

Marcia White interviewed by Kymani White
October 19, 2019
Canarsie, Brooklyn

Kymani White: Good Evening My name is Kymani White, I am interviewing Marcia White in Brooklyn, Canarsie on October 19, 2019. Do you give me permission to record this oral history?

Marcia White: Yes I do

KW: Where did you grow up?

MW: I grew up in Westmoreland, Jamaica in a small district outside of Darlaston

Kw: okay, well describe your favorite meal growing up?

Mw: My favorite meal growing up, I'll say I like rice and peas and oxtail

Kw: Why was this significant to you?

Mw: Not necessarily a significant but I just love food

KW: Was there a meaning behind the food itself?

Mw: No there is nothing behind it, I just love the meal

KW: And who prepared this meal for you when you were in Kingston

MW: My mother would, sometimes my sister did

KW: Does a certain food reminds you of any loved ones?

MW: Yes, it does we love to have ackee and saltfish which is our national dish in Jamaica so there are times especially Christmas time we usually have it for breakfast.

KW: do you have any memories in regards to prepare a meal with an elder?

MW: Yes, jerk pork I did that with my sister, she loves to cook and she taught me how to do jerk pork.

KW: What is currently your favorite meal to eat/make?

MW: My favorite meal to eat right now, I am learning to do Italian food so I am at the stage where I am starting to do like meatball and spaghetti and Lentil soup and most Italian style food which is what I am learning now and I am getting to love it more.

KW: Does it carry any significant beyond the food itself or?

MW: It's just a difference from our culture because we don't do Italian food in Jamaica of course but coming from the Italian food is way different from our culture and I am liking it because I like varieties.

KW: If you could pick anymore who you would eat your favorite meal with? Why and what would you eat?

MW: I would eat my favorite meal with our family because families are important so whatever you do, you try to be family-oriented so I would have my favorite meal with my family and it would be a variety because we would have oxtail, we would have curry goat and we would have chicken because of different taste for persons, there are some who would have different likes and dislikes. So family is the key to all of this.

KW: Is there any food that you would not eat? Because of your culture or religion?

MW: Not necessarily, pork is one thing that I would take off my list, religion reasons for one and it is not healthy so that one I would take off my list.

KW: Is there like any food you would eat on special occasions or holidays, what are those occasions?

MW: Foods that I would eat, okay, for instance, is it in relation to my culture or here?

KW: just any food, any food that you would like to eat on like Thanksgiving or Christmas? For example

MW: Okay, like for thanksgiving, lasagna would be a part of the meal, curry goat would be a part of the meal, for Christmas that is because the Caribbean mostly celebrate Christmas other than thanksgiving so for Christmas these are what we usually have curry goat rice and peas, chicken, roast breadfruit, ackee and saltfish or sorrel drink, those are what we would eat even our Christmas fruit cake because we really big on celebrating Christmas.

KW: who in your life have cooked the best meal and what did they cook and describe it the best

MW: Who in my life cooks the best meal, my sister Cynthia, she cooks a lot, she actually had me tasted crab and rice which I have never had before, so she is a very good cook, I also learned how to cook certain meals with her, what was the other question?

KW: Describe it the best

MW: Delicious, It is Delicious

KW: What does eating well mean to you? Like eating healthy

MW: Eating healthy is important because the body heals itself and what you put into your body is actually how your body responds to you so eating healthy is important for me, exercise is important in order for you to maintain a good health and a good healthy lifestyle.

KW: Do you have a favorite restaurant and what do you get from there?

MW: Actually I do not have a favorite restaurant, I tend to love to do my own cooking because I know what I am cooking, I know how it is prepared and I think that when I do my own cooking, it is healthier because I see and know what exactly what is put into my meal. So in terms of having a favorite restaurant, No I don't because I really don't do take out.

KW: How does the food you eat or cook defines who you are and is there any food that reminds you of home and why?

MW: A food that reminds me of home is what we have as our Jamaican culture like what we have as our national dish which is our ackee and saltfish, jackfruit, roast breadfruit..... there is so much to think of.... What is the other question?

KW: If you go anywhere in the world to try new foods, where would you go and why

MW: Japan, i would like to try Japanese food, Japanese are one of the healthiest set of people and trying Japanese food would be one of one thing I would really love to do, i would really love to go to japan

KW: what is a meal that you can eat all the time or a snack and not get tired of?

MW: There must be something that i will get tired of, a meal or snack that I can eat and won't tired of... I can't think of a meal or snack that I can eat and I wouldn't get tired of because my taste is different and once I have something more than a week, I will get tired of it so... once you have something more than a week I will get tired of it so I would not say that I would have something that I will not get tired of.

KW: Have you ever faced hunger growing up?

MW: Oh yes, lots of hunger.... Lots of hard life, lots of eating cornmeal lunch, breakfast and dinner, eating bammy that we call yoka I have had a lot of that so hard life, hardship, hunger, yes i have had all of those challenges.

KW: How do you feel about fast food?

Fast food is one of the most unhealthy food that anyone could ever have..... Which is why it is called fast food, it is one of the most unhealthy meal and i would not recommend fast food to anyone because it is not healthy.

KW: How do you feel about health when it comes to food and why?

MW: My health is important because heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes all of those you get based on what you eat so you have to be careful of what you put into your body because if you just get up and eat just anything and you start to become sick there are challenges that you would not be able to maintain based upon the food choices that you make before so eating healthy would help you with the choices that you make.

KW: How does the food options in your community affects how you eat?

MW: How the food option...

KW: In your community...

MW: Affects how I eat.... I don't think the food options in my community would affect how I eat because what I eat is my choice and therefore if i see something that I don't want to eat, I have a choice so if it means that I have to come out of my community to get something that is healthy for me I would do that, so I don't think I will limit myself to my community in terms of my eating habits.

KW: How does your income affects your food choices?

MW: My income does not affect my food choices because I grew up knowing what hardship is, I grew up knowing what not having something I needed is, so I learn to live within my budget, so whatever I earn, I budget from that, so I don't allow it to affect anything around my lifestyle.

KW: How would you feel if you lost your cultural background when it comes on to the food you have around you?

MW: How do I feel?

KW: If you lost your cultural background like since your Jamaican.

MW: If i lost my cultural background, I would not allow it to affect me because variety is the spice of life and the fact that I come here and I learn to appreciate Italian food, I would love to try Mexican food, I would love to try Japanese food, variety... so I would not allow my culture to determine what I eat and how I eat.

KW: Have you changed since you moved to New York when it comes on to the food you eat and the food choices that you have around you...

MW: I have changed a lot, I hardly... only when i am home I would normally stick to my Jamaican culture but when I go out, I try not to eat my Jamaican culture , I try new things, hence I like Italian food, I have tried Mexican food but not so much of liking it that much but so far i enjoyed what I have as Italian.

KW: Since you have moved to New York have you ever met somebody that influenced you to try new foods...

MW: Ohh yes, those are my Italian people, moving to New York I have met persons that allow me to try new things even learn how to cook it....

KW: What is your favorite meal of the day?

MW: My favorite meal of the day is lunch, that is the heaviest meal i have had

KW: And why?

MW: Because I try not to eat too heavy for bed so I eat heavy in the day and in the evenings I eat light.

KW: And what would you have for lunch like what variety of food.

MW: A variety of food I would have for lunch is like chicken, fish with vegetable salad, pasta red wine soup, and rice that's what I would have for lunch most of the time.

KW: How often do you eat fresh fruits and vegetables?

MW: I eat fresh fruits and vegetables every day because it is healthy for you, i don't have it with every meal but i try to have it at least once per day.

KW: What are your favorite fruits and/or vegetables?

MW: My favorite fruits and vegetables are... some of my favorite fruits are banana, mango, kiwi, peach... Vegetables like carrot, lettuce, tomato, etc.

KW: Let us agree that the best food in the world comes from your country, which country produces the second-best food?

MW: The country that produces the second-best food, in my opinion, is Italian food.

KW: And what would you get from Italians...

MW: pizzelles, soups, pasta, lasagna, shrimp, scampi that I really love so I would... Next best to my culture food I would say Italian food.

KW: Is there anything that I didn't ask you that I should have asked?

MW: So far, I think you have covered a lot that I can remember, so I would say yes you have covered

KW: thank you for your time and have a blessed evening

MW: thank you for having me and have you for the interview..