



Bertice Berry

Winner of the National Comedian of the Year Award

No one defies stereotypes, generalizations or clichés more than Dr. Bertice Berry. Growing up poor in Wilmington, Delaware, the sixth of seven children, Bertice was told by a high school teacher that she was "not college material". Fortunately, there was another teacher who believed that she was destined for more.

Berry applied to several schools without any idea how she would pay the tuition if she were accepted. The day her application arrived at Jacksonville University in Florida, a wealthy benefactor called the Admissions Department looking for a potential student "who could swim if they had the right backing," and might sink without it. Bertice not only graduated magna cum laude from Jacksonville where she was awarded the President's Cup for leadership, she subsequently earned a Ph.D. in sociology from Kent State University at the age of 26.

Dr. Berry taught sociology and statistics at Kent, and demonstrated that she knew a few things about humor, as well. She became one of the most popular teachers at the university; so popular, in fact, larger lecture halls had to be found to accommodate the ever-increasing number of students. "A colleague said to me, 'You're funny,' and I said, 'No I'm not, I'm a scholar,'" recounts Dr. Berry. It was then that she realized by using humor in her lectures to address such difficult subjects as racism and sexism she was making a more profound impact.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Berry left Kent to become an award-winning entertainer, lecturer and comedienne. From 1991 through 1994 she won the coveted national Comedian of the Year Award, and

was also named Campus Lecturer of the Year and Campus Entertainer of the Year.

She had created a niche as both a gifted speaker with a comic edge and a comic with a serious message. Her busy schedule included over 200 appearances a year. Dr. Berry was the host and co-executive producer of her own nationally syndicated talk show, "The Bertice Berry Show," and hosted "USA Live," a four-hour live interview and entertainment show on the USA Cable Network. She's been featured on numerous other television programs, including appearances on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," and "BET Live" with Tavis Smiley.

*Dr. Bertice Berry is also the best-selling author of an inspirational memoir, *I'm On My Way, But Your Foot Is On My Head*, and the hilarious bestsellers *Sckraight from the Ghetto*, *You Might Be Ghetto If* and the sequel *You STILL Ghetto*. Her first work of fiction, *Redemption Song*, published by Double Day in 2000, is also a Best Seller and has been praised by critics for its ability to entertain, inspire and educate. Berry followed *Redemption Song*, with another bestseller, *The Haunting of Hip Hop* and took her readers on a journey to the other side. In August 2002, she released her most passionate work ever with Jim & Louella *Homemade Heart-fix Remedy*, a tantalizing yet spiritual tale that is sure to open more than your eyes.*

Dr. Berry believes that community involvement is not limited to just "writing a check" and has taken a very active role in supporting organizations that benefit those in need. She has graciously donated all of the royalties from the sales of her books to organizations that help families of terminally ill children, raise funds for orphanages and provide resource information to low-income families.

Despite all of her honors and achievements, Dr. Berry is most proud of becoming the "instant mother" to her sister's four young children. She lives in San Diego, CA, where she is active in the community working with At-Risk Youth and teaching at area prisons and schools.