

What is your name?

Gabriel Jean-Paul Soomar

What is your gender?

Male

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Trinidadian

What race do you identify as?

Black and Asian

Where were you born?

Miami, FL

Where were your parents born?

Trinidad

Is your blackness unique or does it have similarities to other ethnicities?

I think there are similarities across most of the Caribbean countries in terms of music, food, and traditions specifically. A lot of food is inspired by West African culture, and Indian culture. Soca, dancehall, reggae and calypso are pretty common amongst most of the Caribbean islands.

Do you feel like your blackness is questioned? If so, what aspects?

There's a distinction between being African American and Afro-Caribbean. In America, the same way that white people would appropriate African American culture, it's reciprocated and African Americans will appropriate Caribbean culture and only utilize it for all of the exciting things like food and entertainment and parties and music.

Do you believe there to be an implicit or explicit hierarchy of blackness? i.e. Is Afro-Cuban seen as lower than African-American in society?

I think it's pretty explicit. African Americans will always consider America like theirs. African diasporic culture in America is generally considered immigrant and that distinction is made clear.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

House.

How many people lived there?

3 people

Which of the following rooms were in your living space? Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen, Dining Room, Living Room, Den, Foyer, Library, Office, Front Porch, Back Porch, Balcony, Basement, Laundry Room, Front Yard, Back Yard

Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen, Dining Room, Living Room, Back Porch, Laundry Room, Front Yard, Back Yard

What activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen or on the porch that is unique to your culture? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

We cooked on the porch, rather than in the kitchen or anywhere else. Whenever we had family and friends over, we would gather on the porch and then my mother would begin cooking amongst everybody.

What type of non-conventional activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen, on the porch? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

Other than cooking on the porch there were no unconventional activities.

What is your relationship to water?

I grew up around the beach for the most of my life, so I'm very attached to the beach. I use it as a safe space to clear my head.

In what spaces do you feel liberated?

I feel most liberated in water.

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Gabriel Soomar  
by Jennifer Lamy

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In what spaces do you feel restricted?

Anywhere in the house made me feel restricted. Because growing up, there was always this set of rules that you had to follow. And I didn't follow them, I was told to go play outside or go outside on the porch and hang out with my friends.

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