



The “My Black Is Beautiful” Interview

Tasha Smith and her identical twin, Sidra, were born on February 28, 1971 in Camden, NJ. Being raised by a single-mom in a crime and drug infested neighborhood proved to be almost too much of a hurdle for Tasha to overcome as her life spiraled down a self-destructive path marked by promiscuity, Marijuana and cocaine addiction, chain-smoking and a stint as a stripper.

Fortunately, she eventually embraced Christianity, cleaned up her act and moved to L.A. where she tried her hand at standup comedy before settling on an acting career. The versatile scene-stealer has since appeared in such movies as *Couples Retreat*, *The Longshots*, *Daddy's Little Girls* and *Why Did I Get Married*, to name a few.

When not working, Tasha gives back to the community, dividing her time between making motivational speeches and teaching actor's workshops all across the country. Here, she talks about reprising the role of Angela in *Why Did I Get Married Too*, as well as her new TV series, *My Black Is Beautiful*, a reality series premiering this month on BET. (Check local listings)

Kam Williams: Hey Tasha, thanks for the time again.

Tasha Smith: Hey, Kam Williams! [Shrieks] Whassup! How ya doing?

KW: Very well, and you?

TS: I am doing awesome! I was hoping to interview with you when I was in New York for the premiere [of *Why Did I Get Married Too*].

KW: This is probably better because I'm sure you were mobbed and I would have had to elbow my way just to get a few minutes one-on-one with you.

TS: Hey, you can have as long as you need now. How's that?

KW: Tremendous, thanks.

TS: So, what's happening? Hi!

Tasha's back, Black and beautiful as ever

Written by Kam Williams

KW: Nothing much, how about you?

TS: I have just been so busy, and I'm so excited. I have been doing soooooo much. Speaking engagements... producing... developing a half-hour sitcom... working on a movie... leading acting workshops all over the world...and hosting My Black Is Beautiful, an empowerment TV show I'm doing on BET for women.

KW: So, what's the new TV show going to be like?

TS: We're doing makeovers, giving financial classes, answering questions about Black women's imaging in the media, and much more. It's so good! We encourage women to become mentors within their communities in order to teach young girls how to thrive in this society. It's a good thing, so, I'm excited about having the platform and this opportunity because you know me, I love my folk.

KW: Let's talk a little about Why Did I Get Married Too. You were as phenomenal as you were in the original which led me to name you the best actress of 2007. How was it seeing everybody again?

TS: Thank you. It was fun. Honestly, we are like a family. We really are. The chemistry for the sequel was even better. It almost felt like we were actually on vacation together, organically. I got to tell you, it was like a family reunion. It was like, "Hey, girl!" and we just had us a good time.

KW: You can't beat shooting in the Bahamas.

TS: To be honest, the Bahamas wasn't fun. [Whispers] Kam, it was horrible. Not only was the shooting schedule insane, but there were so many bugs on that island that it was nerve-wracking. It was infested with these big moths called "money bats" Imagine if every time you walked outside hundreds of them were all over the place and landing on you. It was so stressful and irritating. I'm not exaggerating. They also had these mosquitoes called "no see 'ems" because you couldn't see 'em. Those things just ate us up. We had welts and bites all over our bodies. Ugh! I could go on and on. And then there were these other bugs like flying cockroaches that made a loud buzzing sound every time we tried to shoot a scene.

KW: Gee, that sounds very different from Couples Retreat, your previous film, which was filmed in Polynesia on Bora Bora, another exotic location.

TS: Let me tell you honey, they should have picked Bora Bora. Bora Bora was a dream! It was truly paradise.

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman asks, who do you admire most in your profession and have you sought out that person as a mentor?

TS: Wow! Angela Bassett is a friend of mine and someone who I truly admire tremendously in terms of her work and her choices.

KW: The Rev. Florine Thompson asks, how has your life changed as a Christian, and who in the scriptures speaks most to who you are and how you've developed spiritually?

TS: I'd say Paul. I just love how he went from being an unbeliever persecuting Christians to one of the most powerful people in the Bible. And how has my life changed as a Christian? Once you have the light of God within you, you see things within yourself that you did not know

Tasha's back, Black and beautiful as ever

Written by Kam Williams

existed. Things that were hidden in darkness are now in light. I see myself as able to forgive... to love... I even see talents in myself that I didn't see before.

KW: Rev. Thompson also asks, how do you express the Christ you serve in the glamorous Hollywood milieu in which you work?

TS: Your atmosphere does not change you, if you are rooted and grounded in who you are. I do what I believe the Lord did, and that is walk in love with all mankind, which I don't see a lot of Christians doing. Christians can be so judgmental, that it can turn off people who are considering converting. It makes me a little embarrassed, to tell you the truth, when I hear Christians criticizing others. I have to fight against being discouraged, because I don't want to be connected with people who are so intolerant of much of mankind like that. God loves us all. He really does. And I want to walk in love with people.

KW: I know you're from Camden, NJ, and your character Angela even brags about it in the film. Have you heard of the Center for Transformation, an organization that's doing some tremendous charity work there, including overseeing a greenhouse, community gardens, neighborhood cleanups, a family resource clinic and other projects?

TS: No I haven't.

KW: Their mission states "we are a people called to be a Christian community and to stand on the side of life with all the struggling people of Camden and the world."

TS: That sounds beautiful.

KW: I can get some information to you about it, if it sounds like a group you'd be interested in working with.

TS: Yeah, that would be great.

KW: I recently met someone from Camden who says he knew you as a child. Eric Lewis, the jazz pianist. I met him backstage after a concert promoting his new album. [Buy it here.](#)

TS: Yes, isn't he talented? I'm so happy for him.

KW: Laz Lyles would like to know what it was like for you to revisit the character Angela.

TS: It was exciting and empowering, because although Tyler always jokes around saying, "Tasha's just like Angela," I'm not really. I'm loud and I communicate, but I'd never think of doing half the things Angela does. She's an over the top character who just lives and speaks honestly without worrying about being politically correct. So, playing her, you get a sense of freedom to do whatever you want and to live vicariously through her.

KW: Laz has a follow up question. What's the most common feedback you get from your acting workshops?

TS: People come to my workshop expecting just to learn about acting, but at the end many say they've learned something about life. They leave as better mothers, better wives, better husbands and better siblings.

KW: After watching your acting studio video, Larry Greenberg wants to know whether a white guy can enroll in your acting course.

Tasha's back, Black and beautiful as ever

Written by Kam Williams

TS: Tell him, "Yes!" and please bring his whole family. I'm giving a \$20 discount to anyone who brings along a white person to my class. Tell him I want white people in my classes and to send an email blast to every white person he knows to come and visit me. [Laughs]

KW: Larry also says he loved your work in Glass House: The Good Mother. He asks, "Is there any chance I could see you in another thriller?"

TS: Wow! Tell him to pray. I want to do another thriller. [Laughs]

KW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

TS: Hmm... I see a beautiful Black woman who has overcome and who is pressing into her future and forgetting about the past.

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

TS: Wow! I remember being 6- or 7-years-old and always begging my sister to act out scenes with me while we were in our bunk beds. I would be like, "Can you be Chaka Khan while I be Diana Ross? And let's act like we're at a party at Stevie Wonder's house and looking fabulous." But she would always just fall asleep.

KW: How's your twin, Sidra, doing?

TS: She's great, thanks.

KW: The Uduak Oduok question: Who's your favorite clothes designer?

TS: I love Catherine Maladrino, Angela Dean and Nicole Miller. Catherine Maladrino designs that beautiful, high-class red carpet stuff. Nicole Miller makes beautiful dresses you can wear everyday. And when you just want to go and shut it down, you turn to Angela Dean. She made my dress for this premiere, as well as for the opening of Tyler Perry's studio, that red sequined number.

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

TS: Wow, I was just telling my boyfriend that I want to be like Solomon, and instead of asking for riches ask for wisdom and creativity.

KW: What is your favorite dish to cook?

TS: I make a garlic cracked crab that will shut everything down. First, I roast fresh garlic in olive oil. Then, I sauté onions, peppers and basil in Old Bay seasoning with butter, heavy cream, wine and beer until it gets thick. Then, I let the fresh crabs cook in that sauce for about 10 or 15 minutes before roasting them. Woooo! Believe me when I tell you that my garlic cracked crab is soooo good. It's dynamic!

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

TS: Understanding Your Potential by Myles Munroe. That book is really, really, really good, and empowers you to appreciate your full potential, and God as the source of that potential.

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

TS: Honey, I'm on Sade's "Soldier of Love" right now. Loving it, loving it, and loving it! That whole album is just crazy.

Tasha's back, Black and beautiful as ever

Written by Kam Williams

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

TS: Today. [LOL] You wanna know what happened? While I was filming "My Black Is Beautiful" I had my DNA traced and found out that I'm linked genetically to the Bubi people of Bioko Island. So, I eagerly asked, "Am I descended from kings and queens?" But I was told, "Sorry, your ancestors were definitely not kings and queens, but probably gatherers in the field." [Laughs more] That was hilarious. I just laughed so hard.

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

TS: Thanks for asking. A lot of times people don't really seem to care about that. How do I sound?

KW: Elated, and you've got a boyfriend since we last spoke.

TS: [Shrieks] I got a man, baby! A man! He is so absolutely wonderful. I am so in love. And I'm planning on getting married and having a baby by the end of 2011.

KW: Congratulations! Who's the lucky guy?

TS: His name is Keith.

KW: Best of luck to you both, Tasha, and thanks for another terrific interview.

TS: Thank you. It's so good to talk to you.

KW: Same here.