

# **The Bitter Southerner Podcast: What We Talk About When We Talk About How We Talk**

Chuck Reece:	00:05	Hello, friends and neighbors, we are back. It's the Bitter Southerner Podcast from Georgia Public Broadcasting and the magazine I edit, The Bitter Southerner. I'm Chuck Reece, I'm your host, and I'm happy to welcome you to Season 2 of our podcast, this is Episode 1.
	00:24	We're so happy to be back with all y'all for a second season, and I am excited about this one. We've got 10 episodes lined up for you, scheduled for release every two weeks, until we finish up in March, and we hope you're thirsty for them. We heard a lot of nice things from y'all about season one, and a lot of good suggestions I hope you'll hear being addressed, as we play out season two.
	00:48	And, one person in particular wrote a review of Season 1 on Apple Podcasts that said, and I quote, "There's a lyrical quality to it, a poetry in the sound of the native tongue that mesmerizes me. I feel like I'm on somebody's porch listening to them tell me about what really matters in life." Now, I was surprised by that, I really was, because, and, and, and not just because someone, you know, seemed to actually like the way I, in particular, talk, I was surprised because, all of us who speak in a southern twang, or drawl, of which there are many varieties, often encounter a completely different reaction, which normally goes like, "Man, you must be stupid."
	01:39	And it occurred to me, that maybe it's time for us to make an episode about the accent, itself. Let me bring in our producer, Sean Powers. He's sitting here. Sean, do you think we need to make an episode like that?
Sean Powers:	01:51	Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Uh, Chuck, at the end of last season's podcasts, we heard from Laura Relyea, she's a writer out of Athens, Georgia, and she told us a little bit about what it was like losing her southern accent at a young age. Uh, and this was when she was 10 years old, her family moved from Charlotte, North Carolina to Chicago, Illinois. And, even all these years later, as an adult, she still thinks about it. It's painful. And, it was just very clear that southerners, but even people who aren't from the south, have a very complicated relationship with the way the southern accent sounds. And, we were just scratching the surface with that, last season, and this season on

the podcast, you and I both agreed, it was time to go even deeper.

Chuck Reece: 02:35 Yeah, and I think it's time also, to make a point that you shouldn't feel bad about how you talk.

Sean Powers: 02:41 Absolutely.

Chuck Reece: 02:42 What you should do, is learn how to embrace it. Now, I was born and raised with this voice, there's not anything I can do about it, and I did try for a while. That was when I lived in New York City, two separate times, seven years in total. And, try as I might, I couldn't shake the way I talked. And it didn't take me long to just give up trying. I just relied on the fact that I was fairly smart. You know, I could actually build a compound, complex sentence on the fly, and if people couldn't hang with the way I spoke, after they figured out that I could do things like that, they could just walk themselves over to the Hudson River and jump right in.

Chuck Reece: 03:37 Now, you might've just figured it out, when we were talking to Sean, but Sean is from the Midwest, and he writes the first draft of every episode. And I then, have to go through it and make it sound like something I would say. Now, don't get me wrong. By the time Sean is done with me, he's going to know more about the south than he ever dreamed. We're schooling him. But, the thing is, and this took me awhile, but I have become proud of my speech patterns.

04:09 Like, if you assume that I'm dumb because of how I speak, I just think the joke's on you. Still, I don't know any southerner, anywhere, whose accent hasn't given them some trouble at least one point in their life. Let's listen to a contributor to the Bitter Southerner, Dartinia Hull, talk about that.

Dartinia Hull: 04:34 When I'm writing, personally, my voice is very southern, and I wouldn't change that for anything. I, but I really do wish that I still had that accent. I miss it.

Chuck Reece: 04:50 Dartinia lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, and she was raised in Rock Hill, South Carolina. She says that growing up, her southern accent was a point of contention even in her own home, because she remembers her mom pressing her to lose it.

Dartinia Hull: 05:06 So, mom spent a lot of time taping my voice, this was back when we used tape recorders, and she would let me listen. And, I remember listening to that and thinking, "I don't sound like

that. That's not me," but it was, and she said, "You can't, you can't do this." And she was doing this out of love, it was definitely a place of love for me.

Chuck Reece:	05:30	Dartinia was a black girl living in the south, and her mom figured that her skin color alone would set her back, and that her accent would just make the burden heavier.
Dartinia Hull:	05:43	I think she thought that people would think that I was, um, somehow less than, and she did not want that. She did not want it. She said, "You're, you're already going to deal with issues when you go out into the world. You're, you're a woman of color. You're a black woman, and you're going to be a black woman, and you are going to already have struggles. I don't want people thinking that you're not smart."
Chuck Reece:	06:13	As Dartinia's family moved around South Carolina, over time she began losing her drawl, but she says it's not completely gone.
Dartinia Hull:	06:21	I noticed that when I'm around friends that I grew up with, when I'm around my cousins, when I'm really relaxed with my family, it comes back, and I think what comes back with that is everything that my grandmother was, and everything that my great-grandmother was. I want to make homemade lemonade, I want to bake a pie, I want to make people feel welcome. There's something, a part of me comes along with that accent, and even though I know it's not what it used to be, there's something that's still there that is very deeply and indelibly me.
Chuck Reece:	07:00	On today's show, we open our ears and hearts to what some southerners think of as an obstacle, and what others, like me, consider a great gift. So, welcome to an episode that we have entitled, with the greatest respect for the late writer, Raymond Carver, What We Talk About When We Talk About How We Talk.
	07:29	We're about to talk with three comedians about their southern accent. So, you know how comedians are, they can get a bit crude with their language, so just a warning, this next conversation may not be appropriate for some of the younger ears who are listening with you. Now, when we were planning this show, I kept thinking back to this one sketch I'd seen on Comedy Central's website. And the setting is, three southern guys walk into a bar, where they meet a New Yorker, and scene.
Drew Morgan:	08:01	Look, we get it, all right? The accents, the Fox News level of anger that we emit, the cheap beer.

Trae Crowder:	08:08	Hops give me gas.
Drew Morgan:	08:09	But, you think it's because we think that fancy beer makes you gay.
Northern Character:	08:13	You got to drink liquor if you want to lick her.
Trae Crowder:	08:16	That's gross.
Northern Character:	08:16	Come on.
Trae Crowder:	08:17	The point is, just like how not everyone with your accent wants to beat his wife with a pepperoni stick-
Corey Forrester:	08:23	You know, shout out to your cousin, Tony, and all.
Northern Character:	08:24	A great guy. Gets out in a year.
Trae Crowder:	08:26	... not everyone with our accent is ignorant.
Corey Forrester:	08:29	Yeah, or wants to get rid of the blacks.
Drew Morgan:	08:31	Blacks rubbing buttered corn on their belly.
Corey Forrester:	08:33	Wha-? Can we get the bill?
Chuck Reece:	08:36	(laughs) That sketch comes from the minds of three men who have become my dear friends over the last few years. They're the liberal rednecks of the comedy circuit. Gentlemen, you all introduce yourselves.
Trae Crowder:	08:50	I'm Trae Crowder. I grew up in Salina, Tennessee, and, uh, one thing that everybody in Salina liked to say, because it was true, was that we had more liquor stores than traffic lights.
Drew Morgan:	09:03	My name is Drew Morgan, and I'm from Sunbright, Tennessee. And the, uh, fake myth, that everyone knows is fake but still spread to little kids, is that, uh, a black man was up on Pea Ridge, taking a pee, and that's how it got its name, and the sun came and he said, "Sunbright," and I have no idea why he was black in the myth, there are no black people there.
Corey Forrester:	09:28	My name is Corey Ryan Forrester. I grew up in Chickamauga, Georgia. Chickamauga, Georgia is famous for the Battle of Chickamauga, which is a battle that the south won, and if you don't believe me, just look at every bumper sticker, ever.

Chuck Reece:	09:48	Now, together, Trae, Drew and Corey, travel America as the Well Red Comedy Tour, and that is R-E-D. Get it? They joined us from a tour stop in Little Rock, Arkansas, for this conversation. These boys have been surprising America, for three or four years, with the words that come out of their mouths. And, particularly, with the words that come out of their mouths that most people would not expect to come out of mouths with such accents.
Chuck Reece:	10:20	So, I wanted to know what they've learned along the way. Trae Crowder and Drew Morgan responded first. Trae actually has a whole bit, now that he's moved to southern California, because, you know, that's where TV is, about how his accent is perceived out there.
Trae Crowder:	10:36	I get, uh, skepticism quite a bit, which has always been funny to me. Like, people don't think that, they think I'm putting on, or it's a, like, a part of an act, or gimmick, or something, that I don't actually talk like this, because it's hard for them to believe that somebody who sounds like me could've, you know, found California. Definitely, uh, people are, like, freaked out by it sometimes, because it's so uncommon out there, but also, the negative connotations that a lot of people have for it. So, anyway, that's my take on it, don't know how Drew has felt about it.
Drew Morgan:	11:07	Well, I have a different bit about the receiving of my specific accent, which is Appalachian, that's how you say that word, goddamnit. And, uh, it's about how people are afraid of that, and they're, sort of upset, or they're pining for, what they call the pretty, or nice, southern accent. And, I think it's very interesting that people are more afraid of mine and Trae's accent than they are, Strom Thurmond's. And, they think mine is racism and oppression-
Trae Crowder:	11:39	Mm-hmm (affirmative).
Drew Morgan:	11:39	... and it's ironic how flip-flopped the truth is there.
Trae Crowder:	11:43	Right, right.
Drew Morgan:	11:43	And, I think that, that's-
Chuck Reece:	11:44	Like, they could trust you if you talked like a slave owner, but... (laughing)
Drew Morgan:	11:47	Right. Exactly.

Chuck Reece:	11:48	But, you talking like a factory worker-
Drew Morgan:	11:50	Yeah.
Chuck Reece:	11:50	... that ain't it.
Drew Morgan:	11:51	Well, I, in the bit, I don't want to do, but it, you know, I, I really think it has a lot to do with the fucking movie Deliverance. I think for a generation of people, this accent is now banjos and butt sex, like, that's what it is, you know? And, both of those are painful.
Chuck Reece:	12:05	Now, I think we need to hear from that Chickamauga boy, too, Corey Forrester.
Corey Forrester:	12:10	To echo what those guys said, like, it's, it's pretty crazy, like, people that I meet in this industry, who have known us for a while, uh, and know the whole, whole deal, like they're like, "You're the liberal rednecks, we, you know, we understand what you're trying to do. You're trying to show us that, like, everybody with that accent isn't an idiot," but, it still seems like they're con- they're still confused about it.
Drew Morgan:	12:31	Like, anytime I say anything decently smart, they're like, "I just can't believe that just came out of you." And, uh, you know, it's insulting, but it's also, kind of, a cheat code.
Chuck Reece:	12:40	Yeah.
Drew Morgan:	12:40	You know, in a way. Like it's, it feels like I can get away with a lot, because when I do something stupid, it's just, you know, as they said about Manny Ramirez, Manny B. And Manny, but then when I do something smart, it seems extra smart.
Chuck Reece:	12:53	Well, that, I mean, my, my experience, the first time I moved up to New York City, back in the, in 1984, uh, sounds pretty damn similar to what you guys are talking about, but, uh, like, the way I handled it up there, like, when someone would marvel at the fact that I used the word y'all? I would try to do something smart, like, make the point, you know, because I was around a lot of writers, and editors, and stuff. And, I would make the point that y'all is a needed word, because English pers- the English language has a second person singular pronoun, you. It has a second person plural pronoun, that is also you. And, or, and, and, uh, the second person plural, should be y'all.

Chuck Reece:	13:47	And, like, y'all is legitimately needed in the English language, and I said, "Bonus. Not only is it a second person plural pronoun, that's missing from the language, it also has a plural emphatic. All y'all, as in fuck all y'all."
Drew Morgan:	14:07	Right, right. (laughing). Yeah. Uh, I, I, I personally feel like, uh, people have started to come around on the id- on, on y'all as a word. Like, I feel like I've seen people, not southerners, on the internet, and wherever else, just out in the world, uh, sort of, lauding the word y'all the way you'd ... Because it's also, you know, gender inclusive.
Trae Crowder:	14:28	Right.
Drew Morgan:	14:29	Which is a big plus, nowadays.
Trae Crowder:	14:31	Oh, they, they gonna take it.
Drew Morgan:	14:32	Right? (laughs)
Trae Crowder:	14:33	Yeah, yeah. It will, it will be, y'all's e- e- eventually. That, that'll be their word.
Drew Morgan:	14:38	Well, we said yuns, in Salina. We, we said, y'all, also-
Trae Crowder:	14:42	We said yuns.
Drew Morgan:	14:44	... but, we said yuns, in Salina, as well.
Chuck Reece:	14:45	Well, I grew up Ellijay, Georgia, saying yuns, too.
Trae Crowder:	14:48	Yeah.
Drew Morgan:	14:49	Uh, some of my cousins said yens-
Trae Crowder:	14:51	Yens. Yeah.
Drew Morgan:	14:52	... but, I always thought they were, like-
Chuck Reece:	14:53	Were they from Pittsburgh?
Trae Crowder:	14:54	Well, I'd of, yeah, I thought they were, maybe, doing it, I don't know, trying to be cool or something.
Chuck Reece:	14:58	Well, let me, let me ask y'all this. Now, how do your southern audiences react to all this enlightened liberalism that y'all guys have, uh, coming out of mouths like y'all's?

Corey Forrester:	15:16	Well, and I mean, you know, you, you've been to some of our shows before, and so, the thing is, the people that, and I, I've said this a lot, but, I mean, it's true, I believe this, the people that, like ... There are plenty of people in the south who sound like us, who, if they are aware of us at all, they are not fans. The people that actually do come to the show, like, buy a ticket and show up, are ... a- nearly across the board, already on, well, onboard with us to begin with, so like, it's not surprising, or shocking to them. If it was just a general, southern audience, like-
Chuck Reece:	15:53	Like, if y'all were opening for Foxworthy, or something.
Drew Morgan:	15:55	Right.
Trae Crowder:	15:56	Sure, yeah.
Corey Forrester:	15:57	... it would be a, and we've all had that experience too, because we all came up in the south, and nobody knew who we were, we were, for most of that time, and we'd go up in front of general southern audiences, and, I mean, yeah, you can shock and upset some people, for sure. (laughs)
Chuck Reece:	16:07	But, shock value really isn't what these guys are going for. They have a message for other folks who talk like them. Folks who would listen to them because they talk the way they do, but who might disagree strongly with what they're actually saying. Here's part of a Corey Forrester bit, from the point of view of an old southern man pondering whether gay people should be allowed to serve in the military.
Corey Forrester:	16:34	They also shouldn't be able to serve in the military, for, uh, reasons (laughing), of which I have none at the moment, but I will go home and watch Sean Hannity, and report back as soon as I can on what it is.
Chuck Reece:	16:53	Corey says jokes like that, though, have to change over time, because their message has to change with the times.
Corey Forrester:	17:01	You, Chuck, have heard me do the bit, it's on our, uh, it's on our critically acclaimed album, where we're at, live from Lexington. It's my closing bit, that I did, about, uh, it was gays in the military, which I ended up changing to transgender in the military, because when I wrote the joke, uh, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, was still very much a policy. And so, it's one of the first real good jokes that I wrote, and I was doing it 10 years ago in the south, and I would always close with it. And, it always got



laughs, mainly because I'm a very good comedian, and it was very well written, but, uh, it was always, I could tell that a lot of the audience was laughing at, like, "Listen to him, saying all this stuff."

Chuck Reece: 17:34 Yeah.

Corey Forrester: 17:34 It took them by surprise-

Chuck Reece: 17:36 Yeah.

Corey Forrester: 17:36 ... and I think that some of them, maybe thought that I truly didn't believe it, I was just saying it as a shock thing.

Drew Morgan: 17:41 Another thing I always thought back in those days, was that, not think, I mean, I feel like I know this, it did upset some people. Some people would get offended at some of my material, whatever, but I also always felt like they would, even if they weren't on board with it, the people in the audience who weren't, they would let me get away with it-

Corey Forrester: 17:58 Yeah.

Drew Morgan: 17:58 ... for a little bit, bec- because of the way I sounded. Because they were like, "Well, he's one of us," so I had, like, a longer leash. Like, if a New York comic had been there saying the exact same jokes I was saying-

Chuck Reece: 18:07 No.

Drew Morgan: 18:07 ... they would've hated-

Chuck Reece: 18:08 Yeah. I mean, I've seen that happen.

Drew Morgan: 18:09 ... But they gave me a little bit of grace, because I, they were like, "Well, he's one of us," you know, for a little bit.

Chuck Reece: 18:15 Sure.

Drew Morgan: 18:15 Believe me, I could still lose them. (laughs)

Corey Forrester: 18:17 Most, most of my jokes coming up, that were like that, were religious. Uh, my dad's a preacher. I grew up in the church. It caused me a lot of, uh, anguish and, and existential issues, and I, you know-

Chuck Reece: 18:28 Boy, did it. Whew.

Corey Forrester:	18:29	... and, uh, I feel like, honestly, it was everybody. And it, and that still can do it to people. Like, even our audiences, in the south, it's just, it's inside us. If you were raised in the church, and you hear someone speaking anything negative about that, even if you agree with it, I think some part of a lot of people, like, their assholes tighten up, and they look around to see if their preacher is in the room, you know? Kind of, like, "You ain't supposed to say this."
Chuck Reece:	18:52	Yeah.
Drew Morgan:	18:52	Yeah.
Corey Forrester:	18:53	There's not, I mean, there's this, that's, I guess that's part of why I'm interested in those jokes, but there's no way around that. I think we're real well received in the south, now. Um, Chuck, not just because of what Trae was saying of like, we've been sought out, but, I mean, if you go to our shows in the south, it's all the people that we have known exist, but the world, including good-hearted liberal people in Connecticut, or whatever, don't think about existing. Liberal people, you know, minorities, queer southerners, like, all those folks are at our show, and I think it's, it's not just, like, oh, they're cool with it. Like, that's part of why they're there.
Chuck Reece:	19:31	The message is this: Trae Crowder, Drew Morgan and Corey Forrester believe, as does the Bitter Southerner, that what makes southern culture special is how it arises from all of us, whether our ancestors were from Europe, or Africa, or the Caribbean, or any place else. Here's Corey, again.
Corey Forrester:	19:53	And I'm gonna use this, an example, and first off, let me preface it by saying, I do not feel that we, uh, undergo the same prejudice, but, like, you know how sometimes you hear people go, "Oh, yeah. You know, my black, my black friend, Darrell, but like, you know, he don't, he don't act black," you know? And, they do that whole thing, which I, it is an insanely terrible thing to say. But, people say similar things, that's like, "Oh, well, you guys, no, I like you because y'all don't act like you're from the south," and I'm like, "Yes, I do."
Chuck Reece:	20:19	Yeah.
Corey Forrester:	20:19	I abso- I'm as southern as any other human being you met, I just-
Chuck Reece:	20:22	Well-

Corey Forrester:	20:22	... think that people, or, have rights.
Trae Crowder:	20:24	... at, Drew, Drew's been saying, since we started this tour, and I completely just, like, the idea of, why don't we also count?
Corey Forrester:	20:31	Right.
Trae Crowder:	20:31	Like, when they think about the south, they only think about, like, the negative stereotypes, even if they know who we are, they take us and, like, remove us from the sou- you know, because what you were just saying-
Corey Forrester:	20:41	Yeah.
Trae Crowder:	20:42	... we're, like, exceptions. But, it's, like-
Corey Forrester:	20:43	Well-
Trae Crowder:	20:43	... no, we should also count. And, and not just us, but, like, outcasts, and Roy Wood Jr.-
Corey Forrester:	20:47	Well, that one, that, those two, that makes me angry, honestly, because I don't know how to feel, I don't know how to express it without sounding like I'm trying to take, you know, ownership, culturally of black people, and I'm not, and that would be a horrible thing, but like, why, why don't we talk about Outkast as a southern artist?
Chuck Reece:	21:04	Right.
Corey Forrester:	21:04	Well, because they're black. That's the box that the world wants to put them in.
Trae Crowder:	21:07	Right.
Corey Forrester:	21:08	You know what I mean?
Chuck Reece:	21:08	Right, it's like, it's like, you could be, like, you know-
Trae Crowder:	21:10	Right.
Chuck Reece:	21:10	... boys, from, like, a town in Alabama, but he's an urban (laughs) comic.
Trae Crowder:	21:13	Right. Yeah. Which-
Drew Morgan:	21:15	Roy Wood Jr., being an urban comic is so, ridiculous.

Corey Forrester:	21:18	It's insane.
Drew Morgan:	21:18	But, it's because you can't say black, you know?
Corey Forrester:	21:21	Right.
Drew Morgan:	21:21	Right. Right. And, and, and, you know, that's something I've noticed, too, is like, the idea that ... like, black southerners and white southerners all consider themselves southerners, for the most part, you know? Uh, and, and that we, there's this assumption that goes with a accent, that we can't have common concerns.
Drew Morgan:	21:48	Yeah, I mean I'm guilty of that frankly.
Chuck Reece:	21:50	... I have, w- what do you, what do you mean?
Trae Crowder:	21:52	Like, uh, when I hear a, a c- certain Yankee accents, like, there are times where I just make certain assumptions about me and that person, on specific issues, aren't going to find common ground. And, and, honestly, on the ones we're talking about, right now. Like, I'm already out of the gate like, "Yeah, you probably think my dad's an idiot because he hunts and, you know, has a rifle, and since he has a rifle, you think," you know, and all those things. And, th- that ain't right either.
Drew Morgan:	22:16	Well, that, that's how I feel when somebody from Connecticut is like, "You don't act southern," and I'm like, "Well, you're being a judgmental prick," pretty much what I figured a Connecticut person would be.
Drew Morgan:	22:23	Yeah.
Chuck Reece:	22:24	Right. (laughing) Well, speaking of, of, you know, how y'all have played with that accent in your comedy, and I know I've told y'all this, individually, but the, the, the skits you guys did for Comedy Central, uh, are just brilliant, man. And, like the one about the restaurant?
Drew Morgan:	22:49	You're from Boone, North Carolina, and you made this menu?
Trae Crowder:	22:52	Yes.
Corey Forrester:	22:54	What year did Doc Watson die?
Trae Crowder:	22:55	What?

Corey Forrester:	22:56	What percentage Cherokee are you?
Trae Crowder:	22:58	One sixteenth on my mama's side, one eighth on my daddy's side.
Drew Morgan:	23:00	Vinegar, or ketchup-based barbecue?
Trae Crowder:	23:03	Both.
Corey Forrester:	23:03	When greeting a fellow southerner-
Trae Crowder:	23:04	Whew, scoot, hot damn-
Drew Morgan:	23:05	... how much sugar goes in sweet tea?
Trae Crowder:	23:07	Until it's sweet enough.
Corey Forrester:	23:08	Dolly Parton, or-
Trae Crowder:	23:09	Dolly. You know, unless the preacher is coming over. Then, we got to pretend like it's Jesus, for a minute, but...
Drew Morgan:	23:15	All right, when you were punished as a kid, where would your parents hit you?
Trae Crowder:	23:20	Home, school, church, anywhere with sticks, really.
Drew Morgan:	23:23	That's a phenomenal answer.
Trae Crowder:	23:24	Mm-hmm (affirmative)
Chuck Reece:	23:26	I've bet I've watched that thing two dozen times and I still laugh like hell, every time I hear it.
Trae Crowder:	23:30	We wondered why it had so many views.
Chuck Reece:	23:31	(laughing)
Trae Crowder:	23:32	Yeah, man. We appreciate that.
Chuck Reece:	23:33	It's all me, yeah. (laughs) Well, I mean, like, w- when you, you know, w- what's different about writing sketch comedy that builds on that, or does that come easy to y'all?
Corey Forrester:	23:45	We're learning as we go.
Trae Crowder:	23:47	Yeah.

Corey Forrester:	23:47	That particular one was based on a bit that I did, but I, and it worked. I have found with other bits that, that doesn't always work, and it doesn't always translate as well. That particular bit had a, was a story, it started out as a story. Me and Andy were in a restaurant and I got mad, about them having Vegan grits, that was the bit. I mean, one thing I specifically did on that sketch, and I'll try to do as long as Comedy Central will let me, you know, our goal was to get these out to more people, grow our audience, et cetera, et cetera. But, I put what I call a little, uh, little redneck bat signals, out there.
Corey Forrester:	24:20	I mean, the references to Dale Earnhardt and Dolly Parton are to be funny, but also, because I'm hoping people see that and go, and, and when you look in the comments of that one, it worked. I mean, people are being like, "Oh my God, I, I'm from the south and they nailed it," and then, like, that is what I was going for.
Drew Morgan:	24:35	Doc, yeah, Doc Watson specifically, because there's, you know, a lot of people-
Corey Forrester:	24:38	That's a deep cut.
Drew Morgan:	24:38	That's a deep cut, yeah. A lot of people, not from the south, still get Earnhardt and Dolly-
Chuck Reece:	24:42	Mm-hmm (affirmative)
Drew Morgan:	24:42	... but the people who were, when we threw, Doc Watson was in there, people were like, "Okay, these dudes are legit." (laughs) I could see any liberal, elite writer going, "I'll put Dolly Parton," but you put Doc Watson, and talk about when Skynyrd plane gets, gets, you know, uh, what, crashed? Gets crashed? [crosstalk 00:24:58]
Corey Forrester:	24:58	Well, Trae, Trae added a joke to that one. It was, um, what was it about snakes you said?
Trae Crowder:	25:02	Um-
Corey Forrester:	25:03	Breeding illegal reptiles?
Trae Crowder:	25:04	Yeah.
Chuck Reece:	25:04	Yeah.

Trae Crowder:	25:04	I, I'm, I'm really, uh, showing myself, here, how much I care about the comments section, but I, I, one of the ones I saw was, I saw, like, two or three people being like, "I, legit, had an uncle who got, who had snake, illegal snakes. I legit." Nobody got arrested or anything, but like, everyone had that weird dude in their neighborhood who's like, "Yeah, you can't get these at the store, now."
Chuck Reece:	25:24	Yeah. Everybody got a snake guy.
Trae Crowder:	25:25	Yeah. You have a snake guy. (laughs)
Chuck Reece:	25:29	(laughs) Uh, what do you want people all over the country, because we got people who listen to this in every state of the union, we got people who listen to it in Europe, and, uh, in Asia ... what should those folks know when they hear a southern accent?
Trae Crowder:	25:48	Man, I don't know. So-
Drew Morgan:	25:48	I, I, I-
Trae Crowder:	25:49	... go ahead, Drew.
Drew Morgan:	25:50	We talk about the duality of the southern thing, a lot, shout out Patterson Hood, who I think is the first person who coined that, or at least, it's, it's, as far as-[crosstalk 00:25:57]
Trae Crowder:	25:56	It was the first time that I heard that-
Drew Morgan:	25:57	Yeah.
Trae Crowder:	25:58	... phrase.
Drew Morgan:	25:58	That, that, which, you know, the Bitter Southerner is, is, is a, is, you know, goes deep with that. I'm, I'm feeling some duality right now, because I have a paradoxical, uh, responses. I want someone to hear a southern accent and know that, um, that we are as diverse, we're not a monolith, we are as diverse as any culture, that when you talk to that person, you might get something you expect, you might get something completely out of left field. If you talk to them for very long, you'll find out that, you know, it's not gonna be everything that you expect. And then, at the same time, I want that person to know that I don't give a shit what they think. Fuck them.
Trae Crowder:	26:36	Yeah right (laughs) Yeah.

Drew Morgan:	26:36	(laughs) I think, negative stereotypes, and the stuff we want people to think when they hear the accent, all, putting, like, no, no matter which angle you're coming at it from, I think one thing most people can agree, that you can assume when you hear a southern accent, is that, y- you know, we're a pretty good time.
Trae Crowder:	26:54	Yeah.
Drew Morgan:	26:55	You're gonna be entertained, one way or another, even if it's, y- you know, from the, like, Connecticut high horse perspective of, like, you know, uh, we're zoo animals-
Chuck Reece:	27:05	Sure.
Drew Morgan:	27:05	... or whatever, or just, you know, you want to have a good time. Either way, you're probably going to enjoy it-
Trae Crowder:	27:11	Right.
Drew Morgan:	27:11	... uh, you know (laughs) if you start picking the brain of a southerner, I think.
Corey Forrester:	27:15	But I'd, I'd, I'd, but I do wish people would ... sure, man, there's Honey Boo Boo. Yeah, we gotta own that, but I also wish it would be William Faulkner, and Outkast, you know?
Trae Crowder:	27:25	Right.
Corey Forrester:	27:26	I mean, think about those things. You're totally allowed to laugh at us, you just have to acknowledge that we kick ass at food, and literature, and comedy, and art, and music-
Chuck Reece:	27:33	Football.
Corey Forrester:	27:33	... and football. Like-
Trae Crowder:	27:34	Well-
Corey Forrester:	27:34	... you can make fun of us all you want. You're absolutely allowed to, but come on, we whip your ass at everything I just mentioned.
Chuck Reece:	27:41	(laughs)
Drew Morgan:	27:41	I don't want to sound too sappy here, but just, you know, you're talking to a human being, so, don't, you know, like, when you,



when you look at, when you hear ... like, there's this, there's this video online that my sister shares with me all the time, and it is funny, and it's this, it's this old southern lady. And, the video is like, somebody, she's being interviewed on the news, and they're like, uh, she got, they got snowed in, or something. Then, they asked her, or, or like, there was a blizzard coming, I think, and they're like, "What are you going to do when you're snowed in?" And, the woman is like, "Well, I think we're just gonna make us a bunch of stews and casseroles, and eat desserts, and just get all fat and sassy."

Chuck Reece: 28:16 (laughs)

Drew Morgan: 28:16 And, it's a funny video to share, but like, I look at it, I look at it as like, that's the sweetest thing I've ever seen, and that's like, like, yeah. We can be simple folks, but that doesn't make us stupid, and expect to hear a story because everybody in the south has one. If you hear my accent, you know, that there's, there's just more to it, and I just wish we wouldn't get treated, like, you know, Ned Beatty in Deliverance, full circle.

Chuck Reece: 28:38 Our love and thanks go out to Trae Crowder, Drew Morgan and Corey Ryan Forrester, not just for this interview, but for what they do all over the country, all the time. Their work matters. You can go buy tickets to their shows at [wellredcomedy.com](http://wellredcomedy.com). That's W-E-L-L-R-E-D comedy dot com. You can hear more of their standup routines and the show notes on our website. This, once again, is the Bitter Southerner Podcast, co-produced with Georgia Public Broadcasting. We'll be back after a really short break.

Chuck Reece: 29:22 Welcome back to the Bitter Southerner Podcast, and we are talking about the southern accent today. Lots of my fellow southerners have felt the pressure to get rid of theirs in various work, or education situations. And, we're gonna hear now from Kristy Whitman Howell, who is from Perkinston, Mississippi, originally. Now she lives in the Midwest and she admits that, in some professional settings, she feels the need to do some code switching, to turn off her southern accent.

Kristy Whitman Howell: 30:08 It's something I started doing when I was in college. I was a history major at University of Southern Miss., and we had a faculty member who was new, um, from the northwest, Pacific northwest, and she made the comment that if I wrote the way I talked, I would have problems in her class. Um, I already knew I wrote well, um, and I've, I've always written fairly well, um, so I decided I would have to change the way I talked, and so, I did.

Chuck Reece:	30:37	Now, that happened more than a decade ago, but it still hurts Kristy, and I get it. These days, she lives in Overland Park, Kansas, where she works on sustainability issues at a community college.
Kristy Whitman Howell:	30:49	People, here, um, in, in Kansas, joke that they can tell when I get comfortable with them, or they can tell when I've talked to my mother, because those are sure to, the two things, if I'm comfortable with you, or I've talked to mama, my accent is gonna come out. Um, if I drink at all, um, it comes out like gangbusters.
Chuck Reece:	31:07	Kristy still does see her accent as a point of pride, and when she gets excited about her passion, environmental justice, her twang comes out.
Kristy Whitman Howell:	31:17	When I talk about climate issues, when I talk about renewable energy, when I talk about social justice and equity, and (laughs) I'm doing it again. Um, I, I do try to make sure that, the people who are listening to me can understand it. Southerners, um, have a leadership role and fit in these conversations, and have, uh, have every right to participate in these conversations, and we do the work, um, every day of our lives, even though we may not be the people who are the most, um, seen and acknowledged by the mainstream environmental movement.
Chuck Reece:	31:56	Now, ain't that something? And Kristy is not at all the only one who sees her accent as a powerful tool.
Jessica Whatley:	32:04	I do not try to hide it, because it's a, next to impossible for me to do that. (laughs)
Chuck Reece:	32:11	Jessica Whatley lives in Los Angeles, California. She's working on a Doctorate of Social Work at USC. We reached her by Skype. She grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, spent most of her adult life in southern Mississippi, somewhere between McComb and Hattiesburg. Also, like Kristy, Jessica has been told to tone that accent down.
Jessica Whatley:	32:36	They're trying to make fun of me, so they'll say things like, you know, "Oh, that's that redneck social worker," and I've had to explain, several times, that I'm not offended by that, all, you know, you, I say, "You know why people's necks got red, right? Because they were outside, working hard? So, I'm not offended that you call me a hard worker." (laughs) And, um, then they just go, "Um, well, hmm, hmm."

Chuck Reece:	32:58	Now, why would they think that?
Jessica Whatley:	33:00	Because they've never been to the south, and the on- their only conception of a southern accent is what Hollywood has designed. And so, I end up having these conversations and they say, "You don't sound southern, at all, da, da, da, da," and then, I'm like, "You know people in the south don't really talk like Scarlett O'Hara, right?" You know, and they don't. They don't know that. They think that I should walk around and just say like, "I declare," you know? (laughs) I was like, "Nobody talks like that in the south." You know, they have this very Gone With the Wind, or like, old south, you know, Hollywood depiction of, of the way that, you know, we should sound.
Chuck Reece:	33:42	When she's not dealing with nonsense like that, Jessica spends time looking at her ways to fix the criminal justice system from within. She works with clients who struggle with homelessness, mental illness, addiction, and she's in the courtrooms with them, talking to judges, making the case for why her clients, maybe, should not be incarcerated, but instead, get the treatment that they need to be healthy. And in those courtrooms, her accent comes in handy.
Jessica Whatley:	34:13	They have this idea of, like, slow, genteel type southerners and I can get up in a courtroom, and I can advocate for my clients, and before anybody knows what's going on, the judge, often times, and even the district attorneys have, "Oh yeah, y'all. Judge, that's fine, yeah. Know what? I think that is a good idea," and for some reason, I don't know if it's just because I out-talk them, or ... but some reason, my clients getting better, um, deals and getting a diversion more often than other people. (laughs)
Chuck Reece:	34:53	What Jessica is doing there, I think, is teaching those judges and district attorneys how to love their neighbors a little more. How to see the human being, instead of the case-file. Jessica says certain clients even find her voice to be therapeutic.
Jessica Whatley:	35:12	I have clients who ask if they can record something that I say on their phone, so that when they're out, away from me, or out in public, um, just anywhere, if they feel overly anxious, or feel like they're going to have a panic attack, they can play it back, because they say that my accent is comforting to them, and they like, also they like the phrases. And, a lot of them are just things I heard my mamaw say.
Chuck Reece:	35:37	Just things I heard my mamaw say. Now, that's how we learn the stories that define who we are.

	35:50	What I've learned over six years of editing the Bitter Southerner, is that how we talk, how we hold in reverence the stories that our elders told us, that crosses every racial and cultural line in the south. Almost six years ago, I got the chance to interview, for the first time, an activist named Michael Render, and you might know him by his rap name, Killer Mike. Now, I recorded this on my phone, long before we had this podcast, so please forgive the poor audio quality, but I do want you to hear something that Mike said to me that day, in 2013, as we sat in the back room of his first barbershop, the SWAG Shop, in southwest Atlanta.
Killer Mike:	36:35	Now, we're all southerners. We'll all talk with these drawls and twangs-
Chuck Reece:	36:38	Yeah.
Killer Mike:	36:38	... you know, we all go to the racetrack on Sundays, we all go fishing, you know? I, I don't nec- I don't have a Dixie flag in the back of my pickup truck, but it still has mud flaps and big tires. So-
Chuck Reece:	36:49	(laughs)
Killer Mike:	36:50	... you're talking about me, too.
Chuck Reece:	36:51	Right.
Killer Mike:	36:52	So, why not just be who I am?
Chuck Reece:	36:55	As we put this episode together, I kept thinking that we needed someone who could write something that got to the heart of how our accents work, and, specifically about how people of all races in our region, prize the way we speak. And, that made me think about Lolis Eric Elie, who is another Bitter Southerner contributor. Lolis grew up in the Treme neighborhood of New Orleans. The son of a schoolteacher mother and a father who was an attorney who fought famously and fiercely for desegregation in New Orleans, and all across the south.
	37:33	I first met Lolis five years ago, when he had just left his post as a columnist for the New Orleans Times Picayune, to write for the HBO TV show, Treme. He's written for the Bitter Southerner several times, and I've honestly encountered very few writers with more capability when it comes to expressing the duality of the southern thing. How people of vastly different backgrounds can be bound together by our common experiences as

southerners, and how we built a culture that's a gumbo of all of us, and all of our ancestors.

Chuck Reece: 38:10 So, I just told Lolis what this episode was about and simply asked him to write something that he could read on our show in a few minutes. I didn't give him any other specifics, because I trusted in his ability, both as a writer and as a citizen of the south, to put things in perspective for y'all. And I think he did that. Give a listen.

Lolis Eric Elie: 38:35 Ms. Murphy lived in mortal fear that I would ax her, even though I wasn't planning on it, I was only in third grade. Just to be on the safe side, every time I raised my hand and said I wanted to ax Ms. Murphy something, she insisted that I really wanted to ask her, not ax her. Eventually, I got the hint and said the word her way. Most of the folks in my neighborhood were black. We axed each other questions all the time and didn't nobody get alarmed. But, Ms. Murphy was white. Apparently, among white folks, the sound of the axing was a big deal. Since my sister and I were the first black students to desegregate our ritzy, private elementary school, we had to learn to desegregate our language. Our parents had both gone to college and graduate school. My mother was a schoolteacher by training, was always quick to correct our grammar or syntax. Our father, who was quick to tell anyone that he was born and reared in Niggertown, maintained vestiges of his old neighborhood sound, even decades later, when he argued civil rights cases in court.

39:41 Ms. Murphy's correction got me thinking about right and wrong ways of talking, in a way different from how my mother had me thinking about it. I developed a conscious awareness at the sound of what you said, could color the perception as much as the substance of what you said. It wasn't so much Ms. Murphy herself, she was kind and teacherly, and I'm sure she'd been prepared well in advance for the possible complications of an integrated classroom, the kids on playgrounds and forced conformity, in ruthless ways. No axers allowed.

40:16 The Beverly Hillbillies premiered before I was born, but I remember seeing the show. Maybe it had a lot of messages, but one thing was clear. Country folks from the south did weird things, ate weird things, said weird things, and were not like us. No matter how big the bank account, or how massive the mansion, these people were the butt of jokes. If you look at the show, which I haven't done in decades, you can also see how some of the jokes were really on the greedy banker, and the other Beverly Hills folks who clamored to curry favor with the

newly arrived money. But, while you might not want to be a greedy banker, you definitely didn't want to be a hillbilly, and wasn't hillbilly just another way of saying southern? Wasn't anyone who talked like a southerner a little slow on the uptake?

41:06 I used to say I was from New Orleans, not from the south. I was proud of my city in a way that I wasn't proud of my state, my region, or even my country. But, maybe that was also a way of saying I wasn't a hillbilly. When you write that someone has a southern drawl, everyone can picture it in their ears, but what does a northern drawl sound like, or a west coast one? Isn't there a government program to help the drawl-less overcome their particular form of poverty?

41:38 People not from New Orleans sometimes say I have a New Orleans accent. Having heard real New Orleans accents all my life, I know that there are at least a couple, and I know that they're wrong about me having one of them. Still, I think I know what they're reacting to. I know now that I speak English well enough to know the morass of my country, well enough, that I don't feel the need to police my diction, as I once did. I haven't done it lately, but I imagine myself still capable of axing someone, should I ever again be so inclined.

Chuck Reece: 42:14 Thank you, Lolis. You, my friend, are a gift to us all. These days, you can find Lolis Elie in Hollywood, where he's a writer, and filmmaker and a husband, and a father of two young'uns. His credits include Amazons, the Man in the High Castle, the Oprah Winfrey Network series Greenleaf, and of course, a show I miss very much, HBO's Treme. You can read more of Lolis' stories about his hometown of New Orleans in the show notes section of our website.

42:50 And, that's it for the first episode of season two of the Bitter Southerner Podcast. Our producer is Sean Powers, [Josephine Bennett 00:43:05] masterfully edits the show. And, our thanks go out to all these people, Trae, Drew, Corey, Lolis, Killer Mike, and especially to Dartinia Hull, Kristy Whitman Howell, and Jessica Whatley. All three of these women are family to us, meaning that they are part of a special group of people who support, with their own resources, the Bitter Southerner's efforts to tell stories. We call everybody in that group, the Bitter Southerner family. They ought to think of themselves as family, and you can visit our website to become part of that family yourself.

Chuck Reece: 43:43 Every South, our theme song, was written by Patterson Hood and performed by his band, Drive-by Truckers. We heard

additional music today from DeWolf Music. And, if you liked the Bitter Southerner podcast, I do wish you would review it and rate it on Apple Podcasts, even if you listen to it somewhere else. Those reviews make sure that more people, all around the world, get to hear our twangs and our drawls, and the fact that, yeah, we're proud of them. The Bitter Southerner Podcast is a co-production of Georgia Public Broadcasting and the Bitter Southerner Magazine.

44:17

You can access more from each episode at G-P-B dot org slash podcast. I'm Chuck Reece, and my three instructions remain constant. Hug more necks, abide no hatred and always do what you love with the people you love. And, you know, you can remember too, that it's all right to do that with a twang, or a drawl, or whatever.