

Tyler Perry: The 'Good Deeds' Interview

Tyler Perry's inspirational journey from the hard streets of New Orleans to the heights of Hollywood's A-list is the stuff of American legend. Born into poverty and raised in a household scarred by abuse, Tyler fought from a young age to find the strength, faith and perseverance that would later form the foundations of his much-acclaimed plays, films, books and TV shows.

It was a simple piece of advice from Oprah Winfrey that set Tyler's career in motion. Encouraged to keep a diary of his daily thoughts and experiences, he began writing a series of soul-searching letters to himself. The letters, full of pain and, in time, forgiveness, became a healing catharsis.

His writing inspired a musical, "I Know I've Been Changed," and in 1992 Tyler gathered his life's savings and set off for Atlanta in hopes of staging it for sold out crowds. He spent all the money but the people never came, and Tyler once again came face to face with the poverty that had plagued his youth.

He spent months sleeping in seedy motels and his car but his faith - in God and, in turn, himself - only got stronger. He forged a powerful relationship with the church, and kept writing. In



by Kam Williams

1998, his perseverance paid off and a promoter booked "I Know I've Been Changed" for a limited run at a local church-turned-theatre. This time, the community came out in droves, and soon the musical moved to Atlanta's prestigious Fox Theatre. And Tyler Perry never looked back.

Thus began an incredible run of 13 plays in as many years, including "Woman Thou Art Loosed!", a celebrated collaboration with the prominent Dallas pastor T.D. Jakes. In the year 2000, "I Can Do Bad All by Myself" marked the first appearance of the now-legendary Madea, a God-fearing, gun-toting, pot-smoking, loud-mouthed grandmother played by Perry himself.

Madea was such a resounding success, she soon spawned a series of plays - "Madea's Family Reunion" (2002), "Madea's Class Reunion" (2003), "Madea Goes To Jail" (2005) - and set the stage for Tyler's jump to the big screen. In early 2005, Tyler's first feature film, "Diary of a Mad Black Woman," debuted at #1 nationwide.

His ensuing films, "Madea's Family Reunion," "Daddy's Little Girls,"

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"Why Did I Get Married," "Meet The Browns," "The Family That Preys," "I Can Do Bad All by Myself," and "Why Did I Get Married, Too?" have all met with both critical acclaim and commercial success, delighting audiences across America and around the world. 2006 saw the publication of Tyler's first book, "Don't Make A Black Woman Take Off Her Earrings: Madea's Uninhibited Commentaries On Life And Love," which shot to the top of the New York Times non-

fiction best-seller list and remained there for 8 weeks.

The following year, Tyler expanded his reach to television with the TBS series "House of Payne," the highest-rated first-run syndicated cable show of all time. His next TV sitcom, "Meet the Browns," was the second highest debut ever on cable - after "House of Payne."

Not one to rest on his laurels, in the fall of 2008, Perry opened his 200,000 square-foot Studio in Atlanta, situated on more than 30 acres of real estate. The Studio consists of 5 sound stages, a post production facility, a pond, a back lot, a 400-seat theater, a private screening room, and designated areas for entertaining and hosting events.

But listen to Tyler and you'll hear a man who hasn't forgotten where he came from or the folks who helped him reach the showbiz mountaintop. He has donated generously to charities that focus on helping the homeless, such as Feeding America, Covenant House, Hosea Feed the Hungry, Project Adventure,



and Perry Place - a 20-home community that he built for survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

In July 2009, Tyler sponsored a trip to Walt Disney

World for 65 children after learning that a suburban swim club had turned them away because of the color of their skin. Tyler Perry has also built two churches and

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