

BETWEEN TWO SHORES



a film by **MARIETTE MONPIERRE**

(Guadeloupe, Dominican Republic)

41 minutes

**AfroPoP X**
the ultimate cultural exchange

DISCUSSION GUIDE
SEASON 10

HOST: NICHOLAS L. ASHE stars as Micah West in the critically acclaimed OWN series *Queen Sugar*, directed by Ava DuVernay and executive-produced by Oprah Winfrey. Earlier he played Viola Davis's son in the courtroom drama *Custody*. Ashe made his acting debut at age 10 in the role of Young Simba in the national tour of *The Lion King*. Ashe is also a talented vocalist, pianist and composer. In 2015, he created a scholarship for young artists in his hometown of Freeport, Long Island. Ashe collaborated with Cierra Glaude on a short film titled *Last Looks*, which had its world premiere at the 2017 Urbanworld Film Festival.



AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange is a US-based public television show featuring independent documentaries and short films about life, art, and culture from the contemporary African Diaspora. The African Diaspora includes Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, South America, Europe, the US, and anywhere people of African descent have made a significant contribution to the culture.

The films are always carefully selected to portray a more balanced view of Africa than you'll get on the nightly news and to provide fuel for what must be a global conversation on the present day realities and contemporary lifestyles of Africans, both on the continent and in the Diaspora.

USING THIS GUIDE

BACKGROUND

The first section of the guide provides

- A synopsis of the film and information on the filmmaker, along with a list of central characters and topics
- Background on the film's key issues, focused on brief historical, cultural, and political context

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The second part of this guide provides questions crafted to be springboards for dialogue, inviting audience members to engage with the issues raised in the film and with one another.

The prompts are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of audiences and circumstances, so you'll want to choose those that best meet your particular needs. You may want to dive directly into an issue-based prompt, or you can gauge the interests of the audience by starting with a general question. There's no reason to cover them all or to use them in order (except for the "wrap-up" questions, which are intended to help people synthesize information at the end of a discussion). Typically you'll only need one or two questions to get things going; let the audience take it from there, using their interests to guide the path of the discussion.

Recommended for: high school, college, and adult audiences

RESOURCES

The final section the guide lists related resources. You can use them to prepare for leading a discussion or recommend them to audience members seeking additional information.



AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

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BACKGROUND

Film Synopsis

Based on work by journalist Christelle Théophile, *Between 2 Shores: From Pointe à Pitre to Santo Domingo*, tells the stories of two very different women who share a common dilemma. Johanna and Cristina are Dominican women who risked their lives by taking to the sea to search for a better life in Guadeloupe. After thirteen years, each of the women has gained legal status on the French island, but they are still fighting to get the proper papers for their children to come and live with them.

Theirs is a common story for thousands of immigrants who have left everything behind in order to improve the lives of their children, only to find that immigration laws and red tape prevent family reunification. This is especially troubling for women like Cristina and Johanna who have born children on both islands. Current government policies force them to choose which children to leave behind. Not surprisingly, the impact on the entire family, including the children that live with their mothers, is heart-wrenching. Still, the families manage to hold on to hope.

Topics: child welfare, colonialism, Caribbean, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, family, family reunification, human rights, human trafficking, immigration law and policy, migration, socioeconomic class

Selected People Featured in the Film

Johanna Olivares is 40 years old. After working in a political party and as a police officer in the Dominican Republic, she pursued the promise of a better job in Guadeloupe even though it meant entering the country without proper documents. She quickly discovered that the offer was scam to recruit prostitutes. Rather than succumb to that life, she found work as a nanny and then in the construction industry. She married, and eventually opened her own restaurant on the beach of Galbas in Sainte Anne.

Johanna's children:

Joan, the eldest at twenty, lives in the DR in an apartment his mother rents for him.

Jomeify, 13, lives in the DR with his mother's friend; Johanna sends money for his expenses.

Léandra is 11 and lives with her mother and younger brother in Guadeloupe.

John-Sylvert is 3 and lives with his mother and older sister in Guadeloupe.

Angela Cristina Beato is 38 years old. She arrived clandestinely in Guadeloupe and has been employed on and off. She has one son, **Widdy**, who was born in Guadeloupe, and was able to bring her Dominican-born daughter to live with her. But her 13-year-old son, Edison, still lives in the Dominican Republic. She continues to fight to gain even a holiday visa so her entire family can spend time together.

The Filmmaker

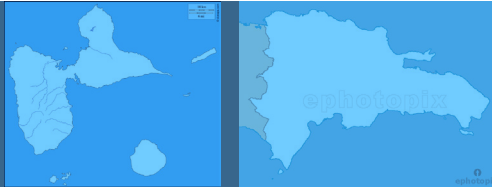
Mariette Monpierre was born in Guadeloupe and grew up in Paris. She earned a Masters Degree in media & languages at the Sorbonne University and Smith College before beginning her career at BBDO New York, producing commercials for Pepsi, Visa, Campbell's, Pizza Hut, Gillette, & FedEx. Her first independent piece, *Knowledge is Power*, was a documentary commissioned by the New York City Health Department in 1998 to raise HIV/AIDS awareness.



In 2002, Monpierre's documentary "Sweet Mickey for President?" won Best Documentary at the Reel Sisters Film Festival in New York. Her first theatrical work, a short film "Rendez-Vous," was also nominated for several awards and included in a handful of major film festivals.

Monpierre is best known for her acclaimed 2011 feature length film, *Elza (Le Bonheur d'Elza)* which explored issues of racism, colonialism, class, and children abandoned by their fathers. Subsequent works include *Paris la métisse* (2005) and *Archipels* (2007).

CONTEXT



Guadeloupe

Located in the Leeward Islands, part of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean, Guadeloupe, is a small territory (629 square miles) that is currently an integral part of France. Its official currency is the Euro and its immigration policy conforms with European Union practice (open to any EU citizen). The population of just over 400,000 is mostly Roman Catholic and speaks French (the official language) and a colloquial local version of Creole.

The roots of Guadeloupe's indigenous Arawak people go back to 300 CE. They were subsequently conquered by Caribs. After the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493, the island was prized by imperial powers as a source of sugar, which led to centuries-long, back-and-forth rule by European colonizers, including Spain, Great Britain, and France. Imperial powers imposed slavery and suppressed slave revolts. Struggles for independence also failed. Control of the island was officially ceded to France in 1815.

Today, the island still produces sugar, but Guadeloupe's main economic activity is tourism. This is sometimes challenging because Guadeloupe has an active volcano. The most recent eruption, in 1976 displaced more than 70,000 people. The island is also regularly battered by hurricanes, including a major hit from Hurricane Maria in 2017 that took out power to 90% of the population.

Dominican Republic

The Caribbean island that Christopher Columbus claimed for the Spanish empire in 1492 was originally inhabited by the Taino. The French would eventually claim the western third of the island, and the two colonial powers shared the land until Haiti's independence in 1804. It would be another forty years before Dominicans declared their own independence. In modern times the DR has been governed by dictators, though there have been competitive elections since 1996 and members of the military and national police are not permitted to vote. More than 90% of the population, which numbers just under 11 million, identifies as Roman Catholic. Ethnically, over 70% are mixed race and nearly 16% are Black.

Despite being home to one of the largest gold mines in the world, the Dominican Republic's economy is not quite as strong as Guadeloupe's. It is highly dependent on the U.S., both for remittances from ex-pats (accounting for about 7% of GDP), as well as for trade and tourism dollars. In terms of per capita wealth, the DR ranks as 103rd (of 230 nations), with an average annual income of \$16k, but that number belies the nation's income inequality, which has resulted in just under a third of the population living in poverty. Still, it is a significantly more wealthy nation than it's neighbor Haiti, which ranks 209th, with an average income of \$1,800.



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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

General

In a word, what's your initial reaction to this film?

If you were going to tell a friend about this film, what would you say?

Describe a moment in the film that you found particularly moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling?

Did you see anything familiar? What do you have in common with the women and/or children in the film?

Were you surprised by anything in the film?

If you could ask Cristina or Johanna one question, what would you want to know?

Reviewing Core Content

What did you learn from the film about why people immigrate and the impact that migration can have on families?

Why would Guadeloupe want to prevent Dominican-born children from joining immigrant mothers who have obtained legal status on the French island?



Immigration Policy

The cultures of Guadeloupe and the Dominican Republic prize family and revere the connection between mother and child. What countervailing values lead to immigration policies that prevent families from being together? How would you craft an immigration that prioritizes the strength of families?

Whose interests are served by Guadeloupe's immigration bureaucracy? How do such bureaucracies reinforce the status quo?

Johanna notes that after thirteen years in Guadeloupe, "I have two French kids. I'm married, I run a legal business. But each time I apply for a residence card, nothing happens, something always goes wrong." In your view, what is reasonable to require of someone who is not native to a particular place in order to grant them legal status?"



How do the stories of these families inform your thinking about current U.S. immigration policies?

Johanna explains, "In my country, as a police officer, I earned 150 euros a month. It wasn't enough to feed my kids and pay their school fees. I was offered to come to Guadeloupe and get a 1,200 euros salary. Only when I arrived here I realized it was a lie. There is only one job for the 'Spanish' here. They call us 'Spanish' but we are Dominican. The only option was prostitution, and I refused to do that." What role does poverty play in migration patterns? How does acceptance of racial discrimination contribute to the type of illegal human trafficking that Johanna describes?

Cristina says she hasn't applied for family reunification because she hasn't had the required 23 pay slips to show authorities. Do you think it's fair to require proof of employment before granting families permission to be together? Why or why not?

What did you learn from Cristina's experience about the temptation to migrate illegally? What do you think you might do in her shoes? If you couldn't obtain legal documentation for your children, would you pay a smuggler?



Family Dynamics

Johanna says that if she had it to do over again, she would never have left without her sons. How does her guilt and sadness affect her own well-being? How does it affect her family?

How would you describe the relationship between Cristina and her son Widdy? What is a parent able to do when they are with a child for all the mundane, daily routines that they cannot do via a long distance relationship?

Much of the film focuses on how mothers miss their children and children miss their mothers. But there are also siblings involved. How are the children affected by being separated from their brothers and sisters?

Jomeify and Edison know that their mothers love them, but they still feel abandoned. What could friends, family, neighbors, teachers, coaches, clergy, or community members do to help the boys (and the mothers) cope?

Cristina says, “Everybody has a secret wound. . . Sometimes you keep smiling but deep down you’re not happy. Every family has it.” Do you think she’s correct? Why do we keep wounds secret? Should family’s like Cristina’s just silently accept that separation is a wound they must bear?

Widdy was born in Guadeloupe, so he is French, but he is also ‘Spanish’ because his mother is Dominican. What is he learning about his heritage and his dual identity from the fact that he can’t travel to the DR and his Dominican family can’t come to visit him?

Johanna appreciates that her mother-in-law, Antoinette, is supportive and loves her Dominican-born kids even though she has never met them. What do families lose when children don’t know their grandparents (or other relatives) and vice versa?



Filmmaking Choices

What major questions was the filmmaker trying to answer and how do you know? What were the filmmaker’s answers? Did you agree with those answers? Why or Why not?

How does the film compare to other media portrayals you’ve seen of immigrants from the Caribbean?

What emotions did the film evoke? What filmmaking techniques contributed to that reaction?

Was there anything about the construction of the film that you found to be particularly notable or memorable?

What’s the significance of the film’s title?

If you could ask the filmmaker one question, what would you want to know?

Wrap-Up

Complete this sentence: I think Johanna’s and Cristina’s stories are important (or interesting or inspiring) because. . .

Is there one thing you learned from this film that you wish everybody knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?

Fill in the blanks: One thing I learned from this screening is

Now that I know, I will

RESOURCES

AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange

www.facebook.com/AfroPoPTV

www.blackpublicmedia.org

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[www. http://worldchannel.org/programs/afropop/](http://www.worldchannel.org/programs/afropop/)

@WORLDchannel

Human Rights World Post

www.paxgaea.com/HRGuadeloupe.html

www.paxgaea.com/HRDominicanRepublic.html

The site includes general information about each island and information on how well they have lived up to the UN's Declaration of Universal Human Rights to which they are signatories.



SEASON 10

TEN DAYS IN AFRICA
BETWEEN TWO SHORES
BLACK PANTHER WOMAN
FATAL ASSISTANCE
AFROPOP SHORTS

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