

Profiling Shemar Moore

The "Criminal Minds" star reveals his broad view of the world

BY ANDREW FISH
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Civil rights were taking root, but equality was still a fight in 1970, the year Shemar Moore was born. With a mother who was white and a father who was black, Moore was an embodiment of the era. Even his name is a confluent idea: His father is Sherrod, his mother Marilyn, and he is the "harmony of the two," Moore explains. But life as a collective symbol of unity was far from comfortable for the family, spurring them to pull up stakes and move to Scandinavia. Thus began Moore's broad view of the world, which has ultimately led him to State-side

stardom as Special Agent Derek Morgan on the hit CBS crime drama, "Criminal Minds."

"My father was not a [Black] Panther, but he ran in those circles," Moore relates. "My mother was a highly educated school teacher, and thought outside of the box — she was outside of society's and family standards. Trying to keep the family unit together with all that civil unrest, with all that racism, my mother just thought it would be wise for us to disappear from that type of environment. Through her teaching credentials, she was able to get work overseas, so we were able to set ourselves up in Denmark."

It's fitting that Moore's character, equal parts brain and brawn, is a " profiler" — analyzing personalities and predicting behavior — as he spent his early life amid unfamiliar cultures, learning to adapt by observation. He lived in Denmark from 1970-73, during which he traveled with his parents all across Europe.

"My mom felt it would be smarter and wiser and safer to stay overseas," states Moore of his Danish toddler years, "where it seemed Europeans were more open-minded when it came to race. My first language, technically, was Danish — but I only knew enough to say, 'I'm hungry,' that kind of thing."

His mother was transferred in 1973 to a more lucrative teaching job at a junior college in the Persian Gulf island country of Bahrain. During another three-year sojourn, though now separated from his father, she took trips with young Moore to places like Cairo, and went on Safari in Kenya. "I've got pictures of me next to the Pyramids, riding camels," Moore fondly relates. "I had this really eclectic, wonderful childhood, being in all these different places."

When they returned to the States in 1976, his mom's hometown of Boston did not exactly greet them with open arms. Moore recalls violence and racial epithets that made no sense to him: "I had rocks thrown at me; I had 11 stitches in my head. All because I was black, I was different, and I didn't understand what that meant, because I had just had seven years of being accepted wherever we went. Whether it was Pakistan, whether it was Ghana, London, Greece — it didn't matter."

Their move west to California a year later brought them to a more peaceful life, allowing Moore to grow up in a place where he could reflect on and integrate the good and the bad of his youth. The strength and insight he found served him well as an actor. He joined the cast of the daytime drama "The Young and the Restless" in 1999, where he won a Daytime Emmy for best supporting actor. He then landed a prominent role in the 2005 film *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, which paved the way to "Criminal Minds." The show follows the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit profilers, who have been hand-picked for their skills in meticulous psychological analysis. Each episode sees the special agents tracking down mentally and emotionally disturbed criminals: psychopaths, stalkers, serial killers, and the like. Moore says he identifies with his television character not with any desire to visit gruesome crime scenes or thwart violent perpetrators, but in his examination and understanding of human behavior.

"I've had so much experience trying to be a chameleon, trying to fit in with different populations, and different ways of thinking, and different cultures," Moore explains. "Being an only child, being a bi-racial child, I think I've profiled people my entire life. Whether it's to make friends, to know where I fit, I know that I can read people very well. I think I can sense if a person is innately good, or if they have an agenda — good or bad."

Though "Criminal Minds" takes much of his time, the warm-hearted, hard-charging thespian has other priorities as well. With his mother now battling multiple sclerosis, Moore will take an upcoming weekend off to participate in "Bike MS," a ride from Camarillo to Santa Barbara, to benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. He also indicates another desire, undoubtedly inspired by his boyhood adventures: "I want to travel. I don't want to do the Four Seasons, five-star thing. I want to put a backpack on and take a train, hitchhike — it doesn't matter. Different languages, different cultures, different food, different people, different complexions, all that! Hollywood's great, but nothing beats traveling to different parts of the world." ▼

The fourth season of "Criminal Minds" premieres Wednesday, September 24 at 9pm on CBS. For more show information, visit www.cbs.com. "Bike MS: California Ride" takes place September 20 and 21. Visit www.bikeMSsocial.org for more information, and see www.nationalMSSociety.org to learn more about the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

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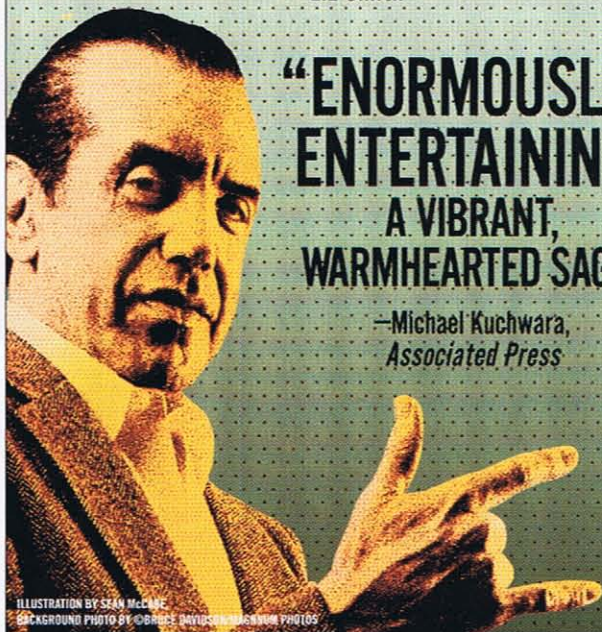


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