

HOMELESS ADVOCATES AND LAPD CLASH • THE AUDUBON SOCIETY'S *MAPPING MIGRACIONES* • VAKOUM CONTRASTS THE BEAUTIFUL WITH DARKNESS

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In Transition

FROM *DISCLOSURE* TO *DRAG RACE*, TRANSGENDER VISIBILITY & ACCEPTANCE MIGHT FINALLY BE WITHIN REACH

By Lina Lecaro



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HOMELESS ADVOCATES AND LAPD CLASH OVER ECHO PARK LAKE CLOSURE

As the city planned to close and fence Echo Park Lake for renovations, homeless advocates rushed to the area to protest the closures and “sweeps” of the unhoused community that resided there.

BY ISAI ROCHA • PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATYA CREASON

A planned closure of Echo Park Lake led to activists protesting “sweeps” of the homeless community in the area and an eventual clash with LAPD.

When word went out that the city would clear out Echo Park Lake on Thursday, March 24, hundreds gathered in the morning, holding signs with phrases such as “Dignity not displacement” and “House keys not handcuffs.”

“Proposed sweeps of homeless encampments don’t resolve the issue of homelessness,” Cass Flower, who attended the protest, said. “We need to be supporting those who need it, not shoving them in a dark corner. The Echo Park encampments have built a loving community at the lake, a safe haven where they can build trust and safety with one another and have a sense of stability. Why would we take that away, especially during a pandemic?”

The Echo Park Lake closure was led by Los Angeles City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell, who represents the 13th district, and was being done to repair more than \$500,000 in damage to the lake.

Theo Henderson, activist and host of *We The Unhoused*, believes O’Farrell is trying to remove the homeless population “under the pretense of renovation.”

“Over the course of a year, he has engaged in aggressive police action,” Henderson said of O’Farrell. “The pandemic has aroused a lot of anti-unhoused sentiment in that area. He is always listening to the NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard) and the people that are housed and creat-

ing the narrative that it’s a dangerous area... with drug usage and violence and the like.”

Before the protests took place, O’Farrell made a statement on the homeless community in Echo Park Lake, saying an effort to move the Echo Park Lake homeless community into housing was already taking place.

“More than 120 people experiencing homelessness at Echo Park Lake have been successfully moved into transitional housing. This includes non-congregate shelter options at a nearby Project Roomkey site,” O’Farrell said. “This work to provide housing and a pathway to stability is ongoing and we still have non-congregate shelter options available to anyone who needs housing at the Lake. Our outreach workers must be able to continue engaging with the unhoused – the individuals who have asked for and want a safe, secure place to sleep each night.”

Advocates and activists worried that inadequate notice was given to the homeless community and feared that a police presence would abruptly begin to remove the homeless.

“We have been looking all over and there has been no notice posted,” Henderson said. “I’ve interviewed some unhoused people there and they have said there has been no notice posted. I don’t know where these magical notices are.”

Protesters and unhoused members



in the area learned that the 24-hour notice would be given later that night in the form of LAPD converging on the area and blocking it off from additional people to enter.

Hundreds of protesters and dozens of LAPD officers filled the streets Wednesday night as the city began its closure.

Protesters had already planned to camp through the night as reports said the park’s closure could begin as soon as Thursday, March 25.

At approximately 8 p.m. videos posted to social media showed a sea of police officers arriving, trucks carrying loads of fencing and the large groups of protesters chanting “these are our neighbors.”

Councilman O’Farrell addressed the Wednesday night police presence at Echo Park Lake, saying the police were asked to be there for “safety efforts” while the fencing was put up.

“The Los Angeles Police Department was asked to support community safety efforts during installation of the fencing to assist in the rehabilitation of Echo Park,” O’Farrell

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said. “Department personnel are deployed in that area so that those efforts can begin in a safe and unimpeded manner.”

Streets that bordered the Echo Park Lake were covered with yellow tape and LAPD officers telling people they could not pass through. Buses for arrest transports were also seen in the area.

“Police officers have come in the dark of night to remove the unhoused community,” activist Theo Henderson said in a video documenting the scene at Echo Park Lake. “They have three police arrest buses, they have two trucks of fencing, as well as over 60 officers converging on different vantage points to cattle the protesters, as well as arrest them.”

LAPD declared two unlawful assemblies in the area and asked people to disperse. Police also said while fencing was going up, people were allowed to remain in the area.

“For clarification, the fencing is being installed tonight and people currently in the park will be allowed to stay overnight, but will not be allowed to come and go,” LAPD announced through Twitter. “The Los Angeles Police Department continues to ask for calm and cooperation as the installation of fencing in support of the Echo Park rehabilitation effort continues.”

People on the ground said officers used tear gas, but the department refuted that, saying no force had been used.

As the midnight hour came, LAPD said it had created a “protest zone” on Glendale Boulevard. While no arrests were made that morning, once the 24-hour notice expired at 10:30 p.m., March 25, 182 arrests were made by LAPD after dispersal orders were given.

Some of those detained were credentialed

media, to which LAPD said they were identified and let go without arrest.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti spoke about the Echo Park protest and said that the city would not allow a single homeless individual in the area to be displaced.

“I’m very proud that we have a place for every single person to be... a safe hotel room,” Garcetti said. “This is exactly what we need whether it’s public works improvement like at the lake, or whether it’s longer term in communities where we have long-term encampments. One hundred percent of the people there have a room to sleep in.”

O’Farrell said that through Project Roomkey, the city was able to house 209 homeless individuals from Echo Park Lake.

“They expressed tremendous relief at being in a safe, clean, secure place, getting a good night’s sleep in clean sheets on new beds, eating nutritious meals on a regular basis, and receiving on-site services,” O’Farrell said of those in the Project Roomkey hotel. “We will continue to champion all types of housing solutions in the 13th District to address the humanitarian crisis on our streets.”

Advocates for the homeless such as Theo Henderson said that O’Farrell “deliberately lied” about housing and he will continue to protest the city’s treatment of the homeless in Los Angeles.

“Mitchell O’Farrell has lied and stated that he has housed 206 unhoused people... that is not accurate,” Henderson said. “Eyewitness accounts at Urban Alchemy (an L.A. homeless nonprofit organization) said they didn’t have any beds for them, and then miraculously, over 166 beds just opened up. He deliberately lied.”

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FEATURE

IN TRANSITION

From *Disclosure* to *Drag Race*, Elliot Page to *Pose*, Transgender Visibility & Acceptance Might Finally Be Within Reach

BY LINA LECARO

Elliot Page – the actor formerly known as Ellen Page – became the first trans man to make the cover of *Time* magazine this month and his image and story is a beautiful thing to see; an unapologetic and celebratory representation of living one’s truth and sharing what that looks and feels like – both those who might relate and for the masses. Posing in a casual black sweatshirt and jeans post-top surgery after only announcing his true gender identity a few months prior, the actor (best known for his role in 2007’s *Juno* and more recently *The Umbrella Academy*- looks, finally, comfortable in his own skin. And yet, his expression suggests he isn’t entirely at peace, and it’s easy to understand why.

As the transgender community gains more understanding and social acceptance, closed minds continue to resist and fight against it, many using religion as justification for bigotry. Those behind this backlash seek to limit freedom and rights for those who are different, and sadly some of them actually have the power to do so.

Which makes this year’s International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31) more pivotal than ever. Unlike marketing-based holidays, social justice celebrations like this one are necessary and powerful. Founded back in 2009 as a reaction to the queer community’s lack of representation for transgender people as part of its activism, it was also meant as a more positive alternative to the Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov. 20), which focuses on those who were murdered due to transphobia.

Post Trump especially, society finds itself torn and worn down more than ever over issues of sexuality and gender identity, on

social media and in real life. But navigating the current cultural battleground should be about humanity, not hashtags. Even as public figures like Page provide much-needed examples trans people can be proud of, division and psychological damage persists for those who don’t conform to traditional gender roles.

Old school thinkers might not understand why pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them) are important and they may question why a recent Gallop poll stated that members of Gen-Z identify as LGBTQ+ more than previous generations, but the whys shouldn’t matter. Respecting fellow human beings should – especially friends, family and loved ones figuring things out or fighting for who they *know* they are. Conservatives and older folks might want to discount this wave of self-expression as a trend, or worse, something that threatens their own lifestyles. But it isn’t and it doesn’t. More gender fluidity in the world hurts no one.

While we have positive portrayals in entertainment and media to thank for the progressive shift in perspectives these days, we also have the stereotypes and negative reactions to trans people on film and TV from the past to blame for the biases, both conscious and subconscious.

Last year, the Netflix documentary *Disclosure* sought to expose the most significant trans representations in pop culture and how they manifested into the divergent outlooks of today. It is the most enlightening piece of work about the topic available to watch on mainstream media right now, featuring a variety of male and female transgender voices – from filmmakers to actors to scholars – speaking about how TV and film affected them. From *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) to *The Crying Game*



(1992) to *Ace Ventura Pet Detective* (1994), *Disclosure* explores how classic movies painted trans people as manipulative or menacing and portrayed cis people’s reactions to them with revulsion – two recurrent themes that ultimately became harmful tropes.

Disclosure’s writer/director Sam Feder (who is a trans man) tells *L.A. Weekly* that *The Crying Game*, in particular, made a big impression on him. “I was 15... it was an incredibly beautiful and complicated movie, but there’s that one scene where she undresses in front of her boyfriend for the first time and he strikes her across the face, then runs to the toilet to vomit in disgust,” he shares. “I certainly didn’t have the language or understanding of my gender at the time but I did not want to be associated with someone whose body evoked vomiting.”

Around this time, Feder started telling stories through images. “I was making photo essays and I became really politicized,” he says. “I started making photo essays and understanding how deeply dominant media stigmatized people depending on their race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.”

After exploring these issues for most of his career, Feder’s deep dive into the trans experience took three years of research and focused

documentation. While the project documents films for their problematic parts, it also spotlights positive portrayals. Some stuff is looked at through both positive and negative lenses at the same time. “There’s a desire to show how we can hold two truths at once, that we can be critical of something, and love it at the same time, we can tell someone they’re wrong, and do it with accountability and love,” Feder explains. “There’s always someone who’s in the film that’s also going to talk about how much they love that movie... whether it’s *Boys Don’t Cry* or *Paris is Burning*.”

Laverne Cox, who served as a producer on the doc, was a longtime inspiration for Feder, and many involved with the film. In 2013 her role as Sophia Buset on *Orange Is the New Black* led to an Emmy nomination (making her the first openly trans person to get one) and a year later, her own *Time* magazine cover, standing proudly over the headline “The Transgender Tipping Point.”

As a trans woman of color, Cox represented two marginalized groups with nuance and power, both in her popular TV role and in her own life. Gorgeous, smart and self-assured, Cox was able to articulate her experience in a way anyone could understand. She stood – and



still stands – as an inspiration and sometimes, inadvertent educator. As the doc shows, her interaction with a clueless Katie Couric during a now-infamous talk show segment made for a teachable TV moment that still resonates.

Explaining that the host's intrusive questions about genitalia and transition objectified her trans guests, Cox said: "The reality of trans people's lives is that so often, we are targets of violence. We experience discrimination disproportionately to the rest of the community. Our unemployment rate is twice the national average; if you are a trans person of color, that rate is four times the national average. The homicide rate is highest among trans women. If we focus on transition, we don't actually get to talk about those things."

While *Disclosure* doesn't judge Couric for her misstep, it's not afraid to call out creators on past mistakes, either. Ryan Murphy made them with shows like *Nip/Tuck* for example, but he also gets praise for his progression as an LGBTQ producer, especially with FX's *Pose*. Casting all trans characters with trans actors and telling trans stories in a real and compassionate way, the show has been groundbreaking. *Pose* just announced its third and final season last week, and as Murphy said to mark the occasion, "The show made history behind and in front of the camera, and its legacy runs deep."

"We got to tell the exact story we wanted, as we wanted to tell it, and I'm incredibly honored and grateful," he added in new press materials about season 3, debuting this May. "Pose's story may end in 1996, but its impact will go on forever."

As we reconsider content from the past, and look forward to what Murphy and his ground-breaking new shows have in store, there is encouragingly, plenty of entertainment to search out right now in terms of representation.

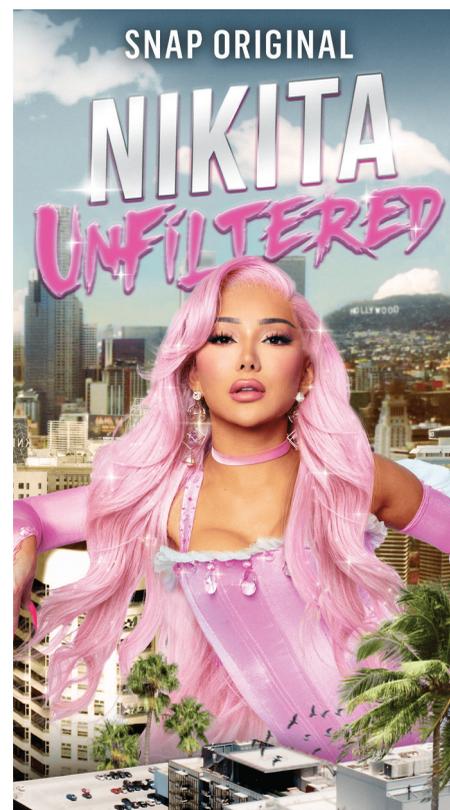
Euphoria, the hit HBO drama about the sex and drug-fueled lives of today's teenagers features a beguiling trans girl named Jules (played by trans actress Hunter Schafer). She's the love interest of Rue, the show's narrator played by Emmy-nominated superstar Zendaya. The first season ended with the pair's relationship appearing to end, but fans are holding out hope, especially after two special episodes from each character's point of view that ran at the end of last year. Whatever happens, the show has illustrated how gender identity and sexuality are not mutually exclusive, even if societal pressures sometimes make figuring that out confusing for young people. When it comes to love and sexual identity, nothing is clear cut and it shouldn't have to be on film, or in real life.

Similarly, the current season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* has brought these issues to the forefront. The current season has its first openly trans male contestant and as of this writing, he's a top contender for the crown this year. Gott Mik, aka L.A. makeup artist Kade Gottlieb, does amazingly theatrical and androgynous drag complete with glam-rock clown makeup and alluring high-fashion get-ups, making him a fan favorite.

The question of what "drag" actually is comes into play here, as Mik dresses up in feminine, albeit freaky, looks. Does he have

an advantage because of how he was born or is "drag" less about conveying a certain gender and more about style, imagination and execution of a thematic and fabulous look? This season, Mik is proving the latter is true.

Like Murphy, RuPaul stirred up some controversy a few years ago when this conversation first started, though. He had previously implied that trans women should be excluded from the competition. Though plenty of con-



Nikita Dragun

testants went on to transition after their time on the show, no openly trans women have been featured or promoted this way... yet. It seems sure to happen soon though, as Ru has seemingly changed his mind and is “moving with what the kids are doing,” as he said on a recent episode of *The Steven Colbert Show*, while touting the show’s new season.

“Every time I open my DMs on social media, I can’t even fathom how many messages I have that are thanking me for being the person that I wish I had growing up which blows my mind,” Gott Mik shares with *L.A. Weekly* about his current visibility. “I wanted to come onto *RuPaul’s Drag Race* and be a trans masculine artist that didn’t care about gender norms or what society wanted me to be. Seeing the reactions from everyone watching has shown me that I am doing that by just being me.”

Win or lose, Mik has strong feelings about why he is where he is, sharing, “I want the takeaway from me being on the show to be that no matter what box society puts you in, no matter what the patriarchy tells you you are, you’re powerful, you’re worthy of greatness and no one can tell you otherwise.”

The excellent new short film called *Juliet* seeks to capture trans greatness while also conveying the pain of not fitting in. As Ira Storozhenko, the L.A.-based director, tells us, she was so touched by actress Jasmine Mosebar after meeting her during her first year at the AFI Conservatory that she decided to share her experience as a student trying out for a coveted theatre role during her transition, in the film.

“I wanted to create the emotional conversation with the audience and share how important yet complicated it is to make the first step when you are a teenager and finding your own voice,” says Storozhenko.

Storozhenko says of *Disclosure*, “I cried so many times when watching, being overwhelmed by the cruelty of the world. I can’t even tell you how I admire everyone who participated. I only wish that there will be one day when there will be no gender separation, and we will stop pointing at actors saying ‘transgender’ actors the same way we never say ‘cis gender’ actors.”

Normalizing differences might help lay the foundation for acceptance, but loving examples might be even more meaningful. As is discussed in *Disclosure*, even the widely panned *I am Cait* (chronicling Bruce Jenner’s transition into Caitlyn) offered encouraging scenes via support group sessions with caring families of trans youth accepting and even celebrating their kids for their uniqueness. Obviously, when these families happen to be famous or have a following, they can be even more influential on the public mindset.

From Charlize Theron to Dwayne Wade to Cher, more and more celebrities have proudly and publicly come out in support of their trans kids, setting an example that not only inspires families to let their hearts lead the way, but might save lives too.

Another new doc called *Draw with Me*, featuring Jennifer Lopez, is no exception. Lopez introduces the short film made in coordination with the Trevor Project, about young artist Brendon Scholl, her “nibling” (a gender-neutral term for niece or nephew). Scholl is her sister Lynda Lopez’s child.

“I hope the film acts as a sort of introduction to people who don’t have any previous



experience with trans people or as a comfort for other trans kids,” Scholl shares with *L.A. Weekly*. “I think that trans visibility has definitely improved in recent years because there are more stories that feature trans people. But there’s a lot of trans experiences that still aren’t being told. It’s largely white trans stories being told which is just a small part of the community. When we start to see media featuring trans people in all our shapes, sizes and colors, then I’ll say we’re getting somewhere.”

As a half Asian and half Latina beauty mogul and influencer with millions of followers on social media, Nikita Dragun takes her platform as a trans role model to heart. Dragun,

whose new Snapchat show *Nikita Unfiltered*, offers a Kardashians-like look at her life, took the opportunity to share her reality with us, as she does her fans. With the second season of her show (which just premiered last week), she also shares her experience looking for love since she transitioned.

“As a biracial person as well as a trans person, I think having a forum and not using it to talk about something so important would be so disheartening,” Dragun shares. “I feel reinvigorated after seeing so many amazing movements, like Black Lives Matter. And I feel like a lot more social issues need to be addressed in general. I’ve fought through stereotypes and



I love proving people wrong. I think I live my life authentically and that’s what’s so amazing about where I am now.”

Indeed, Dragun represents a new group of Gen Z public figures who not only refuse to hide in the shadows but who are putting themselves out there and finding success by celebrating who they are. “I represent a little boy who came to L.A. that grew up and conquered and became this powerful woman,” Dragun says. “And I think we’re kind of all in a transition as people, we’re all trying to become our best selves and our true selves, and I think that is represented in my journey and in my story.”

So how is all this visibility changing things and why does it continue to be necessary? Well, suicidal thoughts and attempts among transgender people are significantly higher than that of the general population in America, according to a 2019 UCLA survey. Then there’s the U.S. Trans Survey, which concluded that transgender people of color are more likely to experience unemployment, harassment by police and refusals of medical care. More recently, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation stated that 2020 marked the deadliest year on record in terms of violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people. Add to all this, the recent onslaught of dehumanizing laws that right-wing policymakers continue to push across the country (most focused on barring trans kids from playing sports under their gender identity or restricting young trans peoples’ access to gender-affirming health care), and it’s easy to see why people like Page, Cox and Dragun are so vital as public figures, both for those struggling with identity and for those seeking to understand something they may not be exposed to in their day to day lives.

“There’s a line towards the end of *Disclosure*,” Feder shares as our interview winds down. “Ford is quoting Marian Wright Edelman, and he says, ‘children cannot be what they cannot see...’ [but] it’s not just about children,” he insists. “It’s about all of us – we can’t be a better society until we see a better society. And I cannot be in the world until I say I am in the world.”

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BIRDS WITHOUT BORDERS: THE AUDUBON SOCIETY'S MAPPING MIGRACIONES

Following bird routes to trace human history in the Americas

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

There are myriad ways for humanity to experience our connectedness with the natural world, but a new project from the Audubon Society really maps it out. Their new year-long web-based project *Mapping Migraciones* does something expected -- tracing the migration routes of species common to the Americas and offering information, photographs, and audio field recordings on

these beautiful feathered creatures. What makes this birding project so special is the profound heart of the idea: overlaying these avian lessons with individual lived experiences of human immigration from those same regions.

Audubon California, the National Audubon Society and Latino Outdoors produced the interactive map that uses migratory bird data and stories from ordinary people to give “a full



Palacio Rezzano family



Audubon Mapping Migraciones

picture of how birds and people are connected through geography and culture.” In addition to the ever-growing archive (to which all are

invited to contribute) panels and discussions throughout the year will accompany the ever-expanding archive.



Ruby Rodriguez - Ruby, Ruby's mom, and Ruby's kids

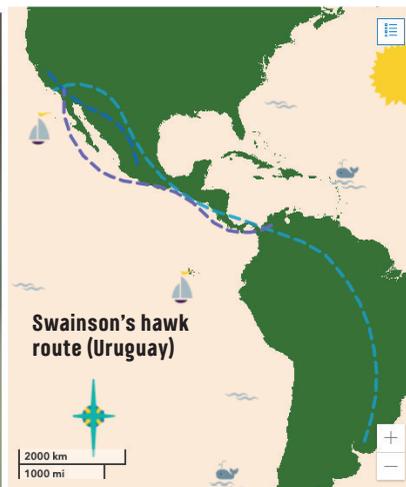


Yellow-rumped Warbler

PHOTO HEATHER ROSKELLEY AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS



Yellow-rumped warbler route (Mexico)



Here's how it works: Take for example the adorable Yellow-rumped Warbler (also known as the Butter Butt for its distinctive markings) which hails from Mexico. Audubon being Audubon, you learn key facts, such as, "they have a long narrow tail, a black beak and patches of yellow -- especially the famous one on their backside. They are abundant in urban areas such as parks and backyards. In the winter they move south across the United States from California to Florida. They can be found along all coasts of Mexico and some of Central America..." Maps and photographs and recorded sound illustrate this species' life in more detail.

Then click on the Read Someone's Story tab on the site, and you meet a wonderful person, for example, Ruby Rodrigez, whose family too immigrated from Mexico. She tells the story of Guadalupe Pérez González, her maternal great-great-grandmother who was born in Querétaro, Mexico. From her story: "Orphaned at a young age by the loss of her parents during the Mexican Revolution, around 1930, Guadalupe and her two children (Phillip and Mary) journeyed north to a border town called Mexicali, where they would remain for about 20 years. She labored hard over a stone stovetop to produce tamales for sale and eventually purchased a humble home for herself and her children. Mary married Leon Torres Ruiz and gave birth to my grandma Eleanor in 1940. About

10 years later, my great-grandpa Leon moved the entire family to California. From their journey, I have learned that the meaning of "a better life" is often incomplete unless it includes the process of (un)learning, healing, and growing. So much of my cultural heritage was lost to assimilation. While this disconnection is a painful experience for me, nature supports me with feeling connected to myself, my history, and everything around me."

Swainson's Hawks (from Uruguay) mean a great deal to Estefania Palacio, whose mother was born in Montevideo, Uruguay and whose dad was born in Tambores, Uruguay. "My family came to the U.S. in search of their American dream," she writes. "They worked hard to achieve better opportunities for themselves and their children. My dad has always loved nature. I have many memories of him telling me stories of his childhood as a gaucho -- sleeping under the stars, raising wild animals as pets, and riding horses. For him, nature is healing and rejuvenating -- it's where he goes to escape all his troubles. When I'm in nature, I feel the peace he described. I think back on all his stories and try to imagine what nature looks like through his eyes: a place to explore, to grow, and to heal. The biggest lesson my family's journey has taught me is to take every opportunity you can get and make it your own."

For more information visit audubon.org/mapping-migraciones.



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TABLE FOR TWO

Remembering Philando Castile With A Fixed Price Menu

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

At first glance, it looks like a romantic table for two complete with flowers, custom tableware, spotless silver and red velvet cupcakes. Take a closer look and you will see the shattered

tail lights and bullets decorating the table coverings made from police uniforms. This is Fixed Price Menu.

Last year, filmmaker/producer and Long Beach native Ava DuVernay founded LEAP (Law Enforcement Accountability Project)

in the wake of the George Floyd murder, to encourage artistic expression around police violence and accountability. Over the course of the next two years, the LEAP fund will commission artistic projects across multiple disciplines including film, literature, poetry, theater, dance, fine art and music from its campus in Filipino Town.

One of the artist grantees is Jocelyn Jackson, a culinary activist, who created a conceptual menu and tablescape, titled Fixed Price Menu, related to the murder of Philando Castile. The former chef, lawyer and artist's culinary-themed installation was filmed with 360 immersive technology and illustrates the imagined sit-down dinner between Castile and Jeronimo Yanez, the exonerated Falcon Heights, Minnesota

cop who fatally shot the school cafeteria chef at a traffic stop in 2016. The aftermath was streamed live on Facebook by Castile's girlfriend who was in the car at the time along with her four-year-old daughter.

Jackson presents the contrast of how something beautiful can be so heartbreaking and how food is an essential medium for her expression. There is personal detail in everything in this tablescape, intended to personify who was being served on each side of the table.

The tableware is very specific. There's all wood on Castile's side and a square plate to honor the cafeteria trays that were a part of his life as a food worker in the school system. On Yanez's side there are silver plates, indicative of the police officer's badge and also the reflection of a mirror. It wasn't just



Jocelyn Jackson
Photo courtesy of LEAP



his place setting, but also the addition of 16 additional plates, all engraved with the names of those Jackson considers co-conspirators. She wants every person that was part of this experience of exoneration also to be present at this table and held in the same accountability, including Tom Kelly, Derek Chauvin's original attorney in the George Floyd case which starts this week.

"It's important for me to highlight all these names," Jackson tells *L.A. Weekly* in a telephone call from Las Vegas, where she is working on her next exhibition, *A Common Thread*, which expresses her passion for textiles. "Putting a recipe box on the table so we can see where Philando Castile continues to have attention to the students he cared for are important details. I hung a police jacket on one chair and a chef's jacket on the other."

The center of the table is a cornucopia of fruits, vegetables and a flower-filled butter-nut squash that Jackson hollowed out.

"There's one moment in my research that Yanez was involved in pulling over Castile five years before the fatal shooting for the same reason in 2016 – a broken tail light," the artist says. "That really resonated with me, so I got some tail lights and I broke the shit out of them. This was the excuse for such brutality. I crushed those tail lights and made a beautiful centerpiece out of the shards. Those red shards of plastic that gave license for a murder to occur. It was important for me to have that real contrast of pain and heartbreak as well as beauty and the ability of a different choice to be made."

The fruits and vegetables were also very intentional, to indicate that Castile's life was very much attuned to the hundreds of students that he cared for on a daily basis.

"It breaks my heart that the centerpiece coming across the table is the setting of those seven bullets that were shot in his direction. As human beings, we all have to have this contrast in mind, otherwise we go into a place of normalcy and status quo, where we think things like seven mass

shootings in seven days can't occur or aren't occurring – they are."

Jackson created the menu with very intentional ingredients to be able to tell the story and for people to tangibly take these stories and recipes into their very lives and experience them in a way that calls to action and sparks a longer conversation. She created the red velvet cupcake recipe for Yanez's young daughter.

"Castile was about a moment away from potentially being the cafeteria worker that took care of Yanez's child," she says. "Would it have been different that day if the officer had recognized him from the cafeteria that served those elementary school children? I wanted to have those moments of pause, for communication of a different outcome. In the cupcakes I used roasted red beets instead of the standard red food coloring. There's enough difference in that recipe that makes people take notice. Sometimes we assume that something is savory, but when we look at it differently and experience it in a different context from a different perspective – assumption can be turned on its head."

It all rests on a tablecloth made from seven brand new standard navy blue police shirts that she cut up and applicayed. It was a collection process she describes as mundane as it was horrifying.

"I went to the stores and purchased the police shirts, jackets and the bullets in person. It was an important process for me to interact with the present moment of how people engage with security culture. I didn't need credentials for these items. I just needed to answer the question of the person helping me if the ammo was for self defense or target practice. It's the first time I've ever heard of that distinction. It was important to have this representation of the blue line that is in our system right now, destroying what it means for accountability for the killing of people of color."

Experience the powerful 3D installation here. (link)



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AAA Travel Alert: Many travel destinations have implemented COVID-19-related restrictions. Before making travel plans, check to see if hotels, attractions, cruise lines, tour operators, restaurants and local authorities have issued health and safety-related restrictions or entry requirements. The local tourism board is a good resource for updated information.

EXISTING IN A VAKOUM

San Diego duo contrasts the beautiful with the uncomfortable

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



The word “experimental” is a tad overused when describing music, almost as much as “alternative” and not least by we journos. When attempting to nail down the un-nail-downable sounds of San Diego-based duo Vákoum, it serves as a solid starting off point. But one run through the videos for “Spark” and “Airotic,” and it’s clear that we’re only scratching the surface.

Vákoum is Lynchian in its contrast of the beautiful with the utterly uncomfortable. The pair (Natalia Padilla and Kelli Rudick) harmonize so effectively that it sounds less like a classic vocal duo and more like a bona fide instrumental tool. The tones reach Kate Bush

heights – emotional and operatic. But there are two of them, working seamlessly and perpetually complimenting each other. It really is something to behold, and something genuinely experimental.

The duo formed in 2014 in New York. They had been working separately, but knew they’d found their match upon meeting.

“We both like similar music, we think similarly composition-wise,” says Rudick. “So yeah, it started then, and then one day we just decided to form a duo. I basically left New York and Natalia was still there. We were doing this back-and-forth thing, then Natalia ended up moving to the west coast, and that’s when Vákoum really took off.”

Both women understandably struggle to describe their sound, with Rudick cryptically offering that it’s a combination of organic sounds.

“It has a lot of elements,” says Padilla. “It’s experimental in the sense that things don’t sound conventional. It is electronica blended with vocals. It’s a hard question, because we aim to do things that just come from anywhere. We don’t really try to sound like anything else.”

The new single is “Golden Love,” a beautiful and emotive piece of work. It’s semi-representative of the forthcoming debut album, a record Padilla says is hard to speak about because the lyrics are so personal.

“I think structurally [‘Golden Love’ is] different because it’s transitional but not as transitional as the rest of the songs,” says Rudick. “It’s not heavily layered as the rest of the songs. It was the last song that was created. It’s like going

already finished it, but we’re writing new music during this pandemic and I think that a lot of the energy that we’ve been processing during this time feels more collective than ever because this is a global thing. You’re tapping into a whole other thing. Musically, this year will be interesting for all musicians, not just us, but it does feel like there’s this charge that’s going to be coming out in the music.”

Padilla admits that she’s finding it hard to write music during these insane circumstances.

“I find it a little bit difficult to compose, even though I am composing,” she says. “It’s a little bit difficult to experience every day. There are barely any new experiences that are personal that are happening. Nothing is shifting. Everything’s the same, and I find it a little bit harder to find the depth that I personally need to begin something that speaks to me.”

They still had to get the thing finished though. Working remotely with a friend in Mexico, Testa Estudio’s Kabe, it took two months to complete the mixing process.

“We took a long time because we were trying to find the times and then he would mix it from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.,” says Padilla. “Then he wouldn’t have any availability for another week. That fluid process. I think that was hard on me and in my head I was stressed out. I wanted to work at it in a consistent way and it was impossible. It ended up being amazing.”

It truly did but, again, it wasn’t easy. Padilla says that they’re very personable people and working with people from different cities and/or countries was challenging. The name of the band is the Hebrew word for “vacuum,” and that’s particularly appropriate here. But the work has been worthwhile.

They at least were working in a sunnier climate rather than their former New York home. Padilla followed Rudick to San Diego (begrudgingly).

“I lived in New York for about 10 years,” Rudick says. “I love New York but it’s one of those places where I’ve always found myself struggling. The highs are super high and then the lows are super low. I found that just messed up my adrenal glands. I was going through a breakup and I decided to just go out west. Try to relax for three months. Those three months turned into a year, and it became suddenly ok not to suffer all the time.”

While Padilla says that she finds San Diego a “little bit too comfortable,” they chose that city as opposed to L.A. or S.F. because of the location of Rudick’s family.

“At the end this became a comfortable spot to have an actual place where we could have our studio, a garden and a dog,” Rudick says. “Do these things that in New York would be extremely difficult. I’ll always have an insane amount of love for New York. That’s the city I would always want to live in, just not at the moment.”

What you’re hearing from Padilla and Rudick, that odd disconnect with how they’re supposed to feel about comfort, is entirely cohesive with their sound. It’s the dichotomy they’re working with, expertly. Looking ahead to this year, they’ll continue working on it.

“Anything that we can create during this time to obviously prepare ourselves for live shows when that can happen,” says Rudick. “Write new songs obviously, and use any kind of medium that we can during the pandemic to bring out music to share with people.”

Vákoum’s Lynchian album is out now.

RUSS JOINS THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY WITH WONDERBRETT LINE

Popular New Jersey-born rapper Russ is teaming up with Wonderbrett on his Cookies and Cream x OZK cross CHOMP.

BY JIMI DEVINE

New Jersey's finest Soundcloud sensation turned platinum recording artist, Russell "Russ" Vitale, announced today he's jumping into the cannabis industry.

To those who already have their eyes rolled back at this last celebrity cannabis announcement of the month, fear not. He'll be working with the team at Wonderbrett on his new CHOMP lineup that shares a name with one of his popular musical efforts from last year.

We jumped on a call with Russ and the Wonderbrett team to hear the vision for what they'll be putting on shelves this week. Russ kicked it off by speaking to the surprise of it all.

"I know some people might be like, 'I didn't even know Russ was into cannabis.'" Russ told the assembled music industry press and two pot critics. "Just from a business opportunity, the cannabis industry has been something that has always been in the periphery as something that's an interesting opportunity. We just wanted to wait until the right partners fell into place and wonderbread obviously is creme de la creme."

Russ went on to clarify that he almost exclusively smoked cannabis as part of his recording process. So with that in mind, he knew off the bat whatever the collaboration with Wonderbrett came up with, it had to be something that provided a functional creativity aspect to it.

"This was about something that's not going to hinder the creative process and something

that's not going to slow down my thoughts that are just running crazy in the studio," explained Russ. "It's hard to turn off the outside noise as you get bigger and there's more visibility."

Wonderbrett would use its famed OZK and a pheno of Cookies and Cream they got from friends to create the CHOMP. According to the cultivators, a lot of what's going on in the CHOMP comes from the Cookies and Cream

side of its lineage, but the Zkittelz in the OZK that was originally bred in the heart of the Emerald Triangle by 3rd Gen Family brings out some extra exciting flavor notes.

The boxed edition eighths of CHOMP will run \$60 MSRP, the \$45 edition mylar bags will feature eights of smalls for 25% off essentially, and the CHOMP prerolls will run \$15. From our familiarity with the general quality of work coming out of the Wonderbrett lineup, all those numbers certainly seemed fair.

Working with artists is par for the course for Wonderbrett. Founder Brett Feldman considers the whole project one giant art vessel. From the quality of the flower down to the packaging, it's all part of it.

"Our brand is really built on flavor in a cannabis experience, and a curated. Our that goes with it too, from the packaging to the art that goes into creating the product," Feldman said.



CHOMP by Russ x Wonderbrett

"People talk about lifestyle. They overuse that word too much. But in this case, really what cam and I curate for our brand, how we live, the clothing, the music, the logos, the imagery – that's just really how we live in our lives."

In the end, it's about getting every part of that creative process out there.

"We just want to share that with everybody," Feldman said. "And to have somebody like Russ come in and do that with us – expand, create this experience – it's life changing. This is just the dopest thing in my life right now."

Feldman went on to explain the parents of the CHOMP in detail at our request. He said a while back, at the beginning of that brand, they were gifted a Cookies and Cream female from a friend and the OZK Male came from the seed packs they found the B-Real collab in. They used one of the males on the Cookies and Cream female. That project gave them about 10 different varieties.

"From there, we presented a few of them and then we worked with Russ on about four to six of them. Two of them really stood out, and then from the two, we left it up to Russ to really choose which one really fit good," Feldman said. "And actually, what he chose was the number four phenotype of it and we're on the same kick. We like that one as well."

Russ and Wonderbrett fans can find CHOMP first at STIIIZY DTLA. More dispensaries are going to be added daily and it will eventually be sold in Wonderbrett's soon-to-open flagship dispensary on North La Brea in Fairfax.

LA WEEKLY Classifieds

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

MRKTNG

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LAWEEKLY Classifieds

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Financial Manager: Req'd: BS/BA in Bus. Admin., Finance, Fin. Mgmt, or related. Mail Resume: Xen Media, Inc., 3701 Wilshire Blvd. #414, Los Angeles, CA 90010

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Application Development Associate Manager (Accenture LLP; Los Angeles, CA): Develop or update project plans for information technology projects, including project objectives, technologies, systems, information specifications, schedules, funding, and staffing. Must have willingness and ability to travel domestically approximately 80% of the time to meet client needs. Multiple Positions Available. For complete job description, list of requirements, and to apply, go to: www.accenture.com/us-en/careers (Job# 00953048). Equal Opportunity Employer - Minorities/Women/Vets/Disabled.

PHONE SERVICES

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: 21STCP00736 PETITION OF EILEEN LUDWICK FOR CHANGE OF NAME To All Interested Persons: 1. Petitioner: Eileen Ludwick filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows; Present name: Eileen Ludwick to proposed name: Eileen Marie 2. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at

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the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING
Date: May 17th 2021 Time: 11:00am Dept: 26 Room: 316
The address of the court is: SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES. Los Angeles Superior Court 111 North Hill Street Los Angeles, CA 90012 MAILING ADDRESS: SAME.
3. A copy of this Order To Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four consecutive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: LA Weekly.
Date: 03/05/21. Hon, Elaine Lu Judge of the superior court.

LEGAL NOTICES

Summons Notice: State of Minnesota County of Dakota District Court
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Respondent: Willie Lewis Baker Jr.

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