



First Helpings

SNEAKY PEACH

HOW ATLANTA SNUCK UP ON US

OSAYI AND I DIDN'T SET out to make this edition of *Gravy* the Greater Metropolitan Atlanta-Athens Issue. But the geographic ties kept popping up, and eventually, half of the issue's writers, photographers, and story subjects claimed a connection with the area. We're calling ourselves out, dear reader, so that you don't have to.

In our SFA work, from oral history to film to print and podcast *Gravy*, we tell stories from across our region. We are imperfect. Over the years we've returned to some places time and again (looking at you, North Carolina and New Orleans) while leaving others virtually unexplored (we're working on it, Arkansas!).

Atlanta, one of the most populous metro areas in the South, bursts with stories, with writers and photographers to tell them, and with curious eaters and readers to devour them. Atlanta has always been a stronghold of SFA membership, website visitors, and podcast listeners.

Whether you're from Atlanta,



Asheville, or Austin, we hope the stories in this issue will resonate with you. Clustered in Georgia, they reach across the region and beyond in topics, themes, and contributors. Meet Esteban Castillo, whose photography graces this cover and accompanies Gustavo Arellano's "Good Ol' Chico" column. Reconnect with familiar voices, like poet Sandra Beasley and erstwhile restaurant critic John Kessler. And be assured: Atlanta is officially banned from our winter issue. It's nothing personal—we've got a lot of ground to cover.

—Sara Camp Milam

FEATURED CONTRIBUTOR

ROSALIND BENTLEY



my cousin Brenda—about a project I was working on about the contributions of women to the civil rights movement. Brenda said, "Well, you know Mama used to let people stay at the house during the movement." The more Brenda talked, naming some of the leading lights of the era who'd stayed in her mother's house, the more I realized Aunt Lucy's story was essential. It was my duty to her memory and as her niece to tell the tale of her Freedom House.

Tell us about the film footage you discovered in the UGA archives as you were wrapping up the story.

For the podcast version of this story, I'd wanted audio from the period. The University of Georgia, where I was finishing my MFA, had archival newsreel footage from Albany. I looked, hopeful we might find some great sound, but the video citation summary said the footage was silent. I left it on the shelf.

The day the podcast aired, my cousin Clennon King emailed me. He'd pulled that same footage for a documentary film he's making about his father, C.B. King Sr., and another Georgia attorney of the civil rights movement. Toward the end of the six-minute tape, he saw Aunt Lucy. She had been misidentified in the citation summary as Coretta Scott King. When he sent me the link to the video, I nearly burst into tears. There she was, going to court to support Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy. To see her alive again in that black-and-white video was golden.

A FLORIDA PANHANDLE NATIVE, ROSALIND BENTLEY grew up spending weekends on her family farm, where she learned rural foodways from her many great-aunts. Her stories have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Essence*, and *Ebony*. Her work has been anthologized in *Best American Newspaper Narratives* and she has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

How did you begin to learn about your family's history in the Albany movement?

One reason I moved back home to the South after seventeen years in Minneapolis-St. Paul is because I had missed several family funerals during my time on the tundra. That included my great Aunt Lucy's in 2002. Had I been there, I would have seen a one-sentence reference in her funeral program about her work during the civil rights movement in Albany, Georgia. Fast forward fifteen years and I'm living in Atlanta. I told Aunt Lucy's daughter—