

Academy Award-Winner in the House!

Written by Kam Williams



Mo'Nique

The "Spread the Love Tour" Interview

Mo'Nique collected a basketful of Supporting Actress accolades over the course of the awards season for her gripping portrayal of Mary Jones, the relentlessly-monstrous mother in *Precious*. The versatile comedienne/actress/talk show host's powerful performance not only earned her a Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, NAACP Image, Sundance Film Festival, BAFTA and Independent Spirit Award, but was recognized as the best of 2010 by most critics' guilds as well. Still, the icing on the cake arrived on March 7th when the talented sister won a well-deserved Academy Award.

Here, in the first interview I've ever conducted which actually brought me to tears, Mo'Nique reflects upon a variety of subjects, ranging from family to spirituality to surviving incest to what winning the Oscar means to her. And she also talks about "Spread the Love," the standup comedy victory tour during which she'll be making stops in 20 cities around the country between now and the end of May.

Kam Williams: Hey, Mo'Nique. The last thing I said to you, when we spoke back in October, was that the next time we spoke I'd be congratulating you on your Oscar. Well, Congratulations, sister!

Mo'Nique: Thank you, brother, I appreciate that.

KW: It was easy to predict. Listen, I watch over 500 movies a year, and let me say that was not only the best performance of 2010, but in my opinion it would even have won if they gave out an Oscar for the best performance of the decade.

M: Wow! Thank you, brother.

KW: Well, I want to thank you for still making yourself available to me now, because it often becomes impossible to land another interview with an actor or actress after they've just landed

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an Oscar nomination. They don't even have to win the Oscar to suddenly be unavailable.

M: And that's a damn shame, Kam. Me? I appreciate the brothers and sisters who were there before anybody was calling. So, how could I not talk to you?

KW: I certainly appreciate that, especially since I remember how over the years you've done a lot of little things for me like arrange to put a couple passes aside if you were doing a comedy show nearby. Speaking of standup, what inspired you to do this "Spread the Love Tour," when you must already be very busy from hosting your late night TV talk show on BET?

M: Well, standup is my first love. When I told my husband [Sidney Hicks], "Baby, I'm ready to go. I'm ready to get back out there," he said, "Okay, then let's come up with a title. What are you trying to say?" and I said, "Let's spread the love! Let's spread the love with jokes, baby, through humor. Let's laugh out loud, but while we doing it, we're gonna be loving on each other at the same time."

KW: I see that you're taking DJ Ant on the road with you. What's up with the music?

M: Oh, Lord, honey! As a comedienne, I always loved when the audience was entertained from the moment the doors opened up 'till the time they closed. I never understood why people would have to sit patiently waiting in silence for the comedians to come on. I say, "Give 'em a full show! Let 'em feel good! Let 'em party! Let that music move through 'em, baby. So, by the time we come to the stage, the house is already on fire. The music helps amplify the experience.

KW: And why'd you decide to have two comedians accompanying you on the tour, Rodney Perry and Tone-X?

M: Now, Rodney Perry is my co-host on the talk show. What I love about him is that he's so brilliantly funny, and he's fearless. And his act is so full of love. You feel like he's Uncle Rodney. And it's the same thing with Tone-X. He's just fearless, and our whole goal is to make you laugh, but to make you feel good at the same time.

KW: And what type of jokes will you be doing?

M: Adult! You know me, Kam. [Laughs] Adult jokes. But they're very honest. Whenever people ask, "Who is Mo'Nique?" I always say, "Come to a comedy show, baby. You will find out who she is right there."

KW: I guess you'll have to touch on winning the Oscar, too.

M: Kam, you know I'm a have to touch it, hit it, slap it and rub it down, because it's been quite a journey, especially after reading some of the articles, and hearing some people's opinions. After all, I'm a comedienne. So, you know, I got to take that and bring it up on the stage.

KW: I'm not you, yet my eyes are tearing up, when I think of all the criticism leveled at you last fall for not kissing-up to the film industry, as if your performance couldn't stand on its own. I admired how you stuck to your guns, even though I thought it might hurt you with the voters. That's why the headline of my article back then was, "Just Give Mo'Nique the Oscar!"

M: It's all about the performance, baby.

KW: What should anything else have to do with it? But they were like sharks circling you in the water, trying to figure out how to prevent you from getting it. It's a further tribute to your performance that you won in the face of negative buzz trying to poison the minds of the Academy voters by suggesting that you were thumbing your nose at the Hollywood establishment.

M: I'm a big believer that when you do it right, and you don't waiver, you win an Oscar. When I say do it right, I mean you stay humble, full of love, and focused on your goal, baby, and that other stuff don't matter. It ends up rolling right off of your back. And you still got to love those people who done wrote that stuff about you.

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KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

JK: Oh my God! It was about my baby Jonathan, just this morning in the kitchen. He said, "Mommy, do you know what David [his twin brother] did?" because he was getting ready to tell on him. I said, "What?" And he paused for a long time before saying, "Nothin'." It was the cutest thing. I said, "I'm proud of you! You were getting ready to tell on your brother, then you thought about it." My kids and my husband, Sidney, make me laugh all the time.

KW: The Ling-Ju Yen question: What is your earliest childhood memory?

M: What is my earliest childhood memory? Wow! Wow! I remember coming home on the first day of school, maybe in the second grade, and I told my dad, "My teacher said I'm gonna pass." But the teacher hadn't told me that, but I wanted some attention. [LOL] I've always been that kid.

KW: If you could have one wish instantly granted, what would that be for?

M: Hmm... That my husband and I would be able to meet the next generation of the Hicks family.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

M: The Shack. Kam, believe me when I tell you that this book is amazing. It's about this guy whose daughter is molested and brutally-murdered. And he has to go back to where it happened. He meets god, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. God is a big, Black woman who talks real slick in her mouth. Jesus looks like he's Iraqi, and the Holy Spirit is an Asian woman. I tell you, Kam, you can just feel the love coming off of the pages. It is a book that I suggest to you, because I believe your spirit can withstand it. [Get it!](#)

KW: I definitely will.

M: It's so amazing, that as you read it, you'll go "Oh my God!"

KW: The next time we speak, I'll tell you what I thought of the book.

M: Yes... Yes, yes, yes!

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What are you listening to on your iPod?

M: This morning, I worked out to Barry White.

KW: Yale grad Tommy Russell says, "You go girl!" and asks, what keeps you going as an actress: a thought, a personal wish, a subconscious force?

M: What keeps me going? These are some great questions, Kam! I think what keeps me going is just today. I'm so appreciative of this gift, because I can't explain it. So, today keeps me going in the hope that I'll get to tomorrow.

KW: Tommy also asks, what do you think the most important political initiative is for President Obama in his first administration?

M: I think it's love, and I think he's doing it. I think the moment that Americans get behind this man is the moment that the world will get behind America.

KW: Barbara Darko noticed that you gave your husband, Sidney, a lot of credit during your Oscar acceptance speech. She asks, how would you describe your relationship?

M: I thank God every day for allowing me to spend this journey with his son.

KW: Rev. Florine Thompson asks, what life experiences prepared you most for your role in Precious?

M: [Pauses, clears her throat] I was molested by my eldest brother, Gerald. So, I knew who Mary Jones was. And when Mr. Daniels [director Lee Daniels] asked me to portray a monster, I was very familiar with that monster. And please let me say this. You know how you might be unable to fully understand something you're going through at the time that it's happening? And you might even want to be mad at God?

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KW: Yeah.

M: Well, the moment we wrapped that movie, I understood why I had gone through what I went through as a little girl, which allowed me to stop resenting my brother. It was life-changing for me.

KW: Reverend Thompson also asks, what would you say to those mothers who sit in silence while their significant other, or perhaps I should say insignificant other, sexually abuses their daughter?

M: The first thing I would say is, this is the “No Judgment Zone.” We ain’t judging. All we would ask you is that you get some help. And get some help for the family, even for the person who is doing it to your child. Remove the predator from the situation, of course, but get help for everybody involved. And love him when he’s unlovable.

KW: She was also wondering, whether this movie has empowered you to champion the cause of domestic abuse?

M: Yes... yes... And domestic abuse is such an umbrella. So much fits under that umbrella that what we’re championing and the mission for us is love. Because when you truly got that thing called L-O-V-E, you’re not judging. You simply want to say, “Listen, baby, what you did, you have to pay for under the law, but we’re gonna love you through it.” Maybe that way you can talk to the next person that’s thinking about becoming a molester, that’s telling you the thoughts they’re having. So, you can suggest they get some help before they act on those urges. That’s the whole mission, Kam, it really is.

KW: The good Rev asks, what do you most thank God for?

M: Today. I’m so thankful for today, that I could wake up to my children who are so full of joy and love, saying “Good morning, mommy!” Man, I’m so thankful for today, because tomorrow, I may not get.

KW: Larry Greenberg says, people might not know that you have been in quite a few action films, like Shadowboxer, Half Past Dead and his favorite, Domino. He wants to know whether there’s any chance of your going back to the action genre.

M: You tell Larry that I am a superhero, and I’m going to be flying in somebody’s film real soon, sugar. So, yes, I can’t wait to put a cape on! [Laughs]

KW: Barbara asks if you plan to bring your daily talk show to mainstream network TV?

M: I get that question often. Would you do me a favor, Kam, and ask Barbara exactly what does she mean by mainstream? Because the stream I’m in right now is my mainstream.

KW: That’s a brilliant analysis. I feel the same way. The New York Times would never consider hiring me or printing any of my articles, so why should I consider that mainstream when I have so many outlets who do appreciate what I do.

M: Kam is my mainstream. People invest so much into that word “mainstream.” What does it mean? And is that supposed to be some sort of validation because you think I should go to mainstream? The stream I’m in right now is my mainstream. If you want to come on over and play with me, come on!

KW: Here’s another one more from Reverend Thompson, how does your spirituality inform you and enable you to play the role of Precious’ mother?

M: Wow! You know, when we went into this, we knew we had to be honest, because if we weren’t, we would not be able to change lives, or to serve as the vessels we were supposed to be used as. So, we just wanted to make sure we were dead honest, so that people who watched the film could literally watch themselves.

KW: Well, thanks again, Mo’Nique. This is the first time I’ve ever ended an interview with tears

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in my eyes. I guess I'm crying because I've known you at different stages of your career, and I'm just so moved by what you've achieved and touched by the absence of bitterness about what you've had to overcome, and I'm honored by how openly you've shared your feelings about it all with me.

M: Kam, I love you, brother. And for the rest of my career, baby, as long as you're doing what you're doing, me and you will keep on talking.

KW: I really appreciate that, and I love you, too, Mo'Nique.

M: God bless you.

To see Mo'Nique's Golden Globe acceptance speech, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQwsWuKo8gc>

To see Mo'Nique's Academy Awards acceptance speech, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pc3hA2ONbU>

To order a copy of Precious on DVD, visit:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002VECM4A?ie=UTF8&tag=thslf_ofire-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002VECM4A