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ON THE COVER:
Photo by Lucas Gouvêa on Unsplash
Mike Hamod has been passionate about cannabis for years. And as his experience with cannabis grew, he became increasingly frustrated with the way the cannabis marketplace has evolved – or arguably, devolved.

He saw problems with the way that cannabis is distributed through dispensaries – problems that most cannabis users can identify but do nothing about. During the height of the pandemic, a friend of Hamod’s called him to lament about his issues in the cannabis delivery and retail space.

“I thought to myself, there are way too many people dealing with these issues when they shouldn’t have to,” Hamod explains. “At that point, I figured that someone should do something about this. That’s when I put the whole concept together.”

His concept was Budbuds, an exclusive cannabis delivery service that will disrupt the cannabis space as a whole. The problems with the cannabis industry in California are very evident to those who consume cannabis on a
consistent basis. Deliveries are often delayed and unreliable, the quality of cannabis has dropped tremendously, there is a deep oversaturation in branding and strains, and, to top it off, cannabis is grossly overpriced. In these days of prepackaged eighths, it’s hard to judge the quality of your cannabis – and if you do happen to like the cannabis, it is hard to repeatedly buy these products, as packaging and cannabis strains are constantly changing and evolving.

Hamod had identified these problems and developed a viable solution: Budbuds, an exclusive, membership-based cannabis delivery company aiming to fully expedite the process of cannabis delivery.

Budbuds is changing the game when it comes to cannabis delivery. What makes Budbuds so unique is that they offer a true farm-to-front-door experience paired with an innovative delivery process using their proprietary technology.

“We have developed a seamless process of positioning our drivers in all of the areas that we serve in L.A., while using a similar algorithm to Uber Eats and Postmates to
optimize delivery,” says Hamod. “This allows Budbuds members’ orders to be delivered in one hour or less, every time. Budbuds’ cannabis is grown and delivered exclusively through Budbuds – there are no outside entities involved, which ensures freshness and quality. With Budbuds, low-quality bud is a thing of the past, as high-quality, triple-A cannabis will be delivered within 10 days or less of being hand trimmed in their cure room. Drivers are vetted and go through a thorough interview process and are paid 50-70% more than average cannabis delivery drivers today.

When you order from Budbuds, your delivery driver arrives at your home in uniform and in a car that is five years old or newer, making the delivery feel more like a presentation and less like a drop-off.

Another exciting aspect of Budbuds is their packaging and branding. Budbuds has four exclusive cannabis brands:

- Fleur, a rose-themed cannabis brand, has a sleek black and red packaging design. Fleur packages are often delivered in a black Fleur shopping bag complete with 12 roses adorning the box. Spliffany and Co. comes in a Tiffany Blue package that evokes the minimalist luxury of a jewelry box. Bloom is a floral-themed brand with white and pastel colors, and GRN is a brand that leans on an earthier aesthetic featuring grass on its packaging.

The fantastic packaging is a stark contrast from the current state of cannabis packaging which sees stickers stuck on
prepackaged eighths and random strains dumped into Ziploc bags.

The colors, materials, kitting and branding of Budbuds makes their cannabis products feel more like designer goods and less like bags of weed. Most importantly, the flower used across all of these brands contain the best cannabis you can find on the market, with all four brands toting strains that are comparable in potency and freshness.

The question becomes, if one lives in Los Angeles, how can they become a Budbuds member and start getting premium weed delivery?

Hamod explains that the exclusive nature of Budbuds is one of the chief reasons the white-glove service can operate the way it does. "Only 10–20% of the market buys truly top-shelf products and we only want to cater to the person that wants a top-quality product," he says.

Budbuds only serves members of their service and their membership is invite-only. The team at Budbuds vets every applicant through web research and oftentimes interviews whoever referred the potential member to further gauge if they are a good fit for the service.

When asked about Budbuds’ ideal members, Hamod explained that they were looking for "members that go for exclusive, high quality brands, and are looking for top quality products in every segment of life."

Budbuds kicked off the start of their service with a bang this past weekend with a members-only event, and the list of attendees was very exclusive, including some of our favorite celebrities and influencers. The event featured a circus at an outdoor venue in Hollywood, complete with a Ferris wheel, magicians, clowns on stilts and carnival games, with cannabis and Budbuds merchandise as prizes, of course.

To top it off, there was an indoor VIP area within the event that functioned as a bumping nightclub complete with a performance stage, a stage that was graced by both a Myles O’Neal DJ set, and later in the night, a performance from Grammy-winning rapper Roddy Ricch. This star-studded event is a testament to Hamod and Budbuds’ commitment to the social aspect of cannabis consumption, as well as the high standard to which member admission is held. Hamod sees many cannabis-infused ideas for events in the future, including movie nights, exclusive club events, and even paintballing—all, of course, only for Budbuds members.
BLACK FAMILY OWNED POPPY + ROSE KEEPS BLOSSOMING
Planting The Seed With Sweat Equity And Family Ties

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

When Michael and Kwini Reed opened Poppy + Rose inside the Los Angeles Flower Market in 2014 near Skid Row, there wasn’t a single bank that wanted to take a chance on them. Lenders all told them the restaurant business was just too high risk, even though they were approving loans on others. Michael already had a thriving catering business, so they scrimped and saved every penny from each catering event. He did all the renovations himself - the tilework, the bar, the bookshelves and the lighting behind the bar. The only thing he left to the professionals was the stove hood. After cooking all day and working events in the evening, he’d come back for five hours and work on the restaurant, putting a ceiling up and spray-painting countertops.

“We didn’t really have a budget in the beginning,” the Culinary Institute of America graduate tells L.A. Weekly. “We couldn’t get a bank to give us a traditional loan at the time because they looked at restaurants as high risk - especially a Black-owned restaurant, even though I had business partners.”

The fully owned and run family business got off its feet with the financial help of friends and family, and pure sweat equity. Since then they have opened the beautiful Poppy + Seed garden restaurant in Anaheim and are preparing to expand further with Poppy + Rose West Harbor in San Pedro, which also will have a large garden to bolster the kitchen and will offer dinner and elevated grab-and-go items.

“It helps keep generational wealth within the family. Even with the new property, if we fall short and need to raise a little bit more money, the only people we are going to are our family. We come from a family where our brothers and sisters have good jobs, and capital. I’d rather have them invest in us with a sure brand that is moving forward. We know how to run our company. I would rather just keep it all in the family, and have them see the returns and build their portfolios rather than some bank.”

That sense of community runs very deep in the Reed family. As Kwini puts it, “to whom much is given, much is required.” At Poppy + Rose, the staff hands out anywhere from 20 to 30 free meals everyday, as well as larger giveaways where they activate at least 100 meals. They currently have started the same practice at the new Poppy + Seed in Anaheim.

At the start of the pandemic in March of 2020 - even during the shutdown while the restaurant was closed - the husband and wife team used their positions as restaurateurs to bring hope to thousands of people throughout Southern California, through a charity they created called the UNI Coalition (as in YOU and I). They’ve helped get homeless and formerly incarcerated Angelenos off the streets by giving them the opportunity to start careers in the kitchen at Poppy + Rose. They’ve raised funds to get homeless neighbors into rehabilitation facilities, and they’ve worked to donate over 3,500 meals, 150 coats...
and blankets and 1,500 water bottles (in partnership with Mountain Valley Spring Water) to those living on Skid Row. At Christmas they gave more than $5,500 away to people who directly messaged them on Instagram regarding unpayable medical bills, student debt and more.

But of all the obstacles along the way, staff challenges and rising prices post-pandemic have hit the hardest.

"The toughest thing about keeping the business running right now is staffing and being able to compete in the industry that is just throwing money at the situation and taking advantage of the shortness in staff," Michael says. "It's getting brutal out there. Employees are coming to me, telling me they're getting calls from bigger hospitality companies offering disgusting amounts of money for positions that we can't keep up with. We're not a Hyatt or a large conglomerate, we're a small business. Another big challenge right now is managing the customer's expectations. Prices are increasing, wages are increasing and the customer still doesn't understand that if things are increasing for us, things are going to increase for you. We feel that sometimes we get the short end of the stick because we are Black owned, people expect more from us. People expect for us to constantly always be present, always in a good mood. I don't think we get the same amount of grace when we do have a shortfall and are struggling in an area like staffing and things that are out of our control. I don't think that barrier is there for minorities and Black business owners. According to Kwini, employees are getting poached right under their noses, cold calling asking for referrals and trying to lure good employees away.

"They are offering $20,000 to $30,000 over salary or $10 or $15 over hourly, so they're offering dishwashers $25 an hour, line cooks $27 an hour," she says. "The big hospitality chains are doing it all over LA. They're slowly taking out the small companies like ours, so we have to rely on our relationships with our employees; hopefully they see that we've been good to them and stay."

"But we really believe that the goodness we put out in the world will come back to us," says Kwini. "As long as we're staying positive, we're just running our own race. Whatever that looks like and whatever obstacles are put in front of us, we're just running our race. It doesn't matter what's happening around us, if things are rising or falling, employees are leaving or staying, I just know that because of the foundation and seeds we have planted and who we are as people, we're going to be OK."

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RuPaul’s Drag Race was a silly, sassy fashion-driven frolic of a TV show when it started in 2009. But somewhere along the way, it became a lot more, presenting a new paradigm for self-expression, gender identity and human acceptance. Today it’s a bonafide cultural phenomenon. RuPaul Andre Charles is more than a gorgeous, funny Black man in fierce frocks – he’s an inspiration, a fashion icon, a business person, and a cultural visionary who continues to elevate not just the LGBTQ+ community, but encourages support and acceptance for all.

As the 14th season is underway, Los Angeles’ own Kerri Colby remains a top contender. Colby, whose real name is Elyse Alessandra Anderson, is one of four transgender participants seen on the show this time out. She and fellow L.A. performer Kornbread “The Snack” Jete (aka Demoria Elise) both started the competition openly trans, with two others on the show coming out since it aired. Jasmine Kennedy shared her transgender identity just last week during a heartfelt episode of the Drag Race’s after-show Untucked, and Bosco, aka “Seattle’s Demon Queen” (real name Chris Constantino) did so just before that on Instagram, citing Colby and Kornbread as inspiration for revealing her true self. This season also had its first straight cisgender male queen, Maddie Morphosis, eliminated in episode 6.

With conversations surrounding trans issues, as well as the differences in gender and sexual preference, pronouns and presentation, each more prominent than ever, Drag Race is more relevant than ever as a platform for understanding how others live their truth. It’s still entertaining as hell, too, with dazzling runway fashion and hilarious challenges. LA Weekly had the opportunity to chat with two ground-breaking L.A. queens a few weeks ago (a third L.A. contestant, June Jumbalaya, was eliminated in episode 3 of this season). We spoke just before Jete had to leave the competition due to an ankle injury (and even though the badass babe is gone, she is not forgotten).

Our colorful conversation provided an insider perspective on what it’s like to be on one of the most popular reality shows in “herstory,” and a lot more.

The following is an interview excerpt. Watch the full Zoom chat on LAWeekly.com.

LA WEEKLY: First of all, it’s really exciting to see L.A. being represented by two, actually three, wonderful queens. And you are both doing really well. So I wanted to hear from each of you first off, just to find out what it’s meant to even just be a part of RuPaul’s Drag Race?

KERRI COLBY: It’s literally been a dream. For me personally, it’s something that I used to dream about a lot when I was younger. I just was like, ‘Oh, my God, what a fantasy it would be, to be on the show.’ And it’s amazing how life works, because things you never expect would happen, can happen when you just don’t know shit about yourself. And I know more about myself now.

That makes total sense. What about sharing yourself? We don’t want to do any spoilers or talk about what’s not been shown, but just in a general sense… Kornbread, you’ve revealed a lot about your family history. A big, consistent component of the show is learning about each contestant and their background and their struggles with family. I’ll ask both of you, but Kornbread, since we’re talking about it, did you find that to be a challenge?

KJ: Absolutely not. Everyone around me can tell you, I am very transparent about who I am. Going to the show, knowing how things work, you have to make yourself connect with America or the world within an hour’s time, in a room full of 13 other super talented people who also have stories, who also have journeys. My thing was going on this show, I was going to be as real and as transparent as I could possibly be. You’re going to get my loud, crazy stuff, and you’re going to get these mood swings that I have as well. And if I don’t like something, I’m going to tell you that I don’t like something… I wasn’t going to fear what the public would think or fear what the fans would say. If you like me, you like me, if you don’t, you don’t. That’s not my problem. So my mindset was just go in here and be as transparent as possible because you never know who you can speak to with just your story. And there was also a moment of realizing my family and things – when you try to express yourself to family or even to friends, there’s always a stopping point with them trying to give their opinion. When it’s not opinion-based, it’s just you trying to express yourself. So I knew going on Drag Race, there was no way they could interrupt what I had to say. And it was the best way to do it. Did I think [speaking about family turmoil] was going to happen that early? Absolutely not.

Kerri, what do you have to say about going in knowing you’re going to be revealing a lot about yourself and your story, and being vulnerable in that way?

KC: Honestly. Kornbread is right on the money. It really is something that, at least for me, I think some girls may not prepare for. But if you’re in that headspace where you’re going on the show to win, and you have that mindset of like, ‘I want to be the best I can be, I want to do the best I can do, I want to really
You both really connect on screen. What about being prepared for drama? As viewers, we enjoy watching that. The little disagreements and that kind of thing. Is that something either of you thought of, like, ‘Oh, I’m gonna try to be nice, or like, no, I’m here to win.’ What were your mindsets in terms of getting along with the other queens?

KJ: I’m an extremely nice person. I’m an extremely giving person. If I disagree with something, I want to speak about disagreeing with something. It’s not necessarily going in thinking ‘oh, I’m going to be nice, because you’re going in with that mindset, you’re not going to give your authentic self.’ You have to be your normal self. And if something makes you upset, or if something even makes you happy, you have a natural reaction.

I don’t even think situations that I had on the show were necessarily drama. It’s just disagreements between people. Not everybody’s gonna have the same opinion and the same mindset or the same agreement. So, for me, it wasn’t drama. On the show it’s just two people having a conversation with heightened personalities who have two different mindsets. We come from different worlds. And, of course, the world likes to see drama, they’re gonna make what they make of it, but at the same time, and it ain’t no damn drama. It’s called being a human being. And there’s not one human being out there that can say they have not gotten into it with somebody before about a disagreement. Plain and simple.

Let’s talk about representation. Obviously, Drag Race has been a boundary-breaker for representation for drag in the queer community and for people of color. Also representing different parts of the country. More recently, it’s been a platform for trans performers. As I mentioned earlier, you representing Los Angeles brings a sense of pride for a lot of us. What do you think about that? It being Black History month is also meaningful.

KC: It’s emotional for me. There’s a lot in this season that was so eye-opening about the power of representation, and the representation of just authentically living in your truth. For Kornbread and me, we represent being a humaan being. And there’s not one human being out there that can say they have not gotten into it with somebody before about a disagreement. Period.

KJ: On the first episode of our season, a Black trans woman won the mini challenge, and an African American trans woman won the maxi challenge. But also, L.A. representation was phenomenal, not just because of Kerri and I, but also due to June Jambalaya who needs as much credit and I personally feel should be having this conversation, because June is Los Angeles, too, and she won her lip sync. And that was the first time literally, an African American person who won the mini challenge, the maxi challenge, and one of the lip syncs, and also all three of us are from Los Angeles. The representation is there!

RuPaul’s Drag Race Season 14 airs on VH1.
CALIFORNIA PRESENTS COVID-19 ‘ENDEMIC’ PLAN

As the current COVID-19 surge continues to dwindle, California introduced an endemic plan to “live with the virus” going into the future.

BY ISAI ROCHA

C alifornia Governor Gavin Newsom presented the state's endemic plan for living with SARS-CoV-2, saying “there is no end date” to the pandemic.

With that in mind, the state introduced the S.M.A.R.T.E.R plan, an acronym that stands for Shots, Masks, Awareness, Readiness, Testing, Education and Rx.

“This plan… has come a long way from our mindset a few years ago,” Newsom said on Feb. 17. “The issues around a smarter plan mean nothing unless you’re ready. We are representing a readiness to make sure we can adapt in real time.”

California health officials plan on simplifying the protocols surrounding COVID-19 after two years of announcing pages worth of regulations.

Secretary of California Health & Human Services, Dr. Mark Ghaly said the state has a lot of immunity and knowledge of how to combat the virus now.

“Today’s an important day, not because it symbolizes some lifting of some important requirement,” Dr. Ghaly said. “It’s really about… the need to balance. Balance between the healthy, humble respect of a virus that has wreaked havoc on our lives.”

Ghaly added that the plan is not about “moving on, but moving forward,” as it is not assured that the virus will go away.

Newsom outlined the three main goals the state attempted to preserve in the midst of the pandemic, which were minimizing the strain on the state’s healthcare system, keeping staff and the public safe, as well as keeping businesses open and school attendance in person.

“We are moving past the crisis phase, into a phase where we will learn to live with this virus,” Newsom said. “We will maintain a readiness posture and stay on top of the nature of change that is so self-evident with this pandemic and disease.”

The state plans to continue vaccinating residents in accordance with guidance from health officials. The state has teamed with more than 800 community organizations and 200 mobile clinics in attempts to distribute vaccine doses.

“It’s not about getting to immunity—that was our old phrase—it’s about keeping up your immunity,” Ghaly said.

Despite dropping mask mandates in most situations, the state “strongly recommends” that people wear high quality masks in high-risk areas. The state has stockpiled 75 million masks in the event of an emergency or shortage.

At least 30 million over-the-counter COVID-19 tests have also been stockpiled, with Newsom saying the state is working to make at-home tests more affordable.

An internal investigation was launched on the East Los Angeles CHP division, finding that between January 1, 2016 and March 31, 2018, $226,556 worth of fraudulent overtime hours were allegedly logged by the officers.

“Trust is a critical part of successful law enforcement,” California Attorney General Rob Bonta said. “These defendants disregarded the law through their alleged actions and did so without thought of how their conduct would impact the California Highway Patrol or the community that trusted them to protect and serve.”

It is alleged that the officers may have logged the extra hours when working protection detail for Caltrans workers through the Maintenance Zone Enhanced Enforcement Program, or the Construction Zone Enhanced Enforcement Program.

A red flag was found during a 2018 audit of hours, where CHP Captain Chris Margaris noticed the East L.A. division, one of the city’s smallest departments, logging in up to three times the overtime hours of some of the CHP’s largest covered areas.

Margaris then found inaccuracies in the Caltrans details, leading to the belief that the officers “may have submitted for and received compensation for overtime assignments not physically worked.”

The L.A. County Sheriff’s department arrested the alleged officers involved between February 15-17, with arrangements scheduled for all 54 officers between March 17-18.

FORMER COUNCILMAN HERB WESSON MAY FILL VACANT L.A. CITY COUNCIL SEAT

Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez introduced a motion to have former councilman Herb Wesson fill the 10th district seat left vacant by councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas.

If confirmed by the council, Wesson will again take the 10th district seat that he held from 2005, until the end of 2020.

“With over 30 years in public service representing the residents of Council District 10, there is no better choice at this time than former Councilmember Herb Wesson,” Martinez said on Feb. 16.

Councilman Ridley-Thomas was suspended by the council in October, after a 20-count indictment for federal corruption charges stemming from an alleged bribery scheme in his time as an L.A. County supervisor. Ridley-Thomas is still awaiting trial and has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Since the suspension, Karly Katona, Ridley-Thomas’ Chief of Staff has overseen matters relating to the 10th district.

Pending a majority vote from the council, Wesson may take over the seat until December 31, 2022, unless Ridley-Thomas is acquitted or has all charges dropped at a sooner time.

“My neighbors have once again called on me to serve and it is my responsibility to answer that call,” Wesson said. “I hope to do the residents of the 10th proud.”
**MESSAGES FROM MERCURY**

Alt-hip-hop crew **Mercury & the Architects** follow up EP with new single “I Don't Fit In.”

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

**T**

Mercury & the Architects was born – to bring that music to the world.”

Ferranola describes the sound as “very lyrical and melodic.” Hip-hop certainly plays a part, as does alt-rock. The likes of Eminem and even Linkin Park are references, as the male/female vocals create a beautiful juxtaposition.

“I’d say working with LYNZI has definitely evolved the sound,” says Ferranola. “The sound has evolved through the years. We’ve experimented with classic rock genres. We like to explore a lot of different genres, I’d say. One of the lines in the newer songs is, ‘Ride the wave but keep the message.’ I always feel as if we’re trying to evolve sonically with the times while keeping the integrity of the lyrics and the music.”

After meeting in Costa Rica, Ferranola and LYNZI wrote a song called “Punching Bag,” and they were up and running as a songwriting partnership. The latest single is “I Don’t Fit In,” and that follows their last EP, Message From Mercury. For now, don’t expect an album.

“I think we’re going to be going on this single run for a little while,” says Ferranola. “Some of these songs that we have, they deserve their own moment in time. We have a collection of work that we would consider to be a collection of work, but I think they all need their own spotlight and their own time. It’ll probably be a run of singles for a little bit.”

The band essentially do everything themselves, from writing and recording to producing.

“We’re going crazy over here,” says LYNZI. “I think we’re going to be going on this single run for a little while, “ says Ferranola. “Some of these songs that we have, they deserve their own moment in time. We have a collection of work that we would consider to be a collection of work, but I think they all need their own spotlight and their own time. It’ll probably be a run of singles for a little bit.”

The band essentially do everything themselves, from writing and recording to producing.

“We’re going crazy over here,” says LYNZI.

Looking ahead, Ferranola wants to keep Mercury & the Architects busy.

“We’re going to be consistently dropping new music every month, a new single for the rest of the year,” he says. “We’re playing live at Madame Siam on Feb. 22, and we’ll continue to book shows, as well, throughout the year. We also have a private club, the Architect Club, that we’ve started for people who really love our music and connect with what we’re doing.”

Plenty to look forward to then.

The “I Don't Fit In” single is out now.
POT SOCIAL EQUITY APPLICANTS STILL WAIT FOR PRIORITIZATION

One of the few retail success stories from L.A.’s social equity program spoke with us on the perils that continue to face Black-owned cannabis locally.

BY JIMI DEVINE

The last year in Black cannabis in L.A. has been a weird one. Now this week, as we celebrate all Black-owned businesses in L.A. here at the Weekly, we’re taking a look at a sector that continues to face big hurdles but is thankful for the wins of 2021.

One of the biggest success stories so far to come out of the city’s struggling social equity program is Gorilla RX. The dispensary was founded by Kika Keith. Since the moment Gorilla RX crossed the finish line in becoming L.A.’s first official social equity dispensary, Keith has continued to be a champion for her peers who have put in a lot of time and money over the years to join her as a success story. Her work has even expanded to the national level with the Minority Cannabis Business Association, where she now serves on the board.

“Yeah, I’m always happy to say that I’m the first, and then I quickly take a breath and say but there’s too many of us that haven’t got across the finish line and that there still are not successful models to incubate, to train, to educate and to provide capital,” Keith told L.A. Weekly.

Keith noted additionally there is little oversight and monitoring of what’s happening to these applicants that are struggling. This includes everything from those that are in huge disputes with their investors, lost their properties, or have lost their inheritance.

“There has been nothing done to address this sort of civil rights issue that’s happening,” Keith said.

Of the 186 pre-ICO dispensaries, Keith noted six of them were owned by African Americans.

“I think three have closed their doors already,” Keith said. “And then out of 200 [Social Equity Applicants], you have five of us who have our doors open. There is a lot more work to be done here. We’re still yet to be prioritized.”

One key aspect of social equity anywhere is those companies participating in a program, be it L.A. or the East Coast, get to market quickly before the pie is essentially chopped up between folks that aren’t from communities that were hit the hardest by the enforcement of cannabis laws. We asked Keith if it’s frustrating watching others continue to cut ever-growing pieces of the pie, as her fellow equity applicants sit in limbo.

“It’s Jim Crow all over again,” Keith replied. “And it was deliberate. You watched it happen in every single city and state where they rolled out social equity, and that’s why I know that it was deliberate. That’s why I know it was designed to fail.”

Keith spoke of numerous investors that she spoke to as early that said their strategy was to wait it out. They knew that it would take so long that they could cut back and get these licenses down the road for pennies on the dollar. You only need to look to Keith’s inbox to see it now happening. Keith said the would-be equity carpetbaggers source the emails through the lists of the approved applicants.

“All these different companies soliciting social equity applicants because they just get an email and solicit folks to take their licenses,” Keith said. “And I believe that it was very deliberate from the time that they could get $10 million, but there was no budget to fund social equity to the time that they had that $8 million, and it took them two and a half years to start the grant program.”

Keith went on to say we have to remember the intent of social equity was more than just the licenses. There were three pillars and that included a gainful living wage, employment for communities that were affected by the war on drugs, and the reinvestment of tax dollars.

“We’ve made close to half a billion dollars in taxes and you can’t tell me programs of South Central Los Angeles that have gotten tax dollars from this cannabis money,” Keith said.

“For the ones that get their doors open like ourselves, our tax bill of $140,000 instead of being able to hire more people in my community, it has been a true miscarriage of justice.”

When asked if she was able to take pride at all in the fact there is more Black-owned cannabis in L.A. this year, Keith noted communities of color have historically gotten used to rejoicing in the small victories.

“And one thing we can’t lose, especially as Black people, is hope,” she said.

Keith believes one of the most effective things the city can do at this moment is provide real hands-on support. The two-hour online training so far hasn’t been an effective tool for creating success for applicants. But with the world opening back up hopefully, there is a chance for something better.

“Sitting in front of a computer reading books and just reading the policy is not an effective model for education for adult learning,” Keith said. “And so I would hope that now that there is an opportunity that you can’t use the excuse that you have to do it on Zoom.”

Keith wants them to rethink things and look at the population that this program was designed for, to create learning modules that are effective. She doesn’t believe that’s happening at the moment.

For her part, she’ll be opening a mock dispensary right next to her shop to begin training programs for those hoping to get a foot in the door in cannabis.
David Heredia’s ‘Little Heroes of Color’ Make a Big Splash

Books and virtual workshops that empower and teach through the arts

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

David Heredia’s Heroes of Color arts education company uses the appeal and verve of comic books, animation and online world-building to teach K-12 students about the rich histories of their communities, empower young artists, and offer professionals the development tools and platform to promote cultural inclusion in their own careers. As Heredia tells L.A. Weekly, Heroes’ origin story reads a little like a comic book itself.

During the worst months of the pandemic, Heredia says, “I was just trying to figure out what everybody else was trying to figure out — how to survive.” Then he started getting calls. Schools from elementary level to colleges were reaching out to him, because they had seen his books like Little Heroes of Color that specifically speak to representation, pride and joy, his Art Activism conference work, or the inclusion workshops he was doing for companies, and they were having issues of race that they felt he could help them address.

It was less about campus culture and more, as Heredia says, “that the students are artists and the question that kept coming up for them was that they wanted to express how they feel in their work, but they were afraid to do it. Their thesis film is their calling card to the industry, and maybe Nickelodeon or Warner Bros. may not hire you if your film is about police brutality, you know. So how do they navigate that? Do they hide what they’re feeling, or do they just openly express it?”

Leading those conversations made a big impression on Heredia. And then he came across a lady on Instagram doing similar workshops on race with children on race, and he thought he should check it out. “I wanted to see one of the workshops. You know, I have three kids and I told them to come be a part of it. So we’re sitting there watching this woman in action and she says, ‘I used three books in my workshop to help teach kids about race.’ She picks up the first one, she picks up the second one, and you’re not going to believe what the third book was. She picked up the Little Heroes of Color book and I was like, ‘I’m in another world right now.’” He realized he could design his own workshops for kids, and conduct them remotely — answering not only the question of the urgently needed subject matter, but also the question of reaching students forced into remote learning situations.

While in many ways the confluence of pandemic circumstances and social justice reckonings woke people up to the value of Heredia’s vision, he’d been at it for years before the current scourge of racist academic censorship came into play. (His book hasn’t been banned from a third-grade library yet, but give it time.)

“I did a video in 2015, which was part of what became the Heroes of Color Video Series,” says Heredia. “There are four episodes. The first one was on the Harlem Hellfighters, an all-Black military unit that fought in World War One. Now the reason for even creating this was because of something that happened to my daughter in school. She was told in kindergarten that she was brown-skinned and ‘they don’t like brown-skinned people.’ Another child told her that. So I was angry and I was also very confused because I thought well, I knew that it was inevitable. It was going to happen, but not so young. So I was like, okay, you know what, I need to do a better job at letting my daughter know that there are so many people who look like her who have done remarkable things and that they’re not only athletes or singers or dancers, they’re intellectual people as well, scientists and writers.”

So he started digging up some research, and around this time, his son who is interested in comic books wanted to know if there are any Latino Black superheroes. “So I’m searching for that, too,” he says, “and in my search, I googled ‘heroes of color.’ That’s what I googled and I started getting the names of real people, not comic book people, and I’m like, oh, this is, this is nuts, you know! I’m college-educated and I’ve never heard of half of these people. And that’s when I formed my company, Heroes of Color. And I did that first video and I think it was almost like therapy. I felt I had so much on my shoulders, and when I made that video I released it all. I didn’t care what anybody thought.”

That was seven years ago. In January, Little Heroes was featured in the Brooklyn Museum and the New York Times and the day of the interview, Heredia had already conducted one workshop. In fact, he’s been tapped for so many by so many different schools in New York, and increasingly closer to home in Los Angeles, that he’s hardly had time to draw in months. Instead, it’s been all about what the kids are creating.

“The reason why it keeps getting picked up is not because of the art of creating a comic..."
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said petitioners desire to have his name changed from ALEX COUP to ALEXANDER MESTER. Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that all persons interested in the said matter of change of name appear as indicated herein above and there to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. It is further ordered that a copy of this order shall not be granted. It is further

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 21LBCP00219 Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles located at: Long Beach Courthouse 275 Magnolia Ave., 1st Floor Long Beach, CA 90802.Filed On 12/03/21 - In the matter of Petitioner MARBELA TRUJILLO. It is hereby ordered that all persons interested in the above-entitled matter of change of name appear before the above-entitled court to contest the petition. You may appear as indicated herein above and there to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Court Date: 01/28/22, time: 8:30 a.m., Courtroom 305 located at Long Beach Courthouse 275 Magnolia Ave., 1st Floor Long Beach, CA 90802. And a petition for change of name having been duly filed with the clerk of this Court, and it appear

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS STATEMENT 20210407FOR The following persons are doing business as 1. WRAPPED WITH LUCES 2. MOLCIE S. LA AIRPLANE SERVICES Street address: 836, BROADWAY ST SUITE 800 LOS ANGELES CA 90014 MAILING ADDRESS: 802 SOUTH COCHRAN AVE LOS ANGELES CA 90019 Articles of Incorporation or Organization Number: A-KON 201600050004 REGISTERED OWNER(S): 1. MK AIRPLANE INDUSTRIES LLC 2. SOUTH COCHRAN AVE. LOS ANGELES, CA 90011. This business is conducted by an LLC. The date registrant started to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above: N/A. NOTICE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBDIVISION AA OF SECTION 17900: A FICTITIOUS NAME STATEMENT EXPRESSES YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK, EXCEPT, AS PROVIDED IN SUBDIVISION BB OF SECTION 17900, WHERE IT EXPIRES 40 DAYS AFTER ANY CHANGE IN THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE STATEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 17905 OTHER THAN A CHANGE IN RESIDENCE ADDRESS OF A REGISTERED OWNER. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2014. THE FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE APPRAISAL OF ENTITY FORM. THE FILING OF THIS STATEMENT does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under Federal law, or common law (see Section 17905). This FICTITIOUS BUSINESS STATEMENT does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under Federal law, or common law (see Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). This FICTITIOUS BUSINESS STATEMENT does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under Federal law, or common law (see Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). 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