DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHARM CITY KINGS

STREAMING OCTOBER 8 ON @HBOMAX



FOR 15 YEARS, COLOR OF CHANGE HAS WORKED TO CREATE A MORE HUMAN AND LESS HOSTILE WORLD FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA. We design winning strategies to change the written and unwritten rules in the industries that affect Black people's lives the most and have the greatest potential to advance racial justice.

Growing up Black in America is a multidimensional experience, especially for promising youth living in low-income and underserved communities. Nowhere is this narrative better told than in Charm City Kings, a gritty, coming-of-age drama of how a young boy's passion and desire to belong faces him with some harsh realities.

Charm City Kings, filmmaker Angel Manuel Soto's latest project, provides a thrilling and emotional look at parenting, the autonomy of Black children, and policing in Black communities — a conversation currently sweeping the nation.

The film delves into key aspects of the criminalization of Black youth, the devastating implications of mass incarceration, toxic masculinity, and more. This guide is designed to help audiences explore the themes in the film and identify ways we can come together to create a world where all young people can reach their full potential and thrive.

Please share this guide with your networks and join the conversation online as you watch @charmcitykings on @hbomax using the #CharmCityKings hashtag.

CHARM CITY KINGS



ABOUT CHARM CITY KINGS

Fourteen-year-old Mouse desperately wants to join the Midnight Clique, an infamous group of Baltimore dirt-bike riders who rule the summertime streets. His older brother, Stro, was their top rider before his tragic death—a loss that consumes Mouse as much as his passion for bikes. Mouse's mom and his police mentor, Detective Rivers, work overtime to help the charismatic teen reach his full potential, but when the Midnight Clique's leader, Blax, takes the boy under his wing, the lure of revving his own dirt bike skids Mouse toward a road way past the straight and narrow.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- What are your initial thoughts about what you just watched? How did it make you feel?
- What did you notice about the intersection of race and class throughout the story?
- What are some of the systemic injustices that show up in the film?



BLACK YOUTHHOOD & FREEDOM

- How do we give Black youth space to explore their passions and dreams while also protecting them?
- Mouse desperately wanted to belong to the Midnight Clique. What were some of the dangers that came to light from his desire to join them? What was his motivation to join?
- Where did the sense of play and imagination in childhood come up in the film? What factors in the film interfered with this sense of childhood play?



POVERTY & HARDSHIP IN THE FAMILY

- What were some of the struggles Mouse's mom faced while supporting her family?
- Mouse's neighborhood is predominantly Black and low-income. What are some of the systemic barriers throughout the film not present in predominantly white neighborhoods?
- Black children and youth have different starting places in life, what are some of the barriers you noticed throughout the film? How did these different starting places impact the lives of Mouse, Lamont, and Sweartagawd?



POLICING IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

- How did you navigate the complexities of the relationship between Mouse and Detective Rivers in light of the current conversations around Black communities and policing?
- What were some of the issues you saw emerge between the community and the police? How do you feel the police could have de-escalated the situation(s) throughout the film?
- What dynamics did you notice with the police presence in Mouse's neighborhood? How did it make you feel?



BLACK BOYS & TOXIC MASCULINITY

- Who and what influenced Mouse and his friends to rob the convenience store? What societal pressures arise?
- Do you feel boys, specifically Black boys, are pressured to toughen up compared to their white peers? If so, what systemic injustices are the result of this pressure to "man up"?
- How did toxic masculinity manifest in Mouse's interactions with Detective Rivers, his mom, and his group of friends?
- What message does Blax's reaction to Mouse's tears send to our Black boys? How can we allow boys space to be vulnerable with their feelings? Why do you feel we struggle with this societally?

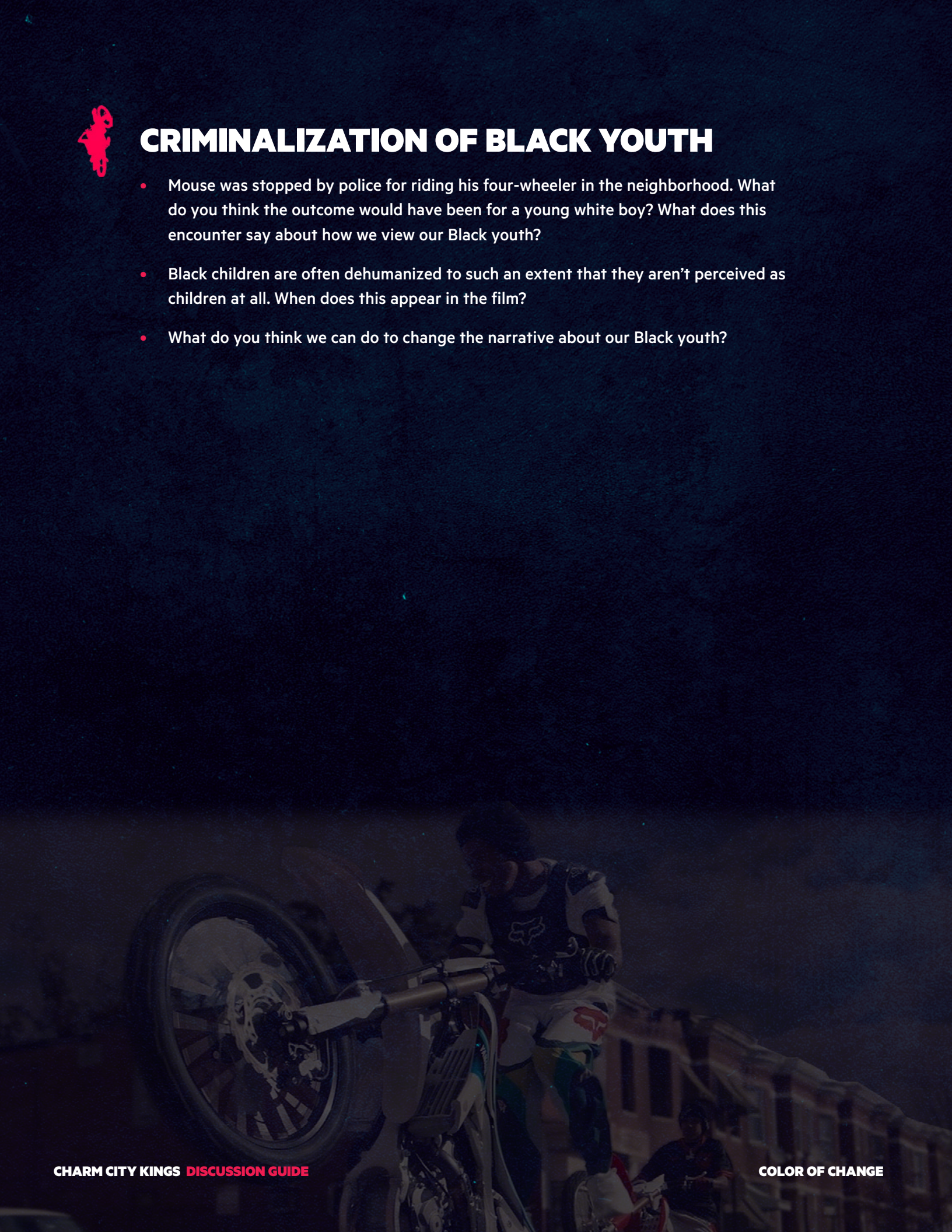


THE BLACK COMMUNITY & MASS INCARCERATION

- What are some of the challenges and barriers faced by formerly incarcerated people?
- When do these challenges show up throughout the film?
- What support and resources might a recently released person need in the short- and long-term?
- What are other policy interventions that help break the cycle of incarceration?
- How does mass incarceration impact families and communities of color specifically?

CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK YOUTH

- Mouse was stopped by police for riding his four-wheeler in the neighborhood. What do you think the outcome would have been for a young white boy? What does this encounter say about how we view our Black youth?
- Black children are often dehumanized to such an extent that they aren't perceived as children at all. When does this appear in the film?
- What do you think we can do to change the narrative about our Black youth?



TAKE ACTION

Here are some things you can do to create a more human and just world for Black people.

HOLLYWOOD + DIGNIFIED BLACK REPRESENTATION

Join our fight to **#ChangeHollywood** and advocate for accurate and humane Black stories in the media.

MASS INCARCERATION

Take action to **change the criminal justice system** and make your voice heard.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Sign our petition to **demand mayors support and adopt a Basic Guaranteed Income.**

SHARE YOUR STORY: We'd love to hear thoughts or your experiences dealing with police, mass incarceration, or the criminalization of Black youth. Share online as you watch **@charmcitykings** on **@hbomax** using the **#CharmCityKings** hashtag.