

**POV** Community  
Engagement &  
Education

DISCUSSION GUIDE



**Pier Kids**

a film by Elegance Bratton

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## PIER KIDS

On the Christopher Street Pier in New York City, homeless queer and trans youth of color forge friendships and chosen families, withstanding tremendous amounts of abuse while working to carve out autonomy in their lives. With intimate, immersive access to these fearless young people, Pier Kids highlights the precarity and resilience of a community many choose to ignore.

View the trailer [here](#) and sign up to receive updates [here](#).



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Film Summary
3	Using this Guide
4	Helpful Concepts & Definitions
6	Key Participants
7	Key Issues
8	Background Information
17	Discussion Questions
22	Discussion Guide Writer

This guide is designed for people who want to use *Pier Kids* to engage and inspire family friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities in honest, and potentially challenging, conversations. It is an invitation for dialogue that requires preparation before you and your community dive in, as well as a commitment for all participants to be fully present. Conversations that invoke experiences of political violence and exclusion and/or feelings of belonging, safety, and identity can be difficult to begin and facilitate. This resource offers support and structure to guide the process. In contrast to debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this guide envisions dialogue undertaken in a spirit of openness and active listening where divergent viewpoints are heard and responded to with care and respect.

Individuals and communities may also come to the conversation after viewing *Pier Kids* with varying degrees of knowledge, as well as dynamic and different experiences. The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the topics in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose the questions that best meet your needs and interests. *And be sure to leave time to consider taking action.* Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult and/or uncomfortable. Whenever possible, please consider a closing activity that gives participants an opportunity to offer gratitude to one another before closing.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

## HELPFUL CONCEPTS &amp; DEFINITIONS

## HELPFUL CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND LANGUAGE FOR FRAMING

## GENDER IDENTITY &amp; SEXUALITY:

**Gender:** The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behaviors that are compatible with cultural expectations are referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender nonconformity.

**Sex:** The public classification of people as "male or female" at birth, based on bodily/anatomical characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia. (GLAAD)

**Gender Identity:** A person's private sense of and experience with being a boy or man, girl or woman, or a gender that may or may not correspond to the individual's biological sex. Gender identity is personal and is not visible to others.

**Gender Performance/Gender Expression:** External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expressions align with their gender identities, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Non-conforming:** This is a term used to describe people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender, nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman. (Not the same as gender identity.)

**Cisgender:** A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as," and is therefore an antonym of "trans-." A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say non-transgender people.

**Transgender (adj.):** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms—including transgender. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the person. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identities. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

## HELPFUL CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

### RACE & RACISM:

**Race:** A social and political construct (race is not biological); “a power construct of collected or merged difference that lives socially.” (Kendi)

**Racism:** A system of advantage based on race that is historic and deeply embedded in institutional structures and benefits White people. Or, a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities. (Kendi) Racism is different than prejudice, hatred, and discrimination. Racism includes one group having power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society.

**Discrimination:** Harmful acts committed against a person due to an aspect of their identity (often discrimination involves institutionalized power and exclusion).

**Prejudice:** A preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information.

**Antiracist:** One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none need developing and is supporting antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas.

**Racist:** “One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing racist ideas.” (Kendi)

### ADDITIONAL TERMS:

**Houselessness:** Rather than using the language of “homelessness,” houselessness is a framing that recognizes housing is a basic human right and also that a home, and a community, can be created and exist even when people are denied their basic rights to affordable housing.

**QTBIPOC:** Queer, trans, Black, Indigenous people of color.

**Sex Workers:** Sex workers are adults who receive money or goods in exchange for consensual sexual services or erotic performances as their jobs. Sex work is work.

### Sources:

Dismantling Racism

[GLAAD](#)

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Racial Equity Institute

## THE FILM: KEY PARTICIPANTS



**Krystal “Labeija” Conyers** - Woman of the trans experience

**DeSean Irby** - Gay Black leader on the pier

**Jusheem “Casper” Thorne** - Bi artist on the pier known for reminding the community they can be and do better

**Tamarah Farley** - Krystal’s biological aunt

**Joelle Dixon** - Krystal’s biological mother

**Terrell Dixon** - Krystal’s biological twin brother

**Antonio Dixon** - Krystal’s older brother



## THE FILM: KEY ISSUES

*Pier Kids* is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Black trans youth
- Houselessness
- Sex work
- Black trans safety
- Community and chosen family
- Trans justice
- Gentrification
- Homophobia in the Black community
- Police violence



## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHRISTOPHER STREET PIER: “PLACE-MAKING” AND DISPLACEMENT

Today the Christopher Street Pier, also known as Pier 45, is part of Hudson River Park, established in 1998. The park serves as an urban recreational public space where visitors can enjoy over four miles of waterfront views of the Hudson River. Located at the intersection of West Street and West 10th Street, the Christopher Street Pier has long been an important part of the West Village—New York’s premier queer neighborhood. It was and is known as a haven where queer folks congregate—today it is also a place for enjoying live music, participating in exercise classes, and sunbathing on the perfectly manicured “green beach” ([Hudson River Park, Pier 45](#)). This park is the attraction it is today because of the Hudson River Park Act, legislation for a revitalization project that was signed into law by Governor George E. Pataki in 1998. The act established the Hudson River Park Trust, which was charged with the task of reimagining the city’s post-industrial waterfront. The pier was originally an industrial area and a site of shipping terminals and ports, but it became obsolete as the maritime industry changed. Planners set out with the goal of enhancing “the ability of New Yorkers to enjoy the Hudson river... promote the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the state; increase the quality of life in the adjoining community and the state as a whole; help alleviate the blighted, unhealthy, unsanitary, and dangerous conditions that characterize much of the area; and boost tourism and stimulate the economy.” The project began with the renovation of the Christopher Street Pier, which was shut down for construction from 2001 to 2003, when the first completed segment was opened up to the public.

Before the pier and surrounding park became a recreational paradise, the area was home to a diverse community of queers and, importantly, not only White cisgendered gay men. It was a place for queers of color, transgender folks, drag queens, and houseless queer youth. The description in the Hudson River Park Act of the area as “blighted, unhealthy, unsanitary, and dangerous” clearly referenced that community, and it was the very existence of that community on the piers in the 1990s that inspired the local government to establish the Hudson River Park Act. That the area was This is evidence of the White hetero gaze of people with power who were unable to recognize the importance of the people living on the pier. Rather than collaborating to “promote the health, safety, and welfare” of the people who called the area home, the trust actively worked to push them out, and in the process of “reimagining” the area, planners did not address the presence or needs of the queer community who made homes on the pier. Instead, developers closed the pier, and then when it reopened the city instituted a 1:00 a.m. curfew that made it illegal for the queer and unhoused community to be on the pier—their home—“after hours.”



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In addition, those responsible for “reimagining” the pier increased police presence, which in turn created increased threat and dangerous experiences for people of color, trans folks, sex workers, and houseless folks in their long-held home. To solidify this state-sanctioned erasure, on the Hudson River Park website, the long history of the queer community was omitted from the history of the area that the trust published as part of its documentation of the process of gentrification. *Pier Kids* invites us to become conscious of what informs *how* we see *who* we see; to interrogate an affluent gaze, a White gaze, and a heteronormative gaze; and to push ourselves truly to see the brilliance and strength of unhoused queers of color successfully supporting one another in a world that persistently failed them.

**PIER KIDS: CHRISTOPHER STREET’S COMMUNITY**

Most major milestones for LGBTQIA+ equality have happened in the past two decades. It became legal for people of the same sex to engage in sexual acts after the Supreme Court decision in [Lawrence v. Texas in 2003](#). Since then there have been many major wins for LGBTQIA+ rights, for example the repeal in 2010 of [Don’t Ask Don’t Tell](#), which banned LGBTQIA+ from serving in the armed forces; and, as recently as 2015 the Supreme Court decision to grant [same-sex couples the right to marriage](#). However, for decades before this period of transition homophobia was government sanctioned and discrimination was legally acceptable. For LGBTQIA+ people, this meant that the state deemed them unworthy of protection and determined differentiated degrees of danger and precarity as a part of queer life. To survive while living their truths, members of queer communities did what those in so many disenfranchised communities had done before them—they relied on community support for their survival. As we see in *Pier Kids*, in the West Village, and specifically on the Christopher Street Pier, there is a long history of this radical community care. In the face of police brutality and government sanctioned eradication, the marginalized queers of Christopher Street supported, celebrated, and created family with each other.

The Stonewall Riots were a multi-day resistance against the constant brutality that queers in New York faced at the hands of police. This event would be commemorated across the nation as the inciting incident of the LGBTQIA+ movement for equality. In a patterned practice of whitewashing that is common in U.S. history, Black and Brown trans folks, drag queens, and houseless people who led this resistance were erased from the national narrative in order to further the movement. Despite this erasure, the riots demonstrated community power that brought a deeper sense of safety and security to the marginalized queers in the area. In the subsequent years, Christopher Street, and especially the Christopher Street Pier, came to be a home where queers all across the identity spectrum could find community and support.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two of the most notable queers to have lived on the pier were queer ancestors, activists, and icons Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Recognizing the need for support in their own lives, they started the [Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries \(STAR\)](#) project in 1970 in hopes of creating housing, education, and support “for the street gay people, the street homeless people and anybody that needed help at that time,” according to Rivera. Rivera was also a member of the Gay Liberation Front and later joined the [Young Lords Party](#), an organization of revolutionary Puerto Rican youth. The spirit of understanding that is sustained within radical communities of people who protect one another is the same spirit that we see manifest and evolving in *Pier Kids*.

Since queer community resistance was happening under the larger project of state-sanctioned displacement, marginalization, and erasure, the stories of those on the frontlines was rarely documented in popular media. Alvin Baltrop, a Black gay war veteran, hung around the pier to document, photograph, and create an archive of life, love, everydayness, and survival on the Christopher Street Pier. Seen here, a photo of Marsha P. Johnson, taken by Alvin Baltrop.



Alvin Baltrop, Marsha P. Johnson, n.d. (1975-86)

Courtesy the Alvin Baltrop Trust; Third Streaming, New York; and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Having found kinship, friendship, and community on the pier, Baltrop experienced the type of marginalization that was common to queers of color at the time, and his work was only recognized by the art world as valuable after his death. In an essay on Baltrop's life and work, Osa Atoe asks, "Why is a Black, poor, queer artist's work only valuable after he is dead?" (*Colorlines*, 2009). This legacy makes *Pier Kids* even more powerful. It is a documentary archive that is bringing the life of the pier made possible by the lives of people who call it home into the public sphere. *Pier Kids* gifts us all access to learn, to celebrate, to love without judgment, and, importantly, to witness the dynamic and creative lives of people in community, choosing family, and protecting one another.

**PIER KIDS: CHRISTOPHER STREET'S COMMUNITY**

A [report from the National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) shows that in 2020 there were 580,466 people experiencing homelessness in America, with a disproportionate percentage of those experiencing homelessness being Black (39%) and Latinx (23%), highlighting systemic racism and structural impacts of poverty and rising housing costs in every American city. Growing momentum across the country for the rights of the unhoused, and increasing recognition of housing as a human right, has been met with increased criminalization of homelessness. According to the [National Homelessness Law Center](#), 187 American cities increased laws that effectively criminalize homelessness between 2006 and 2019. Their findings reflect an overall 92% increase in camping bans, 78% increase in bans on sitting or lying in public spaces, a 103% increase in laws against panhandling, and a 213% increase in criminalization of living in vehicles. This attempt to hide the reality of houseless folks from others in public spaces is often fueled by the common narrative that folks living on the streets are lazy and incapable of pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. This narrative allows people to hide from the truth that homelessness is, in fact, a byproduct of capitalism, a system that was built on and still relies upon systemic inequality that does not readily supply opportunities for advancement to marginalized people. This narrative also keeps the blame on the folks living on the streets, instead of attempting to examine critically the systems keeping them there, such as the service providers, policies, and police who are serving them inadequately.

Youth (ages 13 to 25) are one of the most at risk populations living on the streets. It is estimated that there are 41,000 youth forced to live on the streets in the United States, of which about 1 in 4 are members of the LGBTQIA+ community. In a country where most major milestones for LGBTQIA+ equality happened in the past 20 years, acceptance of the queer identity is still new. According to numerous studies on unhoused queer youth, this is one of the primary reasons that so many queer youth are unhoused—they have been kicked out or run away from their unaccepting homes.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When seeking support services, members of this community face even more challenges due to discrimination, lack of training, and a lack of intentional services provided to them. This is especially true for people of the trans experience. According to a study done by the [National Center for Transgender Equity](#) (NCTE) of the trans folks who attempted to access shelters, 29% were turned away altogether, 42% were forced to stay in facilities designated for the wrong gender, and others encountered a hostile environment; additionally, 55% reported being harassed, 25% were physically assaulted, and 22% were sexually assaulted.

Choosing to live your truth should not come at the cost of shelter and safety, and yet that is the reality for many in the LGBTQIA+ community. Harm is constant for queers living on the streets, and a key to mitigating this is to include people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community in the conversations and decision-making spaces for policies and services development and fund queer-led organizations doing the work to support unhoused folks in creating the lives they want for themselves.

### **SEX WORK AS REAL WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS**

The sex industry is one of the most controversial and dangerous industries in the world, and one to which many street kids, especially queer kids who are unhoused, find themselves turning for survival. Joining the sex trade is often not a choice, but a form of economic coercion, meaning that often sex work is the most viable option for earning a living. In New York City, queer kids are seven or eight times more likely to engage in the sex trade than their cisgender peers. In the film a number of pier kids speak to how sex work helps them earn money to meet their daily needs. As Jehovy says, “If you are broke and you go down to work the streets, you cannot leave without money.”

But the sex trade comes with a lot of its own dangers. In the United States, it is criminalized in every state except Nevada, where regulated brothels are legal. The consequences of this criminalization are numerous: workers in the industry often face physical violence from clients and police; their rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections are heightened; and police records hinder alternative employment opportunities and limit housing options. Coupled with stigma, and discrimination, sex trade workers face many layers of violence, which often goes unchecked because policies and practices penalize the sex trade, often to the detriment of the health and safety of the individuals engaging in the work.

The movement for decriminalization in the United States began in the 1970s as an outgrowth of the second wave feminist movement. The inception of the first prostitutes’ rights groups began with organizations like COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) and FLOPS (Friends and Lovers of Prostitutes).

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In the decades since, there have continued to be major efforts to educate the public, humanize prostitutes by adopting the term “sex worker,” and legitimize the profession. These efforts have led to major world organizations like the [World Health Organization](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) creating policies for and publicly endorsing decriminalization of sex work as a human right and a public health imperative.

In New York City, the long fought effort for decriminalization has ushered in change over the years. In 1976, a law was put in place that allowed police to ticket and arrest all people who appeared to be loitering for the purpose of engaging in prostitution. It has since become known, colloquially, as the “Walking While Trans” law due to the disproportionate targeting of trans folks, specifically trans folks of color. The vagueness of the law allowed police to target anyone they deemed suspicious, which, fueled by gender and racial profiling, led to police targeting trans folks, specifically trans folks of color. In the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, the efforts of grassroots organizations like [DecrimNY](#) and [Make the Road NY](#) coupled with the momentum of the Black Trans Lives Matter movement in New York City led to the repeal of this law in February 2021. This move opened the way for the landmark decision made later that year by district attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. to declare that the city would no longer prosecute prostitution and unlicensed massage. With this, he moved to dismiss 914 open cases for the same charges and dismiss the 5,080 cases charged under the Walking While Trans law. After the dismissal, Vance spoke to what drove the state’s shift in approach: “Over the last decade we’ve learned from those with lived experience, and from our own experience on the ground: Criminally prosecuting prostitution does not make us safer and, too often, achieves the opposite result by further marginalizing vulnerable New Yorkers.” This moment signaled a shift in the decriminalization movement across the United States, and a number of states across the country are poised to follow suit.

In the face of the global shift to support the decriminalization movement, a new anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal model guided by indigenous feminists has emerged. The Bodies Back model, developed by [AF3IRM Hawai’i](#)—a grassroots organization led by Native Hawaiian, BIPOC, queer, and gender diverse women in the trade—is a policy model for non-carceral abolition of the sex trade. This model demands a critical analysis of the systems of violence and oppression that create and maintain the sex trade. Arguably the two most notable accomplishments of the decriminalization movement are the near global adoption of “sex work” as a term meant to center the person over the trade, and the developing legal recognition of sex workers. Within the Bodies Back movement, all work is seen as forced within a capitalist system. Bodies Back affirms that capitalism allows people to use their economic power to gain access to the bodies of others, in effect bypassing consent because of a prostituting person’s need to survive.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Additionally, this model recognizes that the term “sex work” can function as a colonial tool that may diminish the innate power differential experienced by those who turn to the sex trade for survival within a capitalist society. The legal recognition of prostitution is similarly recognized as a tool that preserves the commodification of people (as legally determined) and continues to rely on a narrative that blames and shames sex workers without critiquing systemic sexism, sex buyers, and the colonial state. The Bodies Back model calls for a number of key things that push against what have been identified as “successes” within the capitalist framing:

1. Decriminalize all people who are hired to provide sexual acts.
2. Abolish the notion of sex as an industry and recognize sex as personal, not state-regulated.
3. Reverse the unequal power between buyers and the bought by only decriminalizing prostituting people, expropriating and redistributing wealth from exploiters to prostituting people, and having the government interrupt the systems of exploitation by providing resources to BIPOC folks.
4. Fight for policy change to end LGBTQ discrimination.
5. Focus on giving BIPOC the same freedom to exit the sex industry as bourgeois White women.
6. Provide comprehensive sex education that is gender-affirming and gender justice oriented and create public awareness campaigns against rape culture that explicitly denormalize sex buying and normalize enthusiastic consent.
7. Instate government interventions that interrupt the systems of exploitation. For example, establishing accountability measures as an alternative to prisons, such as a 50-week minimum men’s accountability program rooted in empathy building, self-love, gender based awareness training, and critical race theory; also create family accountability processes.

The sex trade is built from a system of domination and to create safety for the workers in this trade this model requires a balancing of access, resources, education, and power.

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A man and a woman are standing on a rooftop at night, talking. The man is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a blue beanie, and the woman is wearing a light-colored top and a striped skirt. They are standing near a metal railing. The background shows a chain-link fence and some buildings in the distance.

## STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with partners before starting a group discussion.

- What in this film aligned with your knowledge about unhoused queer youth? What challenged your perceptions?
- Whose story in this film impacted you the most? Why?
- Did this film help you better understand the unhoused trans experience? If so, how?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**HOUSELESSNESS: SAFETY, SECURITY, AND SURVIVAL ON THE PIER**

- What are some tools pier kids use to survive on the streets that you were previously unaware of? How do these tools speak to their strength, wisdom, and creativity?
- If you were a service provider, what services would you provide to kids living on the pier? What needs expressed in the film informed your choices? How do you think these services would provide sustainable support?
- Talking about the pier, Aniyah says, “Don’t make this your home... don’t put too much time into it because it’s gonna f\*\*\* your life up.” What external factors did you notice that led to people encountering struggles in their lives? What did she mean by that?
- How would you describe the relationship between the kids on the pier and police? More specifically, how did the pier kids seem to understand the role of the police in their lives?
- In what ways was police brutality normalized in the lives of those who live on the pier? Can you point to some examples from the film?
- How do you think the police would have rationalized putting their hands on pier kids throughout the film?
- In sharing his experience, Desean Irby says, “Being homeless and HIV negative is very hard. When you don’t have a handicap or disability, or something for the NYC system to manipulate in your favor.” In the face of this, Desean found alternative ways to support himself. What were a few of those ways? If you were a pier kid with this knowledge, and the knowledge that people with HIV can live a healthy life with antiretroviral therapy, would you consider contracting HIV to get housed?

**GENTRIFICATION OF A SAFE HAVEN**

- Christopher Street and the Christopher Street Pier were once a haven for QTBIPOC (queer, trans, Black, Indigenous people of color). What were the signs of gentrification you noticed in the film? How did this affect the security of the pier kids?
- What did you notice about the interactions between the pier kids and the pier’s visitors? Who seemed more comfortable?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Early in the film we are introduced to a young White man who works in the financial district. In his interview, when asked if he noticed the Black trans community on the pier, he says, “Black doesn’t belong in the same category as homosexuals.” What does this say about his perception of the people he’s sitting next to? How would you respond to his inability to engage with the Black trans identity?

## THE MANY FACES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

- What were the beautiful things you noticed about the pier community?
- Have you ever felt a sense of belonging as strong as that of the kids on the pier? If so, what did that belonging do for your sense of wellbeing?
- What was your reaction to the opinions of Krystal’s mother and aunt about her transition? How would you engage in that conversation?
- **OR** - Krystal’s aunt Tamarah asks Krystal, “What’s wrong with taking this lifestyle and setting it outside of your mother’s door so that you can go in there and love on her?” How would you respond to that? Would you echo Tamarah’s sentiment and ask Krystal to stop being herself for her mother?
- How does Krystal’s love for her biological family express itself differently than her love for her chosen family? How is it the same?
- In what ways did the chosen families on the pier mirror your own chosen or biological family? In what ways did they differ?

## SEX WORK

- What are some reasons pier kids engage in sex work? What are some factors that lead them to choose this?
- What did you learn about sex work from this film that you did not previously know?
- How can sex work be dangerous for the pier kids?
- A number of pier kids discuss the ways the businesspeople, Wall Street people, and other folks with jobs and marriages take advantage of their need for money. With this awareness do you think the sex workers should be prosecuted for sex work? What alternative methods could be used to promote safety for sex workers and clients alike?

## OPTIONAL: CLOSING QUESTION/ACTIVITY

[Here](#) is an example.

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions:

Did this film change your understanding of people living on the streets? If so, how?

Did this film change your understanding of the trans experience? If so, how?

What are you going to tell others about this film?

## OPTIONAL: TAKING ACTION

This section suggests ways for viewers to get involved in their communities and address the issues expressed in the film. [Here](#) is an example.

If the group is having trouble generating their own ideas for next steps, these suggestions can help get things started:

Search for a local or regional Black trans community organization and support their work by listening, donating, and sharing.

Consciously center Black trans and non-binary people in your world. By doing this, we are bringing awareness to some of the most marginalized experiences, and from this place we can collectively acknowledge and operate with an awareness of what we all need to be free.

Inform yourself about the laws and resources of your local homeless response system. Find ways you can get involved.

Acknowledge people living on the streets. Regardless of whether you have money or food to share, do not look through them or around them. See the humans who are our neighbors.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Maya Angelou once said, “The truth is, no one of us can be free until everybody is free.” Without addressing cultural homophobia and the oppression of Black trans folks within the Black community, no one will be free. If you are part of the Black community, have open conversations about homophobia and its consequences in the fight for our collective liberation.

Learn about the movement to decriminalize sex work. Follow organizations leading this work and support by spreading the conversation, donating, and sharing their efforts.

## RESOURCES

Read *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* by C. Riley Snorton, a book that examines the intersections of Blackness and transness across American history.

[AF3IRM Hawai'i](#) - A grassroots, completely unfunded transnational feminist activist organization led by Native Hawaiian, Black, immigrant, queer, and gender diverse women of color. The group's membership includes women with lived experiences within the commercialized sex industry. Members are committed to militant movement-building from the United States and effect change through grassroots organizing, trans-ethnic alliance building, education, advocacy, and direct action.

<https://blackaids.org/> - Black AIDS Institute (BAI) is dedicated to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Black community. BAI is the only uniquely and unapologetically Black HIV think and do tank in America. It believes in achieving complete freedom for Black people by eradicating systematic oppression so that we can live long, healthy lives.

<https://marshap.org/> - The Marsha P. Johnson Institute (MPJI) protects and defends the human rights of Black transgender people. It does this by organizing, advocating, creating an intentional community to heal, developing transformative leadership, and promoting our collective power.

<https://soundcloud.com/danella-xuc/tracks> - Marsha's Plate: Black Trans Podcast - A lively podcast that centers the Black perspective and features three friends who come together every Thursday to share opinions. Hosted By Diamond Stylz, Mia Mix, and Zee, all Houston-based digital strategists, Black feminists, civil right advocates, and Black trans people. They explore topics of gender, current events, politics, and scumbags all around the world upholding systems of oppression through a Black trans feminist lens. With a funny no-holds-barred style, they introduce new perspectives, stories that connect you to transness, and trans community leaders around the country.

<https://blacktrans.org/> - The National Black Trans Advocacy Coalition is the only social justice organization led by Black trans people to address collectively the inequities faced in the Black transgender human experience.

<https://swopusa.org/> - Sex Workers Outreach Project -USA (SWOP-USA) is a national social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of people involved in the sex trade and their communities focused on ending violence and stigma through education and advocacy.

[Sex Workers Project](#) - A national organization that defends the human rights of sex workers by destigmatizing and decriminalizing people in the sex trades through free legal services, education, research, and policy advocacy.



## DEVYN HARRIS

Devyn Harris (they/she/love) is a queer, genderqueer femme grassroots organizer, peer support specialist, mental health coach, and artist. They believe compassion, grace, and connection are the keys to change in our own bodies and the world. They are a fierce advocate for Black trans folks living on the streets, and as the housing director for Black Trans Leadership of Austin (BTLA) they work to create support systems for all QTBIPOC (queer trans BIPOC) folks who need it. They also serve as a member of Austin's HRS (Homelessness Response System) Leadership Council. A self-professed love warrior, they are in this world to help people heal with love.

### CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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