



For some, food can be as deadly as crack cocaine.

St. Paul native Cindy Traxler's most recently published book, "Fried Chicken, Watermelon, and You," confronts the social norms and practices that have weakened the African-American community to deadly measures. The inspiration for the book was sparked when Traxler's mother began to go blind as the result of Type 2 Diabetes.

"It really hit home that this disease had serious consequences," said Traxler. "I was dealing with my own health issues at the time also."

Traxler said she herself was 326 pounds and had high blood pressure. She knew it was time to change for the better. When she began organizing her life in a manner for positive change, Traxler noticed some underlying themes.

"I put my health on the front burner and in that process, I discovered that there were a lot of unwritten rules that I was following – a lot of cultural rules and a lot of things that I did out of

## Traxler confronts social norms

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tradition especially around diet, exercise and my hair," said Traxler.

The insightful writer said she realized unhealthy eating was engrained as a part of African-American culture the more she researched it. Traxler considers her new book a way to bring awareness.

"'Fried Chicken, Watermelon, and You' was my attempt to try compartmentalize some of what I discovered and what I had incorporated as part of me because of my culture," said Traxler. "When I started thinking about our diet and stereotypes I was like we have to stop this."

Traxler recalls one memory that she considers a catalyst for her book. Her nephew, who was 10-years -old at the time, came to visit her and her family after she had made the lifestyle change. He stated that he was hungry and Traxler told him he could have a piece of fruit.

"He told me that was white people food," said Traxler.

At that moment, the conscious author saw herself in her nephew and realized she used to have the same thoughts. As Traxler furthered her research, she began to discover more factors such as denial that contribute to this phenomenon.

"Everybody believes 'it's not me, I'm not that number,'" said Traxler. "When people in the African-American community hear stereotypes and stigmas about themselves, they just brush it off. Even if it is not specifically you, you don't have to go too many people over in your circle to see that – to see that single parent, to see that person under the poverty line," said Traxler.

According to the author, acknowledgement and opening up to the issues of the Black community is one solution.



"I think one of the biggest solutions is to understand that it doesn't take a huge movement to start a process," said Traxler. "That first thought leads to a conversation. You have a dialogue, then it spreads to other people having a dialogue about what they heard Then you create the meme of 'I am not a slave, I am a human being.'"