



Steve Harvey -- Making Us Take 'Giant Steps' to See History

Steve Harvey's Lessons of History at The Apollo Ring True for Many Black Artforms

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, November 23, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sometimes when I walk down 125th Street in Harlem, I have to catch myself as my first thought often is "wow, I need to go into the Gap and do some shopping". I catch myself because gone are many of the local stores representing Black culture and the history of the centerpiece of African-American art and culture known as Harlem. In are outlet stores and chain restaurants...moving into a historically Black neighborhood.

Last Friday, I was excited to be back because we were going to a taping of the newly resurrected Showtime at the Apollo. Although this was my first time, I have heard stories about the Apollo from my husband, a Jazz musician, who had played at the Apollo when he was with the Duke Ellington Orchestra and the Broadway musical Five Guys Named Moe. I was also excited because we were going to see Steve Harvey who was hosting the show as he did back in the 1990's.

I'll admit that as we walked in I was still thinking about running to the Banana Republic Outlet after the show....but that all changed as soon as Steve Harvey started talking.

I had loved him in Kings of Comedy and my husband annoyingly loves the old Steve Harvey Show -- I knew he was funny but I hadn't yet had the opportunity to witness another talent. He has an amazing ability to communicate the proper history and context of Black tradition, the Amateur Night (Apollo) and Harlem tradition, while being laid back and funny before a 1,500 seat house. He did so in a way that was not a performance, not angry, not condescending...but simply brilliantly conversational -- to a diverse audience -- many of whom had no idea what Showtime at the Apollo was all about.

He explained critical pieces of Harlem history, including the fact that the Apollo is a raw proving ground for entertainers-- and the audience dances in their seat and yes, they boo! And, he explained that the log onstage is not just some good luck charm, but steeped in a painful racial history of Broadway, tying in the creative history of Harlem's artists -- and our country. He also reminded us that it was Showtime at the Apollo that created the talent-show template that is now Simon Cowell's bread and butter.

But most importantly he reminded us that the Harlem you may see walking down "1,2,5th" today, is not the real deal.

The mission creep of White society toward Black culture, whether the result of true admiration, curiosity or outright co-opting, ends with the same result -- Black traditions and artistic pillars of expression: comedy, R&B, Jazz, 'Sangin', Dance, and Harlem itself have dissolved into some homogeneous mix where Disney singers get major airplay imitating Rhianna-Erika Badu-Billie Holiday. Benny Goodman, Elvis, and Kenny G. become the Kings of Jazz and Rock n Roll.

For me, the lessons were personal. I am a former Harlem resident, I am the mother of black children, and I have learned many lessons being married to Jazz musician, [Gregory Charles Royal](#), who is

trying to preserve the art-form that is his soul and that he has played almost his entire life -- and who believes, like Steve Harvey, that humor can reflect truth, pain, and history while making us think and laugh at the same time. In fact, he and Steve Harvey seemed to be kindred spirits as the two of them enjoyed banter during the taping of Showtime at the Apollo; my husband will now forever remind me (when I don't think he is funny) that he made Steve Harvey laugh a number of times.

In that tradition of Black creativity, his Jazz sitcom [GIANT STEPS TV Show](#) was made with other top Jazz musicians as a vehicle to remind people that Jazz and the African American experience can not be unlinked -- no matter how many university degrees one may have.

So, thanks to Steve Harvey, especially in this age of mud slinging and White supremacist "marches", we all need reminders of not just what unites us but also what makes us unique. And btw Showtime at the Apollo was Great!

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