This is a transcript of the **first 42 minutes** of the video "Moonlight - Dramatica Users Group" uploaded by Jim Hull on YouTube. It can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlpoLUreIY4

At the beginning of the video, in red text, is written the following:

Moonlight
Dramatica Users Group
July 2017

In this video, Narrative First founder James Hull leads a group analysis of *Moonlight*.

We begin by identifying the Four Throughlines. With the points-of-view set, we then determine the Main Character and Overall Story Plot Dynamics.

In this document, **a paragraph break indicates that someone else is talking**. Multiple people were talking in the video, but I was only able to identify Jim (James Hull) and Nick, as they were the only names I was able to pick up on.

To give context, I've written certain actions within square brackets, such as when multiple people were laughing, or when something was being written on the board.

This transcript is only intended as an approximation of what was said.
- Sometimes I wasn't sure about what someone had said, but still wrote it anyway, as it seemed to make sense.
- I've occasionally omitted certain pauses or words that would clutter the sentence (such as "like") to make it flow better.
- Due to the sound quality (and likely also due to the fact English isn't my native language), at times I had trouble hearing some people or understanding what they were trying to get at. I marked these as "[*inaudible*]" when they were relevant.

Content Warning: anti-gay slurs

Sections:

- **The Four Throughlines (MC, IC, RS)** [0:14 - 20:04]
- **The Four Throughlines (OS)** [20:05 - 34:15]
- **Character Dynamics** [34:16 - 43:38]

Note that "Character Dynamics" only cover the Main Character Resolve and Growth, as well as most of the talk around the Main Character Approach.

Other Relevant Links:

The full storyform on the Dramatica website:
https://dramatica.com/analysis/moonlight

The audio version of the podcast:
https://dramatica.com/audio/users-group-podcast/moonlight

The article Nick mentions at the start:
https://web.archive.org/web/20170630194008/https://narrativefirst.com/analysis/moonlight

The Four Throughlines (MC, IC, RS)

0:14 - 20:04

Jim: So tonight we did *Moonlight*, written and directed by Barry Jenkins, from a play by... does anybody know? Does anybody want to look it up?

Andrew or something?

I think that's right...

Oh...

Nick: Well it's a guy, and he was- it's semi-autobiographical.

Jim: Oh yeah, that's very-

"Tarell Alvin McCraney."

Jim: Yeah, for both of them I think it was very autobiographical, which explains a lot of the subjective nature of the story. So before we start, does anybody have any feelings about whether or not there was any- if we're actually going to be able to find a storyform tonight?

I think there's one.

Jim: Everybody thinks there's one? There's a reason why it won Best Picture, perhaps?

Nick: There's a storyform, although I didn't really pin it down. I think that, because I feel that there was a good argument being made throughout the story, that there's a storyform *there*.

Jim: Okay.

Nick: There's a lot of different aspects of the arguments, it wasn't just a one-line note. And that made me feel that there *is* a storyform there.

Jim: Okay, and did you have a sense of- when you say that there was a sense of it, why didn't you say "Yo, yeah, for sure, there's a storyform."

Nick: Well, I *may* have been *biased* by reading an earlier article on it!

[*laughs*]

Jim: An incorrect, inaccurate article?

Nick: So I've heard!

Jim: ...which will be redacted, which I'm sorry... *not* sorry.

Nick: But asides from that, I had to agree with the article that I found trouble with the Overall Storyline... finding it *easily*.

Jim: Okay.

Nick: Because it really did seem to center around such three different aspects or time period of the Main Character, and maybe the Impact Character along those... or maybe there was a hand-off with the Impact Character. And obviously with those two, and you have a Relationship Story.

Jim: Okay.

Nick: But the Overall Story that was consistent throughout, that was a little harder to find. And I still think it's probably more on the conceptual level that we'll find it in hard details of searching for the Lost Ark.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: So for you, the Overall Story Throughline was not as well-defined as the three others.

Nick: Right.

Jim: Okay.

I think it's very well-defined, I don't think it's, well, executed externally.

Jim: Oh, okay.

So we don't know... there's no goal where we're like "Okay, when this happens, you know... the story... there's an outcome." But there is a shared Overall-

Jim: Okay. And did you feel there was a complete storyform?

I think it's heavily weighted in one Throughline or another, but I think it's mostly "yeah." It's mostly.

Jim: Okay. Anybody else? Questions? Comments? Okay. So let's talk about the Four Throughlines and see if we can help figure out what is- 'cause I've—and if you've read my original article, I loved the film, I thought it was beautiful, it's the greatest, I'm glad it won Best Picture, of course it should've won. But I felt like maybe there's parts missing in the story, and I attributed that to not having a storyform, but as with *Doubt*, I watched it a second time and it's like "Oh, okay, there's just... key parts are missing" and it's really interesting, you know, once we get into what that actually is, which I think will explain a lot. Well okay, then let's start easy!

[*chuckles*]

Jim: The first thing I do is figure out the Four Throughlines, right. The four different perspectives and the first one is the Main Character Throughline. So, who is the Main Character of *Moonlight*?

[*multiple people*] Chiron.

Jim: "Chiron," okay. Does he go by any other name?

Yes. He's Chiron, he's Little, he's Chiron, he's Black.

Jim: [*writing down the names on the board*] So we have Little, and Chiron, and we have Black. Obviously all the same person. So, if there are three different versions of him, are they all dealing with the same sort of stuff, the same sort of emotional baggage? So it seems pretty consistent, right, so everybody would agree it's just a hand-off from one age to the next, right. It's very purposeful,

there's cards that say which Act we are in, and it goes through each one, it works out great. So just to recap so far, we know there's a Main Character and he's just called Little when he's a little kid, Chiron when he's a teenager, and then Black when he's older. Three different persons, same guy, same guy still dealing with all the same issues. Alright, so, we'll skip, avoiding the Overall Story. The Influence Character Throughline. Who are candidates for Influence Character for all three, for each one, who... thoughts?

His mom.

Jim: His mom, okay.

Paula. Paula is her name.

Jim: In... three?

In what?

Jim: In all three?

Yeah.

Jim: [*writing the Influence Characters under the Main Character names according to each life phase*] Okay. So I will put Paula, and Paula, and Paula.

I think it's Juan and then Kevin.

Jim: Okay, so Juan-

Nick: I would say Kevin for all three.

Jim: Kevin for all three?

Nick: Yeah.

Jim: Why would you say Kevin for all three?

Nick: 'Cause he's there.

[*laughs*]

Jim: Well, that's funny, for some reason I hadn't realized that was him the first time I saw-

He is. He is the soccer- whatever they're playing-

Jim: Actually, what game are they really playing?

"Smear the queer."

Jim: They're playing "smear the queer," on purpose.

That's terrible.

Jim: Isn't it? So Kevin's there all three times. Juan's the other choice?

Yeah.

Juan's there.

Jim: But he mysteriously disappears.

Who was Juan again?

Jim: He's the drug dealer who stepped in.

Yes...

Jim: Amazing actor.

Yes, I wish he was...

Jim: Yeah... You wish he was the Influence? Why'd you say that?

Oh no, the drug dealer you said?

Jim: Yeah.

Oh yeah yeah yeah, because he's very...

Jim: Okay, why do you wish he was the Influence Character?

[*inaudible*] ...I dunno, there's something about him. [*inaudible*]

Do you mean "wish he was past the first Act" or "wish he was-"

Jim: It's very interesting, I've never heard anybody in twenty years say they wish that somebody was the Influence Character. Was there a reason?

He just had a really strong Influence at the beginning.

Jim: Okay. So would he be a good candidate for Influence Character?

Yeah.

Jim: Okay. Alright. Any other option? Any other...

Nick: If you use Juan, then Teresa could be a hand-off with Juan for the other two.

Jim: Teresa is, uh...

Nick: Juan's girlfriend.

Jim: Right. She's only in the second part though, right?

Nick: The first.

Jim: The first, yeah right.

Nick: The first two.

Jim: [*writing Teresa among the Influence Characters*] So maybe Teresa here.

Nick: Yeah, she's not in the third. Except they talk about her.

Jim: Okay. Okay. Any other candidates? No? Okay. So if we look at the Relationship Story Throughline, what is the relationship between Little/Chiron/Black and his mom?

Antagonistic. They're family, right?

Jim: Family, right. But is there a relationship?

Mother/son.

Dysfunctional...

Nick: Dysfunctional, that's the word you guys use!

Jim: [*writing on the board*] Dysfunctional family...

Nick: *Dysfunctional* mother/son! Dysfunctional mother *and* son.

Jim: Okay. And then what about the relationship between Little/Chiron/Black and Kevin?

Friends, lovers.

Jim: Just friends?

Lovers...

Nick: Going from friends *to* lovers.

Yeah.

Jim: [*writing "friends to lovers" on the board*]

Soulmates.

Jim: Well, yeah, I mean, I don't know if they were *friends* in the beginning. I think-

Nick: Yeah, they were friends.

Yeah he's his only-

Nick: Kevin rescues Chiron at the very beginning on "smear the queer."

Jim: Yeah, but what's, like, the first thing they're saying to each other? What's their first scene about?

Nick: The very first scene is when Kevin, so- so... I'm remembering the first scene is... no the very first scene is when the kids are chasing, Kevin I think, past Juan. This is where Juan actually kinda notices what's going on and then comes to Kevin's rescue in the dope hole.

Jim: Okay, that's prior.

No, they were chasing Little.

Nick: No, they- they were chasing- but no, yes, yes.

Jim: But right after "smear the queer," what's the scene between Kevin and Little all about?

[*inaudible*]

Jim: No, right before that, there's a...

Nick: Right, "you can't be soft."

Jim: Okay...

Nick: You gotta show them- You can't let them believe that you're soft, you gotta show them that you're hard. It doesn't matter if you're hard, you have to show them that you *are* hard, they have to believe that you're hard.

Jim: Okay. So, with Dramatica, we're looking at the entire story, we see the whole storyform, everything together. So, when you look at the entirety of *Moonlight*, what's the relationship between Kevin and Chiron?

They're lovers.

Jim: Yeah. It's romantic, right?

Yeah.

Jim: Is every- everybody clear-

It's like Jenny and Forrest from *Forrest Gump*, I think is what you're trying to say, right? Like-

Jim: Uhh...*yeah?* Although, I would think there's-

Nick: Maybe more wholesome.

Jim: Yeah!

[*laughs*]

Jim: Well, the difference is that one is using the other one, strangely enough, taking advantage of somebody's mental issues. So, I think, everybody's clear that Chiron is gay, right? Everybody got that?

[*chuckles*]

[*feigning ignorance*] He's gay?

What?

[*laughs*]

Jim: [*joking*] He was dead the whole time! [*more serious*] Everybody got that, right?

[*still feigning ignorance*] Oh, this makes much more sense!

Jim: *You get it now?* [*points to the board*] And that's the power of Dramatica!

[*laughs*]

Jim: That's it!

We figured it out.

Oh nice.

Yeah.

Jim: Chiron's gay.

Chiron's gay.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: And Kevin- is Kevin's gay? [*semi-shrugs*]

Nick: Well he's at least bi. He could be bi, he could be gay.

He's gay.

Nick: ...Probably gay.

And he had a family-

Jim: He's trying his hardest not to be.

Yeah, in the Black culture, or... the African-American—whatever you [*inaudible*] call it—that culture, they're like, really, really, like, shunned down by family...

Jim: Yeah, it's not-

...when they come out so he has to go and marry somebody else in order- he's gay.

I think the Millenials would say he's genderfluid.

Oh yeah there you go!

[*chuckles & chatter*]

Jim: But see, I don't- I mean, you could say that- Yeah, I know all about that... stuff.

Do you really?

[*chuckles*]

Jim: I've kids, it's fine.

Oh okay... well so does Kevin.

Jim: Yes he does!

[*laughs*]

Oh wow, [*inaudible*] aren't you?

Jim: That's not very nice! Okay. But obviously there's a...

Romantic.

Jim: Romantic, right? And what I was trying to get, as in the first scene, is he's like "Why are you looking at me like that?" He was looking at him in a way that's like, I would imagine... that they both feel that way, naturally that was the beginning of it. So I feel like that was there from the very beginning.

Nick: Okay, when the bleeding was going.

Jim: Yeah, more than just friends, so. Okay, and then the relationship between Little and Juan would be...

Surrogative father.

Pseudo-father.

Nick: I would say guardian.

I would say- I like guardian.

Mentor.

Men- Yeah, I like guardian.

Jim: [*writing "Surrogate Father – Guardian"*]

I only know that because the author said that he felt like he was his...

Jim: Yes, [*inaudible*] make it yourself?

Hmm?

Jim: [*inaudible*] making up stuff?

No, I just read an article.

Jim: Oh that's really good. So this relationship, does that carry through the entire story?

Yeah- Well, not *physically*.

Jim: How do you see evidence of it?

I mean, that's for sure Little, and then... umm... it's just a constant reminder in life, I think they even show clips of... like memories of certain things that he had said to him, wasn't there? There was something like a...

Jim: Not really...

There's not?

Jim: No...

Okay, well, I dunno, I feel like his spirit was still there, in a kind of, obviously, kinda following his footsteps, in a way.

Nick: Well so, in the third scene, when we have Black, he's driving a car that has a little crown in it, just like Juan's did. And at the end, we get the flashback to Little on the ocean, looking back at the events that have just happened- it looks as if he's looking back at the events that have just happened between grown-up Kevin and grown-up Black.

Jim: Okay. So-

...him going back to Teresa's house, it might, you know, I feel like...

Jim: That's still there.

Yeah.

Jim: Do—oh, here's a nice one. Do- okay, so between Paula and Kevin and Juan—because Teresa is basically Juan's mouthpiece when he's missing—do Paula and Kevin share kind of the same point of view?

...share the same point of view?

Jim: Yeah, do they share a similar influence toward Chiron? Is there anything that they- if Paula and Kevin were in the same room, would they agree on what Chiron's issues are?

Yeah, that he was gay?

Jim: No-

No, that he's weak, right, and that he needs to stand up for himself, and...

Nick: If you're asking if they have the same worldview on the way of solving problems.

Jim: Yes, that's what I'm asking.

Nick: Alright, then... no. Well, definitely not by the third scene- by the third Act.

Jim: But I think even in the beginning, that's...

Yeah.

Jim: What about Kevin and Juan, do they have the same worldview?

...I feel like Juan, on the beach, right, he says some—I don't remember exactly, it's been a while since I watched it—but something about how "You gotta decide who you gonna be- how you wanna be," that sort of thing. Kevin is more about conforming to the existing social norms and how to survive.

Jim: Oh, okay...

Nick: Right, in fact, Kevin says that in the third Act, in the restaurant, when they talk about "Well, what's up with you?"

And which in some ways, Paula conforms to, right.

Jim: [*writing Juan's perspective below Juan's "conforming" one*] "Who do you want to be?" Okay. So obviously, this is more complex than your typical Star Wars example.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: [*pointing to the three Throughlines that have been found*] With these three possible in mind, what is the Overall Story Throughline about?

It's about people being...

Nick: Who've been stuck in poverty, and the effects of it.

Or figuring out who- isn't it about people figuring out who they are? Like, what they are, who they are, like they're...

Jim: So who's the one trying to figure out who they are?

Every single one of them, I feel like...

Chiron.

Jim: Is Juan trying to figure out who he is?

Well, doesn't-

Jim: It's a "yes or no" answer. Is Juan trying to figure out who he is? Is the drug dealer on the streets trying to figure out who he is? This is Mom trying to figure out who she is? Is Kevin trying to figure out who she is?... Did I say "she is?"

[*laughs*]

Jim: Is Chiron trying to figure out who he is?

Yes.

Maybe I'm thinking of like, accepting themselves. Because I feel like all of them kind of struggle with accepting.

Jim: But what is- But out of all those people, is there a "yes" answer for who's trying to figure themselves out?

No.

Jim: No. Except for Chiron, right? Okay. So could you maybe say "Who am I?" is his Throughline?

[*multiple people agree*]

Jim: Right. Okay, so, when Juan says-

[*chuckles*]

Jim: What? ...When Juan says "Who do you want to be?" is he providing an Influence Character Throughline or is he just working within the Main Character Throughline?

[*inaudible*]

Jim: With what? I didn't hear.

Oh, on "Who am I?" right? Like you're just saying-

He's bringing out the Main Character.

Jim: Right.

-Yeah. 'Cause he's so young, we wouldn't really be able to pull it out of him without having him standing there

Jim: Right. So, when you have the Main Character Throughline, and obviously they can't just sit and go like "Oh, what the hell am I dealing with?" Obviously there's people that pull that out of them, right. So Juan is like, you know, "You can't let people tell you who you want to be." Okay? What about his mom? Is she-

Nick: So- so just-

Jim: Yeah?

Nick: I don't think Juan actually said that, I think what he said was that "At some point, you have to make your own decision who you're gonna be."

Jim: Okay!

Nick: And that's not quite the same as "You can't *let* people tell you who to be."

Jim: Okay, but it's still the same-

Nick: Yes, yes!

Jim: [*pointing to "Who am I?" on the board*] -general working with this Throughline, this perspective. What about his mom? What's his mom's point of view?

She doesn't like who he is, or she disdains who he is...

Jim: Yeah! I don't think she really likes him, right? You know... she's yelling at him.

She just wants to use him for-

Jim: For what-

-[*inaudible*] money.

Jim: Yeah. So is she really providing an alternative perspective on how to- on "Who am I?"

No.

Jim: Is it okay if we cross out Paula?

[*multiple people agree*]

[*inaudible*] though.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: [*crossing out on the board*] "Dysfunctional family," okay.

The Four Throughlines (OS)

[*inaudible*] for the OS though, right?

No, not being in...

Jim: So what is everybody dealing with? And that would be the bully, and his little buddies, the teachers, the drug dealer on the streets, [*pointing to "Juan" on the board*] the actual drug dealer... I want to include everybody, and Chiron obviously, and his mom, and Kevin, as well. What's everybody dealing with? You said "stuck in poverty."

Well [*inaudible*] it's a broad generalization but I think "stuck in poverty" and the broken relationships with social institutions and toxic culture-

Jim: Wai-wai-wait, that was a lot, "broken?"

I would say "broken institutions."

Jim: [*writing on the board*] Like?

The culture along what comes with it-

Jim: Well, what's one of the institutions that's broken?

School?

Jim: School. Is there another one?

Family?

Jim: Family. Anything else?

The projects of...

Jim: *Yeah*, projects.

Public housing.

Jim: Public housing. Okay. And everybody seems to be dealing with that, right? Would there be a way, maybe, to encapsulate it into... or is "broken institutions" enough?

I think... I think poverty encompasses also broken relationships, and the ways people adapt or need to resort to certain activities to survive in an environment.

Jim: Okay.

It's also a specific, it's all African Americans, right?

Jim: Yes, and it's all in Miami, right... or South Florida.

Nick: Liberty City, where freedom reigns!

Jim: Oh, is that- okay.

[*chuckles*]

It's Miami.

Jim: It is, right?

Nick: It's Miami, it's part of Miami.

Jim: And if you watch the making-of, they make a big deal about getting to shoot it down there, like that's where they're both from, the writer and the playwright, so that was a huge thing. So I feel like there is something there?

They're just stuck in Liberty City, whatever that means!

Jim: Right, and it's like kind of-

Nick: It's an alternative, I also think that they're all dealing with decisions and bad decisions. The pluses and minuses of decisions that they've made and are making.

Jim: Okay, but then what's the actual encompassing- so if actions and decisions happen within that, what is that problem that everybody's in?

Nick: I'm not following the question.

Jim: So you said everybody's making bad decisions and gonna have to live with their decisions.

Nick: Right.

Jim: So what is the context of those bad decisions, how are they- what are they made within...

Nick: Within a situation.

Jim: Well, that's specific!

[*laughs*]

Jim: But something about being in Liberty City, right, or something like that.

Nick: Yeah... okay.

Jim: Or it could be like...

Nick: The third Act takes-

Jim: So it's poverty in Liberty City?

Nick: Yeah.

Jim: Okay. [*writing it down on the board*] That's pretty clever, right? That sounds... good.

I dunno, the city's part of it, but part of it needs to be raised because like this whole story has to deal with the racial issue of being gay and being Black.

Jim: Okay, what is that?

That it's unacceptable in that society.

Jim: Okay, I agree with you, how would you put that into-

Nick: I don't think the story brings that out in a sense of a contrast, so it's not particularly brought out that it's okay to be gay if you're White but it's not okay to be gay if you're Black, and so it's just- it's given within that [*inaudible*], but we're not specifically saying that Black people are especially anti-gay or anything because there's no contrast for you to judge it by.

Jim: Yeah, but I think it's more difficult for sure.

Nick: Certainly, outside of the story, we have every reason to believe so. But, within the story, I don't see any contrast that highlights why it's more difficult or less difficult depending on race.

Jim: But it's not that contrast, it's like what's the story about. Like you're actually watching the story about how difficult it is to be gay within the culture.

Yeah, it's something that you don't speak of.

Nick: Okay, but that doesn't say that it's any more or less difficult than in any other culture.

Jim: Well I think the specificities of shooting it down there and...

Nick: But that's not in the *story*.

It is in the story.

Jim: Oh no, but I think that's, like, an essential part of it, like that's what defines it. Like I'm writing a story about what it's like to grow up closeted in South Florida, that's like in specific... So how would I put...

The Overall Story with the impact of being gay in an African American world.

...dealing with the skeletons in the closet.

Jim: I know, but it would be nice if it was more specific to-

Poverty in African American social [*inaudible*] of Liberty City, I dunno. 'Cause it feels like being Black and gay in L.A. would be very different from being Black and gay in the South.

Jim: Right.

So- I mean Liberty City is just a specific Black neighborhood.

Jim: ...Black and gay in Liberty City, is that-

Poverty, yeah.

Nick: Liberty City, as I understand, is a very poor area, so that would be implied with Liberty City.

Is that what's everybody dealing with?

Jim: Yeah. The Overall Story is the Throughline that encompasses everybody, like what is everybody trying to-

Personally, everybody is dealing with their own stuff, like their mom is dealing with-

Jim: That's true, yes-

-Yeah, it's about the skeletons in everybody's closet, like not being able to- I feel like everybody has their-

Jim: Mom's in there too, that's actually a really good point.

'Cause it's not about-

Yeah.

-not specific.

Isn't her point of view having a gay child in the Black culture?

Jim: Yeah but I still think everybody's dealing with what it's like to live in poverty- in Poverty City. What it's like to live in Poverty City!

Well I think poverty is the impact of it but- I mean, it's, I think, just like you're saying it's about, I think this is like a consequence of slavery, right?

Jim: ...What? ...yeah, okay-

This is the result of slavery- it's not just poverty, and it's not just the fact that they live in Miami. This is what slavery did to these people and...

Jim: ...Okay, that's like a huge- you could be accurate, it's just that seems like a huge stretch to bring into this, not sure if that was-

Well, I'm not- yeah I'm not saying that, you know, it's a story about slavery, I'm just saying that whatever you want to call it, the word "poverty" doesn't encapsulate what it's like to be-

It depends on how you define "poverty," I mean that's what I was saying. Like, for me, I think if you define "poverty" in terms of broken relationships, whether that's relationship to institutions or to other human beings or to oneself, y'know.

Jim: I kinda like that, I like "broken relationships in Liberty City." Or "broken institutions in Liberty City" sounds... [*writing it on the board*] I think that's good enough right now, and I think maybe when we go through, we might be able to define it more through the magic of Dramatica and be able to...

Well, I mean, just to say that even slavery was an institution right, so I mean-

Jim: I know, but was slavery even brought up at all in the whole movie?

Well, it doesn't matter, it's the same comment Nick's making, you're looking at the effects of it, right. So what you have is all here-

Jim: No, I'm just looking at what the filmmakers-

...what we're seeing on the screen...

Jim: I'm just dealing with what the filmmakers put in the film. I don't see any slavery commentary anywhere. I see a lot of broken institutions and poverty stuff.

-I agree but I mean- I'm just saying that there's a difference from, y'know, being a poor Irish person and the causes that led to that.

Jim: Yes...

Maybe it could be considered backstory-

...is in the South, right-

Jim: It would be if it was brought up but that's not even brought up, that's why-

But I mean, that's the point, is that you don't have to. You're just choosing a cultural segment.

Jim: No, I think you just deal with what's actually in the film.

Well, we need to go back to the next point, I'm making the same point you did-

Nick: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: What's the next point? Which is what?

Well he was saying that the whole...

Nick: Yeah, that you can't- that there was not- within the film itself, there is nothing that indicates that it's especially onerous to be gay and Black as compared to any other culture. So you can't say that this is about how hard it is being Black and gay as contrasted to something else. On its own, you have to say "Being gay within this Black neighborhood is tough," but you can't say that this is a film that says "It's tougher to be gay and Black in this neighborhood than somewhere else."

Jim: I think that's the whole point of the *film*...

Okay, but then you have to be consistent, when I'm making the same argument you're making to you, but you're using his defense, so it's just be consistent, that's all.

Jim: But I am consistent. The film is actually about being Black and being gay-

And all I'm doing is saying something about what it means to be Black.

Jim: Yeah but, there's not one single mention of slavery-

It doesn't matter, because-

Jim: Sure it does. When you're dealing with narrative... or what the film, right, like what we're trying to do here... you deal with what you actually see from beginning to end. You can project-

Did you see an African American person in the film?

Jim: Yeah, I saw several.

Okay, so at what point do you think there was slaves in their lineage?

Well there's nothing mentioned-

Jim: It's not a story about slavery. It's a story about-

I'm not saying that it is. I'm just making the same argument that you're making with Nick.

Jim: But, you're not, is what I'm saying. You're projecting the slavery thing onto-

No I'm not, is what I'm trying to tell you. I'm not projecting anything, there's just simply like what it means to be an African American is a whole set of things, right?

Jim: Right...

One of those things has to do with slavery, it's just part of the poverty, one of those things-

Jim: Okay, can anybody here- wait wait- but anybody here, was slavery- I'm going... I feel like I'm going...

...no, no no no, he's just saying that could be an option.

Jim: In *Moonlight*, did they ever bring out slavery? Did that ever- was that ever-

They don't have to, that's the point.

Jim: Was that ever brought up? But you have to deal with-

Did they ever bring up being Black?

Jim: But it's super-

Did they ever bring up being Black?

Jim: ...Yeah, that's the whole point of the film.

Nick: No, they actually don't bring up being Black because *everybody's Black!*

...because everybody's Black, there's no reason to bring it up-

Jim: What is the name of the film?

Nick: *Moonlight*.

Jim: But what does that refer to?

Nick: Blue.

Jim: But what's the actual phrase that the grandmother said? What was the actual-

In moonlight, Black boys look blue. So there's [*inaudible*] Cuban woman.

Jim: And what is that about? What is that line actually about? What is the filmmaker trying to communicate there?

Melancholy, sadness, I suppose.

Jim: Is there something about the perception of Black people, in a certain way, is different than any other race? That's the whole point of that whole conversation, is that you have to put up a different front because you're Black. And that's thematically in the story.

Yeah.

Okay, and why?

Jim: Why? Because if you're gay, you can't be out.

You have to shine a different light-

Jim: You have to shine a different light.

Yeah.

No, I get it, but why is it different in the Black community versus another community?

Jim: ...Why is it different in the Black-

That's what they're trying to get us to think about, right?

Jim: Right, yeah, and that's why they brought it up, because that's the actual subject matter of the film.

But there's no conclusion. There's no-

Jim: Sure there is.

Well, I mean...

Jim: So if they had a similar sort of thematic tie to the narrative about slavery, then I would say yes. But I think specifically this film is about what it's like to be Black and gay and not being able to come out and having to put on a different face for other people because you can't shine the way that other people can. I think that's like an absolute part of it.

Especially in that location.

Jim: Oh, yeah, I mean, they use obviously that part because obviously it's very autobiographical for the two men that grew up in there.

Yeah.

Jim: Alright, well, so this is so far so good.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: We can come back to it and show what I think once we look at the different Throughlines, it might make a little more sense to what the film is actually dealing with.

Character Dynamics
34:16 - 43:38

Jim: So, if we look at Chiron, he starts off as Little, he goes to Chiron, and he goes as Black. And so when we look at the Dynamics questions, Main Character Resolve: is Chiron Changed or Steadfast by the end of the story?

Nick: Changed, because you actually see him running away all the time the first two Acts, and then the third Act he actually is running towards Kevin.

Jim: Ohh... okay, I like that. "Running towards Kevin." Does anybody have anything to add onto that?

He openly admits "You're the only guy who's ever touched me." It's the first time he talks-

Openly.

-openly, acknowledges...

Jim: That's the huge one. "Openly admits..." [*writing on the board and stopping midway*] What did you say, he openly admits he's gay? Or he's just openly admitting...

His attraction.

Jim: His attraction or something like that?

...say something, and coming out...

Jim: Right, which is like, so hearfelt in the moment there. Somebody else mentioned he's got the earings, he's got the teeth...

Fronts.

Jim: ...he's got the front, he's got the same crown that Juan had, that's a pretty clear indicator of Changed.

Yeah.

Jim: And then that would mean either Kevin or Juan or both remain Steadfast and does that... hold up?

Yeah.

Jim: Pretty clearly through the story. Alright, well that one was easy, see, that was easy?

Nick: Yes.

Jim: You said this would be very difficult.

[*chuckles*]

Jim: How about, just for kicks, Main Character Growth: Stop or Start? And this is the part of the arc that goes throughout the entire story. So the change is like "Compare beginning to end" and then the Growth is like "How does it grow over time?" So over time, is he changing by stopping something—which usually is described as a "chip on your shoulder"—or is he changing by starting something—did he have, like, a hole in his heart, he just needed to step up to the plate?

I say Stop.

Jim: You say Stop, and why—or examples?

Yeah, chip on his shoulder, well, because he has to- ..."Oh, why do I have everybody else's role" instead of his own-

Jim: Okay, and so what did he-

-and he has to stop being who *he really is* to make everybody else comfortable.

Jim: ...Okay. [*underlines with dots "Stop" on the whiteboard*]

Nick: So, he also- if we look at the whole "running" thing again.

Jim: Okay.

Nick: As an audience, we're waiting for him to *stop* running away and *start* standing up!... for himself.

Jim: ...well, which one?

[*laughs*]

Nick: To stop running away- to stop running away, because that's what we see him doing and we keep thinking "*No*, everybody is telling you to stand up!"

Jim: Okay.

I think we're waiting for him to Start trusting people, being open with people about who he is.

Jim: [*underlines with dots "Start"*] And what's evidence of that?

I think at the beginning, he's super... I think with Juan, the whole time, he's like super closed off. Juan eventually gets out and then he dies, and then he's pretty closed up. It's like constantly people are needing to draw him out... well, there's Kevin, other folks...

Jim: [*clarifying Stop and Start on the board*] Okay. So Stop- Stop putting up a front, or Start... coming out.

Or trust- yeah, start trusting other-

Jim: So that's pretty much fifty-fifty as usual, anybody have any other comments on that one, no?

[*there are echoes of a child speaking gibberish from another part of the building*]

Jim: Okay. How about Main Character Approach? Does Little/Chiron/Black prefers to solve problems externally as a Do-er...

[*chuckles, maybe because the child keeps making noises*]

Jim: ...or does he prefer to solve problems internally as a Be-er?

Be-er.

Be-er.

Jim: Be-er, and why?

Umm, he's really quiet.

Jim: What are some examples?

He's gay and he doesn't tell anybody?

Jim: *Haha!* Well, what's, what's like an actual example of him *Being*?

Umm... Being... umm... examples of him being...

Nick: Staring at his mother when his mother has-

Yeah.

Nick: -the John in the room with them and he's just not reacting as she takes the John-

Jim: He does *more* than not react, what does he do?

Nick: Well, there's the one time [*inaudible*] he does...

Jim: Do you remember what she was yelling at him?

Nick: No, that's- that's a separate-

Jim: Oh okay, we'll come back to it... which scene are you talking about?

Nick: When the John is there at the table and...

Jim: Okay.

Nick: ...she grabs- So Juan brings Little in from the time that they've gone swimming and then she grabs him inside and says "You come in here!" and then her John's at the table and she grabs up the drug paraphernalia and the John says "Okay, let's go back here" and he's just...

Jim: ...passive...

Nick: ...internalizing it all.

Jim: Okay, that works. It could be...

When the kids are banging on the door to get in at the beginning.

Jim: *Yes!* Okay, that's awesome.

-and he shuts it out!

Nick: So I have a question in regards to Do-er or Be-er.

Jim: Okay.

Nick: Internalizing and externalizing. Generally, where do you put "running away" as a... type of Be-er type example or more of a Do-er type of example?

'Cause if he's running away...

Jim: So "is running away from something Doing or is-"

Yeah.

Nick: Yeah, he's running away from all those kids who were chasing and wanted to beat- "smear the queer."

Jim: Okay.

Nick: And he finds safety, so he's changing his environment.

Jim: Okay, so, evidence-wise, across the entire narrative, how many instances are there of him...

Nick: ...running away?

Jim: Yeah.

Nick: Okay. So there's the "smear the queer" running away, there's the running away when earlier-

Jim: Was the "smear the queer" running away or was it him-

Nick: No no, he was walking away from "smear the queer" and that's when Kevin said—because they were pushing the ball towards him...

Jim: Right...

Nick: And that's when Kevin came through and ran through and picked up the ball, and distracted everyone by taking the ball and they all go after Kevin.

Jim: So a really easy way to figure out is, y'know, the Main Character Throughline is what's connected to the Approach.

Nick: Yes.

Jim: So whatever they're dealing personally is where they first start attacking problems. So when it's just him dealing with "Who am I?" what is his preference? Not talking about any kind of role he

might have in the Overall Story, it's really hard 'cause you kinda have to look apart from the Overall Story from what he's dealing with personally. But to me, a really strong personal moment is his mom yelling at him "Don't look at me," right? She yells that at him, which is really disturbing the way that it's shot and everything and then they play reverse later and she says the same thing. That has a huge impact on him and, what does he do?

Nick: I'm not sure if she says the same thing.

Jim: Oh, yeah, she does.

Nick: No, I think when she mouths it—and we don't have actual subtitles for that—I think she actually says, because of- *When she mouths it*, we don't hear the words. I think she says "You're a little faggot."

Yeah-

Jim: Oh...

-I think that's what she said.

Yeah.

Nick: Because that follows right after the discussion that she had with Juan about "What, you're going to tell my son why the little boys are beating him up?"

Jim: That's weird, like, the first time I saw it, I thought that.

Yeah, I did.

Jim: But when I watched it a second time, I could've sworn it was just a silent version of the latter thing. Regardless, okay, sorry to be wrong about that, either way it's fine, but I remember that and I rewinded a couple times and I was like "Oh my god, she doesn't say that." But if you saw it, and you saw it [*gestures to the two people*], then I just missed out that thing. But, regardless, what was his response? Did he run away?

Nick: No. He [*inaudible*] and just take it in.

Jim: But what did he do even more so? I mean, for me, it works better if she's saying "Don't look at me" because he actually, like- and then he looks right back up at her. Like, defying. Which is a Being thing, that's not a Doing thing. That's a "I'm trying to defy with my presence." That to me is like a really strong Be-er moment.

Nick: Showing his attitude.

Jim: Yeah, and if he's a Changed character, that would imply that he moves from a Be-er to a Do-er. What's a really strong example of him going from Being to Doing?

Nick: Driving down to Florida, umm, also-

Jim: That's a really nice example, what's another example that's *really* strong?

Becoming Black. Just... transition to become- changing his physicality.

Jim: *Yeah*, that would be more of a like, eh, maybe internalizing thing. But what's the Doing thing that he does?

-chair with the guys in school.

Jim: Yeah. That awesome scene with him like coming into the school and just like...

And then he goes back to Being...

Jim: Yes. But that shows like- [*chuckles*].

Right. But that's not the end of the movie.

Jim: Right.