

NCCA

ENTERTAINMENT

a SPÉELman CHRISTmas

Coming home never felt this complicated—or this necessary



Logline

When a grieving Spelman professor cancels Christmas and refuses to give her annual holiday address, her three very different daughters return home uninvited—each carrying secrets, expectations, and their own version of what it means to be a “Spelman woman.” As old wounds surface and a few mysterious jazz recordings begin “talking back,” the Ellis women must confront their legacy, their grief, and the music that still lives in their hearts.

The Story



Dr. Geneva Ellis is tradition personified—an esteemed Spelman professor, community pillar, and widow of the beloved Charles Ellis, a jazz historian and spiritual anchor of the family. This year, Geneva has canceled Christmas. Her heart isn't in it, and she's quietly refused to deliver her annual keynote at Spelman's holiday gala—a speech she's given for over a decade.

But her daughters have other plans.

- ZORA, a high-achieving executive from D.C., arrives first—unannounced, with her laptop and corporate armor.
- SIMONE, a free-spirited yoga instructor, blows in next with an unexpected surprise: a white fiancé named Clay and a wedding set for two weeks out.
- And finally, IMANI, a bright law student harboring a secret pregnancy and mounting doubts about her future, brings the biggest secret of all.

Geneva is blindsided. And not ready.

What begins as a fragile reunion devolves into passive-aggressive jabs over gumbo, holiday traditions, and the weight of expectations—especially those shaped by Spelman itself. Each daughter represents a version of what Geneva once taught and once believed: excellence, freedom, and quiet resilience. But Geneva no longer recognizes herself in any of them—or in the woman she's become since Charles died.

The Story



Then, strange things begin to happen.

Late one night in Charles' study, Geneva plays an old vinyl of his—something he recorded for his students—and hears something odd: a whisper between the notes. A familiar voice. Charles.

At first, she chalks it up to grief and exhaustion. But then, it happens again. A pause in the sax solo. A quiet, intimate murmur:

Let them love you the way I did.

Is it real? Or just memory trying to find its way back?

As Jazz Night approaches, tensions finally erupt in a public blow-up, with years of resentment and fear bubbling to the surface. Geneva storms out. The sisters fracture. It takes a moment of clarity—sparked by music, memory, and a long-forgotten card from her daughters—to finally move her. Geneva chooses to show up again: not as the professor, not as the mother who always had the answers, but as a woman willing to feel again.

At the Spelman Candlelight Service, she listens to a current student perform Charles' favorite holiday jazz piece. Something breaks open. And for the first time since his death, Geneva speaks—not from a podium, but to her daughters. Quietly. Honestly. Full of heart.



Genre: Holiday Dramedy

Tone: Heartfelt, warm, bittersweet, often funny

Setting: Atlanta's historic West End & Spelman College campus

Format: Feature Film



Character Breakdown

Dr. Geneva Ellis (60s) – The Matriarch

Elegant. Controlled. Unyielding.

A Spelman alumna, former professor, and recently retired dean, Geneva is the kind of woman who commands a room without raising her voice. She wears grief like a pressed blazer—sharp, seamless, and silently suffocating. Since the sudden death of her husband, she’s shut out the world, hiding behind structure and tradition. But beneath the composed exterior is a woman aching to feel again—if only she can learn to take off the armor she taught her daughters to wear.



Zora Ellis (34) – The Eldest Daughter

Driven. Polished. Cracking beneath it all.

A high-powered corporate strategist based in D.C., Zora is the “eldest daughter” in every sense—responsible, relentless, and always performing excellence. She’s inherited Geneva’s poise but not her emotional fluency. Zora thrives in control but quietly suffers under pressure she never asked for. When she returns home, she’s forced to confront the question: what happens when the life you built no longer fits the woman you’re becoming?



Simone Ellis (30) – The Middle Daughter

Free-spirited. Compassionate. Unfiltered.

Simone is the soulful middle child—the bohemian one who left Atlanta to chase peace, spirituality, and love on her own terms. Engaged to Clay and always two crystals away from a house cleanse, she masks deep insecurities with sage smoke and sarcasm. Her return home forces her to reckon with unresolved tensions, both with her mother and within herself. She's not as untethered as she seems—but she's still figuring out how to belong without betraying who she's become.



Imani Ellis (25) – The Youngest

Tender. Observant. Torn.

The youngest of the Ellis sisters, Imani is a law student who's always been “the good one”—quiet, steady, and obedient. But she's harboring a secret: she's pregnant and uncertain if the path she's on still fits her truth. Imani is navigating the collision between legacy and identity, trying to find space for her own voice in a family that doesn't always make room for softness. She's about to learn that sometimes the quietest people carry the heaviest stories.



Clay (30s) – Simone's Fiancé

Earnest. Awkward. Surprisingly grounded.

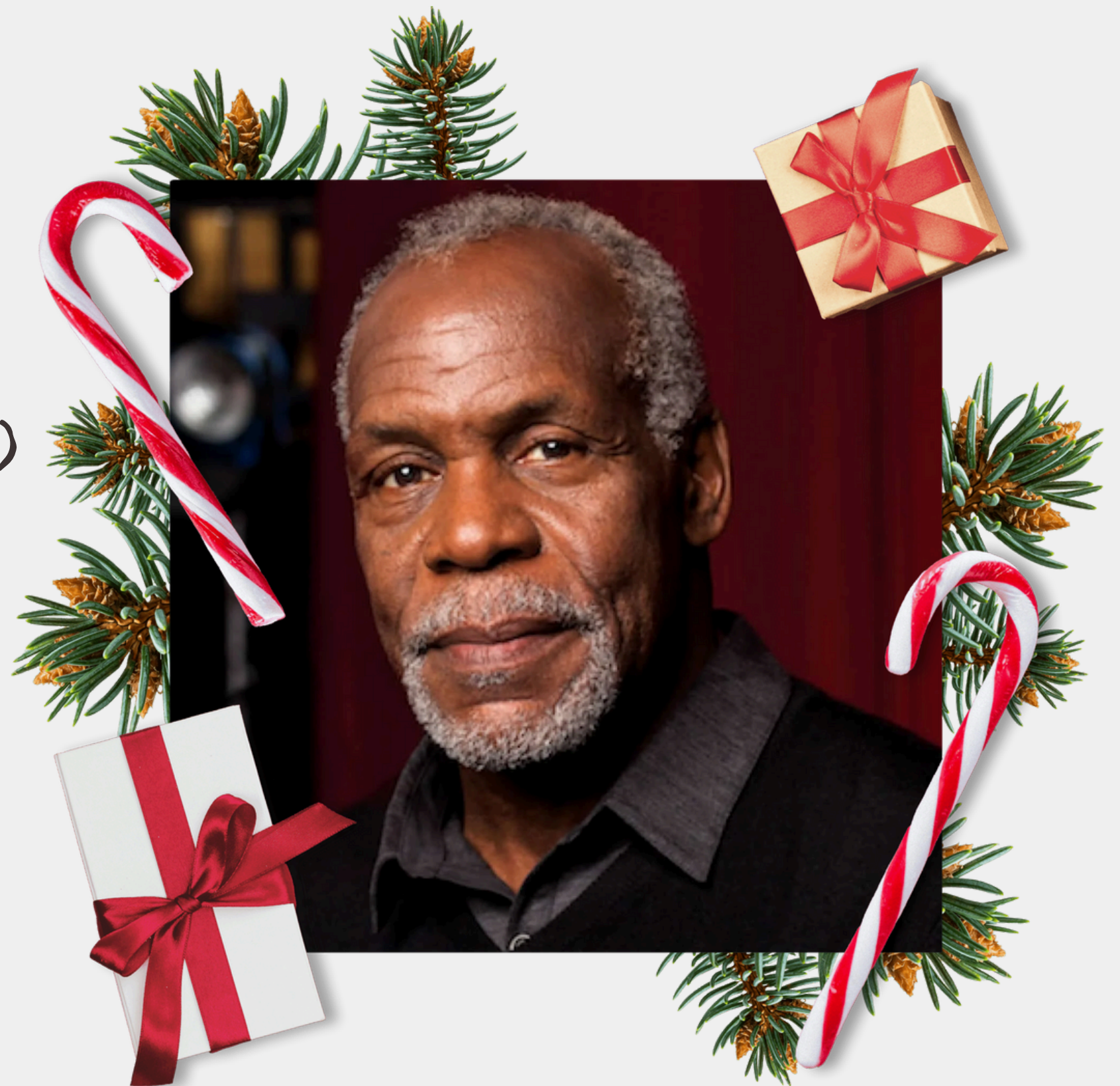
Simone's white fiancé, Clay is a gentle, good-hearted guy with zero chill in chaotic situations. He's a fish out of water in this house full of strong Black women—but he's not fragile. A meditation coach with a dad-joke streak, he's quietly perceptive and more resilient than he looks. Clay is here for Simone—but finds himself unexpectedly drawn into the fabric of this family's healing.



Charles Ellis 60s (seen in flashbacks)

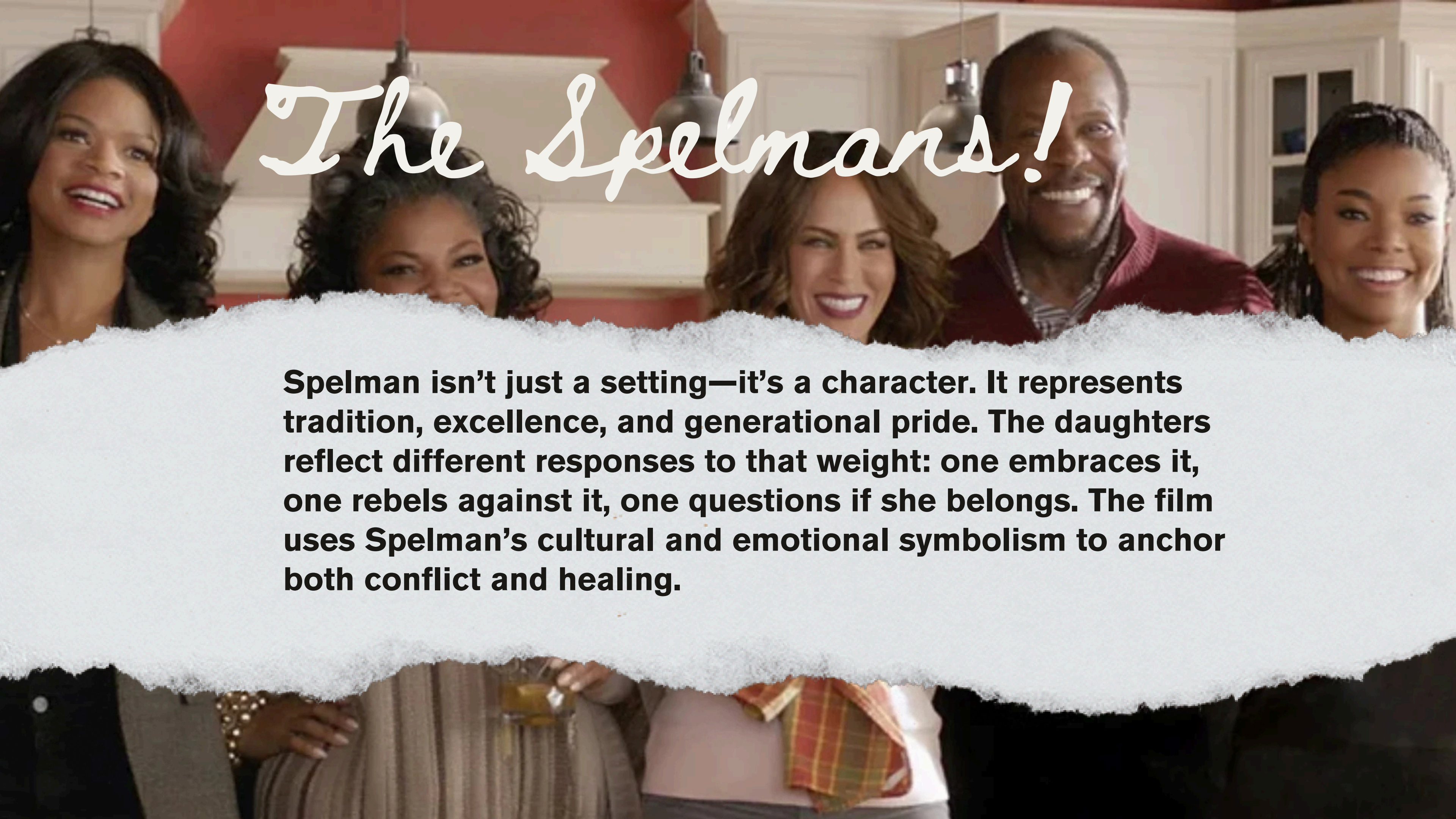
Warm. Wise. Soulful.

Geneva's late husband and the heart of the Ellis home. A Morehouse man with Spelman loyalty, Charles was a community pastor, jazz musician, and the emotional translator for the entire family. Though physically gone, his spirit lingers in vinyl records, old sermons, and the way his daughters still try to live up to the love he modeled. When his voice returns—through memory, music, or magic—it's never loud. But it always knows exactly what to say.



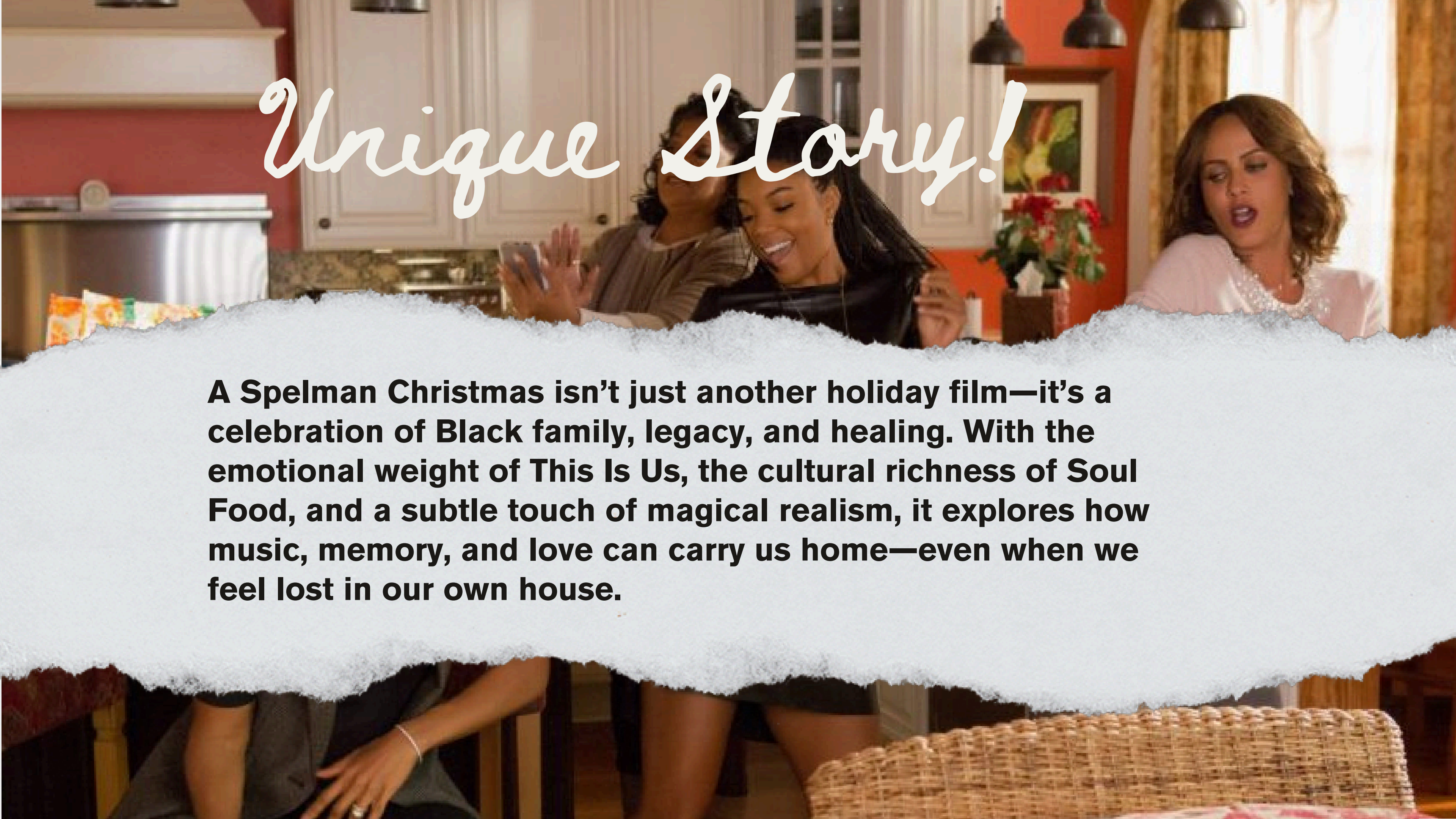
Film Comparisons





The Spelmans!

Spelman isn't just a setting—it's a character. It represents tradition, excellence, and generational pride. The daughters reflect different responses to that weight: one embraces it, one rebels against it, one questions if she belongs. The film uses Spelman's cultural and emotional symbolism to anchor both conflict and healing.



Unique Story!

A Spelman Christmas isn't just another holiday film—it's a celebration of Black family, legacy, and healing. With the emotional weight of *This Is Us*, the cultural richness of *Soul Food*, and a subtle touch of magical realism, it explores how music, memory, and love can carry us home—even when we feel lost in our own house.



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