

TIME

Q&A **Montel Williams**

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Montel Williams does not lack confidence. As host of the new Air America radio show "Montel Across America," the longtime TV host gets to show off his skills as a former motivational speaker. And he is fired up! In addition to discussing some of his marquee issues — he's a longtime proponent (and user) of medical marijuana — the former military intelligence officer talked to TIME about running for office, the "Montel Stimulus Plan," and why he considers Barack Obama to be a straight-up genius.

What's different about doing radio compared to television?

There's nothing like live radio. I like the challenge. Throw it my way. Let me go! I can read something in five minutes, digest it and put it back at ya. Like today, who knew? I got a caller today from Paris. No ifs, ands or buts — the person is listening to me on Air America in Paris. Rock on. When I taped the Montel Williams show, yeah, I did seven different countries, but I didn't have the world. I've got the world now through Air America and I'm going to fire it up. I've introduced a little MSP. You know what MSP is?

No. What is it?

It's the Montel Stimulus Plan. I'm putting forth ideas. I have callers from all over the place calling in and saying, "Montel, are you crazy?" "Montel, Montel!"

Since you brought up politics, you've said you didn't support Barack Obama at the beginning of his presidency, but that you do now. Why?

I've been a staunch Republican. I did 22 years in the military and I had a hard time thinking about a commander-in-chief who has no knowledge of the military. But I wasn't as aware of the genius in the man we have as our president. Across the board, hands down. And supported by a genius wife! That's the reason he's getting such rebuke from the right. There are a bunch of stupid people that are jealous of the intelligence the man has.

So do you have any criticisms of what he's done so far?

Oh, I've got plenty of criticisms. Some of the top secret areas that we plan on opening up, I'm not feelin' it. So I have a problem with that.

How about the stimulus package?

I personally just got impacted by the stimulus plan. I've been unemployed for about a year and I got a new job because this radio network made an investment in me. They couldn't have done so if there were not money available in the marketplace.

Why have you been so critical of the military budget?

We have four different uniforms. If you have the true spirit of joint operations, we don't need a separate Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps. I'm a Marine. Ooo-rah! I went to Paris Island. I get it, I got it! I love my history. But it's now time to look to the future. Put them all under one regime.

You said recently that you own 11 to 14 guns. What do you think about the recent spate of mass killings and gun violence?

The Second Amendment gives us the right to own guns. But I'm a pet owner and my dog Max has a [micro]chip in him. If I lose Max, I'm gonna find him. They can just hit it with the satellite. Pow! Find Max! If you want to put a little chip in my gun so you know where it is all the time, please do.

Why do you have guns?

I like to shoot rocks. It's a big loud noise that reminds me of the days I got to shoot them a lot for Uncle Sam.

What are some other issues you plan on talking about on your show?

Gay marriage is a huge issue. We've got a whole movement in this country saying, "Please be careful. The gay marriage is coming! Oh my God." What is it? They're gonna sprinkle gay dust on you and you're going to run out and kiss your neighbor? I don't get it. What are you so afraid of?

You have multiple sclerosis. What's the latest update on your health?

Mine's gotten just a touch worse. I have pain in my lower extremities and that's now shifted to my face around my right eye. I just don't want to think about what the next two or three years may have to offer if this crap cranks up.

You take an enormous amount of pills and you do self-injections too, right?

Yup. Every day. But you know what? What was the choice? To end up where doctors thought I would be three years ago — a wheelchair? Not happening.

And you use marijuana every day for your pain, right?

Every day. I might take one small whiff and I'm done for two hours. In the middle of the night, I can wake up and be locked in a cramp that will take five to ten minutes to release. I was sleeping for less than two and a half hours straight before I started medicating. Now I get four to six hours.

Do you get high?

I get no euphoria whatsoever. We know now for a fact that the active ingredient in marijuana also affects the nerve endings, the same place I pick up pain. So when I use pot, rather than it going to my brain and giving me a euphoria, it seems to focus on those inflamed nerve endings and it brings down my pain.

To get high, I gotta sit down and deliberately attempt to get high. It requires a lot. I don't do that.

Are you interested in ever running for office?

To get a call from Paris tells me that people around the world are willing to listen and people around the world want information. I am loving this genre! I wouldn't even consider a political office for 12 to 15 years.

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