ENCORE: Empowering Communities: The Pursuit of Nutrition Equality

written by Dr. Ronald Hoffman | February 19, 2025

More and more, the country is devolving into health inequity—between the haves and have-nots. There's also a widening gap in nutrition, with obesity and attendant medical conditions disproportionally afflicting marginalized communities. Today's guest, Tambra Rae Stevenson, is addressing these disparities. She's a healthy food advocate and policy influencer, and a self-professed nutrition warrior. Among her initiatives is WANDA—Women and Girls Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture, an organization building a movement of women and girls of African descent to become food "sheroes" in their communities through education, advocacy, and innovation. We discuss barriers to optimal nutrition, food "deserts", and special needs of underserved populations. There's a paucity of trained nutrition educators of color, and Stevenson is spear-heading initiatives to incentivize development of a cadre of community-based advocates for healthy diets. We discuss the importance of involving kids early, through programs like school and community gardens. Stevenson shares her personal journey exploring her African roots, discovering the benefits of centuries-old traditions of ancestral foods; she's leveraging these insights to promote culturally-appropriate healthier food choices. Initiatives like WANDA can make a huge difference in reversing the tide of preventable disease.