



Empowering Black Gay Men and Allies in the Coachella Valley

# THE BROTHERS' DRUMBEAT



May 2023 | Issue Twenty Seven: Spotlight on Black Seniors and the Excellence of Black Gay Artistry.  
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](mailto:info@brothersofthedesert.org).

Follow us on Facebook and visit our website [brothersofthedesert.org](http://brothersofthedesert.org)

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

**Please take a moment to listen to this important video message about our organization, our accomplishments, and our future.**

<https://youtu.be/9m3JQInatDs>



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Brothers Calendar

- May 3 "Champion" Opera at Regal Cinema Palm Springs at 6:30 pm
- May 7 Boys in the Band at 2:00 pm
- May 11 Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast at 11:00 am
- May 12, 13 MedgarXJames at the Camelot
- May 20 BOD Monthly membership meeting 10:00 am
- May 20 Anniversary Brunch at Escena Grille 11:30 am
- May 25 Third Anniversary of the Murder of George Floyd

### Birthday Brothers

- May 10 Jax Kelly
- May 14 Stuart Huggins
- May 26 Yvans Jourdain

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## Leadership Message

We lost a giant in our community on Wednesday, April 12th with the passing of **Gail Christian**. The members of Brothers of the Desert offer our condolences to her wife, **Lucy DeBardelaben**, and their entire family. Gail paved the way for Black LGBTQ+ people to access power and voice here in the Coachella Valley. She collaborated, coached, mentored, and supported our organization and so many others with her experience and guidance and helped us thrive. We honored her with our first Legacy Award for 2021 at our annual Brothers of the Desert gala for her decades of service. She will be missed, and her spirit will live on in our continued fight for social justice and equity.



We are forever grateful,  
**Tim Vincent** for Brothers of the Desert

## MAY ACTIVITIES



### Tony Bradford On Stage in Boys in the Band May 7

BOD Member **Tony Bradford** makes his Palm Springs stage debut in Matt Crowley's legendary gay drama "Boys in the Band" presented by the Bent Theater Company. Tony plays Bernard, one of the party guests, who as part of a party game makes a call to the son of his mother's employer that he always had a crush on. Several BOD members will attend the final performance on the afternoon of

Sunday, May 7th to support Tony. Buy your \$35 tickets at the link below and look for **Patrick Pierre** in the lobby of the Camelot Theater to sit together. Or call him at 951-223-0171.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-bent-the-boys-in-the-band-tickets>



## Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast May 11

Join many local community organizations in honoring gay icon Harvey Milk. Brothers of the Desert will again have a table for the 11th Annual Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast event on Thursday May 11 at 8:30 AM at the Palm Springs Convention Center. It's also an opportunity to acknowledge the work of gay-straight alliances in schools and to honor some of the leaders of the Palm Springs LGBT Community.

Latino/LGBTQ activist Commissioner **Nicole M. Ramirez**, Queen Mother of the Americas International Imperial Court System U.S.A. – Canada – Mexico will receive this year's Harvey B. Milk Legacy Award. California Insurance Commissioner **Ricardo Lara** will be honored with the Harvey B. Milk Leadership Award. Tickets start at \$65 and can be purchased at the link below. Come join us at the BOD table.

<https://www.universe.com/events/harvey-milk-diversity-breakfast-2023-tickets>

## Membership Meeting New Date May 20

Our monthly membership meeting will be held at the LGBT Center of the Desert (1301 N. Palm Canyon Drive) starting an hour earlier at 10:00 am on Saturday May 20th. Note this is a different date and time than our regular monthly

meetings. All members and guests interested in learning more about our organization are welcome to participate. If you wish to attend virtually contact **Tim Vincent** to request the agenda and/or video link. [president@brothersofthedesert.org](mailto:president@brothersofthedesert.org)



## Anniversary Brunch at Escena May 20

Five years ago, some of our charter members gathered at Escena Golf Club to explore the future of a Black gay men's organization in the Coachella Valley. It was the place we had our first informational

meeting/gathering. After our May membership meeting, we will gather again at Escena Grill (1100 Clubhouse View Dr, Palm Springs, CA) for a

champagne brunch to celebrate each other and our survival as we enjoy lunch and fellowship. The cost of the brunch is \$30 inclusive and includes a choice of entree with unlimited champagne or mimosa, coffee, juice or soft drink. All are welcomed, so please RSVP and pay in advance no later than May 18th. Simply go to the BOD website [brothersofthedesert.org](http://brothersofthedesert.org), click on the donate button at the top of the page, pay by credit card and in the memo line ("write a note") write Anniversary Brunch and the names of those attending. After your checkout send a confirmation email to Lorenzo with the names of attendees [taylorlorenzo@gmail.com](mailto:taylorlorenzo@gmail.com). Contact Lorenzo directly if you wish to pay in advance by cash or check. Sorry, no walk-ins or refunds. Don't miss this landmark social event!



## APRIL ACTIVITIES RECAP

### Member and Annual Meeting April 8

BOD held back-to-back meetings on Saturday, April 8th - the first was the annual membership meeting and the second was regular monthly meeting. At the annual meeting, BOD President **Tim Vincent** shared highlights of the past year and heard suggestions for the year ahead. Treasurer **Raymond Johnson** updated the group on the financial status and new board members were introduced. Board member **Andre Carthen** developed a wonderful video presentation that told the story of Brothers of the Desert in pictures. You can view the video at this link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tRxzOPozUc>



At the regular monthly meeting there was a presentation on One Future Coachella Valley by **Ventrice Diggs-King** and **Cristina Gregorio**, The organization is committed to improving access for Black healthcare professionals by supporting initiatives which aim to encourage and incentivize students in these fields. It actively works on this project to ensure that all students have access to the same opportunities. Some members expressed interest in mentorship and the board will also discuss potential support for their Black and African American Healthcare Scholarship Program. Thanks **Will Dean** for making the connection for us. Tim Vincent also announced an Inland Empire Black Equity grant for the Wellness Summit and another grant from Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective to begin a series of wellness-focused discussion groups for Black gay men. After the meeting, most of the participants went to Blackbook for a delicious casual outdoor lunch.



### Black Artist's Exhibition and Dinner April 20

Ten BOD members and allies showed up for the **Tahj Rust** exhibit at the Palm Springs art museum. After the museum visit they enjoyed drinks and food at the Juniper Tree restaurant.



## FEATURE ARTICLES

### CARING FOR BLACK SENIORS IN COACHELLA VALLEY

Palm Springs is world-renown as a mecca for retirees with a vast array of quality services and recreational activities for older citizens. But the sad reality is that racial disparities in the areas of housing, employment, education, and healthcare can cause Black seniors to be more vulnerable and/or marginalized. According to Mizell Center

Volunteer Coordinator **Ector Simpson** (pictured on the right) and **Frank McAlpin**, Director Geriatric Case Management, "The intersection of age and race along with other identities (gender, sexual orientation, language, immigration status, socio-economic status, etc.) is an important factor when identifying, understanding and addressing the unique needs of Black seniors in Palm Springs. It is essential that African-American seniors have access to culturally competent service providers and resources."



Black elderly persons may end up here without the same generational wealth and family support systems as their white counterparts. They may be widows or widowers who have outlived their spouses and children and may need extra help in getting access to Medicare, social security, assisted living, and long-term care. There is a severe shortage of Black male caregivers and home health aides. BOD member **Malcolm Harris**, who is caregiver to his 93 year old grandmother in Desert Hot Springs, is well aware of the challenges of finding and supporting Black caregivers. He contributed to the Care Can't Wait/Caring Across Generations study and advocates statewide for adequate compensation for Black caregivers. The study and recommendations are available at this link: [Care Can't Wait](#)



One of the most urgent needs is connection to a supportive Black community to overcome isolation. Seventy-five year old **Donnie Chatham** (pictured at left) benefits from the free meal program at Mizell and attends social activities at the James O. Jessie Community Center. He is a Section 14 survivor with mobility challenges and he shares his North Palm Springs home with a younger cousin who helps him out. He raised four sons who have scattered around the world and is very proud of his gay son who lives with his Polish husband in Warsaw. He participates weekly in Ajalon Baptist Church's senior outreach program with outings, a discussion group, and other social activities serving the Desert Highlands Gateway Estates community. Mizell also has a team of social workers who meet with him and other clients in need to help them navigate benefits

Just as LGBT people seek out "gay friendly" communities (like the new Living Out upscale housing project) to retire into, our Black seniors should not have to spend their final years isolated from the culture that has sustained them through a lifetime of struggle.

## CHAMPION: NEW MET OPERA ABOUT A BLACK GAY BOXER



"Champion," a new opera at the Metropolitan Opera, opened on April 10. It is only the second opera by a Black composer to be staged at the Met, both of them written by jazz legend **Terrance Blanchard**, with choreography by **Camille Brown**. The opera follows the life of Black gay boxing champion **Emile Griffith**. Griffith went from abject poverty in the Virgin Islands to being a celebrated globe-trotting middle-weight boxing champ in the 1960s to a lonely and mentally-confused man in the 1990s. Sadly, his rise was aborted by guilt over landing a blow that killed another boxer and the physical abuse of the sport. The opera includes many scenes inside a Greenwich Village gay bar, some pretty explicit language, and an on-stage male kiss (a first in the staid opera house.). His homophobic mother, greedy manager, and taunting by other boxers forces him so deep in the closet that he marries a woman. At his lowest point of self-loathing the baritone singing Emile begs a young blonde pick-up to "f\*ck me till I forget who I am." Blanchard introduces us to a forgotten piece of our Black gay history and manages to peel back a curtain on the struggle that many were subjected to. An encore presentation of the live opera "Champion" can be seen in select movie theaters on

Wednesday, May 3rd and look for **David Maurice Jones** and a few other BOD members to sit with at the evening performance at the Regal Palm Springs. Open seating.  
<https://www.regmovies.com/movies/met-op-champion-encore-2023/ho00012700#/>

## CHRISTOPHER MYER'S ART INSTALLATION: MORE THAN JUST PRETTY HORSES

One of the first things that visitors arriving by airplane to Palm Springs see is an installation of sculptures and flags called *The Art of Taming Horses* by Black New York artist **Christopher Myers** (picture at right.) The installation was part of the 2021 Desert X display and will soon be coming down. Take a closer look and you will see that there is much more to the display than just pretty horses. Each of the six horses is accompanied by banners tell the story of two mythical horsemen, one Mexican and one African American. Myers seeks to reclaim the myth that the West was settled solely by Europeans. As he describes it, "Altanviro stands in for the thousands of Mexican migrants who have come to call the Coachella Valley home, and Loper reminds us that long ago many who fled bondage in search of freedom traveled south, perhaps even through this desert, on their way to free townships along Mexico's northern border." You can hear the whole story of the display in Myers own words at this link.

<https://desertx.org/dx/archive/the-art-of-taming-horses>



## BROTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY



Each month *Brother's Drumbeat* profiles one of our outstanding members. This month we introduce one of our elders, At the age of 84, the amazing **Guy Hubbard** shares his wisdom and humor with us. Guy is a huge movie fan and goes to a first run movie every Tuesday and participates in the Friday men's chat group at the LGBT Community Center.

### 1. How long have you been in Palm Springs? Where did you grow up and where did you move here from?

I was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. I came to California to attend UCLA, intending to return to Indiana when I graduated. That turned out to be a fantasy. After a

few years in Southern Calif, there was no way I was going back to Indiana.

### 2. What have you done in the community (or for work) prior to being involved with

## BOD?

I was a Law Clerk in the Army, and an English teacher at the Army Education Center, in Germany, the first black man to hold such a position (early 60's). (I was the only Black in Headquarters. My office became a major curiosity attraction.) After leaving the Army, I held a series of office management or administrative positions, including being an Animator, drawing characters for Filmation (which was the company that produced the very popular "He Man" and "Shera", television series) I did not work in tv production, but rather for the feature film division. The company was purchased by RCA to start an international commercial retail library of children's animation DVD's. I then became a manager for the Film Musician's Secondary Markets Fund, a company (still in existence) created by the Musicians Union and the Film Producers Guild, from which I retired over a decade ago.

### 3. Why is BOD important to you and how have you participated in Brothers of the Desert?

I have attended many BOD events over the years, including the Wellness Summits. I have had many romantic relationships, but they have all been with White men. BOD is important to me as a place to meet other Black men in the desert and learn about their experiences.

### 4. What have you accomplished that you are most proud of?

Back in the early 90's I became a speaker for HIV Education and Prevention. I was trained by staff at the L.A. LGBTQ and the Long Beach LGBTQ Centers. I lectured on AIDS Education and Prevention until I retired to the Palm Springs area nine years ago..

### 5. What haven't you done yet that you would like to do someday?

If there are things that I would like to accomplish, it would be to travel to Ireland and Jamaica, the lands of a significant percentage of my forebears, that I have not travelled to, as of yet. I've been to England and Germany. which are two major countries my DNA tells me that my ancestors came from. Jamaica would represent Africa, the land of over fifty percent of my ancestors.



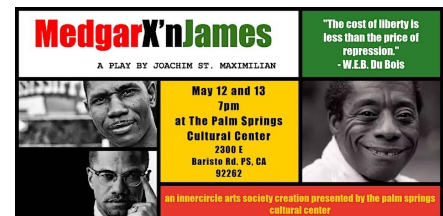
### Anye Drops a Single - "Picture Me Free"

BOD member, social entrepreneur, and openly-gay rap artist **Anye Elite** has released a new single "Picture Me Free." See the announcement and listen to it on the Icon City website. It's Anye's first release in two years and he calls it "an ode to black liberation and the negative effects of capitalism." Congrats and let's support our multi-talented local artist and member.

<https://www.iconcitynews.com/post/anye-elite-liberates-with-new-single-picture-me-free>

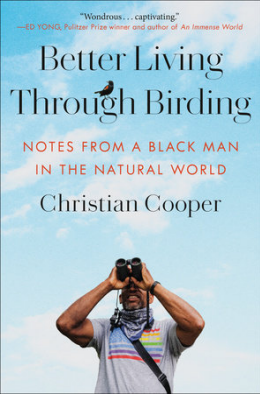
### New Play About Black Icons at the Camelot

Playwright/actor **Joachim St. Maximilian** brings his new one-person play, "MedgarX'nJames," to Palm Springs. The play explores the impacts and intersections of the lives and deaths of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and James Baldwin. There will be two performances at the Palm Springs Cultural Center on May 12 and 13 and tickets are just \$35. They can be purchased at the following link. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/medgarxjames-tickets-540271305017>



### "Extraordinary Birder with Christian Cooper" & Better Living Through Birding

BOD member **Christian Cooper** shares with us information about his upcoming TV show, *Extraordinary Birder with Christian Cooper*, premiering Saturday, June 17 on National Geographic Wild cable channel and subsequently streaming on Disney+. Christian is the



host and consulting producer.

<https://www.disneyplusinformer.com/national-geographics-extraordinary-birder-release-date-announced/>

AND on June 13th his memoir from Random House, *Better Living Through Birding*, hits the shelves

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/671722/better-living-through-birding-by-christian-cooper/>

Christian spends time with BOD while he is in the desert during the winter season and marched with us during the Black History Parade. Congratulations, Christian!

## Mr. Jourdain Goes to Hollywood

BOD member **Yvans Jourdain** booked a role on "The Upshaws" Netflix series playing the role of Mr. Louis Baptiste. He is pictured on the right in costume with series star (and Black lesbian diva) Wanda Sykes. Our rising star also guest stars in Season 2 of much anticipated hit TV series "Single Drunk Female" now airing on Hulu, with Sasha Compere & Marie-Françoise Theodore. Could there be an Emmy in Mr. Jourdain's future? Stay tuned.



## Dominique Represents at Drag4Drag Rally

BOD member **Dominique Cole** was among hundreds who showed up on Tuesday, April 18th in downtown Palm Springs to demonstrate against anti-drag laws popping up in many states across the country and to show solidarity with the drag community. She rocked that unitard in patriotic red, white and blue. Represent!



## Equality Wine Fest - July 1 Get Tickets Now!

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

Vice President **Eric Davis**, it will "bring together some of the world's finest vintners in an exclusive invite-only participation of wineries, we will showcase the immense depth and diversity of wines from these California+ vintners." Equality Wine Fest will also feature local community artists and retailers. Invite your friends and get your tickets early at the ticketing link below:

<https://equalitywinefest.com/tickets>



Mother's Day Inspiration by



## Essex Hemphill

For Mother's Day *Drumbeat* is reprinting the poem "In the Life" by Black Gay poet Essex Hemphill (1957-1995). May our ancestor's words inspire us to be better sons.



Mother, do you know  
I roam alone at night?  
I wear colognes,  
tight pants, and  
chains of gold,  
as I search  
for men willing  
to come back  
to candlelight.  
I'm not scared of these men  
though some are killers  
of sons like me. I learned  
there is no tender mercy  
for men of color,  
for sons who love men  
like me.

Do not feel shame for how I live.  
I chose this tribe  
of warriors and outlaws.  
Do not feel you failed  
some test of motherhood.  
My life has borne fruit  
no woman could have given me  
anyway.  
If one of these thick-lipped,  
wet, black nights  
while I'm out walking,  
I find freedom in this village.  
If I can take it with my tribe  
I'll bring you here.  
And you will never notice  
the absence of rice  
and bridesmaids.

"In the Life" from *Ceremonies Poetry and Prose* copyright © 1989 by Essex Hemphill.

***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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