



# PIER KIDS

A DOCUMENTARY BY ELEGANCE BRATTON

## LOGLINE:

"Pier Kids" follows Casper, Desean, and Krystal, three homeless queer black youth as they navigate the streets, welfare, and their biological families in order to find stable housing. Along the way, the film brings light to an underground community of Pier Kids.

## SYNOPSIS:

The film interrogates the meaning of community within at risk LGBT youth of color and also the larger gay community. Casper, a trans attracted young black man, is left vulnerable in his pursuit for true love while navigating homelessness. Desean is at a critical point in that he is navigating a reality where committing a crime or getting HIV is might be the best alternative to escape homelessness. Krystal utilizes the ballroom scene as a way to survive but is forced to go back to her blood family for support when her gay family proves unable to help her. Face to face, Krystal and her birth mother realize that their mutual love of gospel is the only thing they can agree on when it comes to Krystal's identity. The film wants to put the viewer in the skin of the pier kids because it hopes to show what happens to gay youth when they are kicked out. The film follows these youth over the course of five years to understand what it means to be black and queer 50 years after Stonewall...



## ARTISTIC STATEMENT:

Pier Kids is a verité documentary that's inspired by Marlon Riggs's "Black is Black Ain't", the Maysles brothers' "Gray Gardens", and "Field Niggas" by Khalik Allah. The film was made in the moment, a run-and-gun guerrilla style. The interviews are often on the go to reflect the transience experienced by the characters. Like the work of Marlon Riggs, Elegance the film's director is a character on and off screen. The viewer is offered a type of access that's rare in documentary films. It's goal is to shrink the distance between the concepts of racial/gender marginalization by making the experience personal and specific. The film asserts that the individual experience of black queer life is not complete without engaging the community at large.

The film is also an act of resistance to traditional storytelling forms. The director wanted to make a film in a visual language that mimics the way the people on screen speak and share knowledge with each other. People appear in this film, form a meaningful connection, and disappear without any explanation. It means so much that the audience experience the sense of loss in a way as similar as possible to what the Pier Kids' experience. This is the only way to make their plight palpable so that viewers can no longer play innocent. The film is also about the value of public space for brown and black queer bodies to become their most realized versions of themselves. The film is mostly shot outdoors on purpose. It sees the presence of these bodies in this space as natural and necessary. Pier Kids is directed by the truth of the experience of coming of age outside.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

"People died during the making of this film. People were gay bashed and assaulted by police. People also just plain disappeared. It is important that the world know their stories so that these injustices stop. I am making this film to honor the legacy of this historic safe space for black and brown queer people. I am also making this film as a way to help black families understand what happens to their queer children after they've been kicked out. Most importantly, I am making this film as a testament to the strength and resilience of black queer people.

It is an incredible achievement to survive family rejection and each day lived in the shadow of such trauma is a victory. I believe this film can change the tide of queer youth abandonment in the United States and I hope you will join me in my mission. Everyday all over the world LGBT kids are tossed aside in an attempt to make them modify their desire so that they can be more acceptable. This film revels in their difference and in so doing points out the shared humanity with the audience.

These kids do everything that I do, but under unimaginable duress. Ultimately, this film comes from a sense of gratitude. My life was impossible at times. Each one of the homeless queer people in the film reminds me of myself. I am proudly grateful to be alive to tell this story and it means the world to me that through the telling this film will save lives."

-Elegance Bratton (Director, Cinematographer)



CAST: JUSHEEM "CASPER" THORNE

Casper is a trans attracted bi-sexual skateboarder who "sometimes wishes he were dead", rather than deal with being homeless. He was taken from his crack addicted mother as an infant and began living on the streets at 15.



## CAST: DESEAN IRBY

Desean is the self-appointed mayor of Christopher Street. He is a gay man born in foster care and has never really experienced stable housing. Since he's aged out of the system, he has been struggling to find another government program to provide him with stable housing. He is of remarkable intelligence and is a natural born leader.



## CAST: KRYSTAL "LABEIJIA" CONYERS

Krystal is first and foremost a Christian trans woman whose faith has buoyed her through harrowing struggles. She's been homeless since the age of 16. She's an all around entertainer who moved to NYC from Philadelphia by way of California by way of Kansas City, to transition. Krystal considers herself to be an independent activist/social worker who constantly expands her chosen family based on the needs of the young folks she takes in. Krystal wants to build a new support system around herself to finally escape homelessness.



THE LIFE:





THE LIFE:



THE LIFE:



THE LIFE:





ELEGANCE BRATTON (Director, Cinematographer)

Elegance was thrown out of his mother's home at the age of 16 in New Jersey for being gay. He spent the next 10 years homeless seeking refuge on Christopher Street and the New Jersey, Philadelphia metro areas. After ten years spent homeless, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps where he learned how to make films. Elegance's award-winning short films have played in almost 150 film festivals world wide including Sundance, Outfest, and the American Black Film Festival. He is executive producer and creator of Viceland's GLAAD-nominated series, "MY HOUSE". He is also the author of the Kassel Art Book award-winning photo book, "Bound By Night". He served in the US Marine Corps as combat cameraman, holds an undergraduate degree from Columbia University, and an MFA from NYU Tisch Grad Film.

TERENCE NANCE was born in Dallas, Texas in what was then referred to as the State-Thomas community. Nance learned personhood there. Nance's first feature film, "An Oversimplification of Her Beauty", premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically in 2013. In 2014, he was named a Guggenheim Fellow. In the summer of 2018, Terence's television series "Random Acts of Flyness" debuted on HBO to great critical acclaim, and was renewed for a second season by the network. The New York Times hailed the show as "a striking dream vision of race" and "hypnotic, transporting and uncategorizable" adding that "it's trying to disrupt and redisrupt your perceptions so that, finally, you can see." In the fall of 2018, it was announced that Nance was tapped to write and direct "Space Jam 2", starring LeBron James. Additional film work includes "Swimming in Your Skin Again" and "Univitillen", which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and the 2016 New York Film Festival, respectively. In 2017, Nance premiered a performance piece, "18 Black Boys Ages 1-18 Who Have Arrived at the Singularity and are Thus Spiritual Machines" at Sundance. Nance is currently at work on healing, curiosity, and interdimensionality, and resides in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.



TERENCE NANCE  
(Executive Producer)

SABA AH FOLAYAN made her directorial debut at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival with the feature length documentary, "Whose Streets?". Recently nominated for a Peabody Award, the film chronicles the experiences of activists living in Ferguson, Missouri when Michael Brown Jr. was killed. "Whose Streets?" was distributed theatrically by Magnolia Pictures, and supported by the Sundance Documentary Film Program, Tribeca Film Institute, the Ford Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, among many others. An award-winning storyteller and activist, Sabaah uses written and visual media to bring a fresh perspective to the urgent questions of our time. A Los Angeles native, she has thrived in vastly different environments, from South Central LA to the Upper West Side. Her outlook on social change is both inclusive and unapologetic. She attended Columbia University as a premedical student and graduated with a degree in biology. Outside-the-box thinking and passion for social good drew her to the non-profit and grassroots sectors, where she honed strategic planning and community organizing skills before becoming a filmmaker.



SABA AH FOLAYAN  
(Executive Producer)

CHESTER ALGERNAL GORDON is a producer and costume designer who straddles the worlds of film and fashion. He is the first male African-American costume designer to compete in competition at the Cannes Film Festival with Danielle Lessovitz's "Port Authority", produced by Martin Scorsese. Gordon was also a winner of the Tribeca Film Institute's 2019 TFI All Access Grant. Gordon's films have played in over 200 festivals combined including Cannes, Sundance, SXSW, BFI, Outfest, and the American Black Film Festival. He is also a producer for the GLAAD-nominated documentary TV series "MY HOUSE", which is currently airing on Viceland.



CHESTER ALGERNAL  
(Producer)

# CREDITS:

## **Executive Producers**

Terrence Nance  
Sabaah Folan  
Seth M Rosen

## **Producer**

Chester Algenal Gordon

## **Co-Producer**

Nathan Proctor

## **Director**

Elegance Bratton

## **Director of Photography**

Elegance Bratton

## **2nd Camera winter 2011**

Rey Grosz

## **2nd Camera winter 2012**

Sudama Kanchibhotla

## **Supervising Editor**

Princess Hairston

## **Editors**

Bernhardt Fassenfast  
Thuto Durkac-Somo

## **Associate Producers**

Sammie Maitlin  
Mickey Rolfe

## **Production Assistants**

Yasemin Smallens  
Jourdan Sayers  
Sophie Claire Rupel Wilkowske  
Kyle Johnson  
Sergio Saenz  
Erasmia Gorla  
Diana Budur

## **Cast**

Jusheem "Casper" Thorne  
Desean Irby  
Krystal "Labeija" Conyers  
JB  
Kyd Leo  
Nigel  
Bambi  
Aniyah Balenciaga  
Tay Tay  
Cheetah Mizrahi  
Fabian Labeija  
Marvin Labeija  
Aaaro Nzinga  
Jehovy  
Tony  
Milkshake  
Angela  
Cici  
Claudia  
Lexi  
Daniella Carter  
Melissa Cashmere Santiago  
Joelle Dixon  
Terrell Dixon  
Antonio Dixon  
Tamarah Farley  
Anthony Green  
Annette Irby  
Carol Thorne  
Lisa Barker  
Basheem Anthony  
Joseph Paige  
Jonathan DeJesus  
Trevon Bellrana  
Christopher Newman  
Nyla Moon  
Erin Fowlkes  
King  
Lynwood Whichard  
Antonio "Cheetah"

Lisa "Co-Co" Revlon

Iva "Tigga" Hoyt  
Jamal Dowell  
Joe Paige  
Loko  
Ayyhaunnah Williams  
Chloe  
DeSean Irby  
Donavin "Smokey" Wright  
Tairyc "Casper" Jones  
Chi-Chi Mizrahi

## **Thanks To**

Theodore Hilton  
Elizabeth Glines  
Andrew Leung  
Richard Tucker  
Rachel Burke  
Michael Rittersbacher  
Helen Shaw Barnes  
Christopher Lee  
Tarell McCraney  
Jad Baydoun  
Josh Guild  
Bernhard Fassenfest  
Michaela Murphy  
Scott Whittington  
Rebecca Adler  
Gregory Burley brown  
Chelsea Bruce  
Michael Darnell Dawson  
Katharine Harkins  
Bryan Patrick Harris  
Moiria Clunie  
Fred Tcheng  
Kaos. the blog  
Shahera Hyatt  
Leonard Alberts  
David Litty  
Carmen

James D McCarthy  
Lion  
multitudrops  
PAQUIER  
Tom Nickel  
Anne and Steve Adler  
Jon C Gettel  
dimitri vanderhaegen  
Ryan M. McKelvey  
Kristoffer Stromblad  
Natalie Bernstein  
George Ganat  
Gabriel vogt  
Tommy Wanderlust  
Carol D.  
Vincent Tong  
Carrie Tilton-Jones  
Bill McCarthy  
Yu Rim Chung  
Serena Rodriguez  
Matt A.  
Pamela Rykowski  
Kanthia  
Tosha Silver  
Michael McGrath  
Frank Ligtvoet  
Vince Sgambati  
Gia Concepcion  
Tommy Curran Dorfman  
Steve Terry  
Anthony Exum  
Wendell Pizzaro Patton  
Terry M. Leake  
Theodore Hilton  
Elizabeth Glines  
Andrew Leung  
Richard Tucker  
Rachel Burke  
Michael Rittersbacher  
Helen Shaw Barnes  
Christopher Lee

Tarell McCraney  
Jad Baydoun  
Josh Guild  
Bernhard Fassenfest  
Michaela Murphy  
Scott Whittington  
Rebecca Adler

## **Special Thanks To**

May Hamza  
Megan Devenport

## **Runtime**

84 min



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