feat in fully humanizing a fatally-flawed figure who could've easily come off as a one-dimensional monster instead of a charmer. After all, except for the fact that he made it in the music business, there isn't a lot about Biggie worth emulating.

For instance, he is depicted here as having spent most of his teen years as a cold-hearted drug dealer willing to sell crack to preg-

nant women by rationalizing "I didn't get in this game to become no social worker." The mammoth misogynist also mistreated the females he supposedly cared about, impregnating not only his baby mama, Keisha (Julia Pace Mitchell), but the sexually-insatiable Lil' Kim (Naturi Naughton) and Faith, whom he married after only knowing for nine days.

This riveting cautionary tale, which flies by despite being two-hours in length, revolves around the portly Romeo's juggling his homegirls and groupies while indulging in the sort of conspicuous consumption celebrated in the typical rap video. Sadly, given the title of his first CD, "Ready to Die," he must have had had a decent hunch about the fate which awaited him beyond the bling and booty calls.

Neither approving nor judging, "Notorious" simply

presents the gluttonous Biggie in all his materialist glory, allowing the audience to decide what to make of his train wreck of a personal life. Professionally, one can only wonder what potential might have been squandered, since he was cut down in a hail of bullets before the release of his second album.

Grounded by a host of superb performances, especially on the part of Jamal Woolard, Naturi Naughton, Antonique Smith, Anthony Mackie and Derek Luke, this relentlessly unapologetic immorality play about a bona fide ghetto gangsta' is apt to entertain even Joe Six-Pack to the extent Middle America is inclined to buy into the Hip-Hop Generation's mantra, "Don't hate the playa, hate the game."

Excellent (4 stars). Rated R for nudity, drug use, graphic sexuality, ethnic slurs and pervasive profanity.

Imus

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if we didn't have two African-Americans there. As far as the cruder material, that is the stuff we have eliminated totally."

He said his biggest concern coming back was how people would treat Foster and Powell.

"I was afraid that some people would think that they were there to serve as some kind of racial cover for me, which was not the case," he said. "They were there because they should have been there before."

Foster, who saw the job as a good opportunity and believed Imus was genuinely contrite, said she had the same concern about how she'd be seen. She even worried about whether she'd have to hire security.

"I can represent myself," she said. "I know I'm not anybody's token."



KARITY FOSTER

She said Imus has kept his word on talking about race; the Obama candidacy has led to several discussions about whether it truly meant equality was at hand. Then there's the less high-brow topics, like the abuse she took Friday about her Chihuahua.

A week ago Debra J. Dickerson, author of "The End of Blackness," was on

the show to talk about a collection of essays from Black authors. She'll be on again soon to discuss Black History Month. It's pretty safe to assume neither appearance would have been booked three years ago.

Dickerson, who wrote an anti-Imus essay for *Time* magazine after the Rutgers comments, was angry to get a call from an Imus producer asking her to be a guest for Black History Month a year ago. But urged by the students she was teaching in a college journalism class, she decided to accept the gig.

She bet her students a box of doughnuts that Rutgers wouldn't come up. She lost. Imus wanted to talk about it.

"There are very few people in public life who have taken responsibility the way Imus has," Dickerson said.

Still, she said she gets

very little feedback from friends who are Black when she's on the show. To her, it indicates many have written Imus off, if they cared about him to begin with.

Al Sharpton, one of Imus' most visible critics during the Rutgers controversy, didn't respond to requests to talk about him.

Since his return, Imus said he's had no one he asked to come on the show turn him down — although he didn't ask people he knew wouldn't do it.

Despite owning up to his mistake, he called the media reaction to it absurd. About his critics: "I didn't expect to see any profiles in courage from any of these people and I didn't. Are there some people who, if I was given an opportunity to get even with them, would I?" he said. "Of course. But I'm not going out of my way."