

BILL COSBY - A MUST READ

The Reverend Jesse Jackson almost never gets upstaged and I had never seen the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson cry in public until last month.

Jackson invited Bill Cosby to the annual Rainbow / PUSH conference for a conversation about the controversial remarks the entertainer offered on May 17 at an NAACP dinner in Washington, D.C.

When America's Jell-O Man shook things up by arguing that African Americans were betraying the legacy of civil rights victories. Cosby said 'the lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal. These people are not parenting.

They are buying things for their kids. . \$500 sneakers for what? But they won't spend \$200 for Hooked on Phonics!'

Bill Cosby came to town and upstaged the reverend by going on the offense instead of defending his earlier remarks. Thursday morning, Cosby showed no signs of repenting as he strode across the stage at the Sheraton Hotel ballroom before a standing room only crowd. Sporting a natty gold sports coat and dark glasses, he proceeded to unload a Laundry list of black America's self- imposed ills. The iconic actor and comedian kidded that he couldn't compete with the oratory of the Reverend but he preached circles around Jackson in their nearly hour-long conversation, delivering brutally frank one-liners

and the toughest of love.

The enemy, he argues, is us: "There is a time, ladies and gentlemen, when we have to turn the mirror around." Cosby acknowledged he wasn't critiquing all blacks. . . . Just the 50 percent of African Americans in the lower economic neighborhood who drop out of school, and the alarming proportions of black men in prison and black teenage mothers.

The mostly black crowd seconded him with choruses of Amens.

To the critics who pose, it's unproductive to air our dirty laundry in public, he responds, "Your dirty laundry gets out of school at 2:30 every day."

It's cursing on the way home, on the bus, train, in the candy store. They are cursing and grabbing each other and going nowhere. The book bag is very, v very thin because there's nothing in it.

Don't worry about the white man, he added.

I could care less about what white people think about me. . . . Let them talk.

What are they saying that is so different from what their grandfathers said and did to us?

What is different is what we are doing to ourselves.

For those who say Cosby is just an elitist who's "got his" but doesn't understand the plight of the black poor, he reminds us that,

"We're going to turn that mirror around.

It's not just the poor-everybody's guilty."

Cosby and Jackson lamented that in the 50th years of Brown vs. Board of Education, our failings betray our legacy. Jackson dabbed away tears as he recalled the financial struggles at Fisk University, a historically black college and Jackson's Alma mater. When Cosby was done, the 1,000 people in the room all jumped to their feet in ovation.

We have shed tears too many times, at too many watershed moments before, while the hopes they inspired have fallen by the wayside. Not this time!

Cosby's plea to parents:

"Before you get to the point where you say 'I can't do nothing with them', do something with them."

Teach our children to speak English.

There's no such thing as "talking white".

When the teacher calls, show up at the school.

When the idiot box starts spewing profane rap videos; turn it off. Refrain from cursing around the kids.

Teach our boys that women should be cherished, not raped and demeaned.

Tell them that education is a prize we won with blood and tears, not a dishonor.

Stop making excuses for the agents and abettors of black on black crime.

It costs us nothing to do these things.

But if we don't, it will cost us infinitely more tears.

We all send thousands of jokes through e-mail

without a second thought, but when it comes
to sending messages regarding life choices,
people think twice about sharing.

The crude, vulgar, and sometimes the obscene
pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion
of decency is too often suppressed in the schools and
workplaces.

I passed this on... Will you?