

March 19, 2021

**AWARD-WINNING ACTOR, FILMMAKER AND ACTIVIST TARAJI P. HENSON BRINGS
'BLACK JOY' AS GUEST HOST OF ALL-NEW 'SOUL OF A NATION'**

**New Episode Explores Comedy Within the Black Community and How Black People Have Used
Humor and Music in Hard Times**

**Henson, ABC News' Sunny Hostin, Janai Norman and Alex Perez Lead the Hour Featuring a
Profile of and Performance by Cynthia Erivo, Interviews With Michael Yo and Derrick 'D-Nice'
Jones, and a Conversation With Michelle Buteau and Erin Jackson**

'Soul of a Nation' Airs Tuesday, March 23 (10:00-11:00 p.m. EDT), on ABC



Left: Award-winning actor, filmmaker and activist Taraji P. Henson (credit: ABC/Troy Harvey)

Top Right: Actress and singer Cynthia Erivo (Credit: ABC/Richard Harbaugh); Bottom Right: (l-r) Comedian Erin Jackson, Comedian Michelle Buteau and "The View" co-host Sunny Hostin (Credit: ABC/Lorenzo Bevilaqua)

Award-winning actor, filmmaker and activist **Taraji P. Henson** guest hosts the all-new episode of "Soul of a Nation" which explores Black joy. Throughout history, Black people have used humor and music to get through hard times, making cultural or political statements while simultaneously giving others tremendous joy. This provocative episode examines comedy, film and music within the Black community and how each is a vehicle for Black joy. Henson, ABC News' **Sunny Hostin**, **Janai Norman** and **Alex Perez** lead the hour which includes a spoken word performance and art by Academy Award®-winning director **Matthew Cherry**. The episode features a profile of and performance by actress and singer **Cynthia Erivo**, interviews with comedian **Michael Yo** and **Derrick "D-Nice" Jones**, and takes an in-depth look at sketch comedy throughout the years. "Soul of a Nation" airs **Tuesday, March 23** (10:00-11:00 p.m. EDT), on **ABC**. Episodes can also be viewed the next day on demand and on [Hulu](https://www.hulu.com).

This episode includes the following stories and conversations:

- Throughout 2020, Black comedians and musical artists took the pain of the pandemic, the economic downturn and racial reckoning and delivered memorable performances. Perez takes viewers through some of these defining moments and sits down with Yo, who, after a tough battle with COVID-19 and coming close to death, has made his way back on stage to bring audiences laughter. Meanwhile, DJ D-Nice discusses how he got the country dancing during the pandemic and making joy with his “Club Quarantine.”
- Norman sits down with Erivo to discuss the life and story of Aretha Franklin, previewing Erivo’s role as the icon in the upcoming National Geographic bio-series “Genius: Aretha.” Erivo also performs her hit song “Stand Up.”
- From hit shows such as “The Richard Pryor Show” and “In Living Color” to the successes of today including “Key & Peele” and “A Black Lady Sketch Show,” ESPN’s “**The Undefeated**” takes an in-depth look at the trailblazing comedians of television and the shows that have launched the careers of major Black comedic talent. Viewers will hear from **Deon Cole, Kim Coles, Tommy Davidson, Domonique Foxworth, David Alan Grier, Soraya McDonald, Sylvia Obell** and **Justin Tinsley**.
- Hostin moderates a provocative recurring conversation called “In the Kitchen,” where each week, a group of talkers and thinkers join her for a candid discussion on current events and the theme of the week. This episode features Black comediennes **Michelle Buteau** and **Erin Jackson**.
- Boston Globe columnist **Jeneé Osterheldt**, who wrote about how there can be joy even during times of Black resistance, contributes an exclusive piece on the meaning of Black joy.

“Soul of a Nation,” the first broadcast network newsmagazine that aims to put Black life in America front and center, will present viewers with a unique window into authentic realities of Black life and dive deeper into this critical moment of racial awakening. It will travel across the country, unpacking issues critical to Black Americans through intimate storytelling, and bridge the past, present and future through a variety of voices and experiences from athletes, entertainers, performers and screenwriters. Each episode will explore a specific theme, including spirituality, Black joy, activism in sports and the racial reckoning that erupted after George Floyd’s death, and familiar faces – performers, activists, scholars and clergy – will gather for an entertaining and provocative conversation “in the kitchen” about current events. A special performance featuring some of the nation’s greatest musicians or spoken word artists will close out each show.

“Soul of a Nation” is executive produced by Eric Johnson and Robe Imbriano, Chantre Camack serves as executive editorial producer, James Adolphus is series director and Marie Nelson is the series creator and senior vice president of Integrated Content Strategy at ABC News.

“Soul of a Nation” is the latest original programming from ABC News which has a renewed focus on telling diverse stories across the news division. Previous programming includes the No. 1-rated “Juneteenth: A Celebration of Overcoming,” three-day division-wide series “Pandemic – A Nation Divided” on the disparity in race and class amid the pandemic, “America in Pain: What Comes Next?” on the protests and outrage across the country in response to the killing of George Floyd and police brutality and systemic racism against Black Americans, the month-long reporting series “Turning Point” and pre-election special “America’s Future: The Power of the Latino Vote.”

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