

Speaker 1: 0:18

Welcome to hyphenated life. I'm Adrian Miller, the soul food scholar. Who's dropping knowledge like hot biscuit . Perfect. We got a thumbs up. Excellent. Cool.

Speaker 2: 0:29

Thank you. Well we're where have you been all of our lives, Adrian. Um, so our executive producer , uh, kind of discovered you found you and thought it would be a wonderful to have you on, so, so thank you. I'm going to now kind of quickly introduce you and we'll, we'll get into it. So , uh, David, today we are thrilled and , uh , capital T thrilled to have Adrian Miller on this week show. Adrian is a scholar of African-American food. He's the author of several books, including soul food, which won a 2014 James Beard foundation award. And he's the author of the president's kitchen cabinet for which he was nominated for the 2018 NAACP image award for outstanding literary work. Non-fiction he is a self-proclaimed recovering lawyer. That's curious and served as a white house advisor to president bill Clinton and Adrian Miller. Welcome to hyphenated life. Thank you for joining us for today's conversation.

Speaker 1: 1:31

Yeah, it's a blessing to be with you. Thank you for asking , inviting me. Well, I'm gonna

Speaker 2: 1:34

Start here because you are, you said you say a recovering attorney, so that's interesting. Uh, you are an award-winning food writer, former special assistant to president Clinton, and now you serve currently as the executive director of the Colorado council of churches. Uh, and so David and I would love to know more like how did that happen?

Speaker 1: 1:57

Yeah, it's been an interesting journey. So , uh , you know, for most, most of my life, I thought I was going to be an attorney for several years and then I would shift and go into politics. So I thought I would be the Senator from Colorado at some point in my life. Uh, so , uh, I got the, so it was interesting. I just hated practicing law. That's why I became a returning recovering attorney. Um , it just got to the point where I was singing spirituals in my office. Do you know how dispiriting it is to be in your office as the sun is rising and you're singing Dayo ? So , um, I knew that I knew wanted to do something else. So I was gonna actually open up a soul food restaurant, got a chance to work in the Clinton white house , uh, for something called the initiative for one America. And , um, that was just the , the crazy idea behind that is that if we just talked to one another and listened, we probably realized that we have a lot more in common than what supposedly divides us. And so the shift of food writing happened , uh , the short answer is unemployment. So after my stint with the Clinton white house was over, I was trying to get back to Colorado to my political career, but the job market was really slow. And I was watching a lot of daytime television. I'm not even going to tell you what shows come on, give us , give us something.

Speaker 3: 3:09

It will just start it'll hurt my rep too much.

Speaker 1: 3:12

Um, and the , the depth of my okay. Blind date , if you ever remember that show blind date. Yes. I watched hours of that and love connection. Yeah.

Speaker 3: 3:20

[inaudible] connection. Yeah. Okay.

Speaker 1: 3:24

Um, and then , uh, in the depth of my depravity, I said, I should read something. So I went to the local bookstore and I'm browsing the , in the food section cause I'd always love to cook. And I found this book by John Edgerton called Southern folk food at home, on the road in history. And in that book, he said, he wrote that the tribute to black achievement in American cookery had yet to be written. And that one sentence is what launched me on the journey. Wow.

Speaker 3: 3:47

What grabbed your attention about that? That, that, that didn't exist. And so what connected in your own soul that, that just,

Speaker 1: 3:54

I have to do this , uh, you know, I can't explain it. It was just like, Oh, I could do that. And then really seriously, I'd never even thought about writing a book, especially when I'm food or anything like that, but something spoke to me and I think , um, I've always been interested in history. I was interested in cooking. And so one thing that always grabs at me is just these untold stories. Um, and just making sure that African-Americans are recognized for their contributions to various aspects of our country. And so that was just a treat intriguing. And, you know, the book was 14 years old when I picked it up. So I just thought somebody had done that. So I actually emailed Mr. Edgerton and asked him that question. And he said, you know, nobody's done it. There's always room for another voice. Why not yours? So with no , uh, no qualifications at all, except for eating a lot of soul food and cooking at some that I went at it, I went at it very good .

Speaker 3: 4:47

Yeah. And I , I, my background is in music. I have degrees in music and studied classical singing and all the way through graduate school, where you get into start , you get to take electives and get to the not mainstream stuff. So you can get into some ethno musicology and you start to see some patterns in, in, in high art and music and in art, visual art in the culinary arts where we have this white westernization focus , uh , on the history of it and the other elements are considered fringe. Um, and, and you start to kind of not like that. And, and , uh, for example, I think of most banjo players in our country today are, are white guys and bluegrass bands, you know, but the origin of that instrument and where it came from was from Africa. And I grew up in the South and , uh, I'm sure we'll get more into this later. I am in love with Southern soul food, new Orleans in particular, and, and lately the past five to 10 years , uh , smoked meats, barbecue, and almost more than eating it, which is a transcendental. I love the, the energy and story behind its origin. And it seems like that's what you're writing books about. You know, you go through in your book about soul food, you not only, you know, name what they are and how to make them and a few different options, but where they came from. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that in the origins of soul food in America.

Speaker 1: 6:22

Yeah. So in the, in the quest for telling these untold stories, you know, part of it is, well, what is the history? Because there's one version of history that's told, but you know, you don't know if that's the real story. And so when it comes to soul food, that there's really

two main narratives. One is that it's slave food. And the implications of that is like, Oh, it's not worthy of being celebrated. Or what I heard from a lot of African-Americans is like, Hey, you know, can we get past that? Why are we still recognizing that? Uh , and the other thing is that this food is inherently unhealthy. It needs a warning label. Why are you eating that stuff? And so I just wanted to sort out fact from fiction. And , um, you know, what I found out is that this, this masters leftovers garbage throw away thing is just not, that's part of the story, but it's soul food is so much more complex and soul food and Southern food because it's really a bringing together a West Africa, a Western Europe and the Americas and those ingredients and culinary traditions are all coming together in the American South. Um, and so the narrative just really starts to melt once, once it's held up to historical scrutiny. And what I found is that really, when it comes to the South, it's more about class and place than race, because a lot of poor whites were eating the same stuff as enslaved. African-Americans just a different context. Um , and so that was enlightening to me. And then this whole idea that it's, you know, needs a warning label. Uh , soul food is really the celebration food of the South. That's taken out of the South and transplanted across the country in a different context. And celebration. Food is not meant to be eaten on the regular. It's supposed to be everywhere , right ? This will shock a lot of people, but you know, who think they have a constitutional right to fried chicken, but fried chicken was something that was served every once in a while . I mean, you would have it in the spring , uh, maybe just for Sunday dinner. And so the fact that we can have fried chicken multiple times a day now , um, you know, it's just, it's, we're eating celebration food out of the car out of context, you know ,

Speaker 3: 8:22

For the record, we're here at pine street, church three blocks from the post fried chicken and beer restaurant, which I'm guessing you've been to. And you know, that they've done a pretty good job of doing their research on how to make that stuff really good. And, and we probably , uh, have taken it careful a little bit beyond the celebratory experience. And , uh , but you , you know, it , it comes and goes. And , uh, yeah, I, I, I grew up in Pensacola, Florida, and I remember eating fried chicken every Sunday after church at one of two places. One was at Pensacola club, the other was the pickin's house. Um, and as a child to have the fondest memories I can think of it was ritualistic, right. Um, it's one of the elements of food , uh, that I find spiritual. It , it is ritual in the consumption of it in the creation of it. Um, and I don't know if he, if you have any relation to food like that.

Speaker 1: 9:20

Oh, absolutely. So , uh , I've , I've always been as a person of faith. I've always been kind of intrigued with kind of the intersection of food and spirituality. Um, and it's an it's obvious intersection, but, you know, in today's world, we've, we've divorced that with the way that we connect with nature, our food system , um, fewer people have, I don't have an active spiritual life. Um, it always amazes me how people are just curious that I'm bending over and praying over my food before I eat it when I'm in a public space. So, you know, when it comes to fried chicken, I did a whole chapter. What I called the integration of church and plate, you know, and , and black tradition , uh , fried chickens called the gospel bird, or some people call it Sunday clock. And so I go back into that. And what you find is that , um, there was a connection with chickens and spirituality, even in West Africa, and that comes across the Atlantic. And so in many ways, in which

a fried chicken, it becomes a very important part of black culture. And it's tied to church life and spirituality. And even in a non-Christian context, you see chicken show up in , uh , a spiritual life , um, you know, Santa voodoo and other things like that, but it just shows you, there's a, there's a continuum of experience, spiritual experience with fried chicken that goes back centuries. And so it was fascinating to kind of track that history.

Speaker 3: 10:41

Yeah, that's amazing. The fried chicken one is a , is a fascinating subject matter too. There's a documentary series on Netflix by David Yang , uh , chef , uh , sort of world famous chef it's called ugly delicious, and each episode focuses on a food type. Um , and that's another metaphor that food can give us about celebrating diversity. No, all the chicken is chicken, but all fry . They're all kinds of fried chicken, you know, from, from Korea to India, to America, to , you know, I th I think you talked about that there's some theories out there that , uh, American Southern American style fried chicken is , uh , actually Scottish inherited possibly. Um, it's not , uh , there's, there's some ambiguity there to that story, but in this series , uh , ugly, delicious David Yang , uh, in his episode about fried chicken goes around. He does a great job of talking about some of the more delicate nuances of it , uh, historically what it's represented. And you , you know, you've sort of hinted at some of that, but I love this idea that the , uh , soul food Southern food is isn't, isn't , uh, some kind of lesser tier. Um, and there's a chef that he interviews at Waldo Jordan , um, who has recently opened a restaurant after working at French laundry in Napa and per se in New York city to , you know, to have Thomas Keller's world renowned, you know , restaurant of the year type things. It's absolute pinnacle of the culinary arts. And here's a guy , uh, you know, an African-American guy with Georgia and Florida roots, who, who was making high French cuisine in , in , when it came down to, you know, what he wanted to do in a vacuum. He, he created this restaurant called June baby, and he has a quote that I love, and he says, I could cook ox tails and press the meat into a terrain and cover it with edible flowers. Instead, I want people to experience my mother's oxtails , tearing the meat off the bone, that moment of restoring your soul. And there is just something so beautiful about that. And , uh , not that high culinary art food doesn't have soul to it, but certainly there's this opportunity there for that experience, that more visceral experience, you're not gonna break the beautiful work of art, you know, it's, it's, hands-on , it's, it's deep, it takes a long time to make. Um, and so, I don't know. Do you have, what are your thoughts on, on that element of soul food of Southern food ?

Speaker 1: 13:14

Yeah. So first of all, let me just say, I've been to chef Jordan's restaurant, June baby, and he has another place called Solari , and man, it is next level food that's bucket list for me. Yeah. And , uh , and , and speaking of fried chicken, so he only serves fried chicken on Sundays limited edition. There's a line. And he's told me he has seen people weep fried chicken in a good way. Yeah. So , uh, you know, yeah. You know , often when we talk about food, there's kind of this high and low aspect of it. And I think for too long, a time soul food has been solely in the low category, which kind of , um, you know, it's like considered good working class food. Right. But the , the problem with that is I think it under plays that the skill level that's brought into making that food. And so for a fine dining chef, like Eduardo Jordan, to celebrate that and incorporate that in what he does. Um, and now I think that has actually my book and other food writers have now

invited a re-examination of these kinds of working class vernacular cuisines, as some have called it to say, no, there's artistry here. And , um , we shouldn't gloss over that. Um, they may not have been professionally chain trained in a culinary school, but there's artistry here. And here's the actual untold story that are least Lee Lee's told story about. Um, enslaved cooks. A lot of them did apprentice under French chefs. Um, and that's a story that's undertold , uh, and so , uh, I, I'm just not skilled and French cuisine, but I would love for somebody who knows French cuisine inside and out to go through these old cookbooks and say, Oh yeah, that's a French technique there . It's not identified , but that's a French technique. And the only example I can think of, and David you'll probably use , I'm sure you've had this before is spoon bread. If you, if you sit back and look at spoon bread, another way, it's a cornbread souffle.

Speaker 2: 15:09

Yeah. Which is fairly that you learned that in the French cooking schools. Okay . Wow. That's fascinating.

Speaker 1: 15:17

But nobody talks about spoon bread that way. Right. It's just a type of cornbread for most people. Absolutely .

Speaker 2: 15:22

Absolutely. So, Adrian, you mentioned that you you're a person of faith and of course you're the executive director of the Kolo , uh, Colorado council of churches. Um, how did you come to the Colorado council of churches and David and I have been talking about how we at pine street church, we, we ought to be all in with that, right. As a , as a partner here in the Denver Boulder area. But how did you , uh, I would just say a couple of things, one , uh, how did your experience being a foodie? Uh, and then now you're the executive director of a wonderful, progressive , uh, uh, organization , uh, in Boulder. I mean , excuse me in Denver. Uh, how did, how did that come to be for you?

Speaker 1: 16:05

Yeah, so it was really because of my work , um, in politics. So when I came back to Colorado, after the Clinton white house, I got a job at something called the bell policy center, like ring the bell. And that was a progressive think tank, which was new for Colorado. Cause we had things tanks, but they tended to be very conservative. And so , um, the idea behind the think tank was okay, how can we take people who are consistently at society's margins and get them to a point of self-sufficiency through policy and biblically. It's like, you know, how do we take care of the least of these? Uh, so I was doing that work with the bell policy center and I was the outreach director. So my, my task was to connect with different constituencies. So I can't re I think it was , uh , work on the taxpayer bill of rights. That was one of our major projects for a couple of years. I just thought, Hey, we should connect with the faith community. And so I found the council of churches. And so my predecessor, the Reverend Dr. Jim Ryan was executive . At that time, I got to know him better. We, we hit it off. And so , um, he, the council church just had something, they called a justice commission, which was focused on just kind of work, like paying attention to policy work and seeing where faith communities can intersect. So I was on that and I was still on that when I came to work for a governor, bill Ritter Jr. But you know, being, working for a governor, it was just too hard to make the meetings. So , um, he asked me to head up a task force and then we went out to lunch and I thought we were just going to talk about the task force. And he

said, yeah , you know, I'm actually going to re tire. You should think about applying for my job. Well, I was like, you know, I had my Moses moment. I was like, what now not me pastor. And he's like, you don't have to be a pastor. You just have to have a heart for social justice. So I just applied for the job just because he thought so much of me, I should, I should at least apply. And I was convinced I wasn't going to get it. Cause I remember as I was being interviewed, someone asked me, you know, what are the theological differences between the Lutheran church and the Episcopal church? How would you explain that? And I just looked at the person. I said, well, I don't know much because I thought I wasn't the dead duck, but I guess that honesty was refreshing. And so I've been in that position for eight years. And for those who don't know what the council of churches is , uh, it's two-fold mission. And we , we say walking together and faith working together for justice. So the first part is ecumenical. So like, how can we break down our silos? Cause we , we, Christians, we've definitely kind of built these silos, right? How can we break those down and get to know each other? Uh, and then the second thing is then building on those relationships to do social justice work. Um, so we represent 13 Christian denominations, mainly , um, mainline, Protestant, denominations, and some others. We have a few conservative denominations. And for those who have never heard of us, we're the ones who host the Easter sunrise service at red rocks every year.

Speaker 2: 18:51

Oh, there it is. Wow. That's a , a well attended. Yeah, for sure.

Speaker 1: 18:57

Um, so next year will be our 75th year.

Speaker 2: 19:00

Wow. Well, we'll talk to our heart for missions, team David here at the church, but , uh , that that's just right up, you know , right up our alley in terms of who we are theologically. So, so Adrian , um , in terms of your passion for social justice and connecting that with your kind of faith journey, where did you grow up and, and how did , uh , faith become , uh , such a central part of your own life?

Speaker 1: 19:26

All right. So I'm about to immediately lose street cred on the subject of Southern food and soul food. But I grew up here in Denver , uh, when moved to Aurora when I was a little kid. So this is how it went people back. Um , my parents are from the South, my mom's from Chattanooga, Tennessee, my dad's from Helena, Arkansas. Wow . Uh, so, you know , um, growing up in Denver and then moving to the suburbs, I mean majority white suburbs , um, I'm grateful to my parents for a lot of things, but two things , um, particularly here that are applicable here are keeping me connected to a black church. So we, we , uh, we continued to go to the church that I'm still a member of today , uh, Campbell chapel, African Methodist, Episcopal church. So even though it was in the suburbs, we made the Trek, you know, multiple times a week for practices and then church as well and activities. Uh, and then also my mom cooks soul food. Uh , and you know, I took that for granted cause I was like, well, why wouldn't somebody do that? But I , um , going on to college and encountering African-Americans from different parts of the country who had a very similar story to mine, but their parents decided to shed kind of associations with black life maybe to fit in with the new community. I don't know. There's a lot of reasons why people do those things, but , uh , I'm grateful. My parents

did not do that and made it important for me to be immersed in black culture, even if it was just on the weekends. Nice. Um, so I was

Speaker 2: 20:48

Thinking , uh, kind of moving along here , uh , in the , for the sake of time , uh, you are a food historian and your second book , um, is called the president's kitchen cabinet , uh, that I think came out in 2017 and you explore there the history of African American chefs and the white house. And , um, I'm sort of a political nerd to a degree, lived in DC for a couple of years. And did you say separation of church and plate? I did separation of church and state for a couple of years there. Uh, but in your research from that book, the president's kitchen cabinet , uh, what did you learn and what keeps bubbling up maybe for you that our listeners might be curious about with that?

Speaker 1: 21:31

So one thing your listeners may not know is that every president of the United States has had an African-American cooking for them in some capacity, whether it was in the white house basement kitchen, or when they went on air force one or when they went on the presidential train or the presidential yacht, or when someplace to stay,

Speaker 2: 21:48

There was a presidential yacht, by the way that, that was, that was pretty cool to find out. Yeah,

Speaker 1: 21:53

Yeah, yeah. W w the, the yacht disappeared during the Carter administration cause you know, he was a man of the people and he just thought it was too much of a status symbol. And a lot of members of Congress were really upset about his decision to get rid of the yacht. In fact, one of the Congressman who criticized him most strenuously was representative Dick Cheney . He just felt the president didn't understand how important that is.

Speaker 2: 22:20

Yeah . We've all experienced it.

Speaker 1: 22:23

And then, you know, one was just, I , first of all, I just wish I had gotten the idea for this book while I was in the white house. Cause I could have gotten so much scoop because I had top secret clearance at that time. Oh man. But yeah, it came to me afterwards. Um, but the, the, the , the, just the presence of African-Americans in white house food history, because , um, if you were to just step back and look at the grand scope of white house workers in the kitchen, the typical white house worker was a black woman. And it's only really recently that it's not, that has not been the case. And that's really started in 1960 when , uh , first lady Jacqueline Kennedy wanted to elevate white house food. And so made a market turn towards hiring , uh , classically trained European chefs. We don't , that's not the higher rate now, but that , that fine dining aspect kind of undermined the hires of African-Americans because they just didn't have access to those culinary schools could cook fine, but they just weren't trained in that way. Um, and what I found out the , another takeaway is that in many cases, they played an important role in nourishing , um, our first families and nurturing them in many ways, but also, you know, in, in certain spots they were civil rights activists. Um , we have examples now , um, there's a , there's a code of silence around the white house and the servants. So we don't know all the things that happen, but we do know there were examples in

history where presidents would go and talk to the staff and just check in with them and to see how black America was accepting their policies. And interesting thing happened a lot, but it happens sometimes. Wow.

Speaker 2: 23:54

Uh, Adrian, I'm curious too, I think from, uh, the president's kitchen cabinet book where, uh, and I might be not, I might not remember this exactly. Right. But you said since from George Washington to president Obama, that there were black chefs in the white house, uh, uh, black cooks in the white house. Could you say a little bit more about that and, and did that end with president Obama, by the way, we were kind of wondering about that. Um, uh, earlier, before we hopped on with you,

Speaker 1: 24:25

Right? So the first thing is, um, a lot from the beginning, the white house kitchen has been multi-class in this sense, you've had enslaved cooks or a slave to African-Americans working next, alongside free African-Americans and indentured whites working along free whites. So it's been very multi-class and multi-racial from its beginning, but, um, we've had a lot of, we had a lot of slave holding presidents. And so, um, people may not know this, but prior to Truman presidents had to pay for the cooks and a lot of staff out of their own pocket. And so if you are a slave holder, it just made a whole lot more sense to bring your enslaved cook, who you didn't have to pay to the white house to cook for you, then hiring somebody on the open labor market. So a lot that's what happened. So a lot of white house cooks were enslaved cooks who happened to be cooking for that person in private life. And that's the path to the white house really, until you get to the 1960s, most people are accidental. They were the previous cook or servant of a president, and that person brings them to the white house. And then, um, a lot of it was who you knew. So people already in the lighthouse, whenever there was an opening, they would tap a relative or somebody they knew to fill those spots. Um, and it's only recent history that you have more variety. So, um, so you have a lot of enslaved cooked. And then for most of our country's history, cooking was not considered a glamorous thing. Um, not like it is now. So it was considered menial work and the racial norms of our country, um, for a lot of our history has been, if there's menial work, make black people do it and don't pay them a lot of money. So if they weren't enslaved goats, a lot of the free people cooking in the lighthouse where African-Americans, so, you know, by the time you get to say someone like Rutherford, B Hayes, the entire staff is black and he was president 1870s. Um, and that, so that's, that's really kind of the rhythms of presidential history. Um, and so, uh, but then after slavery ends and he knows still African-Americans were thought of as the cooks. And so again, there's just this cultural momentum that you have black people doing the cooking. And if you look at food history, step back, I mean, you know, as much as Latino cooks dominate kitchens today in most commercial kitchens, you know, if you open the door and look at the kitchen, it's mostly Latinos cooking, regardless of who's the owner, right? The figurehead that's, what African-Americans were, that was the status of African-Americans a hundred years ago. Most of these restaurants were staffed by black cooks. So it's not surprising that the white house had the same dynamic. So, um, but since the 1960s with the increase in hires of white chefs and others, uh, African-American presence doesn't disappear entirely. It certainly decreases, but it doesn't disappear. Um, and so, um, usually there are two or three African Americans on a

presidential staff. So there were in Trump's administration as , and I , I'm not sure sir , about the Biden administration, cause I just don't know who's cooking there, but I would assume that there are African-Americans who were cooking for Trump who stayed there because typically those cooks don't rotate out. It's usually the only the executive chef that has to worry about getting fired with the change of administration. And the current executive chef is a Philippina named Christina Comaford and she's been cooking since the second term of George W. Bush. So this is a quite lengthy run for an

Speaker 2: 27:34

Executive chef. Wow. Well, in Adrian, you're in Denver, Colorado. Now we know that you grew up in Denver and , um, I've , I've read somewhere where you say that the beginning, even the beginning of , um, Colorado statehood , black chefs have been producing top shelf cuisine, and yet they have been underrepresented in Denver's food story at what can you tell us about that?

Speaker 1: 27:57

So part of that I think is just a media creation is just the people. And this has been a long running problem and American media, the people who decide what stories get told and who to spotlight have tended to be white. And , um, they just really didn't value African Americans . So to the extent that these , uh , African-American cooks are noted in , um , our print media , um, it has often been a very terse, you know, like description often to ridicule, but , um, you know, you don't, you don't have a lot of lengthy portraits of these cooks , um, compared to others. Now, again, we're in a foodie moment. So it wasn't really , uh, you know, fashionable at the time to spend a lot of time talking about a cook the way we do now, but still you do have portraits of cooks here and there and you just don't see a lot of African-Americans being celebrated. And part of that was status. Uh, and you know, even in , when somebody was celebrated to get their full name was a rarity, because that person was not considered a full human being. So they would just be called, you know , uncle, whatever, aunt , whatever, and you wouldn't get the full name. Um, and so , uh, that's just been part of just , um, media history here, but it's better now. I mean, to some extent you'll, you'll have African-Americans noted, but the problem now is that it's very difficult for an entrepreneur to start a restaurant because you have to have access to capital. You've got to have a good team behind you. You got to have somebody to make sure you're meeting all the ordinances and requirements and all that kind of stuff. So a lot goes into running a restaurant. And , um , it's , it's just harder to do that nowadays,

Speaker 2: 29:36

Especially at that higher end level that would get that sort of notice. Yeah. Right. Well, I wanted to connect this in the short time we have left because we , uh, of course the world got word , uh, was that yesterday or two days ago now about the , uh, Derek Shovan trial, the former Minneapolis police officer who knelt on George Floyd's neck and was convicted in all three counts this week , uh , all three counts against him. And what , uh , most folks believe is the most consequential trial, certainly in the black lives era , uh, black lives matter era. I'd be curious Adrian, about your thoughts about that. And you wrote an article in food and wine magazine last year about the Louisville chef , uh, David Mcity, who was killed by law enforcement in June of 2020. And , uh, I believe ran his , it Yaz barbecue shack in Louisville, Kentucky. And I loved in that article in the food and wine magazine article, you , um, in the aftermath of that, you celebrated

his life in barbecue, as you, as you write the article. And , um, I think he's been remembered for great barbecue and being just a good person. Uh, but, but what, what might you connect with the breaking news of this week and the Derek Shovan trial, and also thinking about the , the, the David Mcity , uh , story that you seem to be close to and wrote about?

Speaker 1: 31:03

Yeah, so, you know , um, this, the, the verdict was memorable in the sense that , uh, you have a sense, like finally, some accountability for what's what's happened. And you know, the other thing that's been shocking is since George Floyd get a lot of people still getting killed and , um, it just doesn't ever seem to be accountability. And one thing that was really struck me, because I think of it as justice and accountability, but, you know, there've been some people saying this is not justice because George Floyd is not still alive. Um, and it only, you can only have justice if it's restorative. I'm not sure I agree with that fully because I think there are different forms of justice. And that, to me, I've always grown up with the idea that justice, in this sense is you do something horribly wrong. If you go to a trial and you get convicted, then you serve time for that. So we'll have to see what happens with sentencing. That's another part of the story, but , um, it , it just speaks to , um, a certain level of fatigue that these things keep happening. Um, and you know, what I'm going to say is a little charged because I have not done a systemic study, you know, a scientific study or anything like that, but it just seems like when African-Americans are involved, there's always the use of lethal, lethal force that leaves the forest is more used more often than not. And there's so many stories of people who have actually killed other people , uh, or white , but they get taken into custody. And so , um, you know, I think tensions are high , um, senses are heightened. And , um, I think though we have to use this as a teaching moment, right? And I'm hoping that there'll be pulpits across the country where people will talk about this. And I know it's hard in some congregations to talk about black lives matters and racial justice. I know people have told me that. Um , but I know pastors who have talked about racial justice and people get up and leave mid sermon. I know that there are people who leave churches when , uh , when I went to pastor talks about racial justice. But , uh, you know, at some point we have to talk about this stuff and it gets back to my work in the lighthouse , right? It's we have to sit down, talk to one another and listened. And that means people are in favor of black lives matter and racial justice sitting down and listening to somebody who's not feeling that and trying to understand, well, where are they coming from? Uh , and we have fewer and fewer spaces in our society where we can come together in terms of different walks of life. And to me, one of the few spaces left is the church and the table. So I'm spending a lot of timing time thinking about, well, how can I join those?

Speaker 3: 33:32

Yeah , that's all well said in , uh , in you're uniquely qualified to have a really powerful perspective there. Appreciate that. Um, so we're rounding up here and as we round up, I wanna , I wanna talk about your soon to be released. I'm looking on Amazon right now and you can, pre-order black smoke. African-Americans in the United States of barbecue. Uh, I will be pre-ordering this book. I am very excited about this. It looks , uh, as we were talking about before, beyond just the wonderful transcendent experience of eating some of the most delicious food on the planet, it looks inspiring. It looks , uh, you

know, educational, motivational. Can you tell us a little bit about this book, black smoke?

Speaker 1: 34:20

Yeah. Thank you for a moment to , to pub it. So , uh, the book, I did not intend to write a book , um, you know, several years ago, but then I had a traumatic experience. I was watching the food network and there was a commercial for Paula Dean's Southern barbecue hour long, special, and I would want it to learn more about barbecue because so many as soul food joints have a barbecue option on the menu. And so many black owned barbecue joints have a soul food sides. So I thought, well, let me just watch this show. I'm B I'm sure I'm going to learn some stuff. So when the, after the hour show, the credits are rolling, my mouth is a gay because no African-Americans were interviewed on air. And I first, the thing I thought was, how does this even happen? And then the second thing I thought is, well, maybe I got it twisted . Maybe it was Paula Dean Scandinavian, barbecue. And I just , uh , and so I started looking at other media and I just saw African-Americans are not being mentioned in this hugely popular cuisine. So black smoke is a part celebration. It's a celebration of African-American barbecue culture. And then it's also , um, and including, I have a whole chapter on church, barbecue. I call it burnt offerings. Oh, nice. Yeah . And I , I show how , um, barbecue has been distracting to my spiritual life. So I don't know about you all, but every time I hear the words burn offerings, my mouth, my mind starts to wander , um , the whole burning Bush story. Do you ever wonder if it smelled like Hickory or Oh , maybe MIS ,

Speaker 3: 35:47

Right, right. Even, even a pecan or yeah.

Speaker 1: 35:51

Yeah. The Valley of dry bones. Did you think of them as spare ribs and then it's restoration it's it's moving back. It was moving African-Americans back to what I call the center of the fire or in this case, the African-American barbecue story, because African-Americans have been pushed to the sidelines and that's just not right. Because African-Americans for centuries were not only barbecues , principal cooks, but also , um, it's most effective ambassadors.

Speaker 3: 36:19

Right? Absolutely. Um, yeah.

Speaker 1: 36:22

Oh, and I just say one more thing. You can actually pre-order it from my website, soul food, scholar.com and you'll get an autographed copy and I'm happy to sign that any way you want, if you want me to say, I couldn't have written this book without you. I'm happy to.

Speaker 3: 36:37

Well, I it's all of us. Right. We're all in all of us. Barbecue enthusiasts. Um, yeah. And on your website also, you have, for those listeners in Colorado, you have a great list of , uh , barbecue restaurants there. Um , so get out there, do a tour, do, do one every other Sunday and, and get out there, see what there is to be had because what a world that is , um, for , I think I read somewhere your , your , uh, official barbecue , um, uh, competition judge, which was a small dream of mine, for sure. But , um, you know, the, the beauty of this as an art form, I really we'll call it an art form in a communal experience is just off the charts, in my opinion, and to capture it , uh , captured that. And

also in this sort of , uh, I like the restorative component of this, like giving, giving the recognition where it's been do from the beginning to these, these black barbecue , uh , artists let's call them that. And , uh, I can't wait to get my hands on that. And , and , uh , there also appear to be a bunch of recipes in there. So I'll be trying those out. Um, and, you know, getting my rubs in my, the woods is smoking woods and all that stuff. And it's going to be a fun summer for sure. Absolutely

Speaker 4: 37:55

Great Hadrian Miller soul food scholar. Thanks for being on hyphenated life. Adrian Miller we're grateful. Thank you. [inaudible] hyphenated life. Its production of pine street church in Boulder, Colorado hosted by David Long Jew and Andrew Doerr produced by Phil Norman, executive producer, Alexi molding, special things to today's guest, the Leo Hill trust of Boulder, Colorado, and pine street church. If today's episode has inspired, you reach out to us at hyphenated life on our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. You can also find us@hyphenatedlife.org. If you were looking for a spiritual community, we'd love to join you on that journey. Go to pine street, church.net to find out more [inaudible] .