

Our Shared Love for 'Beyond the Gates'

My mom once banned me from watching soaps. Now we can't stop talking about this one.

By [Marcea Cazel](#) | April 22, 2025 | [Living](#)

I was seven years old when I fell in love with daytime soap operas. These shows were over the top with long-lost relatives, cheating couples, people rising from the dead and plenty of villains you loved to hate. I even remember racing home from third grade on my bicycle to watch the "General Hospital" characters Luke and Laura get married for the first time.



RhonniRose Mantilla as Chelsea Hamilton, Clifton Davis as Vernon Dupree and Tamara Tunie as Anita Dupree on "Beyond the Gates." | Credit: Quantrell Colbert/CBS

But my mother wasn't having any of it. Although I knew she enjoyed the nighttime soap "Dallas," I wasn't allowed to watch it. I can still hear her saying that if I learned math like I knew the names of those daytime soap characters, I'd have a better grade.

Debuting in February, 2025, this soap opera focuses on a very affluent Black family with a deep pedigree living in Maryland and with plenty of secrets.

So, I did what a lot of latchkey kids would do. I secretly watched my 'stories.' It was easier since my mom started working the year I found soaps. I could only get home in time during the school year to watch GH. But in the summer, I was in heaven watching my favorite entire lineup of "Young and the Restless," "The Bold and the Beautiful" (which premiered when I was in middle school), "As the World Turns" and "General Hospital" for hours on end. And forget "Tiger Beat"; "Soap Opera Digest" was my go-to magazine. And in all that time, I never imagined my mom indulging in

an afternoon soap opera.

Imagine my surprise when one day she asked if I had been watching the new CBS soap, ["Beyond the Gates."](#) Debuting in February, 2025, this soap opera focuses on a very affluent Black family with a deep pedigree living in Maryland and with plenty of secrets. But hearing that my mother, the woman who once banned daytime soaps in our house, was tuning in? I was surprised.

Soap Operas and Black Families: A Generational Thread

Soap operas were founded in the 1930s and got their names because they were sponsored by soap companies trying to influence housewives of that

generation. Originally 15 minutes long and on the [radio](#), they eventually expanded to 30 and 60 minutes, mesmerizing fans and non-followers. It's hard to find people of a certain age who don't know the character Erica Kane or her portrayer, Susan Lucci. And who didn't wonder in the early 1980s who shot J.R.?

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The irony of my mom telling me not to watch daytime soap operas was that when she was a little girl, during the summer and if she was at home sick, she remembers listening to soap operas, including "Stella Dallas" and "Our Gal Sunday" with her grandfather, who my mom said recently didn't miss an episode of his favorite radio shows.

Black characters weren't at the center of a juicy story, and even if they were included, their roles were often limited to maids, best friends or background

So, I had to ask my mom if she listened as a kid why she told me I wasn't allowed to watch. It turns out she thought they were silly even back then, but it was a way to spend time with her grandfather while she was home. I never did get punished for watching. But she's a mom. She knew what was going on.

Of course, growing up in the 1980s, there was little to no representation for me of African Americans appearing on soaps. Black characters

players in a world that wasn't theirs.

weren't at the center of a juicy story, and even if they were included, their roles were often limited to maids, best friends or background players in a

world that wasn't theirs. And forget romantic interests. I vividly remember when Jessie and Angie became a teen couple on "All My Children." It was a big deal to see Black teens in love and in major storylines.

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While not the first soap opera to have a Black family as part of its main characters (that distinction goes to "Generations," which only ran for two years on NBC), "Beyond the Gates" offers something different. With an almost entirely Black cast and the backing of the NAACP, the show isn't just featuring Black characters; it's centering their lives, struggles and love stories. The Duprees are front and center of every episode, which is something that "Generations" never did. It's a reminder that the African American narrative isn't a monolith, and our stories are just as compelling, layered and deserving of the spotlight as anyone else's.

For my mom and me, it's a shared experience that neither of us saw coming.

More Than a Show, It's a Cultural Shift

Soap operas have always reflected the times, whether addressing social issues, shifting cultural norms or simply changing audience expectations. For decades, Black actors had to fight for space in these stories. That's what makes "Beyond the Gates" different. It's not a side story or a diversity initiative. These Black characters are the main event. And thanks to creator and veteran soap opera writer Michele Val Jean, the show is making history and helping people connect.

We watch, we text and we react to the drama, which is plenty.

I never thought my mother and I would share soap operas, but now we do. We watch, we text and we react to the drama, which is plenty. Maybe she's enjoying it because it reminds her of those childhood days when she listened to radio soaps with her beloved grandfather. Perhaps I'm

enjoying it even more because I never expected to share watching 'the stories' with her, even as we're 1,100 miles apart.

Either way, we're both watching. And for once, she's not telling me to turn it off.



Marcea Cazell is a freelance travel writer who loves writing about culturally immersive travel. Whether finding murals or attending festivals, learning more about local life is always on her to-do list. A contributor to publications such as TripSavvy, Tinybeans and Hop Culture Magazine, she's been traveling her entire life, with her first international trip taking place before her 1st birthday. When not writing or traveling, she enjoys kayaking, hiking in the state parks and relaxing at one of the craft breweries in her area. [Read More](#)

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