

5 Questions FOR...

Eartha Kitt

Legendary Catwoman
reflects on her career
and her only regret

TV viewers still love Eartha Kitt as the sexy, purring Catwoman on *Batman* in the '60s. Younger moviegoers fell in love with her as the cosmetics industry mogul who in 1992 seduced Eddie Murphy's character ("Marcus, darling") in *Boomerang*. Her Christmas classic "Santa Baby" continues to be a holiday favorite. Kitt, 81, spoke out against the Vietnam War during a 1968 White House luncheon hosted by Lady Bird Johnson. For a decade, she could not find work in the U.S and had to make a living in Europe.

EBONY: Have Black actresses made progress?

Kitt: I asked a beautiful Brown actress were things better for Black women, and she said it was very subtle, but it was not better. It is still a struggle for Black actresses. I do see however, many more Black women today than I did when I was a kid or when I was in the movies in Hollywood.

EBONY: How do you feel about getting older?

Kitt: I love aging. It's a wonderfully beautiful process in life. I also don't believe in plastic surgery. I don't see any reason why I should chop up my face. It's not for me. Let nature take its course.

EBONY: You were diagnosed with colon cancer several years ago. How are you coming along?

Kitt: I am fine. We women often feel that we are too busy to have that colonoscopy, but it is absolutely necessary. Get that colonoscopy. It tells you exactly what is going on.

EBONY: Looking back over your life, do you have any regrets?

Kitt: After the luncheon at the White House, Dr. Martin Luther King called me. I don't remember exactly what his words were, but he said, 'I would like to recommend you for the Nobel Peace Prize.' And I laughed and said, 'Come on, I don't like what you are doing.' And I hung up the phone. And it turned out to really be Martin Luther King. I thought it was somebody playing a joke on me. I was so ashamed. I wished I could have called him back. I was crying at his funeral, not only because he was gone but also because I didn't believe the phone call. But I do have a telegram from him that said he admires my courage.

EBONY: How would you like to be remembered?

Kitt: I stayed on my own path and did not follow the herd. I made a way for myself. —Clarence Waldron

ABOUT EARTHA:

Born: Eartha Mae Kitt in 1927 on a cotton plantation in South Carolina and was abandoned by her White father and Black mother

Big Break: Dancer with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company in 1946

Passion: Helping inner-city kids with her Kittsville Youth Foundation in Los Angeles

What's Next? "PBS television special, *The HistoryMakers Presents An Evening With Eartha Kitt*, filmed in Chicago and set to air in February