



Black Is the New White

By Paul Mooney

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OTHER COMEDIANS TELL JOKES. PAUL MOONEY TELLS THE TRUTH.

For more than forty years—whether writing for Richard Pryor and *Saturday Night Live* or performing stand-up to sold-out crowds around the country—Paul Mooney has been provocative, incisive . . . and absolutely hilarious. His comedy has always been indisputably real and raw, reflecting race issues in America, and this fascinating, fearless new memoir continues that unapologetically candid tradition.

While other stars soared only to crash and burn, Paul Mooney has stayed chiefly behind the scenes, and he's got a lifetime of stories to show for it. As head writer for *The Richard Pryor Show*, he helped tear down racial barriers and change the course of comedy. He helped Robin Williams and Sarah Bernhard break into show business. He paved the way for superstars like Eddie Murphy. Few have witnessed as much comedy history as Mooney; even fewer could recount it with such riotous honesty and depth of insight. He reveals the truth about his celebrated partnership with the brilliant, self-destructive Richard Pryor, from their first meeting to the very last joke, and reflects on some of his most notorious moments.

Decades ago, Paul Mooney set out not just make audiences laugh but to make them think. *Black Is the New White* is his blisteringly funny, no-holds-barred memoir of how he continues to succeed wildly at both.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Paul Mooney is a comic legend who has written for *Chappelle's Show*, *In Living Color*, *The Richard Pryor Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Good Times*, and *Stanford and Son*. He played Sam Cooke in *The Buddy Holly Story*. His first comedy album, *Race*, was nominated for a Grammy, and he recently appeared in his own comedy special, *Know Your History: Jesus Was Black . . . So Was Cleopatra*. He performs stand-up comedy to sold-out crowds around the country. He lives in New York City and Los Angeles.

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CHAPTER 1

I'm sliding into a booth in a coffee shop on Santa Monica Boulevard, slapping the table to wake Richard Pryor from his hangover nod.

"Man," I say to him, "I just saw a lady so pretty, somebody should suck her daddy's dick for a job well done."

Richard stares at me. Early afternoon, too early for Richard. I smell the brandy he doses his coffee with. He is a little slowed-down by all the poisons in his blood, but even slowed-down Richard Pryor is quicker than any other human being on earth.

He laughs. I'm not saying Richard just laughs like an ordinary person laughs. I mean he *laughs*. His face lights up like a Times Square billboard and his whole body wags like a dog happy to see its owner.

You know you can die happy when you can make Richard Pryor laugh. It's this huge blast of appreciation, hipness, and intelligence. He *gets* it. His laugh is like ripping open a bag of joy, letting loose a storm that blows you head over heels. It is that powerful.

The greatest comics -- and Richard is bar none *the* greatest -- always have the greatest laughs.

Later on, as the hard living takes its toll and the MS takes over, most of Richard's laughs will turn into fits of coughing, as though he's trying to hack up his liver. But a Richard Pryor laugh is still and always will be like getting a high five from God.

California yellow sun and Pacific blue sky. That September day in 1968, Richard and I are in Duke's Coffee Shop, the original one, in the old Tropicana Motel. *Two dudes, two dudes*, like Richard starts one of his routines. We are the only black guys who can make the scene in Hollywood. We are groundbreakers, accepted at all the clubs, invited to all the parties. When we break into it, Hollywood is still a closed, racist town. The place has never seen anybody like us. We are fearless. We go everywhere. We break down barriers. We still get harassed by bigots and cheated by the system, but it never stops us.

Later that night my wife, Yvonne, gets dressed up and we go to Troubadour on Santa Monica to hear Richard perform his stand-up routine. He's a different comic when I am in the audience. He hears my laugh and he shifts gears, elevating his act to a higher, edgier level. I can tell he is trying to make me laugh, but I'm not going to give it up that easy. I make him work for it. He pushes himself.

From the stage of the Troubadour that night, I hear Richard do the line I gave him earlier in Duke's coffee shop.

"Coming here tonight, I saw a woman so motherfucking beautiful gorgeous that it made me want to suck her daddy's dick for a job well done."

The joke *kills*. The way Richard tells it, it *kills*. The audience practically vomits laughter.

Later that same night -- or is it early morning by then? -- Richard tells me to hold my arm out.

"What for?"

"Just hold it out, motherfucker."

He slips a watch on my wrist. A good watch -- I can feel its heavyweight mass on my arm -- a \$10,000 beauty. The kind of watch you call a *timepiece*.

"What's this for?"

"The bit," he says.

"What bit?" I play dumb.

"The suck-her-father's-dick bit."

"Oh, that," I say. "That's just you and me talking. I could hardly tell if you were awake when I told you that."

"Take the fucking watch. You don't like it, motherfucker, sell it. Take the money, Mr. Mooney."

He always calls me that. Mr. Mooney. Off that character on the *The Lucy Show*.

I take the watch.

The funniest man on the face of the earth wants me to write for him. It begins to click. I think: This thing we have, this Batman-and-Robin thing, can somehow turn into something that means money and good times for both of us. I toss lines to Richard. He puts them out to the audience. The audience flings money at him. Richard throws money at me.

The truth is, it's never about the money for me. I love Richard. I am his biggest fan. I get off on him doing one of my jokes. It means so much to me. I want Richard to be happy and to succeed. My loyalty is to Richard, and my relationship with him is authentic, as though he is my brother. On all of Richard's albums, you can hear me laugh. I always laugh long and loud.

Those first days together in 1968 are the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

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Users Review

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Jorge Hinkley:

Precisely why? Because this *Black Is the New White* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will jolt you with the secret this inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such amazing way makes the content on the

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