

SOUL FOOD JUNKIES

[TRANSCRIPT]

BYRON HURT: This is my pops, Jackie Hurt. My pops loved to eat and he loved eating soul food – barbecued ribs, grits and eggs, collard greens, ham hocks, cornbread, mac and cheese, black-eyed peas, sweet potato pies. You name it, he loved it. My mother, Francis Hurt, married my pops at 17 and cooked most of his meals. Like most boys, I wanted to be just like my pops. At the dinner table, I ate whatever he ate. So I would stack up my plate with the grits and the eggs and the salt pork, and we would slice up our pork in nice little pieces and mix the grits and the eggs together and put all the pork that we had cut up on top of the grits and the eggs, and then put it on top of our toast. That was like a typical Sunday breakfast. Breakfast on Sunday morning was when my pops and I really connected because we were sharing food with each other and establishing a family tradition. I never questioned what we were eating or how much. Back then, I just enjoyed my mother’s delicious food.

My father went from being young and fit, to growing nearly twice his size. I worried all the time about my pop’s health. My biggest fear was that he would get sick and die at an early age. Even though he talked about making changes, he continued to eat soul food meals that were high in fat and calories. Seven years ago, my pops got sick and even still, he refused to give up eating traditional soul food and I just couldn’t understand why. My father’s difficulty giving up soul food and other unhealthy foods made me curious about black people and our relationship to food. I wanted to know more about soul food’s history, where it came from, and why it is so important to black cultural identity. How does Southern food become soul food? Is soul food good or bad for you? Is soul food causing illness and early death in my community? These questions sent me out on a national journey to find out if we are a culture of Soul Food Junkies.

TITLE SCREEN: SOUL FOOD JUNKIES

BYRON HURT: What is it about soul food that you love? What’s so appealing?

Woman: The spice, the season.

Man: I came for the fried chicken.

CAKE MAN RAVEN: My relationship with soul food has to be one of those marriages that you just don’t divorce from and don’t break up or get separated from.

CASSANDRA GAINES: Everybody loves soul food. Everybody loves soul food.

NORMA JEAN DARDEN: Soul food is a great part of our culture because it's a time of coming together. It's a time of cooking together, talking together, sitting down and consuming together.

Reverend: That's why when we pray, good Lord, good meat, come on let's eat! Hallelujah!

MICHAELA ANGELA DAVIS: Soul food is a repository for our history and for our dreams, and it's this memory of comfort. And soul food represents black.

The Hurt Family: SOUL FOOD!

Chef: If you ain't get your fingers greasy, you ain't eating no soul food you know.

SONIA SANCHEZ: So not only was soul food, soul food, but soul food is the soul food conversation. The conversation of people who cook soul food, who didn't have a lot of money. And so therefore they fried their chicken, made the grits and made the greens and made the string beans and mac and cheese.

VONDA McPHERSON: Soul food for me is love and it's the main ingredient.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: At home we didn't call it soul food, we just called it dinner.

BYRON HURT: My family is from a small Southern town called Milledgeville, Georgia. Food is a huge part of the culture in Georgia, especially what is now affectionately called "soul food."

BYRON HURT: Ma, what is that you're doin'?

FRANCIS HURT: I'm putting the foil around the edges of the pie crust so that when I put it in the oven, the edges won't burn.

BYRON HURT: So I have all of these beautiful memories of my mother, sister, and me preparing and cooking soul food for our trips from New York to Georgia. We would wrap the food in foil and put it in brown paper bags. Looking back, those were some of the best times for us as a family. Soul food was a big part of our journey. We bonded as we drove south eating my mother's fried chicken. My parents told us stories about what it was like growing up in the Jim Crow South. As we crossed the Mason Dixon line and made our way into the Deep South, my father would have my sister and me close our eyes and imagine what life was like during slavery. Driving past cotton fields on both sides of the highway, I would close my eyes tightly and visualize myself picking cotton from sun up to sun down.

CHAPTER 2 – SOUL SURVIVORS

BYRON HURT: The stories my pops told my sister and me were powerful and made me wonder about the day-to-day lives of my enslaved ancestors. I've always heard horrible stories about slave traders feeding enslaved Africans the poorest quality foods but if this were true, then how did they manage to survive the riggers of slavery?

JESSICA B. HARRIS: Slavery may have been racially based, but it was an economic proposition and it wasn't economic to put all those people in a ship and have 'em die! So you had to feed them enough of what they would eat so that they would survive the voyage. And the voyage was beyond horrific.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: So what the savvy slave trader did was to study his cargo and their culture. What do these people normally eat? And best he could is reproduce that in the cheapest form possible.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: Basically the enslaved might be fed corn, rice or yams depending on their point of origin.

BYRON HURT: I often hear black people say slaves ate from the bottom of the barrel. When I was young, my grandfather told me stories about his grandfather eating food out of hog troughs. Were stories like this, fact or fiction?

LENI SORENSON: It's important to complicate the notions of soul food in the same way that it's important to complicate our notions of slavery, our notions of American history. Everything is inevitably twenty times more complicated than you thought it was gonna be. There's so many mythologies that have accreted onto the idea of what black people were eating during the time of slavery. If one's grandfather said that his grandfather ate out of a trough in the slave pen, there may very well be a kernel of truth to that. But we're also hearing the story now from a grandfather who heard it from a grandfather. People who were being given a peck of cornmeal and a half-pound of salt pork or three dried fish and a little bit of salt every week, how do you raise a community of women who are pregnant, who are lactating and knee babies and adolescents and men – and women, too – who are burning 3,000 calories a day? They can't live on what I just named. They can't. So we know they didn't. So what did they eat?

BRYANT TERRY: Slavery wasn't a monolithic institution. It looked different in different parts of the Americas and the Caribbean. In certain parts of the Caribbean, enslaved Africans were able to grow their own food and had Sundays off. It wasn't this paternalistic system like it was in the black belt in the Deep South.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: Under some systems they had provision grounds and in the provision grounds they were expected to grow their food. Remember, slaves were responsible not only for growing their food, but in many cases for growing the food for the entire plantation.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: They're givin' slaves the bare minimum in order for them to exist and to work. Now slaves are fighting against that. They're resisting by trying to provide food for themselves. So they're using a lot of the same hunting and fishing techniques that they did in Africa. The Tidewater region, slaves there supplemented their diet with fishing, with crabs, crab cakes and all those kind of things.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: The enslaved in the low country had rice in their diet. They had broken rice; the rice that wasn't able to be sold became a part of the diet.

SHANTRELL P. LEWIS: New Orleans is a very African city with, what I would say, a thin, French veil. The first wave of African people were coming from the Senegambia region of West Africa to New Orleans. Something else that these people brought was okra. Which 'gumbo' is actually the West African word for okra and so the women, when they were disembarking off of the slave ships, people were finding seeds in their hair and they were actually okra seeds.

LOLIS ERIC ELIE: New Orleans is interesting because although we're in the South technically, in terms of culture we face more even south of us, to the Caribbean. So we find we got a lot in common with those cultures. We got seafood, obviously, with all the islands, also from the kind of beans that are the heart of our food very much common in the area south of us, not as common in Mississippi and Virginia and other places north of us.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: It's my argument that the slave quarters is influencing the big house more than the big house is influencing the slave quarters. It was black women who raised these white kids in these wealthy families, and they're feeding these kids their food. So they might make for the table some kind of special dish for this planter, but in the kitchen is where that little white boy is and little white girl is, and she's eating and he's eating that food and developing that palette. So as he gets older, he said, "This is the kind of food I want my family to have."

MARCIA WEAVER: I can tell you right now we learned all of our cooking skills from African Americans. Just have to face that fact. Soul food didn't come here from the Caucasian parts of our world; they came from Africa. And whatever household you came from in Mississippi, and probably in the South, if you had soul food, you had some connection with African Americans in your family so that you learned how to cook those meals so that they'd taste really good.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: And so what happened clearly in the South, and, arguably, in other parts of the United States and, even more arguably, throughout the hemisphere, was that the hand of the African in the pot transformed the taste of the pot.

BYRON HURT: Black people in the South during and after slavery took their food and seasoned it, battered it, fried it, baked it, smoked it and canned it. With a pinch of this and a pinch of that, we turned survival food into a delicacy that people from all walks of life enjoy

eating. But to further understand my pop's deep love for soul food, I decided to go back to the Deep South – Jackson, Mississippi. I wanted to get a better sense of just how entrenched the soul food tradition is to Southerners. While there, I went to a historically black college football game at Jackson State University. Here, there were thousands of black people having a great time and where there are thousands of black at a social event, there's got to be some soul food. As a Northerner returning to my Southern roots, these tailgaters reminded me that there's nothing quite like Southern hospitality. The atmosphere felt like a family reunion.

BYRON HURT: How long y'all been out here tailgatin'?

Man: Oh, man, we got out here yesterday what time?

Man: Three? ...About three.

BYRON HURT: Wait. Y'all been out here since yesterday?

Man: Yes!

BYRON HURT: Everywhere I turned, people offered me something to eat. Now I don't know about you, but growing up my father warned my sister and me to always accept a plate of food when we came Down South, even if we weren't hungry. He said folks in the South would be offended if you didn't accept their food. I ran into these brothers who introduced me to their tailgate special.

Man: Mississippi junk pot!

BYRON HURT: So tell me what you got inside the junk pot.

Man: Corn, neckbone, turkey neck.

BYRON HURT: And what else?

Group: ...Ah, potatoes, potatoes ears, pig ears and pig feet! Everything ain't good for you in here!

BYRON HURT: All right. So wait, you saying everything in here ain't good for you?

Group: No! But it's good to you, though! Good to you...

BYRON HURT: And then, they offered me something to eat.

Man: Are you a 10 percenter? Come on! Get you some of this pork!

BYRON HURT: It was like my father was right there with me, standing on my shoulder. I really didn't want to reject their Southern hospitality, but I stopped eating pork and red meat years ago. And when I looked into that junk pot and saw all of that food swimming in all of those pig ears and pig feet, I was like, "Yo, y'all are buggin'!" But the social pressure got the best of me. I grabbed a piece of corn, hoping they'd be satisfied. But my man right here wasn't having it.

Man: Get you a turkey neck!

BYRON HURT: I'm good man, I'm good man. I'm good.

Man: Get you a turkey neck man! Hold on, man. Hold up, hold up, hold up. You got to have this right here.

Group: You got to have it. Hey, you got to have that. Taste it!

BYRON HURT: I'm good. I'm good. Nah, I'm good!

Man: Taste it! Taste it! Uh-uh! You gotta taste it in front of us!

BYRON HURT: I'm gonna taste it right now!

Man: All right taste! If it ain't right, tell the people it ain't right!

BYRON HURT: Yo I can not front. That turkey neck, drenched in pork juice, was delicious!

STEVEN JACKSON: I think it truly stems from Southern hospitality and back in the day in the South where everyone used to feed each other. If Big Mama had this much food, everybody on the block was eatin'.

PORTIA JONES: They don't think about high blood pressure or anything that's gonna happen down the line; they think about, okay, right now. "We're eating now. We're at the table. So, you know, everybody come in. Let's eat. Let's enjoy right now."

AKIL BAKARI: Food is an event in the South, and Jackson typifies that enormously, particularly in the areas where black people are predominant, and actually Jackson is a predominantly black city, about 85 percent.

STEVEN JACKSON: In our culture, especially black culture, we have a problem with eatin' all the wrong foods – a lot of fried foods, a lot of grease.

LESLIE McLEMORE: Mississippi is – not only are we the fattest state; we're the poorest state. We don't exercise and don't have the dietary choices that a lot of people have. So all of that is a part of why we are called the fattest state in the union.

Man: Wooo!

BYRON HURT: There you go!

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: See, our platform, it is really to change the dynamic for living for black people and for all people who live in our ward in the city and in the state. So we have to grapple with the issues of food and health. You cannot really create a culture of

advancement if you don't have people who are plugged into the ways that we can promote life.

BYRON HURT: My next stop was Peaches Restaurant on historic Farish Street. I heard about the delicious breakfast at Peaches and the unique role Ms. Peaches played in feeding civil rights protestors in Jackson. I couldn't wait to meet this local legend in person.

MS. PEACHES: I established Peaches Restaurant in 1961 in May, May the 1st.

BYRON HURT: How old were you when you established Peaches?

MS. PEACHES: [laughs] I'm 86 now. So you would have to do a little figurin'. It must have been I was... it was in my 40's.

RODERICK EPHRAM: Medgar Evers ate here. The Freedom Riders ate here. So it was a very important movement for Peaches Restaurant in civil rights, I think. It made black people feel like they were special. They could come here, get a home-cooked meal. Wasn't no black, wasn't no white; it was just soul food. I know they was havin' some type of protest downtown, and what they'll do when they arrest you and take you down to the fairgrounds. And they'll put you where they keep the horses and cows at. The people didn't have nothin' to eat all day. Of course, I think they would let 'em stay for four or five hours and stuff like that. But what Mom done, Miss Peaches, did, I think she made over like a hundred-some sandwiches. Ah, she had just opened up, I think, seven to eight years. It was in the '60's. So she really didn't have a lot of food herself. So she made all the sandwiches, stuff, and got in her little car and took the food down there to the fairgrounds for the civil rights marchers to have something to eat.

MS. PEACHES: You out there and bein' misused, mistreated, people are doggin' you around and you ain't got nowhere to go. I think it was my duty to open the door and let you in.

RODERICK EPHRAM: You lookin' at a little black lady. You know, she could have been afraid 'cause she has the white police officer with German shepherds, and she could have got in trouble for openin' her door and lettin' all these people run in here. If I was growin' up in her era, I don't think I would have did half the stuff she did. 'Cause I used to see her come home and count pennies. Couldn't even pay bills, but she steady feeding folk.

MS. PEACHES: ...And havin' ability to cook gave me power. It made me stronger, made me want to do more of it because the people depended on me to do it. And when you expect me to do something, I want to do my best. And I will do my best.

BYRON HURT: My pops would have loved Miss Peaches because she represents countless black women in the South whose food nourished folks like my dad with loving hands.

BYRON HURT: Taundra, remember when we used to go down South and we would pack the food for the trip?

TAUNDRA HURT: I mean I remember the night before always – well, at that time we used to eat white bread – gettin’ the bread out and helpin’ Mommy make the sandwiches. Mommy would be in the kitchen, frying up the chicken. You would always save the bigger pieces for Daddy. That was always a must.

BYRON HURT: Ma, why did we pack the bags instead of just going to a restaurant?

FRANCIS HURT: One of the reasons is because black people were not allowed to stop at a hotel or eat in certain places. That’s were it actually originated. But it was before your time. It just became a tradition, I guess.

BYRON HURT: My pops often reflected on how some black traditions were born from necessity.

JACKIE HURT: Under the system of Jim Crow and segregation, probably many people before me had to learn some coping skills. In doing this, they did not necessarily have to surrender their dignity, but they had to find ways, viable ways, tenable ways of getting their needs met without sacrificing our dignity.

Music Lyrics: *“Where there’s health neglect, there’s no self-respect. But what else do you expect? Look how they dealt the deck. We inherited stress, had to bury our best: Martin, Malcolm X, bullet holes in their chest [Gun Shot]. We adapted to struggle, only way we survive, eating scraps from the table, but it kept us alive. Making something from nothing, still we hope for the best, making miracles happen, daily coping with less.”*

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: During the end of Jim Crow and before the 1970’s-1980’s when black folks could freely go into any establishment they want, they had to be just as strategic about where they ate. And one of the things that you see black folks do, particularly when they’re traveling on the train in the South or the bus, is shoebox lunches – literally taking an empty shoebox, linin’ it with a paper towel or some waxed paper, typically what’s going to be in that box, a hard-boiled egg, a napkin with some salt and pepper on there, some fried chicken.

JESSICA B. HARRIS: There was a series of black guidebooks known as “The Green Book” that came out, I think in the ‘40’s or ‘50’s, that were designed specifically for blacks who traveled. And it listed where you could stop and where you could eat. There was always “the network,” if you will.

Media Clip – “Sanford & Son”:

Fred Sanford: *This stuff costs so much, they don’t even put the price beside it!*

Son: *No, Pop. We’re flyin’ first class, man. We get our choice of any of this stuff for free. See, you don’t get that in second class.*

Fred Sanford: *We can eat any of this stuff here free?*

Son: *Our choice.*

Fred Sanford: *Then I won't be needin' these. I won't be needin' these chicken wings.*

CHAPTER 3 – SOUL REVOLUTION

BRYANT TERRY: In the late 1960's you had young African Americans who were kind of naming and reclaiming different parts of our culture. Soul food was another thing that was being re-embraced, and in some ways it was this kind of romanticization of the way that people were eating in the rural South.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: The term “soul food,” evolved out of the Black Power movement. You have the emergence of the Afro as a symbol of black authenticity. You have soul music, Motown. All these things evolve around that same time period.

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: At the best moments of the black freedom struggle, we recognized that we didn't just need to change laws; we also needed to change our living patterns.

Archival Footage: *Come on in, little brothers. Come on in, little sisters. Y'all can sit down and get something' to eat.*

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: When you had organizations like the Black Panthers they not only told us to change our diets; they also imposed breakfast programs and other sort of community oriented food programs so that people would have healthy living options. And they understood the relationship between healthy living and a community. They understood the relationship between developing a black nation and having healthy diets.

BYRON HURT: The first people I ever heard rejecting soul food was comedian and activist Dick Gregory and Nation of Islam leader, Elijah Muhammad.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OPIE: Dick Gregory has a following because of his stature as a comedian. Then he has this radical change in his life, and it happens because as a form of protest he decides that he's going to go on this fast. So when he does this, it draws all this attention. His role as a comic takes back seat to his role as an activist. And within the context of an activist, he has food activism in there.

DICK GREGORY: “Soul?” Should call it “death food,” ‘cause it will kill you. [laughs] You know, it will kill you. When you get somebody my age, what soul food was then is not what soul food is now. The difference when I grew up and now is people had houses, it wasn't apartments, and had gardens and fresh stuff and no chemicals in it. The biggest shock to me is what Elijah Muhammad was able to do to non-believers. My mother, man, my mother she ain't gonna be nothing but a Christian all her life and would go to war if you told her. But she stopped eating pork. Huh?

BYRON HURT: And why was that?

DICK GREGORY: Elijah Muhammad!

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: When the honorable Elijah Muhammad emerges, he put out the book “How to Eat to Live,” all of these things created a new model for black living and black wellness that many people carried on. So that even if you weren’t buyin’ their political line, even if you didn’t want to join the Nation, even if you were a Christian, you still said, “Well, maybe I don’t eat pork today.” You still said, “Maybe I don’t need to eat bottom feeders.” You – you changed your entire diet based on these things.

MINISTER ABDUL HAFEEZ MUHAMMAD: In the Nation of Islam and in “How to Eat to Live,” we have referred to a soul food diet as a slave diet, because it is the lower realm of food that our former slave masters gave to us when we were displaced Africans under their slavery. But when you know better, you do better.

BYRON HURT: The Nation of Islam’s image of strength and discipline appealed to me as a young black man. Although I never joined the Nation, I did change my eating habits based on their emphasis on healthy living. My father on the other hand, a Christian, thought I was nuts. He said our family had eaten this way for generations and lived well into their eighties and nineties. He saw no need to stop eating the food he enjoyed. It’s Sunday morning and we had our traditional Sunday morning breakfast with the grits and the eggs and the bacon and the salt pork. All I was eating was like the grits and the eggs, and maybe some toast. Realizing that I had rejected the pork, my father was like, “What are they teaching you up there in Boston?” He was kind of ridiculing the fact that I wasn’t eating any pork anymore. Maybe he felt like that was me rejecting him, me rejecting black culture, me rejecting the food that he loved. I don’t know, but I know that it made him feel a little bit uncomfortable.

DICK GREGORY: I can understand your father: “You can’t tell me nothin’. Especially if you got some education and I ain’t got none. Huh? Who you think you are? I raised you, boy. It was good enough for you!”

BYRON HURT: But traditional soul food wasn’t good enough for us anymore, so we changed. My sister moved toward a vegetable based diet and became the most health conscious person in our family. And as my mother learned to prepare soul food in a healthier way, she also began to change, but my father resisted and clung to tradition.

QUEEN AFUA: In every family, when one begins to make that shift, the family becomes threatened and frightened of change. Change is one of the hardest things to make. So it’s emotional, it’s how we were raised. It is how long your father, or any of us, been eating a particular way. And so now it’s ingrained and it’s a habit.

FRANCIS HURT: Lord we thank you for how you’ve blessed us to come together today. We thank you for the food that was prepared. We thank you for blessing us to use it for the nourishment of our bodies. Christ sake, amen ...

Hurt Family: ... Amen.

BYRON HURT: I remember when you and daddy came up to see one of my football games and at that point daddy was really heavy. Do you remember that?

FRANCIS HURT: Yes.

BYRON HURT: It was no big deal to him but when I saw him, I was really shocked at how heavy he was. But I was always scared to say something to daddy about his eating habits or his weight because of how he reacted. One weekend when I came home from Boston, I said to myself, "I'm going to say something to him, because if I don't say anything to him and he has a heart attack or a stroke, I'll never be able to live with myself." Right before I left to go to school, I just said to him, "Daddy you know I just wanted to say that I'm really concerned about your weight." He listened to me in that moment but he kind of tossed it back onto me, and he started talking about how much food I ate during the weekend while I was home. You know what I mean? So he kind of put it back onto me. Do you think that daddy was addicted to soul food?

TAUNDRA HURT: I think he was addicted to food in general, food that made him feel good.

FRANCIS HURT: ...Right, right.

TAUNDRA HURT: It didn't have to be soul food. It was a comfort food. It was something that kept him going. Something that he enjoyed and didn't want to give up. I don't think it was just—

FRANCIS HURT: Soul food.

TAUNDRA HURT: I don't think he was just addicted to soul food.

FRANCIS HURT: Right.

DICK GREGORY: Addictions. All addictions is about pleasure. Hm? All addictions about pleasure. Something so awful in your life that you need pleasure.

BYRON HURT: My pops life wasn't an easy one. His mother died young, when he was only 10 years old. His father was a man who was neglectful, abusive, and drank too much. My dad lived through the racism of the Jim Crow South and had to navigate a society that was hostile to black men. But perhaps the biggest tragedy in my pop's life was the sudden lost of my older brother, Howard. Howard was just four years old and my parent's first child. As the story goes, he took a gun, which he thought was toy pointed it at his head and pulled the trigger. It was a horrible, horrible accident. This happened during the holidays, on one of those trips from New York to Georgia. When I think about that, I can only imagine how that impacted my father, the pain of losing his first son.

BYRON HURT: When you hear ‘Muskogee, Oklahoma’ the first thing that comes to mind is soul food, right? Okay, well, maybe not. But after doing a little research, I found out that, once a year, the city of Muskogee is the place to be to celebrate soul food.

CASSANDRA GAINES: I want to welcome you all to the 5th annual Soul Food Cookoff competition. Whatever you serving the judges, you need to serve the community. And if you run out of food before a certain time, you will be penalized.

Contestant: What if you serve 200 people and then you run out of food?

CASSANDRA GAINES: That’s a different story.

CASSANDRA GAINES: Five years ago, by me being an event planner for the city of Muskogee, I knew I had to be creative coming up with something during the Dr. Martin Luther King celebration. And I went to the Internet and couldn’t find where nobody was doing a soul food competition, anywhere. So I put together the Dr. Martin Luther King Soul Food Cookoff.

Cassandra Gaine’s voice on PA system: So use the white ticket to vote for your favorite food.

CASSANDRA GAINES: The people that enter this competition is strictly home bred, home grown. They’re not the restaurant owners. They’re just people coming in here letting people know that they can cook!

Contestant: Now, you haven’t had nothing until you had my black eyed peas.

BERNICE THARP: Here I have smoked pork roast.

BYRON HURT: How long did it take to make this?

BERNICE THARP: About four to five hours.

DOMINIQUE NERO: We got slow, smoked ribs. We smoked them for hours and hours on the grill, hickory smoked. Didn’t get no sleep last night because we were just anticipating how good they was going to turn out. I was actually counting ribs to go to sleep.

Contestant: This is actually jalapeno corn bread but it’s layered with meat, cheese and jalapenos.

DEE RICHARDSON: The thing that stands out to me is the enthusiasm that each of the cooks has. When you walk up to the table and they just want to tell you immediately what they’ve done, how they did it, where some of the props came from – most of which came from the family heirloom – mothers, grandmothers.

BERNICE THARP: This is a butter churn, and we make butter out of this from cream.

DEE RICHARDSON: Some of the women in the back are actually wearing uniforms from their grandmothers', aunts' wardrobes.

BERNICE THARP: Well we're wearing old housedresses, bonnets and other hair attire. My grandmother always wore a house-dress, apron, and a bonnet on a daily basis.

BYRON HURT: Now how long have you been cooking soul food?

JANICE BROWN: All my life.

BYRON HURT: ... All your life.

JANICE BROWN: My mother is the queen of culinary. From the time we were old enough to reach the cabinets. She allowed us in the kitchen, she allowed us to be creative. When I got older, it was mandatory, once a week, that you picked out something that you were going to cook for dinner and you cooked it for the family.

BYRON HURT: You're competing against your aunt and your grandmother?

DOMINIQUE NERO: ... and mother!

BYRON HURT: And mother?

DOMINIQUE NERO: There's all kind of stuff going on. That's all three of our mothers over there.

Dominique's Mother: We are number one! We will beat my son, my nephew...

Dominique's grandmother: ... And grandson.

Dominique's mother: ... And grandson! They can come in second, but they can not beat us!

Dominique's Aunt: We got this!

BYRON HURT: What do you have on your plate here?

Competition Attendee: I have black eyed peas, neck bones, a little peach cobbler juice left, zucchini bread, and sweet potato crunch.

Competition Attendee: We grew up eating this kind of food. Soul Food tastes good, better than most white man's food tastes, for sure.

CASSANDRA GAINES: The cooks will be judged on taste, presentation, texture and originality.

BYRON HURT: After hours of prepping, cooking, baking and making sure their presentation was air tight, it was now time for the judges to taste and decide who will become the soul food cook of the year.

BYRON HURT: Do you just take a little, tiny piece and see how it fits your palette?

Judge #1: Most of us take a tiny piece; well this gentleman here eats as much of it as he possibly can.

Judge #2: Well, I've been around soul food all my life for some reason and to see it glorified because all during my lifetime, well, my mother's cakes or my aunties' pies or the barbecued brisket, or the barbecued ribs or what not – all my relatives and friends were talking about how good they were. So I'm glad that now they can have a reward for being able to do this.

CASSANDRA GAINES: I want to thank each and every last one of you for participating. Every last one of you are, in my eyes, a winner. And let's give them all a round of applause. The 3rd place winner wins \$500. The 2nd place winner wins \$1,000 and the 1st place winner wins \$2000. Booth #6, Gail Moore, \$500 – let's give her a round of applause. Booth #9, \$1,000, Tanya Davis. Booth #2, \$2,000.

BYRON HURT: So you're the big winner!

BERNICE THARP: I'm the big winner today!

BYRON HURT: How you feelin'?

BERNICE THARP: Excited! I already know what I'm gonna get, a new refrigerator!

CASSANDRA GAINES: For people's choice – Janice Brown!

BYRON HURT: This is like, you know, winning the Super Bowl, right?

JANICE BROWN: It is! It is for me.

BYRON HURT: How you feelin'?

JANICE BROWN: Oh I'm thrilled, thrilled to death. I'm on cloud nine right now. To win People's Choice, that means more to me than anything the judges could do.

BYRON HURT: Now why is that?

JANICE BROWN: Because we have so many people come through here and there's so much good food, and for them to vote ME people's choice – that's just validation and ... it's just overwhelming for me. Overwhelming.

JANICE BROWN: That was fun, it's always a great time, isn't it?

BERNICE THARP: It is, it really is. I enjoy the people, coming and talking.

JANICE BROWN: You know, ever since you guys were next to us in Tulsa that day, I just always look forward to you guys coming down here.

BERNICE THARP: It's been fun. I tell you, it always is.

JANICE BROWN: Well, I'll see you next year.

BERNICE THARP: Okay, good luck with your business.

JANICE BROWN: Thank you, sweetie.

BERNICE THARP: You're welcome!

BYRON HURT: Asking people to change their eating habits is almost asking someone about their sex life or how much money they have in the bank. Food is deeply personal. So when I asked if soul food is healthy, I got some pretty interesting reactions.

Man: This right here, it was aight yesterday but when they told us it wasn't good for us, we stopped eating it. But it wasn't killing us then.

BYRON HURT: Now whose "they"?

Man: You know who "they" is!

BYRON HURT: (laughs) Aight, I know who they is...

Man: This is how we survive, this is what they gave us. We had to eat this: We had to eat the pig feet, we had to eat the pig tail, we had to eat the neck bones. They wouldn't eat it! We fixed it, we seasoned it. It's good, now they like it too.

Man: God made Adam and Eve, came from his ribs. So a woman is good, so the woman came from the ribs, so the ribs gotta be good too you know. That's the way I see it.

Woman: It's comfort food you know, you eat it and it makes you feel better. It must release endorphins or something that just make you feel all right.

Woman: Everything in moderation. I can eat this, this, this, this... but in moderation.

DICK GREGORY: I don't eat anything that fart, doo-doo, pee or screw. Now there's no conversation behind that.

Man: I have this concept called "plate police," which I can't stand. I can't stand somebody who look in your plate and tell you what you should do. We all tryin' to reach our joy, our peace, our Heaven, whatever. You eat what you please. You got your own route. I take mine.

BYRON HURT: Now one thing I remember from growing up. It could be an old milk container or an old can, and there would be a whole bunch of grease –

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: ...Grease.

BYRON HURT: – poured all the way to the top.

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: And what did you do with that grease?

BYRON HURT: We re-used that grease, again and again and again. But that was just what we did.

SHERRY WHITFIELD: Remember the bacon? We'd fry that bacon in the morning and then we'd drain the grease and put it in a can. We didn't put it in the refrigerator.

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: It sat on the—

SHERRY WHITFIELD: It sat on the stove or under the cabinet and we kept that grease until it was time to do something else with it like put it in the greens, you know because it had flavor. And it never spoiled! Isn't that amazing?

BYRON HURT: It is, I mean it's absolutely amazing. Is that healthy?

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: I would think that's not healthy. I haven't done that in years and now you get in medicine, you hear about the heart disease and the strokes and heart attacks and your like, "Wow I can't believe I was doing that!" But at the time that was what mama taught us to do and the tradition was passed down.

SHERRY WHITFIELD: That's the way I was taught you know it goes from one generation to the next so you follow suit.

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: My whole family has suffered from bad eating. They were all sufferin' from eatin' pigs' feet and chitlin, and fryin' everything and puttin' hot sauce on everything, and puttin' an extra bag of sugar in the Kool-Aid. I mean everything that you could imagine, I'm part of. I come from that tradition. I still roll like that sometimes. I

know better, and it's still hard for me not – and I keep hot sauce in my bag – literally. I'm not even exaggerating, I keep a bag.

BYRON HURT: You got some hot sauce in your bag in there?

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: I keep hot sauce in my bag, man, just in case – just in case some fried chicken pops up. I love it. You know what I mean. That's how I live, but I have to make a choice and say, "Okay. Today I have to make a different choice because yesterday I made a bad choice." And I try to regulate myself, but it's a work in progress. It's like somebody who's tryin' to get off of like crack or heroin or something. I'm tryin' to wean myself off fried chicken, man.

MINISTER ABDUL HAFEEZ MUHAMMAD: Soul food restaurants don't turn me on. What turns me on today is a nice salad, you know, with different kinds of lettuce and roughage that will clean out your colon. The different kinds of onions and the beets and the carrots, and things of that nature that make things healthy. I like healthy living today.

BYRON HURT: No fried chicken?

MINISTER ABDUL HAFEEZ MUHAMMAD: Well –

BYRON HURT: No fried chicken?

MINISTER ABDUL HAFEEZ MUHAMMAD: – hard givin' up that fried chicken!

BYRON HURT: I feel you. It was hard for me to cut back on fried chicken, too. Until I learned about the health risks associated with some of my favorite comfort foods.

DR. RODNEY ELLIS: When you fry foods, you can sometimes increase the levels of carcinogens – the things that can cause cancer. A lot of times the way the food is given to you, it's large amounts, especially of the starches. So if you got a lot of sweet potatoes or yams or sweets, all those carbohydrates in too high amounts can be a problem for you.

MICHAELA ANGELA DAVIS: I don't remember things being so heavily full of oil and sugar like they've become now. So I think that's where the soul food story gets a little sad. We had meals together that were fresh and that weren't packaged most of the time. So I think one of the things that has happened is we have started going outside of ourselves and outside the community to get quick, fast cheap food.

BRYANT TERRY: The most important thing is that people complicate their understanding of what soul food is. Because it's easy to say that it's the bane of African American health. But the bigger cause of the decline of African American health is the industrialization of our food system four or five decades ago. The goal of these corporations that are producing food is to make it cheap, make it fast, to make it convenient.

Kentucky Fried Chicken Commercial: *"Kentucky Fried Chicken, when you're on the run! When you can buy chicken like this, why cook?"*

KOLU ZIGBI: A lot of things happened between the 1960's and today to create the situation that we're in now where people spend less time cooking and more time eating already prepared food and food that's fatty and salty and processed. And some of those changes, we all know about – more sedentary lifestyles with television and computers, more women entering the work force, which is a necessity, maybe always happened in the black community, but became more widespread.

McDonald's Commercial: [singing] *"McDonald's!"*

BRYANT TERRY: I probably would have wanted to have canned food items and fast food because it just seemed like the evolution of being a modern American. When I think about the fact that, four or five decades ago, this was being presented to the American public, it seemed modern. It made sense.

KOLU ZIGBI: But what happened is, if you eat it day after day and for dinner, you may not be having something so healthy, then it really becomes a problem. And that's the point that we're at now.

LOLIS ERIC ELIE: The problem with talking about a connection between food and nutrition is that it's a long-term thing. So it's not the food you ate this morning or last week, or even this year. It's the food you have been eating everyday of your life for the past ten, twelve, 20 years.

CHAPTER 4 – SOUL SICKNESS

BYRON HURT: Along my journey, it was shocking to hear just how many people had a family member or loved one who is suffering from a preventable disease.

Man: My mother had diabetes, so we sort of had a kinship in that.

Woman: I have high blood pressure.

MS. PEACHES: I had two sisters to die from diabetes.

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: I had prostate cancer.

Woman: ... And then going into my aunt's we've got breast cancer all throughout their— have had colon cancer as well...

Woman: Diabetes and high blood pressure and everything runs in my family. That was a wakeup call for me, because my dad died at the age of 41.

Woman: It's almost like you eat, you get big, you go to college, you get your education, you get your diabetes, you get your high blood pressure and you die.

BYRON HURT: Hearing all of these stories was sobering. I realized that, as black people, we share common health issues that demand our immediate attention before it's too late.

JACKIE HURT: You may know by now that I'm Jackie Hurt and the proud father of the groom, the very happy, joyous father-in-law of our beautiful bride. When Byron was a little kid, I had him out there with me cutting the lawn. And he could barely walk and couldn't even step off the curb. His legs were not long enough. I turn around and look, and I don't know if he remembers this, he was backing off the curb to get down on the pavement. And I watch him and he started running down the street, and I watched him, and he ran halfway down the block. And I said to myself, "That boy's going places."

BYRON HURT: I learned that my father was sick when my mother gave me a call to let me know that he was being taken to the hospital. The doctor noticed spots on his pancreas. It sounded like it was serious, so I asked her if she wanted me to come home and go to the hospital and when she told me yes, that's when I knew that it was serious.

FRANCIS HURT: We knew that there was something wrong with him. We knew that he was going into the hospital for tests. We did not expect to hear that he had pancreatic cancer, and that the prognosis was three to six months. It was devastating.

BYRON HURT: When the doctor said that, I almost fainted. I had known someone who had lost their mother within a matter of months with pancreatic cancer, and so I was in fear from the moment the doctor gave us the diagnosis.

TAUNDRA HURT: We didn't realize the impact of what we were in store for. To see him go from strong to weak, to barely functioning. Words can't describe how that makes a person feel that's about to experience losing a family member.

JACKIE HURT: Just standing here on this boardwalk before you hit the beach again makes me feel like I've reconnected with something very special when I come back here. Every single time. I always have to come up here and say hello to the beach when we get here, and goodbye to the beach when it's time to go.

Text on Screen: Byron's dad, Jackie, passed away at age 63 from pancreatic cancer. The incidence of pancreatic cancer is 50-90% higher in African-Americans than any other racial group in the U.S. – Johns Hopkins Medicine

BYRON HURT: Initially when daddy got sick, I thought his illness was related to soul food and his inability to want to give up eating certain kinds of food. I remember I came home

and did a search of pancreatic cancer. I started to read about what were some possible factors in developing pancreatic cancer.

Media Montage – Cancer Factors: *“Healthy cells grow in a controlled way. Cancer divides and can spread to other parts of the body. People who drink on average about 5 sodas a week... Consuming high amounts of animal saturated fats... Cigarette smoke. The muscle proteins in beef, pork and even chicken can generate a cancer causing reaction when they meet a hot grill. Processed meats contained preservatives such as nitrates. Pancreatic cancer is the 4th leading cause of cancer death in the U.S.”*

BYRON HURT: I realize that unhealthy soul food was just one reason, not *the* reason why my father got sick. I think I needed something to blame, and all the rhetoric I had heard about soul food being unhealthy made it an easy target. But my sister was right: It was far too simple to blame soul food for our father’s death. My pops also ate lots of fast food that could be found everywhere in the black community. And when you have a diet that consists of unhealthy soul food and highly processed foods, the combination could be deadly. My journey led me to an even larger problem.

CHAPTER 5 – SOUL JUSTICE

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: One of the things that causes black people to have the relationship to soul food, and some of the unhealthy eating habits that we have, is what we call a ‘food desert.’

BYRON HURT: When I walk around the city of Newark, where I work, it’s very challenging to find healthy food. A lot of cities around the country – like Brooklyn, Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, Oakland, California – just don’t have a whole lot of quality supermarkets. Most people go to bodegas or corner stores, or in some places, they even go to liquor stores to get their vegetables. People just don’t have access to healthy, quality, fresh produce and quality food. And it’s something that has become normal to us.

Media Clip - Michelle Obama: *“There are 23.5 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, who live in food deserts.”*

BRYANT TERRY: The reality is that, in America, there is a class-based apartheid in the food system. If you live in the middle class or an affluent neighborhood, then you have an overabundance of good food – you know, farmers markets, health food stores, conventional supermarkets. But if you live in low-income communities, there’s often very little healthy food.

DR. ALETHA MAYBANK: In New York City, for every 10,000 people in BedStuy, there’s only one supermarket as compared to the Upper East Side where there’s higher income,

people make more money, there are 3 supermarkets for every 10,000 people. So there's somewhat of a disparity there.

SONIA SANCHEZ: I go in the supermarket in my neighborhood, I see vegetables that look they're having a nervous breakdown. They're so shriveled and they're askin' people the regular price for it. So I go, put the fruit and the vegetables in a cart, push the bell and tell them, "How dare you do this? How dare you put this out in this community?" You know? And they say, "Lady, I'm going to call the police." I said, "Good. I'm going to call reporters." And they improved on the food, too.

DR. MARC LAMONT HILL: There is no better example of racism in the 21st century than the relationship of black people and access to healthy foods. People think about racism as an individual act of prejudice or discrimination from one person to another. That's not what it's about. It's about systems. It's about structures. It's about institutions, and the fact that black people live in neighborhoods where they can't get access to healthy food choices and white people can get healthy food choices? That is classic textbook racism. When you want to wipe out an entire generation of people, when you want to engage in a kind of 21st century genocide, all you have to do is continue to do what we're doing, which is deprive people of access to healthy food.

BRYANT TERRY: African Americans have been green. We've been eating close to the land. We've been thinking about ways that we could be eco-sustainable. We just didn't call it that. It was just the way that people had to live out of necessity. If anything, we need to be talking to the elders – the aunties and the grandmothers and the great-grandmothers – and finding out, what were they doing? How were they practicing sustainability with very few resources and a lot of people?

BYRON HURT: I went to go see my Uncle Tony, my pops' youngest brother.

BYRON HURT: Hey! How are you doing?

MARY HURT: Hey Byron! Oh, good, good, good...

BYRON HURT: Happy Thanksgiving to you.

TONY HURT: Good to see you!

BYRON HURT: He grows his own garden in Milledgeville, so I decided to go check it out.

TONY HURT: This is my little garden, my little getaway here, something I do every year during the spring of the year. Right here we have cayenne peppers and only could find one plant of those. And right here I have some banana peppers.

BYRON HURT: Why do you think it's important to be able to live off the land like this?

TONY HURT: It's good because you know what went in the production and the growth of your plants. There's not a lot of chemicals and we think, this day and time, that's what's causing so many diseases and ailments in our body. So I know when I do my gardening it's chemical free and it's like I said, it's pretty much organic and I get a great joy out of that – eating good, healthy food.

BYRON HURT: My uncle looked great and as I left him, I thought, “What if we all had access to healthy, organic food?”

CHAPTER 6 – SOUL REMIX

WILL ALLEN [Speaking to audience]: What we do in here is we grow sprouts. We grow about 2,000 trays a week...

WILL ALLEN: I come from a legacy of growing food for people. That's how this whole thing started, by me purchasing this facility to grow food and sell it to the folks in this community. But also it has to be combined with education, 'cause once people get into that mode of eating bad food, their first taste of really good food tastes strange to them.

Growing Power Conference Attendee: I'm growing my own farmer's market now at 61st Street market. You come there and get your fresh produce if you're all in Chicago!

WILL ALLEN: I see more African American people getting involved. The kids are passing on the word to their parents and other adults in the community. To me this is a multicultural, multigenerational revolution. You see the examples of community gardens in those communities popping up.

JENGA MWENDO: The lower 9th ward isn't all about devastation and, 'oh, it's so horrible what happened after Katrina.' But we're actually taking the initiative and taking the responsibility for making sure we have a brighter future. You know, making sure we have food security here.

BAYE WILSON: The Lincoln Park Community Farm started as a project to provide fresh vegetables to people in the neighborhood. That's the goal, to really get more people in Lincoln Park, in the city of Newark eating fresh vegetables on a daily basis.

BYRON HURT: In New Orleans, Louisiana, Jenga Mwendo is introducing her daughter, Azana, to a vegetarian and raw food lifestyle.

JENGA MWENDO: You like it, Pumpkin?

AZANA: ... Mm-Hmm!

JENGA MWENDO: ... Good!

JENGA MWENDO: Growing up vegetarian in New Orleans was... It was difficult. I think a lot of adults are probably concerned about us, because of that real strong belief that unless you eat meat, you're not getting the things that you need, which is ludicrous. I don't feel like anybody looks down on me now for eating that way because I think that they see the health benefits from it. I have a lot of energy, I'm not overweight, I look very young for my age. My daughter is obviously very healthy.

BRYANT TERRY: When I was working with young people and we would try to introduce to them vegetarian and vegan cuisine, they'd be like, "This is white people's food!" And I do want people to have a more positive outlook about vegans and vegetarians, and understand that you can be a brother of color who was born in Memphis, lived in New Orleans and Brooklyn, and now lives in Oakland and cool, whatever – you can still do it. You don't have to be some crunchy, granola person with Birkenstocks to be vegan.

BYRON HURT: And for those not quite ready for a crunchy, granola lifestyle, Dr. Rani Whitfield of Baton Rouge says you can still eat your soul food, but the way you prepare it is one of the keys to a healthier life.

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: The dish for tonight is gonna be skinless, boneless, oven-fried chicken, roasted sweet potato mash, greens – mustard greens without the fatback, salt meat. I prefer not to use the skin, which has a lot of saturated fats and trans fats in them, and so the bread crumbs kind of substitutes for that.

VONDA McPHERSON: Soul food doesn't have to be unhealthy. My customers come in and they say, "I would like oxtails, okay, but I want brown rice. Instead of having collard greens, could you sauté me some spinach?" These are all elements for us to enjoy the foods that we have, however, just make them a little healthier for us as people.

DR. RANI WHITFIELD: Now for years, African Americans had been picked on and teased about watermelon. But watermelon actually has a natural amino acid in it called arginine, which is the precursor to nitric oxide. Nitric oxide is a potent vessel dilator and that causes... can enhance a man's erection. So for all the teasing we've been given for years about eating watermelon, I'm a continue to eat my watermelon!

BYRON HURT: All right, I think we should eat!

DONNIE NORTHERN: Put a little broccoli in here, baby...

BYRON HURT: In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Donnie Northern has transformed his life with diet and exercise and received some unexpected benefits.

BYRON HURT: What did you have for breakfast this morning?

DONNIE NORTHERN: I had spinach, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes and alfalfa sprouts. It's live food and if you're eating live food, you feel alive. And if you're eating heavy foods, you feel heavy. And when I feel like this, I'm perky, I'm ready. We was taught all the wrong things. We was taught that men don't cry. Men don't complain. Men just be a man – suck it up, shake it off and keep going, and that's not the way it works, you know, I got a problem and I needed help.

DONNIE NORTHERN [with gym attendant]: What's going on this morning, man? Alright, we good.

DONNIE NORTHERN: The number one illness was the hypertension, that's the high blood pressure. And so when the blood pressure goes up, it messes with your sexual organs – mentally. I was impotent and it was like hell. That was about eight months – no relationship with my wife, but as I started back working out, getting back in shape, and then it started gradually... You know, you started getting a little tingly down there. Not a whole lot but just, you know, 'okay well, I'm working with something here.' And then, I'll tell you something else, too. Once I lost this stomach – now the stomach was about yay big – I ended up with about two more inches of pecker. I went somewhere I ain't been in a minute, you know, with me and my wife.

MRS. NORTHERN: (Laughter) – you a bad boy.

DONNIE NORTHERN: Shoot, you just found that out!

DONNIE NORTHERN: Man, my wife say I'm like the energizer bunny and I keep going on and on and on! I feel good about me and I'm handling mine. So we just got to change the way we eat things 'cause we've always been taught that soul food is this, and soul food is that. That is not soul: Soul food comes from the heart and from the soul, and you eat what make you feel good, and this make me really feel good.

BYRON HURT: My final stop was St. Philip's Academy in Newark, New Jersey where kids of color are learning how to eat healthy.

BYRON HURT [Speaking to students]: Can somebody in the class tell me what your favorite vegetables are?

Student: My favorite vegetable is lettuce.

Student: My favorite vegetable is spinach with ketchup on it.

BYRON HURT: ... With ketchup on it!

MIGUEL J. BRITO: When I take a look at what St. Phillips looks like and feels like, the first thing I say is it's nothing like most people's idea of a school. One of the things that makes St. Phillips Academy a unique school is our "Eco-Spaces" program. Eco-Space is a

multidimensional program, which has two focuses. One is sustainability and conservation, and the other is nutrition.

CHRISTOPHER BARNES: Here, the kids are definitely much more knowledgeable and they concentrate more, they focus more and they have a better diet. Overall, their appearance, and who they are and how they project themselves is a lot better.

BYRON HURT: So if you had a choice between eating at Popeye's or Church's Fried Chicken, or McDonald's or any other fast food restaurant – would you choose that, or would you choose what you eat here?

Student: What we eat here, definitely!

BYRON HURT: Really? Wow, that's sayin' a lot. Why?

Student: Because not only the fact that it's healthier, it tastes more fresh. Like the stuff that they make, they don't really cook. They process it. And it's processed food and I don't really like that stuff. I like real fresh food.

FRANK MENTESANA: The kids are really learning in their classroom setting as well as the learning environments – the kitchen, the dining room – to actually learn about what are the effects of the choices that they make, and they are responsible for their choices. When they leave the four walls of St. Philip's, they will be kind of armed, if you will, with the knowledge and the ability to make good choices for themselves and then bring it out into the community as a way to preach about good health and wellness.

Students: Vegetables are soul food!

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: When you ask the question of, "How do we get average people to respond to this crisis, this food crisis?" It's a big challenge. But what we have to do is make it part of the popular culture. Fighting against oppressive wars became part of our popular culture. Fighting against police brutality and racism became part of our popular culture. So we have to go that distance.

DR. ALETHA MAYBANK: The power is with us, in the people. We have the power to change our communities. One, we need to educate people up on what is going on in the food environment and two, give people the sense that they have the capacity to actually do something to change it.

BYRON HURT: Change. It sounds easy, but changing a cultural tradition like soul food and modifying your diet is difficult. I started out my journey grappling with my father's death and asking if we are a nation of Soul Food Junkies. Well, I think the answer is yes, we are. We love soul food and we ain't giving it up for no one. But we don't have to quit our beloved cuisine cold turkey. We can maintain our culinary tradition by taking steps to make it healthier now and eat it in moderation. Because contrary to popular belief, soul

food can be good to us *and* good for us. Perhaps my pops' story is your story, or the story of someone you love. Perhaps you wanted to change, but have been putting it off. But I hope by sharing my family's personal loss that my dear father, Jackie Hurt, inspires millions of people to take action and move toward a life of health and wellness. My pops often talked about living long enough to meet his grandchildren. Sadly, he did not have a chance to meet my daughter, Maasai. After watching my dad die, too soon, I'm trying to live a healthier lifestyle so that one day I may live long enough to meet mine.

FILM CREDITS

BYRON HURT: So talk about the pork, right. You have no problems... You're unapologetic about eating pork?

KRISTIN: That's correct.

BYRON HURT: Why?

KRISTIN: Because its tasty. Pork has never done anything to me. What? As long as it's made right, it's okay with me.

BYRON HURT: So J, You do not eat pork?

JAMELLA: No.

BYRON HURT: Why? How come you don't eat pork?

JAMELLA: I just think it's toxic for the body. I think it's bad for the colon. A hydro-therapist was telling me once that death starts with the colon and that certain foods like beef and pork and chicken, it just stays there for years. I eat a lot of vegetables and it just doesn't stay in my body and I feel much better. That's just why.

BYRON HURT: Now, Kristin, how do you respond to that?

KRISTIN: Fiber! But again, everything in moderation. I do know about the meat staying in your system for a long time. It doesn't have to, though. Chase it with some vegetables and you're good to go.

BYRON HURT: Can you tell the difference between collard greens that's cooked with pork and collard greens that are cooked without pork?

Man: To me, if you don't put meat in collard greens, you're just wasting your time! Okay?

BYRON HURT: Do you love soul food?

Woman: Do I love soul food? What you think? I love it, I love all kinds of food. All kinds of food. I wish you had some chitlins! Yeah, chitlins is good. You like chitlins?

BYRON HURT: Nah, nah, nah ... I'm not gonna front. What about the smell though, how do you deal with the smell?

Woman: They stink! But it's so good when you eat it.

APRIL: When I think about soul food, I don't even think about the actual food. I think about what it does. Even when you think about the movie *Soul Food*, you know everybody could bring their problems to Big Mama house and, yeah, you have these arguments and you have these fights but you know you have that solid foundation. And not only would that soul food start in the dining room or wherever you ate, but it matriculated through outside...the kids going to play, the parents going to play cards, so and so in the back, the boys playing basketball. So it was like that starting point where the family got to know each other. It's just something about that home feeling where you got somebody and it helps you gain a sense of self. You don't feel alone.

[END]