



Empowering Black Gay Men and Allies in the Coachella Valley

THE BROTHERS' DRUMBEAT



March 2024 | Issue Thirty Six: Encouraging a Vibrant and Healthy Black Gay Community in Palm Springs
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!

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MARCH ACTIVITIES



Monthly Membership Meeting March 9

The monthly membership meeting will be held at the LGBT Community Center of the Desert (1301 N Palm Canyon Drive) on Saturday, March 9th at 11:00 am. There is often a guest speaker. If you need the agenda or want to connect virtually to the meeting contact **Tim Vincent** at president@brothersofthedesert.org

Lunch Social March 9

The March lunch-time social will be held at Sonny's Bar and Grill, a new addition to the Arenas district started by one of the Hunters employees. Located at 214 E Arenas Road in Palm Springs with parking on the street and in the rear.



They serve breakfast and lunch specials and look forward to welcoming our group at 12:30 pm on Saturday, March 9th. Be sure to RSVP to **Eric Davis** before Friday, March 8th, so the restaurant can know how many to expect.

RSVP to Vicepresident@brothersofthedesert.org



Barbershop Discussion Group March 12

Brothers of the Desert invites you to the next meeting of Barbershop: A Black Men's Space for Honest Talk about Wellness. Building upon the tradition of barbershops in Black communities, the discussion group is designed to encourage open and honest conversation. The free monthly meetings are inclusive, welcoming the full spectrum of

Black men each month: gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, and straight allies. The discussion topics are determined by the group. In February, the following topics were discussed:

- How do we deal with loneliness and isolation
- Is it easier or harder to find Black friends/community in Palm Springs?
- Concerns about aging and dealing with death related legal issues.
- The lingering effects of the "Black table" in the cafeteria. Does it make it harder for Black men to connect with each other in Palm Springs "white spaces"?

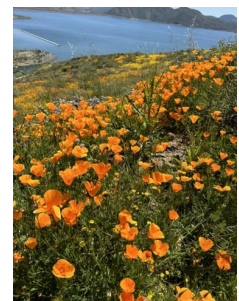
Meetings begin with a meet and greet with dinner that begins at 5:30 pm and the discussion group starts at 6:00 pm. The group is facilitated by Stuart Huggins and Will Dean. To register to attend the meetings and get the location email

Info_Barbershop@LKAPS.org

For questions contact **Tim Vincent** at president@brothersofthedesert.org or **Jax Kelly** at jaxkelly@lkaps.org

See the Wildflowers at Diamond Lake March 23

BOD members **David Maurice Jones** and **Thomas Sarkis** are organizing a half-day trip to Diamond Valley Lake near Hemet to see the 2024 wildflower Superbloom. Our reward for the wet winter is a spring of abundant and spectacular wildflowers and Diamond Lake is one of the best places to see them. Meet at 9:00 am at 4Paws Coffee Co. at 2500 N Palm Canyon Dr Suite A5 in Palm Springs, in Racquet Club Center. After coffee the group will ride as a caravan (or not if you're independent) to Diamond Valley (45ish minutes), spend a couple hours walking, hiking, and for some of us skipping, among the wildflowers and then have lunch before returning around 2:00pm. The area entrance fee is around \$11. Contact David with questions or to RSVP at davidmaurice.jones@gmail.com





Tim Vincent Honored by S.A.G.E. on March 24

SAGE is a national organization works across the country to ensure that LGBTQ+ older adults age with the dignity, support, and respect they deserve. . They will have a Palm Springs event on Sunday, March 24th at Living Out Palm Springs, from 11am - 1pm. It will be a special brunch event, honoring BOD president **Tim Vincent**, with SAGE's Pioneer Award, and **Martin Massiello**, CEO of Eisenhower Health, with the Corporate Champion Award. Please come out and

support this important organization and the work Brothers of the Desert continues to do in the Coachella Valley. Tickets and sponsorships are available at the link below.

<https://give.sageusa.org/event/2024-sage-and-friends-palm-springs>

FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES RECAP



Paul, the genial manager at Low Desert Mexican, and his staff were terrific at our February lunch social. There were 22 attendees, including some friends from the lesbian and transgender communities.



A daylong outing to Yucca Valley on Feb. 17 included visits to Noah Purifoy Desert Museum and Pioneertown. About twenty-five guys participated in the afternoon jazz potluck at the home of BOD member Michael Hardwick.



Drag bingo at the Roost raised \$2000 for the scholarship fund.



Author Terry McMillan interviewed by Will Dean on Feb. 27. Author Christian Cooper interviewed by Lorenzo Taylor on Feb. 28



Wes Rankin and Thomas Sarkis getting into the cowboy spirit in Pioneer Town.



BOD members marched in the annual Palm Springs Black History parade on Feb. 24.



Eric Davis and Dr. Larry Kidd represented BOD at the One Future Coachella Valley Fundraiser on Feb 28.



FEATURE ARTICLES

Health Challenges of Older Black Gay Men



During his Wellness Summit presentation "From the Rooter to the Tooter" **Dr. Sheldon D. Fields**, President of the National Black Nurses Association, told us about some of the health screenings, vaccinations, and immunizations that older Black gay men should be requesting from their doctors.

Black gay men encounter unique healthcare challenges that stem from a convergence of factors, including race, sexual orientation, and age. Disturbing statistics highlight the urgency of addressing these disparities. According to

the Kaiser Family Foundation study, life expectancy for Black males born in 2021 fell to age 66.7, while White males could expect to live to 73.7 years. According to a recent study by the National LGBT Cancer Network, older Black gay men are at a higher risk for various health issues, including HIV/AIDS, cancer, mental health concerns, and diabetes.

Only 5.4% of all U.S. physicians are Black or African American according to the the latest data from the Association of American Medical Colleges and even fewer identify as gay or have training on LGBT healthcare issues. **Dr. Angela Simmons**, a leading expert in LGBTQ+ healthcare said, "Older Black gay men often grapple with a lack of representation in healthcare settings, leading to a sense of invisibility and, consequently, neglect of their unique health needs." One Black physician **Dr. Leo Moore** (see story below) recommends a website to help Black people find Black health care professionals. <https://www.findablackdoctor.com/>. The LGBTQ+ Healthcare directory is also a good resource for finding gay doctors.

<https://lgbtqhealthcaredirectory.org/>

So what else should older Black gay men do? According to Dr. Fields, they should:

- Find a primary care provider who is sensitive to your needs, with a background or specialization in sexual health or geriatrics.
- Educate yourself before going to see your provider. You should know about the vaccinations you need for your age, including shingles and RSV.
- Do a self assessment of your own health risks. Be prepared to ask for STD and HIV testing if you are sexually active, as it may not be offered to older men.
- Don't be embarrassed in seeking out professional mental health counseling if you feel depressed or anxious. Don't let years of accumulated loss, trauma, and lived

- experiences of racism and homophobia rob you of the joys of living.
- Reduce stress by planning ahead for long-term care or a time that you might need assisted living.
- Do not ignore those achy/painful joints and seek out a rheumatologist, chiropractor, or other specialist. Keep moving and participate in some type of weight-bearing exercise or yoga, as tolerated.

Health advocates agree that the most essential elements to staying healthy in your golden years are staying active, having strong connections, keeping a good sense of humor, and pursuing a balanced perspective on life.

Brothers Embrace Their Feminine Sides



You may have noticed that many Black men have recently taken to wearing pearls and painting their nails. Tapping into your feminine side is no longer the exclusive prerogative of drag queens and effeminate men. We see it among gay celebrities like **Lil Nas X** and **Billy Porter**, but even **Snoop Dogg**, **Seal**, and **Rapper A\$AP Rocky** have been seen with full manicure sets. Instead of gold chains around their necks, Black men like **Pharrell Williams** are stringing pearls around their

necks. Throughout history, pearls have been worn by men and women as symbols of regalness and authority. Like many things that start in the gay community, straight and metrosexual men like **Harry Styles**, **Timothée Chalamet**, and **Lenny Kravitz** cannot resist jumping on the gender-bending trend wagon. In the 1980s, lots of famous men (**Prince**, **Dennis Rodman**) weren't afraid to layer on the jewels as a fashion statement. 2022 Heisman Trophy winner and USC quarterback **Caleb Williams** paints his nails with different shades and messages every week, picking it up in high school from his mother who was a nail stylist.

These small flashes of feminine style are different from assuming a drag personality where exaggerated female attire and behavior are created. "I was born and grew up with masculine energy," says **Patrick Pierre**, "but Patty Cakes is feminine energy which is my own creation. I can mold her into whatever fearless version of myself that I want to project." For many Black gay men, there is power that comes from defying cultural norms and overcoming that boyhood fear of being labeled as a sissy or trying to be a "girl." So silence that little critical voice in your head and don't be afraid to switch it up, whether it's nail polish, pearls, make-up, or hair color.

BROTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY



Each month *Brother's Drumbeat* profiles one of our outstanding members. This month we introduce a new member, the amazing **David Stepney**.

1. How long have you been in Palm Springs and where did

you come from or have you lived previously?

I moved to the area in October of 2019. I'm originally from St. Louis, Missouri.

2. What kind of work have you done and/or how have you been involved in the community?

For many years, I worked in medical intensive care units as a certified critical care nurse. These days, I am a Health Facilities Evaluator Nurse for the Department of Public Health. The work is very fulfilling because I am still in the capacity of advocating for vulnerable individuals and families.

3. Why is BOD important to you?

I'm really happy to have found BOD because of the sense of community it provides and opportunities to connect with other gay/bisexual men of color in the Valley.

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

I have a rather diverse vinyl record collection and I love all things music...from R&B to jazz, disco, pop, and rock. I really love listening to and dancing to old school music so the BOD New Years Eve Dancing Through the Decades party was right up my alley! I'm also a homebody, I enjoy "nesting" at home with my partner, Pierre, of 27 years and small gatherings with great conversation. I'm also easily hooked on true crime television series.

5. What is your lifelong dream (what's in your bucket list)?

Hmm... My lifelong dream would be to travel on extended vacations to Australia, New Zealand, Africa and South America. Then, I'd like to own my own record store and open it whenever I'm not traveling.



Actor Returns to DeZart Performs in Leading Role

Openly-gay actor **Dennis Renard**, thrilled Palm Springs audiences last year in the lead role of Pharrus in "Choir Boy." He now stars in DeZarts Perfoms' limited production of "A Case for the Existence of God" by Samuel D. Hunter. Dennis can be seen in a regular role in the NCIS television series and in Discovery + "The Book of Queer."

Director **Michael Shaw** describes the award-winning two-character drama: "With humor, empathy and wrenching honesty, Hunter commingles two lives and deftly bridges disparate experiences of marginality." The play runs March 1-10 and tickets are available at the link below.

<https://ci.ovationtix.com/35982/production/1170680>

Anye Co-hosts Black Fashion Weekend March 2-3

BOD member **Anye Elite** will co-host a weekend of Black fashion sponsored by the Coachella Valley Black Girls Gather. This inaugural "Black" Fashion Weekend is an effort to bring together the best talents from six local boutique and thrift shop owners, fashion designers, and hair artists in the Coachella Valley. The theme for this unapologetically Black Fashion Weekend is "Embracing and Loving Yourself." Tickets for the two day event at the Family Health and Support Network are \$50 and \$100 and can be purchased at the link below.

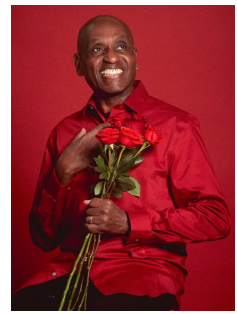
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cvbbm-black-fashion-show-weekend-tickets-723814216807>



Johnnie McKinley Honored for Black HIV Awareness Day

BOD member **Johnnie McKinley** was one of three Black gay men honored by the LA LGBT Center on February 7th. He was cited for his participation in the Center's LGBT Senior Center, where he participates in weekly HIV/AIDS Support Group-Men Living With HIV (50+). There is an article in the Center's online newsletter which contains an interview with him and two other "elders." See the article in the link below.

<https://lalgbtcenter.org/vanguard/our-lives-matter-our-elders-speak-out-for-black-hiv-aids-awareness-day/>



Mike Henderson: Black Gay Travel Deadline March 15

At the February membership meeting, BOD member **Michael Henderson** gave a fantastic presentation on his company, B.A.G. Travel, and blackgaytravelers.com. Michael specializes in immersive group excursions around the world for Black gay men and their friends. Please consider his amazing 2024 travel adventure options below:

1. **Puerto Vallarta Pride** (May 23-27) - All-Inclusive stay at the Hilton Vallarta Riviera and special performances. 20 Brothers interested = Michael chartering a round-trip shuttle from Palm Springs to Tijuana Airport to make the flight to PVR more affordable.
2. **Thailand + Cambodia and Hong Kong** (November 6-18) - Witness the world-famous Chiang Mai Lantern Festival, Angkor Wat Temples (featured in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Tomb Raider*) and the world's best skyline in Hong Kong!
3. **Cape Town** (April 5-15 or May 31-June 10): Imagine sipping the finest wines while meeting the talented Black winemakers in South Africa's famed Cape Winelands!

Hurry, Brothers! Spots fill up fast. Book before March 15 at blackgaytravelers.com. Interest-free and "Travel Now, Pay Later" payment plans are available. Questions? - email: requests@blackgaytravelers.com

Dr. Leo Moore Named "The Ultimate Guy 2024"

BOD congratulates our good friend and former Wellness Summit keynote speaker **Dr. Leo Moore** for being named the 2024 Ultimate Guy. The popular magazine says of Leo and the two runners up: "The are resilient, capable of withstanding derailing setbacks. Committed, to their families, their jobs, and to bettering the worlds around them. And they're generous, with their time and talents in a way that makes us want to seize every hour in the day." We can testify that this is a perfect description of the Leo we have come to know and love.

<https://www.menshealth.com/>



Jax Kelly: Older Adults Survey Deadline March 31

The State of California is conducting an important survey of older adults called "From Challenge to Resilience." BOD member **Jax Kelly** says. "So excited to announce California's first survey of LGBTQIA+ older adults! As a member of the California Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability, I know the importance of obtaining this data to advocate for services for LGBTQIA+ older adults. We especially need

to hear from Black gay men. If you are over 50, please to https://aging.ca.gov/Survey_of_LGBTQIA for more details and to complete the survey. The deadline is March 31st."

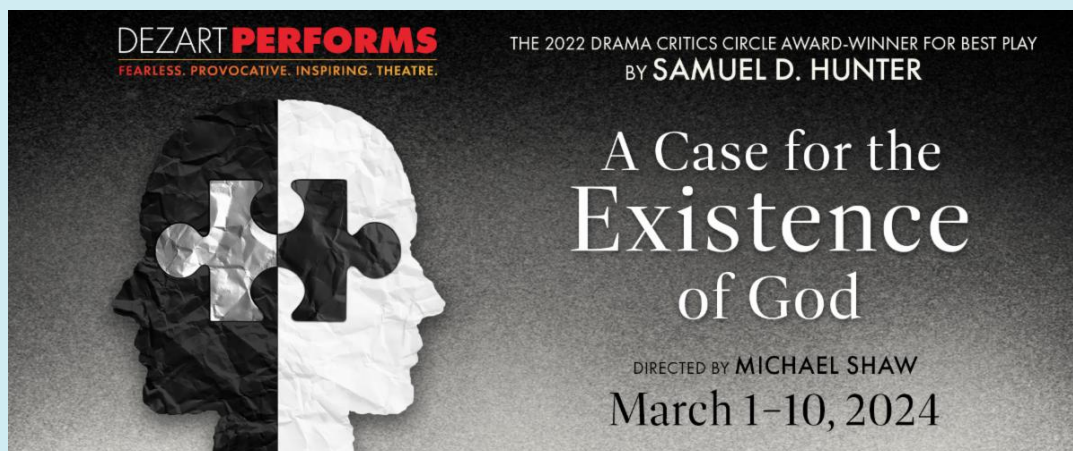


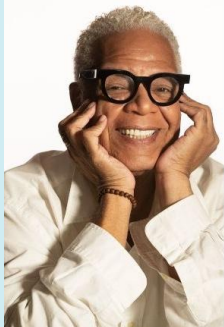
Brothers Calendar

- March 2-3 Black Fashion Weekend
- March 9 BOD Monthly Membership Meeting and Social Lunch
- March 12 Barbershop Discussion Group
- March 23 Diamond Lake Day Trip
- March 24 SAGE Honors Tim Vincent
- April 5-6 Ken Page at the Purple Room

Birthday Brothers

- March 13 John Taylor
- March 18 Tommy Dodson
- March 21 Ron Oden
- March 22 Cliff Wynne
- March 25 David Wilson





1900 N. Palm Canyon Dr. Palm Springs, CA

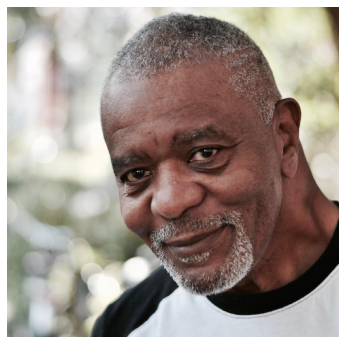
Friday, April 5, 2024
Saturday, April 6, 2024

KEN PAGE “RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW”

With nearly fifty years as a cabaret and Broadway performer, “Right Here, Right Now” features songs and stories from Ken Page’s illustrious career including his legendary performances in GUYS AND DOLLS, THE WIZ, CATS, AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’ and more.

Tickets and More Information:
www.purpleroompalmsprings.com

Honoring Our Ancestors



Celebrating the Life of ABilly S. Jones

The Black gay community lost a true legend in the passing of **ABilly S. Jones-Hennin** on Jan. 19 due to complications from Parkinson's disease and spinal stenosis. Abilly was a co-founder of the National Black Gay Coalition in 1978. He was the logistics coordinator for the first March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979. He started the Gay Married Men's Association (GAMMA), co-founded the D.C. chapter of Black and White Men Together. He helped develop culturally-appropriate HIV prevention programs for Black gay men and became a disability rights advocate in his later years, speaking specifically about homophobia in healthcare settings. Learn more about his amazing life and accomplishments in the Washington Post obituary and Outwords video archive at the links below.

<https://wapo.st/3HC88BS> <https://theoutwordsarchive.org/interview/jones-hennin-abilly/>

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.

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram Brothersofthedesert

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