



Mr.
SOUL!

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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USING THIS GUIDE



Independent Lens brings **Mr. SOUL!**, the story of the groundbreaking series *SOUL!* and its creator, back to its public media roots this February. At a time when the nation was in socio-political upheaval over the Vietnam War, racial injustice, and the assassinations of civil rights activists Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., producer Ellis Haizlip saw a lively cultural renaissance in Black communities across the country. This Black Arts Movement provided the source and substance for the series *SOUL!* at a time when there were few balanced images of African Americans on television.

Produced, developed, and hosted by Haizlip, *SOUL!* was an important chapter in the story of television and public broadcasting. It was the first variety show series of its kind, and it introduced many Black artists, poets, writers, dancers, and musicians to a national audience.

This season, Indie Lens Pop-Up partners across the country will host virtual screenings of *Mr. SOUL!* to introduce attendees and public media viewers to Haizlip's story and the lasting impact of *SOUL!* on American television, arts, and culture.

To help organizers, educators, and viewers generate dialogue about diverse representation and inclusion in media, as well as about using the arts as a tool for activism and civic engagement, this guide provides background information on the documentary, suggested discussion questions, and a list of resources dedicated to the arts, media, Black history, and culture.

Thank you for joining with us to promote these goals of *Mr. SOUL!*:

- Use the arts as a civic engagement tool
- Inspire young people to express themselves through art as a form of activism
- Raise understanding about why representation in media both in front of and behind the cameras matters and support more Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), women, and LGBTQIA+ persons in creative and decision-making positions in media and arts organizations
- Encourage support for public media in fostering an inclusive community of ideas
- Celebrate the importance of local arts organizations in communities

ABOUT INDIE LENS POP-UP



Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS's *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations together to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics and social issues to family and community relationships.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indie Lens Pop-Up is virtual. Audiences can watch films together from the safety of their homes on OVEE, the Indie Lens Pop-Up virtual theater. Make friends, share stories, and join the conversation at an Indie Lens Pop-Up screening online: bit.ly/ILPOP-Screenings.

ABOUT THE FILM



Photo Credit: Alex Harsley

How to Watch the Film

Virtual Indie Lens Pop-Up Screenings:

January 23–February 28, 2021

Independent Lens Broadcast Premiere:

February 22, 2021

Stream online at video.pbs.org:

February 22–March 23, 2021

From 1968 into 1973, the PBS variety show *SOUL!*, guided by enigmatic producer and host Ellis Haizlip, offered an unfiltered, uncompromising celebration of Black literature, poetry, music, and politics—voices that had few other options for national exposure and, as a result, found in the program a place to call home. The series was among the first to provide expanded images of African Americans on television, shifting the gaze from inner-city poverty and violence to the vibrancy of the Black Arts Movement. Through participants' recollections and illuminating archival clips, *Mr. SOUL!* captures a critical moment in culture whose impact continues to resonate and celebrates an unsung hero whose voice we need now more than ever, to restore the *soul* of a nation.

FROM THE FILMMAKER



Photo Credit: George Newcomb

I have wanted to make this film my entire life, having a deep personal connection to the story, which I've actually lived. Ellis Haizlip was my uncle, and he was a huge inspiration not just to me, but to many others.

I was a little girl when Uncle Ellis moved into our Upper West Side home in New York City, around the time his television series, *SOUL!*, was born. I remember eating oatmeal at midnight with my uncle and the guest stars he would bring home after taping the show. I would bask in the glow of all these intelligent, glamorous Black people, mesmerized by my uncle's coterie of magical friends. It would be years before I would learn that it was James Earl Jones who had pinched my cheek and that I had been playing with the children of the late Malcolm X, whom Uncle Ellis was babysitting and had brought over for a play date.

Uncle Ellis was the visionary creator, producer, and host of *SOUL!*, a groundbreaking Black Arts television series broadcast weekly on WNET Channel 13, New York City's flagship PBS station. To millennials, *SOUL!* might just be the greatest show you've never heard of. *SOUL!* premiered in 1968, airing 130 dynamic episodes before its controversial cancellation in 1973. It was the

first nationally broadcast all-Black variety show on television, merging artists from the margins with post-civil rights Black radical thought. Originally conceived as a "Black *Tonight Show*," at a time of great turmoil and social unrest in America, *SOUL!* was a quintessentially New York institution that also became a platform for political expression and the fight for social justice.

A quiet revolutionary, my uncle was determined to elevate the perception of African American culture by showcasing a dazzling array of people of color: performers, artists, activists, community leaders, and politicians at a time when television neither accurately reflected nor positively portrayed a full spectrum of society. He was curating the culture, the fluidity of Black thought and identity.

Mr. SOUL! illuminates how *SOUL!* became one of the most successful and culturally significant Black-produced television shows in U.S. television history, providing expanded images of African Americans, shifting the gaze from inner-city poverty and violence to the vibrancy of the Black Arts Movement, and paving the way for today's Black television hosts.

Stylistically, this documentary honors the vibrant, edgy style of the original *SOUL!* series. We shot using two to five cameras, featuring the trademark bold and innovative cinematography of Hans Charles. We were inspired to make *Mr. SOUL!* as visually dynamic and culturally radical as each original episode of *SOUL!*

The time for Ellis Haizlip's voice is now. The United States is on the eve of a great racial reckoning. We're looking deeply at issues of systemic racism, and we're having conversations about where we want our country to go and how we might get there together. And in order to get there, it is tremendously important to have Black people in key decision-making roles throughout the media industry. My uncle's story is an excellent reminder of this—of why our stories, told by our people, matter now more than ever.

At last the nation is getting *SOUL!* We are beyond honored to bring *Mr. SOUL!* and Ellis Haizlip to public television in time for PBS's 50th anniversary—a true homecoming that recognizes PBS and the Ford Foundation as being incubators of diversity, inclusion, creativity, and freedom of expression on national public television.

Ellis Haizlip was faithfully committed to pushing the culture forward, to bringing the culture and the myriad talent and politics of Blackness to the forefront, and his story makes *Mr. SOUL!* a moveable feast for everyone gathered at the family table. Our film captures a critical moment in culture, the impact of which continues to resonate, and an unsung hero whose voice we need in order to restore the *soul* of a nation. *Mr. SOUL!* is a love letter to Black culture, Black history, Black excellence, Black Arts, and Black lives.

The revolution will be televised, again.

— **Melissa Haizlip**, Producer, Writer, Director, *Mr. SOUL!*

PEOPLE IN THE FILM



Photo Credit: Chester Higgins

About Ellis Haizlip

"Somebody had to be first. And it was Ellis Haizlip."

—Valerie Simpson

Ellis Haizlip was born in Washington, D.C., on September 21, 1929, the son of Ellis M. and Sarah Corbett Haizlip.¹ Haizlip grew up in the city's historic Deanwood neighborhood, located in the far northeastern quadrant of the city.²

Haizlip attended and graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar Senior High School during the time when Washington's schools were by law segregated by race. Regardless of where you lived in the city, prior to the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, race determined where you went to school, not geography. For Washington's African American high school students, Dunbar was considered the most prestigious "colored" high school, offering a college preparatory curriculum that fed the Black student pipeline to Ivy League colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), like nearby Howard University.³

Haizlip went on to attend Howard University, where he majored in economics and sociology.⁴ It was at Howard that Haizlip started his career as a producer. Under the mentorship of director,

playwright, and poet **Owen Dodson**, Haizlip produced his first play, for the Howard Players.

After graduating from Howard in 1954, Haizlip moved to New York City, where he began working as a producer and stage manager for professional theater productions, including Howard Richardson and William Berney's *Dark of the Moon*, at the Harlem YMCA's Little Theater in 1957. The play was directed by **Vinnette Carroll**, and choreographed by **Alvin Ailey**. It featured an all-Black cast starring **Roscoe Lee Browne**, and launched the careers of **Cicely Tyson**, **Clarence Williams III**, and **James Earl Jones**.⁵

In 1965, Haizlip produced the European tour of *The Amen Corner*⁶ (his mentor, Dodson, had directed the premiere of *The Amen Corner*, James Baldwin's first play, at Howard University in 1955).⁷ Haizlip produced other shows in Europe as well as in the Middle East, including *Black New World*, by choreographer **Donald McKayle**; *Black Nativity*, by **Langston Hughes**; and even a concert tour for German-American actress and singer Marlene Dietrich.⁸

In 1967, Haizlip was hired as a producer by WNET (then known as WNDT), New York City's public broadcasting station. He was the first Black producer hired by the station.⁹ As a performing arts producer, Haizlip was at the cusp of the emerging Black Arts Movement. His *SOUL!* variety show series, which premiered in 1968, featured music, dance, poetry, and interviews by and with Black

PEOPLE IN THE FILM

performers and Black public and political figures. Haizlip produced and often hosted the program, mentoring many of the young artists on the show, including Valerie Simpson, Nick Ashford, and poet Nikki Giovanni, along the way. Focusing on the African

American experience, *SOUL!* was the first national television series of its kind. It ran for five seasons, ending in 1973.

Haizlip continued working with WNET, producing many programs, including *Memories and Visions*, a 1974 PBS television special featuring the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater,¹⁰ and multiple live performances and events, such as the first Congressional Black Caucus Dinner event, in 1970; Soul at the Center, a 12-day festival of Black expression in the performing arts at Lincoln Center in 1972 and 1973; and “Welcome to the World Saxophone” in 1980.¹¹

In 1978, Haizlip went on to develop and executive-produce *Watch Your Mouth*, a PBS youth-oriented comedy-drama that combined education, comedy, and drama to improve language and writing skills for kids aged 14 through 17. The series was funded with a \$1.8 million grant from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the first television production grant from the federal agency. It starred actor **Joe Morton** and featured a diverse cast. The *New York Times* described the series’ storylines like this: *A male teacher’s homosexuality, the plight of a Haitian immigrant, an exchange student’s fatal illness, the loss of virginity, thievery in school, bank robbery hostages, and the creation of a singing group.*¹²

In 1986, Haizlip became the Director of Special Programs for the New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, where he conceived a series of cultural events and programs bringing the *SOUL!* concept uptown and transforming a public library into a cultural mecca.¹³

Throughout his career, Haizlip was committed to building Black institutions, and he was actively involved in many African American political and arts organizations. He served on boards and produced many cultural events in celebration of phenomenal African American artists, including the Lincoln Center memorial for actor Diana Sands, who died in 1973.

Haizlip also produced the memorial ceremonies at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for James Baldwin in 1987, as seen in the PBS American Masters documentary *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*,¹⁴ and for Alvin Ailey in 1989, which was broadcast nationally on PBS.¹⁵ Haizlip also produced *A Harlem Welcome for the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu*, sponsored by the Schomburg Center.

Haizlip received numerous awards and honors for his groundbreaking cultural work. The president of the borough of Manhattan proclaimed December 6, 1988, Ellis Haizlip Day.¹⁶

Haizlip died from lung cancer January 25, 1991, in Washington, D.C. He was 61 years old.¹⁷ His memorial tribute was held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.¹⁸

Sources:

- ¹ sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/ACMA.06-005.pdf
- ² playbill.com/article/lincoln-center-out-of-doors-kicks-off-with-a-tribute-to-a-pioneering-series-on-black-culture-and-art
- ³ chicagoreviewpress.com/first-class-products-9781613731765.php
- ⁴ sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/ACMA.06-005.pdf
- ⁵ nytimes.com/1991/01/30/obituaries/ellis-haizlip-producer-61-dies-mentor-to-many-black-performers.html
- ⁶ nytimes.com/1964/07/11/archives/play-by-baldwin-an-entry-in-1965-vienna-festival.html
- ⁷ nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2011.99.44
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- ⁹ thirteen.org/program-content/history-ellis-haizlip-soul/
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- ¹² nytimes.com/1978/03/25/archives/watch-your-mouth-on-wnet-explains-english-to-teenagers-18-million
- ¹³ current.org/2020/11/film-explores-quiet-revolutionary-behind-groundbreaking-tv-show-of-black-culture/
- ¹⁴ pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/james-baldwin-film-james-baldwin-the-price-of-the-ticket/2632
- ¹⁵ <https://www.alvinailey.org/about/history?page=12>
- ¹⁶ museumofuncutfunk.com/2012/09/20/mr-soul-ellis-haizlip/
- ¹⁷ nytimes.com/1991/01/30/obituaries/ellis-haizlip-producer-61-dies-mentor-to-many-black-performers
- ¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/01/arts/ellis-haizlip-tribute.html>

PEOPLE IN THE FILM

Additional People Appearing in *Mr. SOUL!*

Ashford and Simpson

Nick Ashford (1941–2011), singer-songwriter

Valerie Simpson, singer-songwriter

Beth Ausbrooks (1929–2017) and **Mary Wilburn**, Ellis Haizlip's childhood friends from Washington, D.C.

Obba Babatundé, actor, performer

Amiri Baraka (1934–2014), activist, poet, playwright

Harry Belafonte, actor, singer, director, activist

Ronald Bell (1951–2020), singer and composer, Kool & the Gang

Black Ivory, 1970s R&B group from Harlem

Stuart Bascombe

Leroy Burgess

Russell Patterson

Alonzo Brown Jr., producer and writer, *SOUL!*

Kathleen Cleaver, member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), communications secretary for the Black Panther Party, law professor

Ivan Cury, one of the original directors of *SOUL!*

Carmen de Lavallade, actress, dancer, choreographer

Leslie Demus, *SOUL!* production secretary, president of the Billy Strayhorn Foundation Inc.

George Faison, dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (1967–1970), theater producer, founder of and choreographer for the Universal Dance Experience

Nikki Giovanni, poet, activist, English professor

Dr. Harold C. Haizlip (1935–2018), cousin and closest relative of Ellis Haizlip; hosted several *SOUL!* episodes in the first season after the departure of the original host, Dr. Alvin Poussaint

Thomas Allen Harris, filmmaker

Chester Higgins, original staff photographer, *SOUL!*

Anna Maria Horsford, actress, associate producer, *SOUL!*

Judith Jamison, dancer and artistic director emerita, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alice LaBrie, original associate producer, *SOUL!*

The Last Poets, music and spoken-word group formed by Black poets, writers, activists in Harlem, New York in 1968, whose work, along with poet and musician Gil Scott Heron, is considered to be the precursor to hip-hop

Umar Bin Hassan, poet and performer, The Last Poets

Abiodun Oyewole, poet, performer, and founding member,

The Last Poets

Stan Lathan, one of the original directors of *SOUL!*, noted producer/director of *Def Poetry Jam* on Broadway and HBO

David Leeming, author, *James Baldwin: A Biography*

Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, Harvard professor, author, *Vision & Justice*

Dr. Loretta Long, actor, original *SOUL!* co-host, Susan Robinson on Sesame Street

Felipe Luciano, *SOUL!* guest host, poet, journalist, founder of the Young Lords Party in New York City to advocate for Puerto Rican and Latino civil rights in the city and in New Jersey, member of the original Last Poets, America's first Puerto Rican television anchor

Christopher "Kit" Lukas, original producer and co-creator of *SOUL!*

Sade Lythcott, director, National Black Theatre

Louis Massiah, filmmaker

Novella Nelson (1939–2017), actress, face of the original *SOUL!* opening titles

David Peck, footage archivist, Reelin' in the Years

Dr. Alvin Poussaint, first *SOUL!* host, psychiatry professor at Harvard

Hugh Price, former senior vice president of WNET, former president and CEO of the National Urban League

Questlove, drummer, DJ, producer, band leader of The Roots

Sonia Sanchez, poet, activist, scholar

Rev. Cheryl Sanders, Ellis Haizlip's niece, pastor of the Third Street Church of God, Washington, D.C.

Greg Tate, author, *Village Voice* writer and cultural critic

Dr. Billy Taylor (1921–2010), jazz composer, musician, broadcaster, founder of New York's Jazzmobile, artistic director for Jazz at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Robert Thompson, professor of Television & Popular Culture, Syracuse University

Blair Underwood, actor, executive producer of *Mr. SOUL!*, voice of Ellis Haizlip

Gayle Wald, English professor at George Washington University; author, *It's Been Beautiful: Soul! and Black Power TV* (Duke University Press, 2015)

Sylvia Waters, dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, artistic director Emerita for Ailey II

Stevie Wonder, musician, singer-songwriter, record producer; performs with his band Wonderlove on *SOUL!*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Photo Credit: Alex Harsley

About *SOUL!*

"The primary purpose of *SOUL!* is neither to educate nor to entertain, but to give people a chance to share in the Black experience. The show must do that first. Then it can educate and entertain. *SOUL!* makes Blacks visible in a society where they have been largely invisible."

—Ellis Haizlip

SOUL! was the first national television variety show with content created by, for, and about African Americans. The show was recorded at WNET in New York City before a live audience. Ellis Haizlip wanted *SOUL!* to be something more than a "Black *Tonight Show*," a format he felt was inadequate for his vision.

At a time when much of the media was focused on inner-city poverty and violence, *SOUL!* countered with programming that amplified the voices of the Black Arts Movement, celebrating Black artistry and culture within the United States and around the globe. Haizlip was intentional in making the show an experience not just for the audience in the studio, but for viewers as well. He wanted the viewers to feel the "vibrations" when watching from home "because it will be beautiful."

SOUL! ran for five seasons, from 1968 into 1973. What *SOUL!*

brought to audiences was the vibrancy and diversity of Black Arts and culture never before seen on national television. *SOUL!* became a Black public sphere, a cultural space where Black artists, musicians, athletes, and activists were free to discuss their varying positions on Black liberation, Black identity, and the common misconception of a monolithic Black community.

The first episode of *SOUL!* premiered September 12, 1968. Its first hosts were Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Loretta Long. Guest performers included the vocal group Patti LaBelle & the Bluebelles; actress Novella Nelson, who became the face of *SOUL!* in the opening title credits; jazz musician/composer Dr. Billy Taylor; soul group The Vibrations; gospel singer Pearl Williams Jones; and comedian Irwin C. Watson.¹⁹

A month after the premiere, Dr. Alvin Poussaint stepped down as host, and was replaced by Ellis Haizlip's cousin, Dr. Harold C. Haizlip, who also stepped down. Soon thereafter, Ellis Haizlip stepped in to co-host with Loretta Long. After eleven episodes, Long left to originate the role of "Susan" on a new children's educational television show called *Sesame Street*, at which point a reluctant Ellis Haizlip took over the hosting position at *SOUL!*

- **Explore more:** Ellis Haizlip and *Soul!*
thirteen.org/program-content/history-ellis-haizlip-soul/

Sources:

- ¹⁹ thirteen.org/program-content/soul-about-the-series/

"Brother Ellis was going to bring Black women to the forefront."

—Sonia Sanchez

Haizlip brought women into the production of *SOUL!* at a time when opportunities for Black women—in fact, for most women, but especially for women of color—to work behind and in front of the camera were practically nonexistent. Among the women involved in the production were Alice LaBrie and Anna Maria Horsford, both associate producers on *SOUL!* and the first two Black women producers for WNET,²⁰ and multiple co-hosts, including Long and poet Nikki Giovanni.²¹

Haizlip also featured and mentored Black women writers and poets, including Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou, and highlighted performances by dancers Carmen de Lavallade, Judy Dearing, and Eleanor McCoy,²² singers Odetta, Patti LaBelle & the Bluebelles, Gladys Knight, Valerie Simpson (with Nick Ashford), Roberta Flack, theater director Barbara Ann Teer, and many others.

At Giovanni's request, Haizlip arranged for a conversation between her and writer James Baldwin. The conversation was taped in London in 1971 and became a two-hour special for *SOUL!* The unfiltered dialogue between Baldwin and Giovanni was an effort to inspire the two writers to "begin to draw upon each other's strengths rather than wallow in each other's weaknesses," wrote journalist Ida Lewis in the foreword of the published transcript.²³

- Watch the 1971 Dialogue between Nikki Giovanni and James Baldwin on YouTube: youtu.be/eZmBy7C9gHQ

SOUL! also featured in-depth interviews with political and public figures and civil rights activists, including Kathleen Cleaver, Mrs. Georgia Jackson (mother of slain Soledad Brother, George Jackson), Muhammad Ali, Betty Shabazz (widow of Malcolm X), and Stokely Carmichael (who changed his name to Kwame Ture in 1978).²⁴

"*SOUL!* makes Blacks visible in a society where they have been largely invisible."

—Ellis Haizlip

SOUL!'s impact resonates in American arts, culture, and media even today. It inspired many future artists and changed the trajectory of television for all time.

- Explore more: *SOUL!* original broadcast dates, guests, and hosts thirteen.org/program-content/soul-about-the-series/

Sources:

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²¹ thirteen.org/program-content/soul-about-the-series/

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²³ brainpickings.org/2016/04/04/james-baldwin-nikki-giannis-dialogue

²⁴ nytimes.com/1998/11/16/us/stokely-carmichael-rights-leader-who-coined-black-power-dies-at-57

Timeline: Black National Television Talk Show and Variety Show Hosts

SOUL! premiered in 1968, a time when African Americans on national television were so rare that an appearance was a special event for African American viewers, prompting telephone calls to neighbors, friends, and family to turn on the television when a Black person was on the air.

SOUL! and host Ellis Haizlip were a unique combination. Not only was *SOUL!* the first national series of its kind combining the variety show format with public affairs, but also, it broke barriers for content by and for Black viewers with a host who was neither entertainer, comedian, nor journalist—no big, boldface name that could be added to the title. *SOUL!* and the people described below opened the door wider for future hosts, who would stand on the shoulders of giants like Haizlip; Oprah Winfrey, Arsenio Hall, and all the BIPOC variety, late-night, and talk show hosts who have followed.

The following is a timeline of benchmarks in American national network and cable television for Black variety and late-night show hosts from the 1950s through 2015.

1956 – *The Nat King Cole Show* debuts

Nat King Cole was the first Black national television variety show host.²⁵ Though television was a relatively new medium when the show premiered, Cole was already an established band leader and jazz musician. He invited African American jazz musicians, singers, and actors to perform, including Ella Fitzgerald, Harry Belafonte, and Sammy Davis Jr.²⁶ Despite the show's glittering star power, in a time of racial unrest and rampant discrimination, national sponsors were reluctant to back *The Nat King Cole Show* because the host and most of the show's guests were Black.²⁷ Cole's manager informed him that Max Factor Cosmetics turned the show down because "no Negro can sell lipstick" for their company.²⁸ The show ended just over a year after its debut.

- Explore more: *American Masters: Nat King Cole: The World of Nat King Cole*, pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/nat-king-cole-about-nat-king-cole/558/

1968 – Harry Belafonte hosts *The Tonight Show*

Johnny Carson turned his late-night host desk over to actor, singer, director, and activist Harry Belafonte for a single week in February. Belafonte invited friends and fellow activists from the entertainment industry and the Civil Rights Movement to be his special guests, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Senator Robert F. Kennedy, actor Paul Newman, and actress Lena Horne. The week made Belafonte the first Black host of a late-night network talk show.²⁹

Sources:

²⁵ npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5411446

²⁶ indianapublicmedia.org/nightlights/nat-king-cole-show.php

²⁷ pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/nat-king-cole-about-nat-king-cole/558/

²⁸ indianapublicmedia.org/nightlights/nat-king-cole-show.php

²⁹ npr.org/2020/09/08/910650652/the-sit-in-revisits-a-landmark-week-with-harry-belafonte-as-tonight-show-host

1970 – *The Flip Wilson Show* premieres on NBC

Comedian Clerow “Flip” Wilson was the first Black entertainer to host a successful variety show on network television.³⁰ The show ran for four seasons and featured, among others, musical guests Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Johnny Cash, and the Jackson Five; comedians Redd Foxx, George Carlin, Richard Pryor, Lily Tomlin, and Joan Rivers; and sports celebrities like Joe Namath and Sugar Ray Robinson. Wilson was a storyteller and brought the characters he created for his standup routines and recordings to life, including Reverend Leroy of the Church of What’s Happening Now³¹ and the sassy, proud Geraldine, a predecessor to Tyler Perry’s Madea.³²

1986 – *The Oprah Winfrey Show* premieres

After her anchor positions in Baltimore and Nashville, Oprah Winfrey moved to Chicago, where she hosted *A.M. Chicago*. Subsequently, King World offered Winfrey the opportunity to nationally syndicate her own program, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (later, *Oprah*). Winfrey interviewed people from all sectors, including business leaders, entertainers, authors, sports figures, scientists, and political figures. The broad scope of topics and people, combined with Winfrey’s affable personality as an interviewer/host, made *Oprah* the highest-rated talk show in television history.³³

1989 – *The Arsenio Hall Show* premieres

Before becoming a celebrity comedian, actor, and variety show host, Arsenio Hall made his television debut on *SOUL!* in 1971. At fifteen, he was already an accomplished magician. In 1987, he spent 13 weeks as interim host on the Fox network’s *Late Show* following the firing of the show’s original host, comedian Joan Rivers. Paramount Studios offered Hall an opportunity to create/host his own nationally syndicated variety show, and *The Arsenio Hall Show* was born. The show kept the standard late-night format³⁴ and ran for six seasons.³⁵

1996 – *The RuPaul Show* premiered on VH1

RuPaul Andre Charles is one of the first openly gay talk show hosts. He is best known for his onstage drag queen persona, RuPaul.³⁶ RuPaul is also the creator and host of the popular competition reality show *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, which premiered in 2009 and ran for 13 seasons.³⁷

2000 – *Later with Cynthia Garrett*³⁸

When actress and producer Cynthia Garrett took over as host for *Later*, she became the first Black woman to host a late-night show.³⁹ *Later* ended in 2001, and Garrett now hosts her own global women’s talk show, *The Sessions*, on Trinity Broadcasting Network.⁴⁰

2014 – *Just Keke* premieres on BET cable network

Just Keke had a short run after premiering on BET. At age 20, the host, actor Lauren Kenyans “Keke” Palmer, became the youngest talk show host in television history.⁴¹

2015 – *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore* premieres on Comedy Central

Producer, writer, actor, and comedian Larry Wilmore was the “Senior Black Correspondent” for *The Daily Show* from 2006 through 2014.⁴² *The Nightly Show* with Larry Wilmore ran for two years and delved into commentary around race and racism that most late-night shows avoided.⁴³ When Wilmore’s show was canceled in 2016, television critic Melanie McFarland referred to Haizlip in an article for Salon: “What they got in Wilmore, however, was a modern version of Ellis Haizlip with a bit of Tavis Smiley mixed in...”⁴⁴

2015 – Trevor Noah anchors Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show*, replacing Jon Stewart

South African comedian Trevor Noah is the third host of Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show*, which premiered in 1996, with Craig Kilborn as its first host.⁴⁵ Noah joined *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in 2014 as a contributor until Stewart stepped down as host in 2015.⁴⁶

Sources:

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The World in the Age of *SOUL!* (1968–1973)

Black Arts and Black Power Movements

"We said we wanted an art that was culturally Black. We wanted an art that was not just to titillate the minds of the elite, but we wanted an art that would contribute to the liberation of Black people."

—Amiri Baraka

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Black writers, visual artists, choreographers, playwrights, and musicians were purposing artistic work into a form of nonviolent protest against centuries of systemic racism and racial oppression. This period became known as the "Black Arts Movement." It was a fervent cultural response to the social-political landscape in the United States from a Black perspective, consciousness, and experience, with the goal of Black liberation. With roots in the Civil Rights Movement, the sense of urgency around artistic endeavors found momentum after the assassination of Malcolm X/el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz in 1965.⁴⁷

"Individualism is a luxury that we can no longer afford. The definition of Black Power is the coming together of Black people to fight for their liberation by any means necessary."

—Stokely Carmichael

In an article for the 1968 summer issue of the *Drama Review*, cultural critic, playwright, and poet Larry Neal wrote, "This [Black Arts] [M]ovement is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America."⁴⁸ Neal appeared on *SOUL!* in 1970, and his interpretation of the movement is identical to Haizlip's vision for the *SOUL!* series.⁴⁹

SOUL! also gave voice to the Black Power Movement. Haizlip invited Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) to be interviewed on *SOUL!*, where Carmichael shared how introducing the concept of Black Power—a call for Black political and economic power—started a movement.⁵⁰ In 1966, after James Meredith was shot by a white man on his solo March Against Fear,⁵¹ Carmichael and fellow Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) members were ready to shift the tone of passive/nonviolent action to more direct protest. SNCC member Willie Ricks urged Carmichael (then chairman of the SNCC) to include the phrase *Black Power* in his speech during a march for voting rights, and Carmichael's call

resonated with the communities along the route, becoming part of the lexicon.⁵² Haizlip responded that "Black Power [is] something people could give their own definition to...."

The new Black aesthetic also embraced Pan-Africanism. By 1963, more than 30 African nations had gained their independence from white colonial rule.⁵³ American Pan-Africanism was joining the liberation of African nations with the idea that people of African descent anywhere share common interests and a common culture and should unify around them.

"Ellis already knew that Black culture was world culture."

—Felipe Luciano

On *SOUL!*, the African diaspora was lifted up. The program featured musical artists Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, who were in exile from South Africa,⁵⁴ which was still under white minority rule, or Apartheid, at that time; Puerto Rican percussionist and composer Tito Puente and his orchestra; and poet activist Felipe Luciano, among others.

In contrast to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s that produced writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston,⁵⁵ artists involved in the Black Arts Movement sought to be more independent from the influence of wealthy white patronage. The goal of financial independence was not always achievable because as the movement grew, so did interest from foundations, even corporations.⁵⁶ For the most part, the Black Arts Movement found its home and purpose in community-based enterprises—-independent theaters, galleries, artist guilds, publishing houses that continue to publish today, such as Black Classic Press⁵⁷ and Third World Press,⁵⁸ and bookstores featuring titles by Black authors from around the globe.

Sources:

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⁵⁵ jstor.org/stable/26434688

⁵⁶ upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15142.html

⁵⁷ thirdworldpressfoundation.org/about/

⁵⁸ blackclassicbooks.com/about-us/

The Black Arts Movement also found a home at Howard University. Shortly after Haizlip graduated, Howard University opened the College of Fine Arts.⁵⁹ The college's theater department became one of the institutional incubators for students to perform plays by Black playwrights, including Ed Bullins, who was also Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party for Self Defense; Amiri Baraka; Joseph Walker; and J.E. Franklin.⁶⁰

This focus on Black Arts was encouraged in part by a student demonstration and takeover of Howard's administration building in 1968. At the time that Haizlip attended Howard, the University offered a traditional and mostly classic Euro-centric liberal arts curriculum. By 1968, student protesters at Howard demanded that the University establish a department of Afro-American history and culture.⁶¹ The students were successful, and their success opened doors wider for Black studies departments in colleges and universities nationwide, including HBCUs and Ivy League institutions like Yale and Harvard.

Black men may have been the most visible messengers of the movement, but Black women asserted their influence and voice and rose to prominence. These included writers, poets, and playwrights such as Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Audre Lorde, Jayne Cortez, Maya Angelou, Carolyn Rodgers, Gwendolyn Brooks,⁶² Mari Evans,⁶³ J.E. Franklin,⁶⁴ and theater directors Barbara Ann Teer and Glenda Dickerson.⁶⁵

"And you think of the Afro being the ultimate kind of statement of follicle militancy, right!"

—Greg Tate

Black cross-over artists began to adopt some of the symbolic elements of Black Power, trading wigs and straightened hair for Afros. "Godfather of Soul" James Brown released "Say It Loud [I'm Black and I'm Proud]" in 1968.⁶⁶ When "Queen of Soul" Aretha Franklin released her epic concert gospel album *Amazing Grace*, the album cover featured a photo of the artist in an African-inspired headdress and caftan instead of the traditional choir robe.⁶⁷ True to the spirit of the Black Arts Movement, Franklin also personally supported the goals of civil rights and self-determination.⁶⁸

The Black Arts Movement may have peaked in the mid-1970s, but the lasting influences of the movement on American culture had already begun. Many celebrated post-Black Arts Movement writers were shaped by the movement, including Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, August Wilson, and Ntozake Shange.⁶⁹ The movement seeded early radical multiculturalism—it inspired and aided similar nationalist formations in other communities with artists who were Puerto Rican, Native American, Asian American, Chicano, and other ethnicities, in the United States and globally.⁷⁰

The beneficiaries of the Black Arts Movement are BIPOC filmmakers and performers we know today. Hip-hop, Afro-punk, and Afrofuturism all have their roots in the movement. Artists who want to send out a political message can claim the Black Arts Movement as an artistic ancestor as they create, innovate, and respond to the people and the social and political issues of the day. Though the aesthetics and tools may be different, the vision and tenets of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements—liberation and self-determination—remain.

Sources:

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- ⁶⁰ [Howard University Theatre Arts faculty and alumni who were at the College of Fine Arts from 1968-1975 —including professor emerita Vera J. Katz, a colleague of Haizlip's mentor Owen Dodson — were contacted for this guide about the impact of the Black Arts Movement at the university.](#)
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Kerner Commission Report

"This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution."

—Kerner Commission Report

In 1967, more than 150 incidents of violent upheaval took place in U.S. cities. That summer became known as the "Long Hot Summer of 1967."⁷¹ Across the nation, African Americans were expressing rage against racial injustice, decades of entrenched segregation, extreme poverty, redlining and predatory lending practices, lack of infrastructure and public services, and police harassment and brutality. The deadliest uprisings occurred in a two-week period in Detroit, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey. Detroit's "Uprising of 1967" was prompted by a police raid on a party at an unlicensed after-hours bar.⁷² The Newark riots ignited after two white police officers arrested and beat a Black cab driver for a minor traffic infraction.⁷³

In July 1967, a commission was empaneled—the Kerner Commission—to investigate why these uprisings and civil unrest had happened. President Lyndon B. Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Named for its chair, Governor Otto Kerner Jr. of Illinois, the 11-member commission had two African American members: Senator Edward W. Brooke III of Massachusetts, and civil rights activist Roy Wilkins of the NAACP.⁷⁴

President Johnson asked the panel to answer three basic questions about the riots:

1. What happened?
2. Why did the riots happen?
3. What can be done to prevent the riots from happening again?⁷⁵

Released in 1968, the Kerner Commission Report concluded that the uprisings and riots resulted from people of color's longtime frustration and suffering from poverty, the lack of economic opportunity, and institutional racism.⁷⁶ The report also emphasized deepening racial division between two Americas, "one black, one white—separate and unequal," and the imperative need for action.⁷⁷

Chapter 15 of the report addresses the media's role in framing the state of affairs. The report describes how important segments of the media did not accurately portray the "scale and character of the violence" in the summer of 1967 or adequately report the "causes and consequences of civil disorders and on the underlying problems of race relations."⁷⁸

The Kerner Commission Report also made recommendations for a new path forward—a segment is copied below. [Note for historical context: In 1968, the term Negro was used in official government documents and texts, including in the work of prominent Black figures of the 20th century, including "Negro History Week" founder Carter G. Woodson and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. By today's standards, the use of the term Negro to identify African Americans is considered out of date, even disparaging. The term Black appeared on U.S. forms starting in 1970, a nod to the impact of the Black Power Movement.⁷⁹]

- Expand coverage of the Negro community and of race problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with urban and racial affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Negro community.
- Integrate Negroes and Negro activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programs that recognize the existence and activities of Negroes as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community.
- Recruit more Negroes into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.⁸⁰

The Kerner Commission Report led to the creation of public affairs programs and series focusing on Black issues, topics, and culture, centering on Black representation. This shifting political landscape was fertile ground for the birth of "Black Power television." In response to the times, WNET created the series *SOUL!* and *Black Journal*. *SOUL!* went beyond these expectations, becoming a cultural space centered on Black artists, activists, musicians, and

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- ⁸⁰ eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf

poets who discussed their varying positions on Black liberation and Black identity, helping to decenter the common misconception of a monolithic Black community. The Kerner Commission Report's findings remain as relevant today as they were 50 years ago.⁸¹

- You can read the full Kerner Commission Report here:
eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf

Public Broadcasting

"The Corporation will assist stations and producers who aim for the best in broadcasting good music, in broadcasting exciting plays, and in broadcasting reports on the whole fascinating range of human activity. It will try to prove that what educates can also be exciting."

—President Lyndon B. Johnson's remarks November 7, 1967, when signing the Public Broadcasting Act into law.⁸²

Timeline⁸³

1952

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) begins allocating local television stations, reserving 242 for noncommercial educational television.

The Educational Television and Radio Center is founded in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a grant from the Ford Foundation to support the growing number of educational television stations across the country with program sharing.

1962

Congress passes the Education Television Facilities Act to fund educational programming.

1967

Congress passes the Public Broadcasting Act, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signs it into law. The Public Broadcasting Act establishes the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, "a private, nonprofit corporation managed by a nine-member board appointed by the president and approved by the Senate to funnel government support to public television stations and producers nationwide."⁸⁴

1968

PBS incorporates. "PBS is a private, nonprofit corporation whose members are America's public television stations—noncommercial, educational licensees operating more than 300 PBS member stations and serving all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa."⁸⁵

The Nixon Administration and Public Broadcasting

"Our first step for this year is to get rid of the Public Affairs programs. But how do we get rid of it?"

—President Richard Nixon discussing public broadcasting with cabinet members Clay T. Whitehead and Charles W. Colton in a meeting at the Oval Office; transcript dated February 5, 1973

Former Vice President Richard M. Nixon was inaugurated as president of the United States in 1969. The new president was antagonistic toward public broadcasting. Nixon and Director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy Clay T. Whitehead characterized public broadcasting as having a liberal bias and being hostile toward the president. The last straw for the Nixon White House was a report in 1971 about plans for a public affairs/news program on PBS anchored by Robert MacNeil and Sander Vanocur, who had been critical of Nixon in the past.⁸⁶

Cutting off funds required legislative action that could draw public attention and disapproval. The administration's best option to meet its goal of decentralizing public broadcasting was to take control of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's management, as all CPB board members are appointed by the president. In 1972, President Nixon vetoed a bill that included a two-year allocation of CPB funding. A one-year bill with reduced funding was enacted. CPB's first president, John Macy, resigned in protest, and its first chair, Frank Pace Jr., also resigned.⁸⁷ They were replaced, and President Nixon appointed six new board members.⁸⁸

In a confidential memo, Whitehead outlined the White House strategy recommending an increase in operations funding to local stations. Whitehead would also encourage the local stations to pressure CPB to fund more "balanced" programming. In driving division between local stations and the CPB, the administration's goal was to make public broadcasting less centralized and influential.⁸⁹

To keep public broadcasting funding decisions safe from political or government involvement, PBS's founder and first president,

Sources:

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⁸⁹ <https://current.org/1979/02/nixon-administration-public-broadcasting-papers-summary-of-1971>

Hartford Gunn, formed the Station Program Cooperative, an annual program market where station funds were collected to produce ongoing series. Stations would vote on funding decisions.⁹⁰

The Nixon administration did accomplish a restructuring of the funding process. With more focus on stations and their programming, public broadcasting could draw from and bring regional diversity to audiences. The shift would bring national, cultural, science/nature, how-to, public affairs, children's, and educational programming to audiences. Unfortunately, this new structure did not support the WNET-produced public affairs series *Black Journal*, or the cultural series, *SOUL!*, whose funding CPB chose not to renew.⁹¹

Ellis Haizlip told *Jet* that he believed the cancellation was "the beginning of a systematic plan to remove all Black programs from public television."⁹² Despite the 20,000 letters received by the station in support of the show, and Ellis Haizlip's herculean efforts to keep *SOUL!* on the air, the show was canceled. The last episode of *SOUL!* aired on March 7, 1973.⁹³

In 1973, the Senate's Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities conducted hearings regarding the 1972 arrest of five men for breaking into and wiretapping the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. The men involved were connected to the White House and President Nixon's reelection campaign committee. President Nixon won a second term in 1972 by a landslide.

MacNeil and local television host Jim Lehrer provided the gavel-to-gavel coverage of the hearings. The Watergate hearings were a ratings and fundraising success for PBS member stations.⁹⁴

August 8, 1974, President Richard M. Nixon became the first—and so far, only—U.S. president to resign from office.

Explore more:

Gavel-to-Gavel: The Watergate Scandal and Public Television

americanarchive.org/exhibits/watergate/watergate-and-public-broadcasting

Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 (Section D spells out the creation of CPB)

cpb.org/aboutpb/act

Full text of President Lyndon B. Johnson's remarks when signing the **Public Broadcasting Act of 1967**

cpb.org/aboutpb/act/remarks

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DISCUSSING THE FILM



Photo Credit: Shoes In The Bed Productions

Documentary films are a great way to start a community dialogue. These questions can help you think more about the main ideas in the film and discuss them with other viewers, either in person or online at #MrSoulPBS and #mrsoulthemovie.

- 1 Why do you think Ellis Haizlip named the series *SOUL!*? How do you define *soul*?
- 2 What was happening in your community when *SOUL!* was on the air, 1968–1973?
- 3 When *SOUL!* was on the verge of being canceled, Haizlip asked the audience to send letters of support even if they disagreed with the show's content.
 - a. Have you ever joined a campaign to save a television show or series? Which show?
 - b. How do you think audiences can influence outcomes?
 - c. Why do you think Haizlip asked for both pro and con letters to keep *SOUL!* on the air?
- 4 Haizlip says, "There exists, as far as I know, no TV program that deals with my culture so completely, so freely, and so beautifully. There is no alternative to *SOUL!*" Kit Lukas mentions the complaints about the show being "too Black," which is often understood to be code for expressing discomfort with Black cultural expression.
 - a. Do you agree with Haizlip's decision not to adjust *SOUL!* to make it more appealing to sponsors and/or funders? Why or why not?
- 5 Questlove asks, "How different would our lives have been?"
 - a. What do you see as the lasting impact of *SOUL!* on American culture, music, literature, and dance?
 - b. How different would our lives be if *SOUL!* still existed?
 - c. Which artists today carry on *SOUL!*'s legacy?
- 6 Could a show like *SOUL!* exist today? Are there any television shows that are modern-day versions of *SOUL!*?
- 7 Sonia Sanchez says, "We had to put Black women back on a stage. But the whole movement was sexist. The NAACP was sexist. The movement that [Dr. King] led was sexist. Everything was sexist, make no mistake about it. America was homophobic and sexist."
 - a. Which women in the documentary resonate with you?
 - b. Given the social and political landscape Sonia Sanchez describes, what impact did *SOUL!* make in giving women a platform in front of and behind the camera? What has changed? What continues?
- 8 How have artists/the arts influenced our social and political culture? Do you think artists should be more or less involved in the political discourse? Explain your answer.

DISCUSSING THE FILM

9 In the documentary, when talking about Ellis Haizlip’s strained relationship with his very religious father, Dr. Harold Haizlip, Ellis’ cousin and closest relative, says, “The term *gay* was not in vogue at that time.” Ellis, who was openly gay, invited Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam (an African American political and religious movement) for an interview on *SOUL!* He asked his guest, “And does the fact that a man is a homosexual...negate his coming into the Nation and being dealt with by the Nation of Islam?”

- Why do you think Haizlip is asking this question?
- What do you notice about the demeanor of the two men during this exchange on the subject of sexual identity?
- What do you notice about their language?
- How would this conversation happen today?

Note: In 1987, GLAAD persuaded the New York Times to change its editorial policy and use the word gay, which eventually extended to all media outlets.

10 At Haizlip’s recommendation, Nikki Giovanni, one of the prominent women poets of the Black Arts Movement, recorded “Truth Is on Its Way,” in which Giovanni recited her poetry to a gospel music track by the New York Community Choir. Giovanni says, “It wasn’t called ‘spoken word’ then. If it had been spoken word, I would have won a Grammy.” Being a published poet, why do you think Nikki Giovanni says that? What is the difference between “poetry” and “spoken word?”

11 Representation in film, television, and other media not only addresses a fundamental need for identity affirmation, but also provides a vision and opportunities for upward mobility for BIPOC, women, and LGBTQIA+ persons where they didn’t exist or were hindered by stereotypes created in writing rooms. What does full representation look like on media platforms?

- What does the *Mr. SOUL!* film tell us about the state of Black representation and authorship in film and television today?
- Why is it important for Black people, for all people of color to tell their own stories?

12 In the clip featuring The Last Poets, the spoken word music group performs one of their signature works, “Die Nigger!” These and other works by The Last Poets and poets like Amiri Baraka use the derogatory word *n*gger* in political messaging to point to the racial injustice woven into the fabric of the American political landscape. In the documentary, Haizlip introduces The Last Poets with a disclosure to the audience and a request to “accept [the performance] in the spirit that it’s delivered.” Read the poem or review this part of the documentary and answer the following questions:

- How do you interpret the N-word in this poem and its overall message?
- Who are the Civil Rights Movement figures mentioned in the poem?
- What does the poem trigger and build up to? (See the last line, “So black folks can take over.”)

*“Niggers watch Medgar Evers die
Niggers watch Emmett Till die
Niggers watch Bobby Hutton die
Niggers watch James Chaney die
Niggers watch niggers die, niggers die, niggers die, niggers die
Die, die, die, die, die
Die niggers
SO BLACK FOLKS CAN TAKE OVER”*

13 At the end of the film, during the last episode of *SOUL!*, Haizlip says, “Although it’s over, it’s not the end. Black seeds keep on growing.” These words came from a telegram sent to Haizlip by Patti LaBelle, to commemorate the last show and encourage her friend not to despair—that the conversation was not over, it had just begun. How did the *SOUL!* series plant seeds for the future?

- Who in your community—artists, activists, leaders—are carrying on Haizlip’s work and legacy?
- Who do you think is the next Ellis Haizlip?

ENGAGING WITH THE FILM



Photo Credit: Chester Higgins

Mr. SOUL! is a great reason to get more involved in your community and participate in virtual arts and media activities with others. These suggestions and resources are for those looking to do more after watching the film, such as creating your own *SOUL!* web series or event, organizing a virtual poetry slam, creating a *SOUL!* playlist, or getting more involved with your local arts organizations and public media station.

Create your own *SOUL!*

Produce your own variety or talk show. If you're a student, propose this as a project for a class.

- Make a plan
- Pick a topic/theme
- Invite your guests to join you on Zoom
- Choose the perfect host
- Shoot it on your mobile phone

Conduct an engaging interview

Use these tips—inspired by Haizlip—and the resources that follow to help you conduct a successful interview.

- **Research and prepare** – Be curious. Learn everything you can about the subject you're discussing and the person you're interviewing, including their background, and anything else that will make the conversation interesting, informative, and enlightening. Prepare your theme and questions before the interview.
- **Listen** – Listening is key. Listen closely to what the person in front of you says. As an interviewer, you're not thinking of getting to the next question. You're listening for the questions that may come from the conversation that's unfolding. And if the interview is in person, read the person's body language.
- **Ask open-ended questions** – Avoid "yes/no" questions, for example, "Do you like hip-hop?" Instead ask, "Why do you like hip-hop?" Have open-ended questions prepared in order to generate a conversation. If needed, ask your guest to clarify their answers to make sure they're fully understood.
- **Be comfortable with who you are, but remember the interview is not about you** – Be courteous to your guest even when you disagree.

ENGAGING WITH THE FILM

Resources

- Scholastic has a tip sheet to help young journalists conduct interviews like a pro: www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/how-conduct-journalistic-interview/
- StoryCorps also has some great interview questions that lead to in-depth personal stories and memories: <https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>

Connect with your local live theater, dance studio, art museum, and music venues

Locate their websites and check the schedules. Many of these organizations are hosting virtual events and exhibitions, including classes and workshops. Join online discussions. Invite the artistic staff to your *Mr. SOUL!* online screening.

Showcase local poets, writers, performers and artist activists

Have your guests share their work. This can also be an intergenerational conversation between an artist who started their career during the time of *SOUL!* (1968-1973) and an artist today.

Say it! Write it! What matters to you?

Host an online poetry slam. Use this resource from Youth Speaks for guidance: youthspeaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/HowtoCreateanIn-SchoolSlamUDPS.pdf

Explore some of Youth Speaks' writing prompts to bridge social distance: youthspeaks.org/writing-prompts-2/

Host a listening party

Make a playlist inspired by the musicians and singers who appeared in *Mr. SOUL!* Invite DJs in your community to share their favorite mixes. Swap mixes across generations and engage in a conversation about the music you love and the memories the music evokes. Save your playlists for June, Black Music Month, established by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. ⁹⁵

Connect and partner with your local public library

Share their recommendations of books, DVDs, and recordings featuring the writers, poets, actors, and musicians appearing in *Mr. SOUL!* Suggest *Mr. SOUL!* as a theme for a window display and online feature during Black History Month (February) and for the PBS *Independent Lens* broadcast.

Reach out to a writer guild or start one

Many states have writer guilds and/or writing centers where writers can go to workshop new work, take classes, network, and find support. Reach out to your local independent bookstore, library, community center, or community college to find how you can connect with or get involved with a writing group. If you're thinking of starting a writing group, here's a link to a toolkit from the Writing Center at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. There are other great resources on the site for writers too. writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/writing-groups/writing-group-starter-kit/

Find support through your state arts councils

Locate your state arts councils and find out how they are benefiting communities through the arts. If you're an artist, you may find support opportunities:

www.arts.gov/state-and-regional-arts-organizations

Work with students to see how art and activism connect

Teaching Tolerance offers 12 mini lessons for grades K-5 on art and activism. The series capitalizes on children's natural relationship to art by prompting them to examine the ways art relates to community leadership and activism. The lessons can be used individually or as a full series and are not dependent on sequence. Some of the lessons can be adapted for virtual learning:

www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/art-and-activism

Host an online arts festival with your PBS station

Browse the PBS Arts website page (pbs.org/show/arts-page/) and host an online arts festival celebrating PBS's contributions to arts and culture. Engage your local PBS station's general manager and programming department staff in a conversation about local arts and cultural programming with stories about your community.

Take an online dance class and express yourself through movement

At the Ailey Extension, take a free online dance class led by members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, then make a video of your new moves: youtube.com/c/AileyExtension

Sources:

⁹⁵ nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/celebrating-black-music-month

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites

- pbs.org/independentlens/films/mr-soul
– PBS *Independent Lens* webpage for *Mr. SOUL!*
- mrsoulmovie.com
– The official filmmaker website for *Mr. SOUL!*
- sova.si.edu/record/ACMA.06-005
– *Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives: A Finding Aid to the Ellis B. Haizlip Papers, 1945-1991, in the Anacostia Community Museum Archives*, Smithsonian Institution
- www.dc1968project.com
– *dc 1968 project: 365 stories re washington dc in 1968*
- www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/masters/in-the-making
– *American Masters: In the Making*
- www.thehundred-seven.org
– *The Hundred Seven*

SOUL!

Watch episodes of the original *SOUL!* series with Ellis Haizlip on the following streaming services:

- thirteen.org/programs/soul/thirteen-specials-soul-march-7-1973
– PBS Passport (with PBS Passport membership)
- amazon.com/Soul/dp/B0878YC7KR
– Amazon Prime (with Prime membership)
- shoutfactorytv.com/series/soul
– Shout Factory TV
- tubitv.com/series/2178/soul
– Tubi TV

Films

- pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/toni-morrison-the-pieces-i-am-about/12366
– *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*, directed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/the-black-panthers-vanguard-of-the-revolution
– *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, directed by Stanley Nelson
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/black-power-mixtape-1967-1975
– *Black Power Mixtape 1967–1975*, directed by Göran Hugo Olson
- pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/maya-angelou-film/7533
– *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*, directed by Bob Hercules and Rita Coburn Whack
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/i-am-not-your-negro
– *I Am Not Your Negro*, directed by Raoul Peck
- pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/lorraine-hansberry-sighted-eyesfeeling-heart-film/9846
– *Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes, Gifted Heart*, directed by Tracy Heather Strain
- pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-about-the-film/3610
– *August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand*, directed by Sam Pollard
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/through-a-lens-darkly
– *Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*, directed by Thomas Allen Harris
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/new-black
– *The New Black*, directed by Yoruba Richen
- pbs.org/independentlens/films/deaf-jam
– *Deaf Jam*, directed by Judy Lieff
- pbs.org/independentlens/everychildisbornapoet
– *Every Child Is Born a Poet: The Life and Work of Piri Thomas*, directed by Jonathan Robinson
- pbs.org/independentlens/raceistheplace
– *Race Is the Place*, directed by Raymond Telles

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Articles and Essays

- www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/black-history-month-17-lgbtq-black-pioneers-who-made-history-n1130856
– Aviles, Gwen, & Ariel Jao, “16 Queer Black Pioneers Who Made History,” NBC News
- www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/when-public-television-had-a-little-soul
– Coley, Jordan, “When Public Television Had a Little SOUL!” *The New Yorker*
- now.org/blog/10-black-feminists-you-need-to-know-about
– Digitalonline, “10 Black Feminists You Need to Know About,” NOW
- www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/arts/music/mr-soul-ellis-haizlip.html
– Farber, Jim, “‘Soul!’ Brought Black Culture to TV in 1968. A New Doc Tells Its Story,” *New York Times*
- www.playbill.com/article/lincoln-center-out-of-doors-kicks-off-with-a-tribute-to-a-pioneering-series-on-black-culture-and-art
– Haizlip, Melissa, “Lincoln Center Out of Doors Kicks Off With a Tribute to a Pioneering Series on Black Culture and Art,” *Playbill*
- www.dosomething.org/us/articles/7-young-black-lgbtq-activists-you-should-know
– Menjivar, Jackie, “7 Young Black LGBTQ Activists You Should Know,” *Dosomething.org*
- www.brainpickings.org/2016/04/04/james-baldwin-nikki-giovanis-dialogue
– Popova, Maria, “James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni’s Extraordinary Forgotten Conversation About the Language of Love and What It Takes to Be Truly Empowered,” *Brain Pickings*
- bit.ly/3q4t6ig
– Bailey, Peter, “Despite Financial Woes, Two Programs Hang On to Give TV Viewers Meaningful Fare,” *Ebony*
- variety.com/2020/artisans/news/mr-soul-ellis-haizlip-1234775317
– Tangcay, Jazz, “How ‘Mr. Soul!’ Honors Ellis Haizlip and His Groundbreaking Late-Night Legacy” *Variety*

Books

- www.chicagoreviewpress.com/tv-a-go-go-products-9781556525728.php
– Austen, Jake, *TV a-Go-Go: Rock on TV from American Bandstand to American Idol* (Chicago Review Press, 2005)
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/7753/the-fire-next-time-by-james-baldwin/
– Baldwin, James, *The Fire Next Time* (Vintage International, 1993; originally published by Dial Press, 1963)
- nikki-giovanni.com/works/essays-and-conversations/a-dialogue/
– Baldwin, James, & Nikki Giovanni, *A Dialogue* (J.B. Lippincott Company, 1973)
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/556894/i-am-not-you-negro-by-james-baldwin/9780525434696/
– Baldwin, James, & Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (Vintage International, 2017)
- books.google.com/books/about/Eulogies.html?id=Jd5aAAAAMAAJ
– Baraka, Amiri, *Eulogies* (Marsilio Publishers, 1996)
- www.blackclassicbooks.com/e-book-black-fire-an-anthology-of-afro-american-writing-amiri-baraka-and-larry-neal/
– Baraka, Amiri, & Larry Neal (Eds.), *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (Black Classic Press, 2007, 2013; originally published 1968, publisher unknown) e-book
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/10860/my-song-by-harry-belafonte-with-michael-shnayerson
– Belafonte, Harry, & Michael Shnayerson, *My Song: A Memoir* (Alfred K. Knopf, 2011)
- books.google.com/books/about/Howard_L_Bingham_s_Black_Panthers_1968.html?id=3J71bwAACAAJ
– Bingham, Howard, *Howard L. Bingham’s Black Panthers 1968* (AMMO Books, 2009)
- www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/83agb8cf9780252036682.html
– Bodroghkozy, Aniko, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (University of Illinois, 2013)
- www.dukeupress.edu/groove-tube
– Bodroghkozy, Aniko, *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Duke University Press, 2001)
- www.simonandschuster.com/books/Ready-for-Revolution/Stokely-Carmichael/9780684850047
– Carmichael, Stokely, with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell and John Edgar Wideman, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael [Kwame Ture]* (Scribner, 2005)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

- us.macmillan.com/books/9781250091536
 - Cleaver, Eldridge, *Target Zero: A Life in Writing*, edited by Kathleen Cleaver, foreword by Henry Louis Gates Jr., afterword by Cecil Brown (St. Martin's Press, 2007)
- backbeatbooks.com/books/9781480363991
 - Danois, Ericka Blount, *Love, Peace, and Soul: Behind the Scenes of America's Favorite Dance Show, Soul Train: Classic Moments* (Backbeat Books, 2013)
- www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15142.html
 - Ferguson, Karen, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)
- www.harpercollins.com/products/the-hippest-trip-in-america-nelson-george?variant=32205963657250
 - George, Nelson, *The Hippest Trip in America: Soul Train and the Evolution of Culture and Style* (Harper Collins, 2014)
- www.harpercollins.com/products/the-collected-poetry-of-nikki-giovanni-nikki-giovanni
 - Giovanni, Nikki, *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni 1968–1998* (Harper Collins, 2003)
- www.harpercollins.com/products/love-poems-nikki-giovanni?variant=32117380120610
 - Giovanni, Nikki, *Love Poems* (Harper Collins, 1997)
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/575725/begin-again-by-eddie-s-glaude-jr
 - Glaude Jr., Eddie S., *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (Crown, 2020)Books
- press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/Y/bo10327415.html
 - Gluck, Bob, *You'll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and the Mwandishi Band* (University of Chicago Press, 2012)
- www.simonandschuster.com/books/Sweeter-the-Juice/Shirlee-Haizlip/9780671899332
 - Haizlip, Shirlee Taylor, *The Sweeter the Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White* (Simon & Schuster, 1995)
- www.dukeupress.edu/black-power-tv
 - Heitner, Deborah, *Black Power TV* (Duke University Press, 2013)
- www.simonandschuster.com/books/Scuse-Me-While-I-Kiss-the-Sky/David-Henderson/9781416534341
 - Henderson, David, *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky: Jimi Hendrix: Voodoo Child* (Atria, 2008; originally published 1978, publisher unknown)
- www.workman.com/products/panther-baby
 - Joseph, Jamal, *Panther Baby: A Life of Rebellion and Reinvention* (Algonquin Books, 2012)
- us.macmillan.com/books/9780805083354
 - Joseph, Peniel E., *Waiting, 'Til the Midnight Hour* (Holt Paperbacks, 2007)
- www.simonandschuster.com/books/Thelonious-Monk/Robin-Kelley/9781439190463
 - Kelley, Robin, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, 2010)
- www.skyhorsepublishing.com/arcade-publishing/9781628724387/james-baldwin
 - Leeming, David, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2015; originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1994)
- aperture.org/books/bestsellers/aperture-223-erizku
 - Lewis, Sarah (Ed.), *Vision & Justice: Aperture 223* (Aperture, 2016)
- www.amazon.com/My-Best-Friends-Call-Susan/dp/1502776324
 - Long, Dr. Loretta, with Scott Alboum, *My Best Friends Call Me Susan* (Up Front Productions, 2016)
- www.harpercollins.com/products/soul-train-questlove?variant=32132775247906
 - Questlove, *SOUL TRAIN: The Music, Dance, and Style of a Generation* (Harper Collins, 2013)
- www.beacon.org/Morning-Haiku-P874.aspx
 - Sanchez, Sonia, *Morning Haiku* (Beacon Press, 2011)
- www.beacon.org/Shake-Loose-My-Skin-P380.aspx
 - Sanchez, Sonia, *Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems* (Beacon Press, 2000)
- uncpress.org/book/9780807855980/the-black-arts-movement
 - Smethurst, James Edward, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005)
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/74220/black-power-by-kwame-ture
 - Ture, Kwame, & Charles B. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (Vintage Books, 1992; originally published by Random House, 1967)
- www.dukeupress.edu/its-been-beautiful
 - Wald, Gayle, *It's Been Beautiful: Soul! and Black Power Television* [spin-off series of short books] (Duke University Press, 2015)
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/314814/eyes-on-the-prize-by-juan-williams
 - Williams, Juan, *Eyes On the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (Viking Penguin, Inc., Blackside, Inc., 1987)
- www.wiley.com/en-us
 - Williams, Yohuru, *Black Politics / White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2000)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Organizations

Below are organizations that are actively working toward goals that align with the goals of your *Mr. SOUL!* screening and discussion:

- www.thealliance.media
– THE ALLIANCE FOR MEDIA ARTS + CULTURE
- www.americansforthearts.org/
– AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS
- blackmuseums.org
– ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUMS
- blackpublicmedia.org
– BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA
- centerforblackliterature.com
– CENTER FOR BLACK LITERATURE
- www.culturalpower.org
– THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL POWER
- colorofchange.org
– COLOR OF CHANGE
- hollywood.colorofchange.org
– HOLLYWOOD COLOR OF CHANGE
- cbc.house.gov
– CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
- www.cbcfinc.org
– CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION
- www.firelightmedia.tv
– FIRELIGHT MEDIA
- www.glaad.org
– GLAAD (Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)
- www.harlemaa.org
– HARLEM ARTS ALLIANCE
- www.hurstonwright.org
– HURSTON/WRIGHT FOUNDATION
- www.naahbcu.com
– NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF ARTISTS FROM HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
- www.nabj.org
– NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS
- nbaf.org
– NATIONAL BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL
- ncblackrep.org
– NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®
- www.arts.gov
– NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
- www.neh.gov
– NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
- nmaahc.si.edu
– NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
- www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg
– SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE
- usdac.us
– U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE
- youthspeaks.org
– YOUTH SPEAKS

Credits

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COPY EDITOR

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Sr. Manager, Engagement & Impact

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Engagement & Impact Coordinator

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Producer, Writer, Director, *Mr. SOUL!*

Leonard Joseph

Associate Producer, *Mr. SOUL!*

E. Ethelbert Miller

Writer, Literary Activist, Radio Host for "On The Margin," WPFW 89.3 FM (Washington, DC)

DESIGN

Jo Ko

Designer

ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as other series through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit itvs.org.

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens.

Join the conversation:

With #MrSoulPBS and #mrsoulthemovie at [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter @IndependentLens and @mrsoulthemovie.

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide. CPB is also the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services. For more information, visit cpb.org, follow us on Twitter @CPBmedia, Facebook and LinkedIn and subscribe for other updates

THIRTEEN/WNET

THIRTEEN is one of America's most respected and innovative public media providers. A member of the WNET family of companies, THIRTEEN is a unique cultural and educational institution that harnesses the power of television and electronic media to inform, enlighten, entertain and inspire. The flagship public television station of the New York City tri-state area and the most-watched public television channel in the nation, THIRTEEN reaches millions of people with programming that celebrates arts and culture, offers insightful commentary on the news of the day, explores the worlds of science and nature, and invites people of all ages to have fun while learning. For more information, visit thirteen.org.