ABOUT THE FILM
Filmmaker Byron Hurt explores the upsides and downsides of soul food, a quintessential American cuisine. Soul Food Junkies explores the history and social significance of soul food to black cultural identity and its effect on African American health, good and bad. The film is also an opportunity for everyone to rethink the comfort food they grew up with, and how to find a balance between tradition and health. The film utilizes soul food as a lens by which to inquire about the practices of the food industry and the growing food justice movement taking root over the last few years.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER
BYRON HURT - DIRECTOR
Byron Hurt is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, published writer, anti-sexist activist, and lecturer. Hurt is also the host of the Emmy-nominated series, Reel Works With Byron Hurt. The Independent named him one of the “Top 10 Filmmakers to Watch” in 2011. His most popular documentary, Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was later broadcast on Independent Lens. Hurt’s writing has been published in several anthologies and his work has been covered by The New York Times, O Magazine, AllHipHop.com, NPR, CNN, Access Hollywood, MTV, BET, ABC News World Tonight, and many other outlets.

ABOUT THE CURRICULUM WRITER
Sarah Dahnke is a multimedia artist and arts educator. She has worked as a teaching artist in public schools throughout New York and Chicago, writing original curricula that weave arts into social studies within the classroom. She is the former artist residency manager at chaNorth, where she managed a partnership with McNerney Organic Farm that brought artists to the farm to work, harvest and connect to the land. Sarah has a master’s degree from the NYU/Tisch Interactive Telecommunications Program and is a student at Just Food’s Farm School NYC.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE
Whether you’re an educator, administrator, parent, student, or just someone who wants to learn more about media literacy, you can use this guide as a way to discuss the themes in the film. Lessons are aligned with time-coded video modules, and ‘Resources for Students and Teachers’ offers further reading, further watching, and a list of local and national arts organizations. Above all, we understand that educators are multifaceted artists in their own right, so we encourage you to utilize your own artistic experiences to spark dialogue.

A PDF of this and other creative, incisive Tribeca Film Institute® Educator Guides can be found at TRIBECAFILMINSTITUTE.ORG
DISCUSSION PROMPTS CONT.

SLAVE TO FOOD
In the film, we meet comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory and Nation of Islam Student Minister Abdul Hafeez Muhammad who advocate rejecting traditional soul food as a way to reject the oppression of slavery. They refer to the soul food diet as a slave diet and implore that it is important to “eat to live” as opposed to living to eat. Dick Gregory says “soul food will kill you.” The Black Panthers had a similar viewpoint, teaching healthy eating to young people as a way to build a strong, healthy community. Yet, most cultural dishes have nutritious elements, utilizing produce grown in the area where the dish originates and may also incorporate less-healthy techniques to create richer flavor or to stretch meals to feed more people. For example, black-eyed peas, a cheap, abundant protein source, are often boiled with a ham hock. Is soul food bad for you? Is it possible to reinvent the cuisine to be healthier? How would you decide?

FOOD AND GATHERING
Food offers a way for people to come together and share something, even when they otherwise feel segregated. During the Civil Rights movement, political organizing would sometimes take place over meals of soul food, and matriarchal figures like Ms. Peaches would take it upon themselves to cook for and feed those who were protesting for equal rights. In these cases, soul food might have felt grounding and familiar, like a taste of home amongst a chaotic future. Culture and food are intrinsically linked around the world. If you change a dish, does it become less culturally important? If you bake chicken instead of frying it, does it eliminate the tradition?

VIDEO MODULES

1. Always Accept a Plate of Food
2. Ms. Peaches
3. Dick Gregory’s Death Food
4. Complicated Soul Food
5. Food Deserts

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

OBESITY, DIABETES AND AFRICAN AMERICANS
Diabetes and obesity disproportionately affect African Americans. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, African American women have the highest rates of overweight and obesity compared to other groups in the U.S. About four out of five African American women are overweight or obese. In 2010, African Americans were 1.4 times as likely to be obese as non-Hispanic whites. In 2010, African American women were 70 percent more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic white women. In 2007-2010, African American girls were 80 percent more likely to be overweight than non-Hispanic white girls. African American adults are twice as likely to have been diagnosed with diabetes by a physician than non-Hispanic white adults. In 2008, African Americans were 2.2 times as likely as non-Hispanic whites to die from diabetes.

FOOD AND TRADITION
Many classic soul food dishes are based on what some refer to as “survival food,” foods that would normally be thrown away and were instead given to slaves in the United States. These were usually foods that were considered bottom of the barrel (pig feet, turkey neck bones, intestines), which were fried to make more palatable. These survivalist cooking skills evolved into dishes that are important cultural traditions with roots in the Deep South among both black and white communities. Byron Hurt speaks about his own rejection of pork and the consequent guilt of also eschewing his family’s culture as a result of his beliefs. How are food and traditions so deeply linked in cultures around the world, and how does this have conflicts with health?
“What if we all had access to healthy, organic food?” This is the essential question asked by Byron Hurt in Soul Food Junkies and is a similar question that has been asked in the previous films in this Youth Screening Series. Food deserts are called “class-based apartheid,” and it’s stated that there is no better example of racism in the 21st century than access to food or that lack of access is 21st-century genocide. Again, we hear about the strong links between race, class, health and access to food.

One minute writing exercise: Based on everything you’ve learned in the previous films, why do you think that there are so many diet-related illnesses in the United States?

WRITE THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS ON THE BOARD:

Argument 1: There is a lack of access to fresh, healthy food in low-income areas.
Argument 2: There is a lack of education about what makes a food healthy versus unhealthy.
Argument 3: People know better, but they just have bad eating habits they cannot break.

• Take a vote in the classroom and tally your votes next to each argument. If there is another strong viewpoint in the classroom that is not represented, you may choose to include it.
• Appoint a team leader for each argument, preferably someone who feels strongly about that particular viewpoint, and divide the class into three groups.
• Spend 10-15 minutes allowing the groups to develop their arguments further, then bring them together for a moderated debate. Give each group a time limit of 2 minutes to deliver their opening statements then one minute per group for follow-up rebuttals.
• After each group has had a chance to deliver a few rebuttals, allow two more minutes for closing statements.

Reconvene as a whole class group for discussion:

-Did that debate open your eyes to another viewpoint?
-Did the debate change your opinion?
-Did the debate allow you to draw any new conclusions? What conclusions and how did you arrive at them?
**POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY 1**
**SHOEBOX LUNCH**

*Time:* 45 minutes  
*Materials:* Paper and writing utensils

During the Jim Crow era, trains were segregated and Black people were not allowed to visit the dining cars. Many passengers would pack a meal in shoeboxes when traveling to southern cities. Road trips by automobile also presented challenges to a family looking for places to eat. Planning ahead with boxed lunches became a tradition, and it was traditional for a shoebox lunch to include fried chicken, hard-boiled eggs, pound cake and other traditional soul food items. In the film, we hear Byron Hurt speaking with his mother about their family road trips from New York to the South, where they would pack soul food meals for their journey, even though the family could have eaten at restaurants in those days without any trouble. His family, like so many other families, had developed a tradition based on necessity and habit.

**Discussion:**

Does your family have any recipes that have been passed down from older generations? What are they?

Does your family have traditions that revolve around food? Describe them.

If you were to create your own shoebox lunch for traveling a long distance, what would be included?

**Writing activity:**

Write a paragraph in first-person point of view. You are about to take a journey across the country, and you won’t be able to stop to eat at restaurants along the way. You are going to pack a box of food at home to bring with you to keep you nourished. What will go into that box? Explain why you chose each item. Did you choose food because it was healthy? Because it had sentimental value? Because they are foods you have a habit of eating every day?

Students will share their paragraphs at the end of class.

**Taking it further:**

Create a simple web repository on Tumblr or another free and easy to use platform. Record audio of students describing how to make the contents of their shoebox lunches. Create an entry for each student that includes their audio and paragraphs from the writing activity.

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**PRE-SCREENING ACTIVITY 2**
**A NEW SCHOOL LUNCH**

*Time:* 1 hour  
*Materials:* Chart paper and markers, pens, pencils

The National School Lunch Program supports student nutrition in over 101,000 schools and residential facilities. It provides free and reduced priced meals to low-income children before school, during school, after school, and over the summer. In the 2012 fiscal year, the government allotted $11 billion toward school nutrition programs. Michelle Obama has been a prominent figure in the movement toward healthier school lunches with more fresh produce, however the new federally funded school lunches have been under scrutiny with some saying the calorie limits are too low and portions too small, leading students to supplement their meals with junk food to “fill up.” In the film, we will visit EcoSPACES Academy in New Jersey, where the students learn to cook and garden on a regular basis, making food education a part of their everyday lives.

**Discussion:**

How much of a role should schools play in healthy eating?

Does the government have a role in guiding and funding healthy food practices?

Should there be mandates that state schools in areas with higher risk for obesity-related diseases receive special attention when it comes to nutrition?

How could schools solve the problem of some students not feeling full enough after eating a low-calorie school lunch?

**Designing:**

The average school lunch costs approximately $2.92 per meal, with $2.57 coming from federal funding (source: HEALTHY study, 2012).

Problem: According to The New England Journal of Medicine, children in the United States are the first generation predicted to live a shorter life than their parents. (For more on these statistics, you can read the New York Times article addressing the issue here: [www.nytimes.com/2005/03/17/health/17obese.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/17/health/17obese.html?_r=0))

Solution: What should be included in a healthy school lunch experience? Keeping budget constraints in place, how could you transform school lunch into something that instills healthy eating habits that students will take with them through life? Think about the menu, but also consider the eating environment, scheduling, psychological conflicts, design of the eating space, etc.

In groups, redesign school lunch at your school. Every group should first brainstorm ideas, and once solutions are in place, using a large paper and markers, begin your redesign. Write up three sample lunch menus and create a sketch of your newly renovated lunchroom. Include notes about any other changes you would propose to the school lunch experience. After each group finishes, present your redesigns to the class.
POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY 2
FOOD, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Part A: Food family tree
Time: 45 minutes
Materials: Paper and writing utensils

All around the world, communities come together over food traditions. In this warm up activity, students will map out their own communities and how they overlap with rituals around food and eating.

• On their own papers, have students think about a recent or significant meal they have eaten with a group. This group may have been family, friends or a mixture of the two. Who was there? What relation did they have to you? What did you eat? Be specific. Feel free to add illustrations to the diagrams that depict the people or foods included in the gatherings.

• Break the class into groups of three to four students. In these groups, students will share their diagrams, and the group will look for links between food and community. Do the people who gathered in your diagram share values about food? Is this a group of people who regularly eat together? Who come together on special occasions? What do people in your group have in common? What do the diagrams reveal about your communities and food preferences?

• Reconvene as a class and share your findings.

Part B: Culture
Time: 30 minutes
Materials: Chart paper or white board and markers

As a class, consider the following:

1. Culture is a learned experience; we learn it from our families and the people around us. It is the same with food. The food that we use for celebrations in our own homes as children are more than likely to become a part of the foods we use to celebrate with as adults.

2. Culture involves change; the foods that we use to celebrate with may change as we change. Our tastes as well as our celebrations may not even be the same.

3. Every culture resists change; even though some of the foods we use may change, many will stay the same because of what we learned as children.

4. We are unconscious of our culture. We may use the foods that we do because it is just so much a part of our lives.

5. Take a vote on each item. Does the class agree or disagree? Why? Can you highlight examples to back up your viewpoints?

Taking it further:

• Host a classroom potluck and invite students to bring in a dish that is important to their family, their culture or their tradition. You may choose to also collect recipes for each dish and create a digital cookbook.

• Students can make a video of a relative cooking their family’s traditional dish and share those videos. Here are some tips: http://www.familylegacyvideo.com/529/capture-your-family-cooks-and-their-recipes-on-video/

FURTHER READING
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT SOME OF THE ISSUES PRESENTED IN THE FILM, CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS.

Everyone Eats by E.N. Anderson
Examines the social and cultural reasons for our food choices and provides an explanation of the nutritional benefits for why humans eat. E. N. Anderson explains the economics of food in the globalization era, food’s relationship to religion, medicine, and ethnicity as well as offers suggestions on how to end hunger, starvation, and malnutrition.

Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power by Psyche A. Williams-Forsorn
Examines the complexity of black women’s legacies using food as a form of cultural work. While acknowledging the negative interpretations of black culture associated with chicken imagery, Williams-Forsorn focuses her analysis on the ways black women have forged their own self-definitions and relationships to the “gospel bird.”

Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time by Adrian Miller
The story of a family in India who must flee their town in order to find work. Promises of a big factory job end up being lies, and the young boys find themselves working in a sweatshop.

Food Movements Unite!: Strategies to Transform Our Food System By Samir Amin
Photographs and text that document working children especially in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Mexico.

FURTHER WATCHING
IF YOU LIKED THIS FILM, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE SOME OF THESE OTHER FILMS.

Joy by Andrew Haas & Adam Goldstein
The film shows Joy Moore, a food justice activist, at work with students of all ages and from diverse backgrounds, sharing her insights about healthy living, and her vision for a healthier world.

Mandela Marketplace by Cara Jones
Mandela Marketplace makes fresh organic produce available to the residents of West Oakland. This story chronicles the efforts of a team of dedicated young people who transport this produce from Bay Area minority farmers to liquor and corner stores in their community.

The Garden by Scott Hamilton Kennedy
Filmmaker Scott Hamilton Kennedy’s Oscar-nominated documentary follows a group of low-income families struggling to keep a 14-acre urban farm area in South Central Los Angeles out of the hands of bureaucrats and real-estate developers.

Food Forward
Watch online: http://www.pbs.org/food/shares/food-forward/
This PBS original program opens the door into a new world of possibility, where pioneers and visionaries are creating viable alternatives to the pressing social and environmental impacts of our industrial food system.

GET INVOLVED
CRAVING MORE HANDS ON EXPERIENCE? CHECK OUT THESE ORGANIZATIONS.

LETSMOVE.gov
Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move campaign teaches about healthy eating and exercise.

FAIRFOODFIGHT.com
Fair Food Fight is an activist site containing behind-the-scenes information about big food companies and corporate agriculture.

SCHOOLGARDENWIZARD.org
A resource and how-to site for establishing a school garden.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS
TRIBECA YOUTH SCREENING SERIES® STAFF

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COMMUNITY CLASSROOM
Community Classroom is an innovative and free resource for educators, offering short-form film modules adapted from ITVS’s award-winning documentaries and standards-based lesson plans for high school and community colleges, NGOs, and youth organizations. ITVS.ORG/EDUCATORS/COLLECTIONS

ITVS
The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy® Award-winning series Independent Lens on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

ABOUT TRIBECA YOUTH SCREENING SERIES®
Tribeca Youth Screening Series® is a media literacy program begun in 2006 by the Tribeca Film Institute®. The academic year is divided into two series, screened from September through June in partnership with national and neighborhood partners. These screenings are augmented by in-class sessions led by a Tribeca Teaching Artist, who works with a film-specific curriculum written and edited by a team formed through Tribeca Film Institute®. Schools are selected based on relationship, location, and need; in 2012 we will be working in eight schools in New York and New Jersey. Connect and download free curricula at TRIBECAFILMINSTITUTE.ORG

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