

# WANDA SYKES

b. March 7, 1964

## COMEDIAN/ACTOR

*“They pissed off the wrong group of people. Instead of having gay marriage in California, we’re going to get it across the country.”*

**She was a performer and writer for “The Chris Rock Show” and won the 1999 Emmy for outstanding writing for a variety, music or comedy special.**

Wanda Sykes is an Emmy Award-winning comedian and actor praised for being one of the most entertaining women of her generation. She was the first African-American and first openly gay master of ceremonies for the White House Correspondents’ Dinner.

Sykes was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, and raised in the Washington, D.C., area. Her father, an Army colonel, worked in the Pentagon; her mother worked as a bank manager. At a young age, Sykes discovered her passion for making people laugh. She was outspoken and entertaining in high school. In 1986, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing from Hampton University and began working for the National Security Agency (NSA).

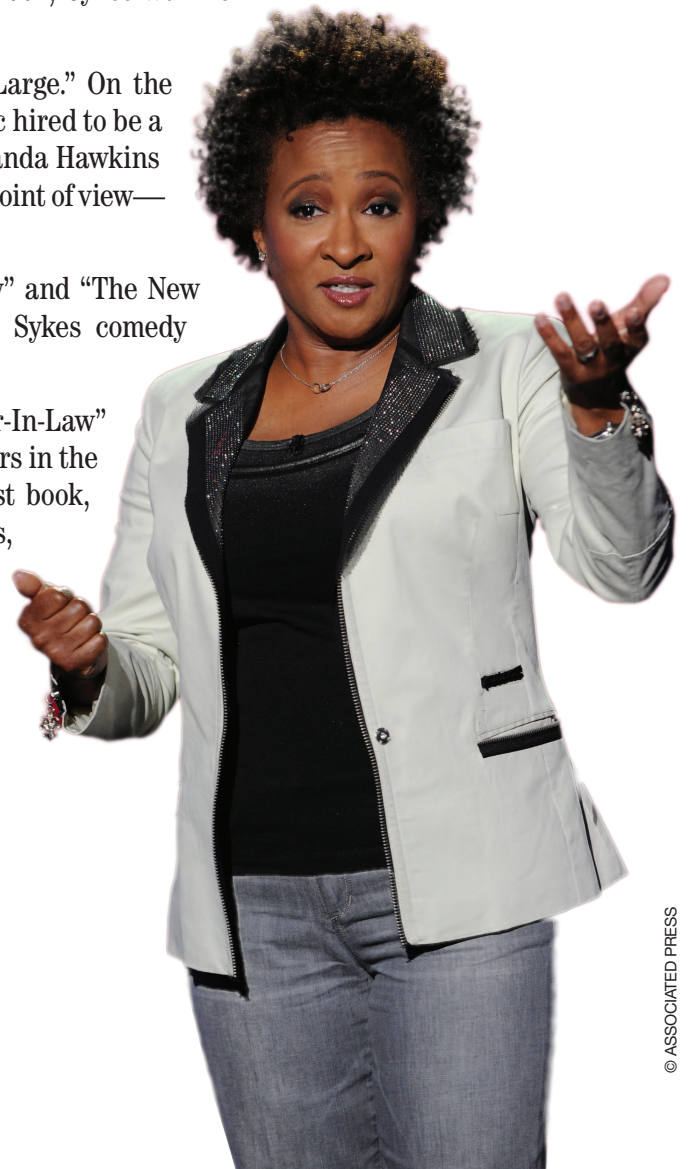
Sykes’s stand-up career began spontaneously at a talent showcase. She quickly made close friends in the comedy world, including rising star Chris Rock. She was a performer and writer for “The Chris Rock Show” and won the 1999 Emmy for outstanding writing for a variety, music or comedy special. In 2002, Sykes won her second Emmy for her work on “Inside the NFL.”

In 2003, Sykes launched her first television show, “Wanda at Large.” On the show, she played Wanda Hawkins, an unsuccessful stand-up comic hired to be a correspondent on a political talk show. Sykes acknowledged, “Wanda Hawkins is basically me personified. We have the same attitude, the same point of view—pointing out hypocrisies in the way we see the world.”

Sykes has starred in “Wanda Does It,” “The Wanda Sykes Show” and “The New Adventures of Old Christine.” HBO has produced two Wanda Sykes comedy specials, “Sick & Tired” (2006) and “I’m a Be Me” (2009).

Sykes appeared in the feature films “Evan Almighty,” “Monster-In-Law” and “My Super Ex-Girlfriend,” and provided the voice for characters in the animated films “Over The Hedge” and “The Barnyard.” Her first book, “Yeah, I Said It,” is a collection of comedic essays on current events, family and life.

In 2008, Sykes came out when she announced her own marriage while speaking at a rally for gay marriage. She lives in California with her wife, Alex, and their twins, Lucas and Olivia.



**lgbt**  
★  
HISTORY  
MONTH

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright ©2011 – A Project of Equality Forum