

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Tavis Smiley Commentary on the Tom Joyner Morning Show  
Tuesday, April 15, 2008**

*The following is a full transcript of Tavis Smiley's commentary on the Tom Joyner Morning Show from today:*

There is no way to put into words the love and respect that I have for Tom Joyner or the love affair that I've had with Tom Joyner Morning Show listeners for almost 12 years now.

Tom's announcement last Friday about my decision to leave this morning show at the end of June came, I suspect, as a surprise to you and, honestly, as a shock to me. I had no idea that my dear friend Tom Joyner was going to share with you Friday morning what we had just discussed barely 12 hours earlier Thursday evening. But I have accepted Tom's apology and that is for me, now, old business.

You see, even when you take issue with his methodology, it's hard for me to have any sustained angst or anger with the man. The man who almost 12 years ago realized that **I** had a little something to say and that **HE** had a platform on which I could say it.

Here again, words cannot convey my abiding appreciation, my deep gratitude for the man who allowed me to express myself: before BET, before NPR, before PBS, before PRI (Public Radio International), before my New York Times best selling books, before my own imprint SmileyBooks, before my High Quality Speakers Bureau, before ... well, I think you get my point.

Sometimes I joke that my life is really divided into two periods, "BT" and "AT", "Before Tom" and "After Tom".

On the real, I'd take a bullet for Tom Joyner. Not in my heart, maybe in my arm ...my *left* arm... maybe in my leg! Not in my heart, but I would take a bullet for Tom Joyner. I love this brother.

But if finding a love language to tell you how I feel about Tom Joyner is a challenge this morning, then you better believe that trying to express how I feel about YOU, each and every one of you, is next to impossible. And you know that I am never speechless. I pray that by the end of June when I transition out of this Tuesday/Thursday sacred and consecrated space - that's what it is for me - I hope by then, I will have found the words to describe and an appropriate way to thank you for 12 years of putting love in my heart, hope in my soul and a smile on my face.

In July I will celebrate 12 years as the resident political commentator and social critic on this radio program. Twelve years of 3 AM wakeup calls. Twelve years of asking questions, addressing topics, raising issues, profiling people and places. Twelve years of challenging us to re-examine the assumptions that we hold. Twelve years of trying to expand our inventory of ideas. Twelve years of standing on my square, trying to lead by loving, trying to save by serving. Twelve years of love and service.

Now, I realized a long time ago that you're never rewarded for virtue, so, I've just tried to tell the truth as I see it, even when you didn't agree. I can almost guarantee that between now and the end of June, you're going to fall out with me again! That said, I always prefer light, but you better believe that I can take the heat.

I always prefer light, ALWAYS prefer light, but you can best believe that I can take the heat.

Twelve years of never taking an opinion poll, never putting my finger to the wind to test what might be the acceptable, politically correct, popular thing to say. Twelve years of asking God to give me the courage to say and do what I think is right, even when I think it's hopeless.

I was just past the age of 30 when I started with Tom. I'm now 43. I wasn't a math major, but I think  $43 + 43 = 86$ . Given the life expectancy of Black men, and let's be honest for that matter, Black women, I now have more years behind me than I have in front of me.

We tend to not like to think about mortality, especially when we're 43 years young. But this isn't really about mortality as much as it is about reality. My granddad used to say to me all the time, "Tavis, the best ideas in Black America can be found in the graveyard."

For so long as a child I didn't quite get that. I do now. So many of us go to our graves with good ideas that we never did anything about. You see, death may come like a thief in the night, but it cannot steal the love you've already given away.

And so, every year on my birthday I spend time reflecting how I did with the goals that I set for myself last year. And I spend time wrestling with what I'd like to accomplish over the next year of my life. Not New Year's resolutions, but on my natal day.

Big Mama always told me, "Tavis, you can do anything, but son you can't do everything." Big Mama, as usual, was right.

And so, I find myself having to clean some stuff off my plate so that I can pursue certain other passion projects which require, at this point in my life, a deeper commitment on my part. We are in the process now of doing not one, not two, but three documentaries. One directed by the Academy Award winner Jonathan Demme. I'll tell you more about that later.

Another documentary, already in development, takes a microscopic look, a no-holds barred look, at what happens in our communities when the few hospitals that are serving our people close down. It's starting to happen all across the country.

We're also working on **America I Am: The African American Imprint on America**. We talked about this at the State of the Black Union, but this is the biggest, baddest, boldest, Black exhibit ever created. Imagine, 15,000 square feet. It's a massive exhibit that tells the story of our imprint on America.

W.E.B. DuBois asked the question, "Would America have been America without her Negro people?" It's about time 400 years later that we put together an exhibit that will travel the country, for five years, to major cities, that tells the story of our imprint on America. We're about to announce in just a few weeks where that exhibit will kick off this fall. That announcement will be made right here on the Tom Joyner Morning Show.

SmileyBooks. As a kid, I grew up reading Dr. Cornel West. I am now blessed to publish Dr. West. His next book, called **Hope On A Tightrope** is coming out this Fall.

I mentioned my birthday earlier. I share my birthday with a dear sister named Iyanla Vanzant. Iyanla's next book, **Tapping the Power Within** (20th Anniversary edition) is coming out this Fall as well on SmileyBooks. I owe it to them to help put their books on the list as well.

The **Accountable** book, the last book in the Covenant trilogy. Accountable is about making the Covenant real. You don't know the work that goes into putting these books together. We got the first two on the list and made America take notice of **The Covenant** and **The Covenant In Action**. We can't come up short on this last book, holding the new President and leaders across the country accountable to making the Covenant real. That book is coming out in February.

Speaking of February, next year is the 10th anniversary of the State of the Black Union symposium. It's because of Tom Joyner and this platform that we created the State of the Black Union. It is now the most watched program on C-Span and the most requested DVD every year. We've got a lot of work to do to celebrate this Anniversary the way it ought to be celebrated.

Next year is also the 10th anniversary of the Tavis Smiley Foundation, working to empower young people around the issue of leadership development.

I've got the two major party conventions back-to-back this summer - Democrats in Denver followed the next week by the Republicans in Minneapolis.

None of this includes my day jobs! I've got a television show every night on PBS, I've got a radio show on PRI (Public Radio International) where we're about to start a wonderful series called "My America 2008". There's a lot of stuff on my plate. I've got to move some of the stuff off my plate to concentrate on these new passion projects.

And so, 12 years later, this platform, the Tom Joyner Morning Show, has provided a space for my gift from God to make room for itself. My gift has made room for itself and so will yours. Put another way, the more you do, the more you *can* do.

And so, I'm excited about the opportunity to bear witness and to share our story with a broader audience of Americans who need to be enlightened, encouraged and empowered by our story.

I've committed to help Tom identify the person, who will take these reins on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, through an exciting process which Tom and I will roll out for you just a little bit later. A process that you, the listener, will be involved in to help select my successor.

Finally, it seems to me, that if being Black is about anything, then it ought to be about Black folk giving other Black folk a chance to grow, a chance to succeed. My definition of success is simple: "How many other folk did you help make successful?"

So, Tom Joyner, 12 years ago knew that I had something to say, but needed a platform on which to say it. Somewhere there's somebody else 12 years later who has something to say but needs a platform. The time has come.

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