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Special to the NNPA from the St. Louis American

In a 90 minute special “Oprah’s Next Chapter” Oprah Winfrey talked with the family of Whitney Houston. Yesterday’s special was the first time the family has publicly spoken since the passing of the music icon at the age of 48.
The interview kicked off with Bobbi Kristina talking about how her mother’s spirit has been an unyielding presence in her life since her mother passed away on Feb. 11 of this year.

“She’s always with me… I can always feel her with me,” Bobbi Kristina told Winfrey while standing in an area of her Uncle Gary and Aunt Pat’s (Whitney’s brother and sister-in-law/manager) home. “She always asked me… ‘Do you need me?’ And I caught myself one day, out of nowhere, I didn’t even know I said it, but… I said, ‘I’ll always need you’. Her spirit is strong… I feel her pass through me all the time… Lights turn on and off and I’m like, ‘Mom, what are you doing?’ I can still sit there and I can still laugh with her… I can still talk to her. I can still feel her saying ‘I got you.’”

According to the family Bobbi Kristina is residing in the place she called home with her mother, but is supervised by her aunt and uncle.

“I still have all her clothes, everything that she has ever given me.”

She referred to her mother as “an angel” and touched upon the swirling tabloid headlines regarding Houston’s alleged lifestyle.

“I saw her hurt. I saw her cry,” she said. People “don’t know who she was. Everything people are saying about her, all that negativity, it’s garbage. That’s not my mother.”

The special on OWN also covered Whitney’s ex-husband, Bobby Brown, who had a tumultuous marriage with the singer. While some have accused Brown of introducing Houston to drugs, leading to the singer’s downfall, sister-in-law Pat Houston said that was untrue, and both Pat and husband Gary Houston, had warm words for Brown.

“I loved Bobby Brown. Bobby was a good guy,” said Gary Houston, Whitney’s older brother. “I don’t know how good they were for each other.”
They also denied that the Houston family had asked Brown to leave her funeral service or didn’t want him to come; Brown showed up briefly but left after a dispute over seating.

“Bobby was supposed to be there,” said Gary Houston.

Pat Houston said Bobby Brown and his daughter have a relationship, but indicated they hadn’t spoken since at least Houston’s funeral.
The special ended with Gary giving a musical tribute to his baby sister with a soul-stirring rendition of “I Look to You” – his smooth tenor vocals held up until emotions took over halfway through the song.