

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES

Thirteen/WNET New York
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press information

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Chris Tucker biography

A native of Georgia, Chris Tucker still considers it his home, as it has been for his ancestors dating back to slavery. As he learns in the course of *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES*, Chris's pre-Civil War slave ancestors were part of a group divided up in a state lottery when their owner died intestate. By the early 20th century, Chris's great-grandfather, TA Bryant, Sr., was living in the community of Flat Rock, Georgia amid Jim Crow segregation, where he played a central role in keeping the black community together.



Chris was born in the city of Decatur in 1972 to Norris and Mary Tucker. The youngest of six children, he found comedic inspiration in the daily life of a large, tightly knit southern family, whose stability gave him the freedom to take chances. His unique voice and rapid speech distinguished him as a child and later became a defining feature of his comedy act, and before leaving Columbia High School had been voted Most Humorous - as had his mother Mary before him.

In 1991, when he was 19 years old, Chris made his amateur debut at Atlanta's Comedy Act Theater, and received a standing ovation. Seven short years later, he appeared alongside international action star Jackie Chan in the blockbuster Hollywood film *Rush Hour*. In between, he honed his comedy act, appearing in Russell Simmons' 1992 Def Comedy All Star Jam on HBO, landed his breakout film role as Smokey in the 1995 hit comedy *Friday*, and joined the all-star ensemble in Quentin Tarantino's 1997 film *Jackie Brown*. In honor of his proven track record as a box-office funnyman, the world's theater owners named him "Comedy Star of the Year" at the film industry's 2002 ShoWest convention.

In 2001, Chris toured Uganda and Ethiopia with Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and U2 front man Bono, in an effort to generate awareness of economic and social issues facing Africa and increase U.S. financial aid for the continent. In 2002, he traveled to South Africa with Secretary of State Colin Powell for a summit conference on sustainable development.



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