

## Remembering Don Cornelius and His 'Soul Train'



**AP**

Don Cornelius at a rehearsal for the 2001 Soul Train Music Awards show in Los Angeles

JUNE SIMMS: Welcome to AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.

(MUSIC)

I'm June Simms. Today, we remember Don Cornelius, the creator of the influential American television show "Soul Train."

And we talk to an expert about your relationship problems.

(MUSIC)

### **Relationship Advice**

JUNE SIMMS: Tuesday is Valentine's Day. So this is a good time to report that our new [relationship advice blog](#) has been getting a lot of comments. The advice comes from you, our audience. English learners get to practice their writing while helping other people solve real-life problems.

This week, as promised, we also asked an expert to offer some advice. Karen Ruskin is a marriage and family therapist. She also wrote the advice book, "Dr. Karen's Marriage Manual."

We explored first the problem sent by a Chinese man. He is studying medical chemistry in South Korea. His girlfriend of several years plans to move to South Korea herself. She plans to study the Korean language at the same university. However, the man's mother disapproves. He says she is concerned that her son will not keep up with his studies because of the added responsibility of his girlfriend. He says his family has told him if he does not end the relationship they may stop giving him money.

Dr. Ruskin praised the relationship between the man and his mother.

KAREN RUSKIN: "That's lovely that he has a connection with his mother and it matters to him what she thinks."

But, she says it is important to note that a twenty-five year old man is old enough to decide who his girlfriend should be. And, she says, a person of that age should be able to handle several responsibilities at a time.

KAREN RUSKIN: "A twenty-five year old absolutely can achieve school success, work success and be in a serious relationship and manage that in a healthy way."



Dr. Ruskin says the student needs to talk to his mother about her exact worries. For example, he noted he was hoping to start a business with his girlfriend. But he is studying medical chemistry. Is this part of his mother's problem with the plan?

KAREN RUSKIN: "Perhaps there is a concern that his goal focus is shifting because of the relationship that he's in."

Dr. Ruskin says the worry may also be financial. She says this man should know that he can not expect his parents to support both him and his girlfriend financially.

We then turned to a forty year old man from Iran. He has been at the same company for fifteen years without a promotion. He asks for advice on how to build effective relationships at work so that he can move up.

Dr. Ruskin says there are several actions the man might want to consider. She says one is to show interest in his co-workers.

KAREN RUSKIN: "Ask them questions: what they're doing in the office? What these projects are that they're working on. And be able to share your interest in being a part of that --- your interest in being their teammate. Take on extra responsibilities of what they're working on, if they're willing to allow that."

She also says people have to dress for the job they want. If a supervisor wears a suit and tie every day, so should anyone who wants to be a supervisor.

And, Dr. Ruskin says employers notice people who create ideas.

KAREN RUSKIN: "Show your worth and why you're needed, and why you're a necessity, in this company by coming up with new concepts and then showing them."

She says presentations are important. Gather people for a meeting on new ideas. Dr. Ruskin says supervisors often see employees in a new and leading role when they are presenting material in front of a group.

However, Karen Ruskin also has a warning for the Iranian man. She says fifteen years is a long time.

KAREN RUSKIN: "There is the possibility that you might need to consider that you've been there for so long that you are not able to be seen through the eyes of higher level. That you are seen in one way and unless you are in a different company that may be the only opportunity for you to be seen in a different light."

Lastly, we spoke about a forty-five year old man from Japan. He asked how to deal with friends who ask for loans. The man wrote that he had suffered ruined relationships as a result of lending money. But he says it is hard to say no when a friend requests financial help.

Dr. Ruskin says any time you loan money to a friend, the relationship changes.

KAREN RUSKIN: "Usually when you find yourself loaning money, you now enter a business relationship and it does change the friendship. You're like a bank and there's a reason why banks are not our friends."

Dr. Ruskin does not suggest that our writer in Japan has to stop loaning money. But, if he does, he should know that it will most likely affect any friendship.

Send us your relationship problem for our advice blog at [voaspecialenglish.com](http://voaspecialenglish.com). Write to [mosaic@voanews.com](mailto:mosaic@voanews.com). We will not use your name but please tell us your sex, age and country.

(MUSIC: "Mr. Big Stuff"/Jean Knight)

## **Don Cornelius Remembered**

Before there was "MTV," or "American Idol," or "Dancing With the Stars," there was "Soul Train." The extremely influential television show helped introduce America and the world to African American music and culture.

The creator, producer and host of "Soul Train," Don Cornelius, died last Wednesday, at the age of seventy-five. Officials believe his death was a suicide. This week many people are remembering the well-known television personality, and the show that made him famous. Barbara Klein has more.

(MUSIC)

That is the theme song from "Soul Train." Don Cornelius launched the show in nineteen seventy, with just four hundred dollars. It was the first show of its kind - the first show to feature African American young people, as well as their music and culture.

**DON CORNELIUS:** "I had a burning desire to see black people presented on television in a positive light."



**AP**

Don Cornelius in 2006

Don Cornelius wrote, produced and hosted "Soul Train" for more than twenty years. It was the show people tuned in to every week for the hottest new music, the best new dance moves and the latest look in hair and clothing.

Watching "Soul Train" on Saturday became a family tradition for millions of African Americans across the United States. Ralph Herndon is a pianist with the Choral Arts Society of Washington. He says the show was especially important to African American youth.

**RALPH HERNDON:** "Soul Train was like having a party at your house every Saturday. Something that our black youth had to look forward to, something they could identify with."

"Soul Train" helped establish the careers of many African American artists. The Jackson Five, James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Marvin Gaye are just a few of

them. One appearance on the show could help an artist gain national attention, and greatly improve their record sales and concert attendance.

(MUSIC: "Reasons"/Earth, Wind and Fire)

Don Cornelius hosted "Soul Train" from nineteen seventy until nineteen ninety three. By the time the show went off the air in two thousand three, it had become one the longest running syndicated shows in American television history.

Robert Johnson is chairman of Black Entertainment Television. He says Don Cornelius was a powerful influence on African Americans, the United States and the world.

Robert Johnson: "For him to bring Soul Train to television at the time he did and keep it running for so many years is nothing short of phenomenal. It was literally must-see TV. He will be sorely missed, but he will always be remembered."

Don Cornelius was found dead at his home in Sherman Oaks, California on February first. Officials believe the seventy-five-year-old shot himself. His son Tony Cornelius told The Hollywood Reporter that father's failing health may have played a part in his death. He also suggested his father was troubled by a failed marriage and other relationships.

Singing legend Aretha Franklin said she was shocked by Don Cornelius' death. She called it a "huge and momentous loss."

In a statement to CNN, famed producer Quincy Jones called Don Cornelius a giant in the industry. Jones said the man's "contributions to television, music and our culture as a whole will never be matched."

(MUSIC: "Never Can Say Goodbye"/Jackson 5)

JUNE SIMMS. I'm June Simms. This program was written and produced by Caty Weaver. Join us again next week for music and more on AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.