



Empowering Black Gay Men and Allies in the Coachella Valley

THE BROTHERS' DRUMBEAT



July 2023 | Issue Twenty Nine: Hot Topics and News for the Coachella Valley Black Gay Community
Lorenzo Taylor, Editor

Welcome to the Brothers' Drumbeat, a monthly e-newsmagazine to keep you informed about what's happening and coming soon with Brothers of the Desert. If you have questions, please contact info@brothersofthedesert.org.

Follow us on Facebook and visit our website brothersofthedesert.org

Please share our newsletter with someone who will benefit from the information!

**Please note that Brothers' Drumbeat will be on hiatus in August.
See you in September.**

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JULY ACTIVITIES



Equality Wine + Food Fest - July 1

BOD is one of the sponsors and benefactors of the GED Equality Wine Fest at the Margaritaville Resort. Organizers hope it will be the preeminent wine event of the year, featuring LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and Women owned, managed, and/or produced wines. Equality Wine Fest will also

feature local community artists and retailers. Chef and BOD Board Member **Andre Carthen** (pictured on left) will be one of the celebrity guest speakers who will give an exciting food demonstration.

<https://equalitywinefest.com/tickets>



Membership Meeting + Members Lunch July 8

Our monthly membership meeting will be held at the LGBT Community Center of the Desert. We will return to our regular second Saturday morning at 11:00 am schedule. If you need the agenda or want to connect virtually to the meeting contact **Tim Vincent** at president@brothersofthedesert.org



Members Lunch for Saturday, July 8th 12:30pm.

Wilma and Frieda-Palm Springs

155 South Palm Canyon Drive, Suite A21-A27 (Up-stairs)

Palm Springs/Public Parking in the Rear

760-992-5080 (Restaurant)

<https://wilmafrieda.com/menu>

RSVP by Thursday, July 6th by 6pm to Eric at Vicepresident@brothersofthedesert.org

The restaurant is very busy so they can't accommodate large reservation add-ons on Saturday. Eric will need to confirm reservations Friday.

Catch "Moonlight" at the Art Museum July 13

Cocktails: 5:00 p.m., Screening: 6:00 p.m.

Palm Springs Art Museum, Annenberg Theater

101 N Museum Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262



Escape the heat and join your Brothers at the Palm Springs Art Museum for cocktails and a screening of the Black gay film "Moonlight." The screenplay is by Tarrell Alvin McCraney whose play "Choirboy" we saw back in April. The screening in the Annenberg Theater is free, but you must register in advance. Look for **David Maurice Jones** and other BOD members in the lower lobby before the show.

<https://store.psmuseum.org/cocktail-cinema/>

JUNE ACTIVITIES RECAP

Police - LGBT Community Town Hall June 6

Several BOD members were present for the Police Town Hall Meeting with the LGBT community. Our own **Andre Carthen** has served on the Police Community Advisory



Board which helped organize the forum that filled Hunters Bar on June 2nd. Palms Springs Police Chief Andy Mills charmed the crowd and pledged his support for protecting and engaging the LGBT community. He gave several examples where police were active at community events, including the Drag For Drag event and discussed recent efforts to prosecute online predators. **Lex Ortega** from the LGBT Center moderated the event.



Membership Meeting June 10

Twenty-four members and guests attended the June membership meeting, including four first time attendees and

seven virtual attendees. There were updates on upcoming activities and a brainstorming session on topics for the Wellness Summit.

Brianna Miller from Voices for Children did a presentation on foster care and a need for volunteer mentors for the Court Appointed Special Advocates program that supports kids in foster care. Learn more about their program on their website.

<https://www.speakupnow.org/>



Brunch at Grand Central

Juneteenth for Black LGBT June 18

My Lord, What a Celebration! Eighty six Black lesbians and gay men and allies gathered at the Mizell Center on Sunday June 18th for the first (annual?) *Sunday Supper* gathering in celebration of Juneteenth. After drinks and social time, **Perry Lang** started the program with the song Oh Freedom, taking the audience on a journey through some of the great orators from freedom in history. Music on the program was provided by **Keisha D.**(Rise Up!), **Richard Riley** (Somewhere Over the Rainbow) and **Anye Elite**. **Sweet Baby J'ai** was co-emcee did an interpretative reading of Maya Angelou's Still I Rise. **Tim Vincent** did a moving tribute to of recently departed "shero"**Gail Christian**. Then came time of the Juneteenth feast with mouthwatering soul food by several local culinary geniuses, led **Michael Taylor** who also provided the decorations and beverages and prepared some of the dishes including fried catfish and sweet potatoes. **Betty Berrysmith** prepared some smoked chicken, **Martin Mitchell** prepared the macaroni and cheese and **Judith Belle** prepared her Sunday church lady potato salad, **909** prepared the greens, **Wes Rankins** won the dessert contest. After the meal, it was time to dance and "shejay"**Teri McClary** got everybody up on our feet to slide-slide-boogey and the wobble. It really felt like we were celebrating with our sisters and brothers, cousins and extended family in the church basement. Thanks to **Ector Simpson** and the staff of Mizell Center for providing the perfect venue for the event and all the volunteers who made it happen.





Juneteenth for All June 28

On the last Wednesday of June, BOD was the lead sponsor of an evening of conversation and gospel music. The Mizell Center hall was filled with about 100 community members who came out for a beautiful evening filled with love, laughter, conversation, and much song! The panel discussion on Juneteenth in Black history included television producer **Marilyn F. Solomon**, professor **Mzilikasi Kone**, and community activist and BOD member **Wes Rankins**, Music selections were provided by **Yve Simons**, **Hope Diamond**, **Charles Huff** and **Doug Nagel**. The program kicked off with introductory comments from Palm Springs Mayor **Grace Garner** and was closed by **Rich Wallace**, president of the Southern California Black Chamber of Commerce. BOD president **Tim Vincent** said "The panel discussion was dynamic and truthful and the singers are excellent."



Mizell Center staff Ector Simpson, Singer Hope Diamond, and Emcee and singer Charles Huff



Mayor Grace Garner (above) opening remarks. The audience (below)



Wes Rankins makes a point

FEATURE ARTICLES

Surviving Summer in the Palm Springs Heat

Summertime in Palm Springs can be brutal with temperatures reaching into the 110s and 120s for long stretches. *Drumbeat* was interested in knowing how some of our BOD members survive and thrive in July and August in the desert.



Thomas Sarkis - We survive the summer heat by doing the following

activities: traveling out of the desert during the peak months of heat; walking early morning and late evening; dipping in the pool; knitting and reading indoors; attending programs at the Center; and walking around Walmart using their air conditioning.

Raynard Pearson - Early morning, I exercise and do errands around town all before 10am... Then I'm in for rest of the day til 8pm. Rinse and Repeat daily..

Ernie Stroman - On the hottest days I stay inside - read books (including the Brother's Book Club selections) and do painting and artwork.

Cliff Tatum - I spend some time at a cabin in Big Bear, go to my local friends' homes and enjoy their pools, and (occasionally) the Sunday beer busts at the Barracks.

Carl Sessoms - I love the heat. I even go on my daily ten thousand step walks when it's 120 degrees. I also use my Regal movie club subscription to go to see films.

Bob Cox and Martin Mitchell - We are usually in during the day. We tend to run errands early in the morning, and go out after the sun sets.

Robert Banks Ramirez - As someone who moved to the desert for the warm weather, I don't survive the heat, I thrive in the heat! This means working indoors during the daytime in an air conditioned environment and socializing at night under the warm breezy skies. That's my favorite time of the day! Although I love the desert heat, if it gets above 120 degrees it's time to hit the nearest beaches. I'll also use this time to attend Pride Celebrations in L.A. (June), San Diego (July) and Long Beach (August).

Thomas Swope - When the temperatures soar I spend as much time as possible at the gym and in the pool.

Will Dean - To beat the heat in the summer, the goal is always driving destinations for weekend getaways. These include cultural activities in LA and San Diego, but Idyllwild is good for a closer, hassle-free, day trip.

Please be sure to wear sunscreen to protect against UV rays that can damage your skin or cause discolorations and cancers.

....Or Plan A Mid-Summer Getaway

The travel group Mature Black Men (MBM) has been going to Ft. Lauderdale in the summer for the past two years. Their MBM Summer Brotherhood Getaway July 13-17 includes parties, discussions, and a Denim and Diamonds Masquerade Yacht Party. It's a chance to have some summer fun and meet Black gay men from around the country and the globe. The inclusive weekend is \$350 and airfares to Ft. Lauderdale are cheap in the summertime.

<https://www.matureblackmen.org/>

If you're avoiding Florida and want cooler temperatures or something more intellectually and culturally stimulating, consider the 37th annual Adodi National Retreat in Woodstock Illinois (outside Chicago) from July 25-30 at Loyola University Retreat Center. The \$675 registration fee includes a variety of workshops designed for the Afrocentric same-gender-loving man.

<https://adodi.org/retreat>

NYC Black Pride s a yearly five-day event that brings 10,000+ to attend cultural events for Black and Latino LGBT persons from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and the Caribbean. The event is August 16-20. B.A.G. Travel is offering a rebate contest for those who book their travel and accommodations through

AHB23 Imposes Death Penalty on LGBT Ugandans



As we celebrate gay freedom across the U.S., we should keep in mind that many of our brothers and sisters around the world struggle against discrimination and prejudice. **President Yoweri Museveni** of Uganda has just enacted AHB23 a new law that flagrantly infringes upon rights and freedoms. The bill stipulates harsh penalties, including the death penalty or life imprisonment for LGBTQ persons and their allies found to have violated the law. For the first time, it would make merely identifying as gay illegal and punishable by life in prison. And friends, family and members of the community would have a duty to report individuals in same-sex relationships to the authorities.

Other African countries, including Ghana, are looking at imposing similar laws. The United Nations, the White House, and several human rights organizations have condemned these laws.

Whatever you do, please find ways to get involved in this critical issue. Consider lending your support to an online petition organized by Ugandan writer, physician, and activist **Kwei Quartey**. <https://chnq.it/rLcWr4NFX>

BOD member **Gil Gerald** is also organizing a campaign to support Ugandan activists. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/protecting-the-rights-of-lgbtq-people-in-uganda>

GROUND BREAKING BLACK GAY TELEVISION MYSTERY DRAMA



Tom Swift: Fictional Black, Gay, Billionaire, Genius, Inventor, Playboy

It only had one season on the CW, but handsome 27-year-old actor **Tian Richards** played the gay male lead in the series "Tom Swift" last year. Tian, who is openly gay, plays the supremely self-confident, brilliant, sexy, billionaire son who uses his ingenuity and gadgets to find the murderer of his father who was killed on a near-future mission to Saturn. It is the first time that a network television series has been centered on a Black gay character and it is handled well.

The attractive, impeccably dressed, pearls-wearing character is openly-gay and even introduced to a potential beau by his match-making mother. This slick, well-produced show was a spin-off from the Nancy Drew detective series. Talking to Entertainment Weekly about his groundbreaking character, Tian said "Tom is central, taken seriously, and still fabulous, insecure, broken, messy, and chaotic." It is must-watch television and is still available streaming on Peacock, the CW or MAX. Below: **April Parker Jones** supervises as **Donovin**

Mills and Tian Richards dance together. **Hayward Leach** plays an attorney who is Richard's (main) love interest and sex partner.



BROTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY



Each month *Brother's Drumbeat* profiles one of our outstanding members. This month we introduce a thirty-five year old who is one of our youngest members, the amazing **Ernie Stroman**, who will celebrate his 80th birthday on July 31st.

1. How long have you been in Palm Springs and where did you come from or have you lived previously?

I have lived in Palm Springs for eight years. Previously I lived in Los Angeles since 1952 after relocating from South Carolina with my family. My last residence was in the Miracle Mile area for over 35 years.



2.. What kind of work do you (or did you) do and/or how have you been involved in the community?

I retired from Nissan Corporation in 2001. At Nissan I was employed as a Senior Human Resources manager. Previously I worked for Northrop Aircraft, Hughes Helicopters, The Rand Corporation and UCLA, State of California and Sears..

I am a member of the United Methodist Church of Palm Springs. Also, I volunteer as a docent at the Palm Springs Art Museum. In my spare time I create art from "founded objects". Last year I had the honor of entering a juried exhibit and sale at the Galen Museum and was successful in making my first sale.

3. Why is BOD important to you?

To me the BOD is much needed as a community of Black men and our allies. I have watched it the organization grow and become a vital meeting place and a voice of Black gay men in Palm Springs. Its leadership has been diligent and an exemplary representation of the intellect and power of Black gay men.

4.What are your hobbies or non-work activities that bring you pleasure?

As mention earlier, I am a self trained artist. I make art from things people throw away such as, medicine bottles, paper towel cores and styrofoam to name a few objects. I see the potential for art in a lot of common everyday objects that we discard without a thought. Also, I enjoy listening to classical and jazz music as well as singing. Recently, I finished reading two fascinating books: "We Lie Here", by Rachel Howzell Hall and "Master Slave Husband Wife" by Iloyn Woo. I was one of the founding member of the Brothers Book Club (BCC) over 25 years ago. The club was comprised of Black men from across the United States.

5. What is your lifelong dream?

I do not really have a bucket list, per se. I simply want to live each day to the fullest, continue learning, contributing where I can and learning to love myself and others more.

BOD Begins Planning Discussion Groups

Palm Springs was one of three communities that were awarded \$10,000 grants from Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM) and Healthline to conduct discussion groups. BOD is collaborating with Let's Kick Ass Palm Springs to develop discussion groups with Black gay men over 50 living with, or impacted by, HIV. Planning has already begun for the launch of these discussion groups in the fall. You can learn more about the projects and the grantee in the Healthline article at the link below.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/beam-and-healthline-continue-partnership-through-hiv-and-aids-community-support>



From left: photo by Zerb Mellish, Mahaneela, Maddie McGarvey



BOD at Community Juneteenth Rally

BOD Board President **Tim Vincent** spoke before a large gathering at the Community Juneteenth Celebration on June 19th in Stevens Park. The theme of the rally was Equity, Inclusion and Unity. He, and many of the speakers, focused his comments on the continuing battle to get compensation to the survivors the the Section 14 survivors.



BOD at Bloom in the Desert

Reverend **Kevin Johnson** and our allies at Bloom in the Desert ministry invited BOD to have an active role in the churches service on Sunday June 18th in commemoration of Juneteenth. BOD member **Lorenzo Taylor** gave a commentary on the meaning of Juneteenth, relating it to his recent journey through the South and connection to his paternal great-grandfather who was born into slavery. BOD member **Jessaye Martin** led the congregation in singing several Negro spirituals and the Negro national anthem. Several BOD members attended the service.



UPCOMING
EVENTS

Brothers Calendar

- July 1 Equality Wine+ Food Festival
- July 8 BOD Monthly Membership meeting 11:00 am
- July 8 Monthly Members Brunch at Wilma and Friedas 12:30 pm

- July 13 Cocktails and "Moonlight" at the Palm Springs Art Museum 5:00 pm

Birthday Brothers

- July 10 Patrick Pierre,
- July 18 Tee Jay Johnson
- July 22 Matthew Ford
- July 23 Lorenzo Taylor
- July 31 Ernest Stroman

Honoring Our Ancestors



Billy (William Thomas) Strayhorn (1915 -1967) was an openly-gay musician/pianist/composer/arranger who collaborated for over three decades with band leader Duke Ellington. Read more about his incredible life in **David Hadju's** biography "Lush Life." Hadju details his great friendship with Lena Horne and Ellington's steadfast friendship in spite of Strayhorn's sexuality. Ellington took credit for many of Strayhorn's compositions, including "Take the A Train", "Lush Life." and the soundtrack to *Anatomy of a Murder.* Strayhorn participated in many civil rights marches and activities and was also a committed friend to **Martin Luther King Jr.** He lived as an openly gay man during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s and spent eight years with his African American partner musician **Aaron Bridgers** and several years with a subsequent White partner, **Bill Grove**. He and Mr. Grove lived separately because of prejudice against their interracial relationship. Grove was at his deathbed when he died of esophageal cancer in 1967 and he carried on Strayhorn's legacy as estate executor. Strayhorn's favorite phrase was "Ever upward and onward!"

<http://www.davidhajdu.com/lushlife.html>

Brothers of the Desert is a non-profit 501-c3 organization whose mission is to build to nurture, support and connect Black gay men in the Coachella Valley through philanthropy, volunteerism, mentorship, education, advocacy and social networking.

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