To the Black community: You are our people, and we are yours always.

“MAMA, CAN WE TALK?”

A Tool on Trans Identity for Black Communities

Presented by: Southerners on New Ground
& The House of Pentacles
Introduction

Review the SONG Film Series Toolkit on tips about how to set up a film screening in your area! This film and series of smaller videos will be added to the list available for screening.

This film was created because we asked the question, how do we as Black trans and gender non-conforming people talk to our families in ways most accessible to them about our identities. Much of the media, narrative films and documentaries that exist about trans and GNC folks are centered around whiteness. We know that bathroom access is NOT the end of the line for Black trans folks. Even before they get to the bathroom, Black trans folks have higher rates of homelessness, joblessness and often experience violence both on the street and in the criminal justice system. We tell our own stories better than anyone else could. This is especially true throughout the history of Black life and resistance.

We’ve worked to create a series of narrative tools (both the Gaycation street interviews + the 30 minute documentary) that centered how expansive gender can be in the Black community. Blackness for centuries hasn’t been bound by binaries and there’s no reason to pretend it needs to be now. We know that our cisgender family members and loved ones aren’t often given definitions and language that feel true to them around the vastness of gender, but they feel it in their bones. We offer these tools as a love letter to our Black families and we hope that this will be a way to keep our trans and GNC siblings from experiencing more familial harm and rejection.

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DEFINITIONS

Chosen families - non-biological kinship bonds, whether legally recognized or not, deliberately chosen for the purpose of mutual support and love.

Cisgender - a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and assigned male at birth). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

Gender binary - the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

Gender non-conforming - 1) a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man) 2) a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as “GNC.”

Gender neutral pronouns - A gender neutral or gender inclusive pronoun is a pronoun which does not associate a gender with the individual who is being discussed. The most commonly used gender neutral pronouns are “they/them/their” and “ze/zir/zirs,” they there are also many others. The best practice to find out anyone’s pronouns is to ask.

Usage: They went to the store. I want to talk to them.
Ze is walking down the street. I went to meet zir.

Non-Binary - is a category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine—identities which are outside the gender binary and cisnormativity.

Trans* - An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (trans men) and transgender women (trans women).

Transgender - A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that assigned at birth based on anatomical sex.
ON BEING... BLACK & TRANS IN THE SOUTH

Along with “Mama, Can We Talk?” a series of videos called “On Being... Black, Trans and in the South” was created at the 2017 SONG Gaycation. These are street style interviews that explore gender and what it means to have familial love and support.

For viewing visit “On Being... Black & Trans In the South” on Youtube.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What would your family say if you told them you were transgender?
2. How did you tell your family that you are transgender?
3. What has been the hardest part about being transgender in your family?
4. How would you explain gender neutral pronouns to your family?
5. What does it look like for you family support look like?
6. (For Parents) What does it look like to support your transgender kids?

JARDYN
Jacksonville, FL
Pronouns: They/Them/Their
“MAMA, CAN WE TALK?”
RUNNING TIME: 25 MINUTES

This documentary follows Joie Lou in the Bronx, New York, as they embark on their first conversation with their family (their mother, brother and sister) about what it means to be a trans non-binary person and start hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

For viewing visit bit.ly/HOPrelease
Password: HOPextendedfam
For help setting up a film screening in your area contact houseofpentacles@gmail.com & kindred@douthernsonnewgorund.org

KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What comes up for you after watching the film?
2. When thinking about trans people in the media, what does that representation often look like? Who is showcased and what are their identities?
3. What are some of the barriers to trans people coming out to their families? What are some of the risks?
4. What do you think are some of the barriers for folks in the cisgender Black community to understanding and accepting Black trans identities?
5. Trans folks have high rates of being kicked out of their homes for their identities and experiencing violence, how can we as a community combat this? What are some action steps?
6. We have had national conversations about bathroom access for trans people, but what does this documentary bring up as other problems that need to be addressed?
7. Trans folks come into their truth at any and every age, what are some ways we can give children in the Black community the space to explore gender?

FOR TRANS FOLKS:

1. What is the importance and role of coming out to your families?
2. What are some of the barriers to coming out?
3. What are some joyful moments of being Black and trans?
4. What do you need from your families?