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Life Lessons From Judge Mathis

Rajiv Mohan, Managing Editor

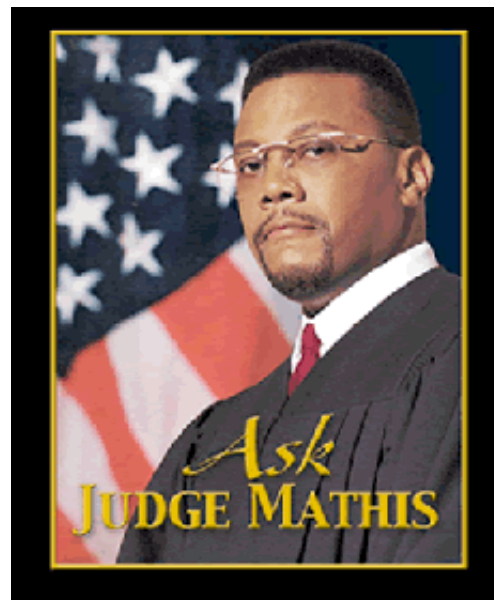
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Every now and then, flipping through the channels in an afternoon of idleness, I stumble upon the insightful wisdom of one - Judge Mathis.

Integral to the depth of the show is the background of Judge Mathis. Raised in the projects of Detroit, Mathis was a dropout gang member who found himself entangled in a life filled with crime and drugs.

Motivated by a promise to his dying mother, Mathis turned things around. He earned his GED, graduated from Eastern Michigan University, and ultimately received a law degree from the University of Detroit Law School. Against numerous obstacles he was elected to the district court in the state of Michigan.

The underlying tone of Judge Mathis is "tough love," an ideal that was key to Mathis' own turnaround. In the courtroom, Mathis is committed to setting youngsters on the right track, often checking their grades and requiring drug testing, counseling, or attendance at institutions of higher



education or trade school as part of his judicial decisions.

wisdom, kindness, justice

Despite all the toughness, Mathis maintains levity on the bench, which makes for great entertainment value. Unlike Judge Judy, who tolerates no nonsense whatsoever and spews mean-spirited invective, Judge Mathis often laughs with, but more often at, his ridiculous participants. Instead of sharply cutting them off, he actually allows them a fair opportunity to air their serious legal grievances.

In a recent episode, a participant delivered this eloquent line: "She socked me in my face multiple times in my eye, she spit in my face, she pulled her breast out and start swinging her breast in my face."

Amid all the breast-swinging, drugs, sex and violence Judge Mathis does actually provide practical insight on how to exact legal revenge on many of life's troubles: that mooch friend who won't pay you back, that ruffian teenager who destroys your property, or like that baby momma who slashes your tires, harasses you over the phone at work and then proceeds to physically assault you, inevitably resulting in a lengthy hospital stay and irreparable emotional distress. I have learned that one should always take pictures of everything, and get any and all shady dealings down in writing.

Some may belittle Judge Mathis, writing the show off as tasteless drivel, putting it on par with such other staples of daytime television as Maury. However, those of us who have ever watched it know that it is much more than that (the recent introduction of paternity testing to the show notwithstanding). Judge Mathis is a beacon of hope for troubled souls - a source of inspiration, advice, and perhaps more importantly, pure entertainment.

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posted 4/14/08 @ 4:36 PM NA

Ahh yes. Way to go Rajiv. I know coming out of the Judge Mathis closet must have been a big moment for you. I applaud you.

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