

For Immediate Release

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Television commentator Tavis Smiley delivered a huge offering of his unique political analysis Friday at the National Black MBA Association's annual convention in Houston.

HOUSTON (September 17, 2004) – As his 40th birthday approached earlier this week Tavis Smiley paused to reflect upon his life's accomplishments and wondered what his legacy might be.

Despite hosting the syndicated Tavis Smiley Show from NPR, serving as a contributor of political commentary on the Tom Joyner Morning Show, as well as being a special correspondent for CNN and ABC television, he longed to uncover something that would remain after he's gone.

And thanks to Smiley's gift of \$1 million to Texas Southern University this week, he's now guaranteed a tangible legacy. His pledge was further enhanced with the surprise announcement from TSU that they school would build a new journalism school complex and name it the Tavis Smiley School of Communications and the Tavis Smiley Center for Radio, Television and Print Media Studies.

Similarly, he urged members of the National Black MBA Association on Friday to map out their futures with the idea leaving a lasting impression, at the 26th annual conference which drew a gathering of nearly 20,000 business builders and job seekers in Houston.

"It's never too early to plan out what your legacy is going to be," said Smiley, who said he became even more contemplative with the Sept. 13 arrival of his milestone birthday against the backdrop of memories of his slain childhood heroes, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcom X, who never lived past the age of 39. "You do realize that you're going to leave one whether you want to or not. Somebody has got to say something about what you did with your life."

Smiley found it prophetic that he managed to reach such a personal milestone with the TSU alliance in a year that marked his 40th birthday and coincided with 50th anniversary of the landmark Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling that has been so instrumental in empowering blacks to achieve the type of success that for the very existence of organizations such as NBMBA .

Still, all of the degrees, accolades and accomplishments aren't enough without the ability to impact lives and influence people. In order to do that, Smiley says, it takes a plan. "It's like black folks talk about reparations. But if they give you a check, what are you going to do with it?"

He offered these five questions to ponder in formalizing that plan:

- * Are you living in your purpose?
- * Are you striving to be the best at what you do?
- * Do you have a plan?
- * Are you mentoring anybody?
- * What is your legacy?

"On your tombstone there is some very important information: your name, your date of birth and the date you expire," Smiley said. "In between the two is a dash. You know very well that what's most important on that tombstone is not when you were born and not when you died. It's what did you do in between the time that you came and your left."