

MESSAGE

Special Pride Edition
Summer 2026



In The Meantime Men .org

In The Meantime Men's Group, Inc. is purposed to enrich, empower, and extend the lives of intergenerational Black men, respectful of sexual orientation, through social, educational, health, and wellness programs and services.

Programs and Services

Daily

Mental Health

Telehealth psychotherapy
Peer counseling

Sexual Health

HIV Counseling and Testing
Linkage to STI Screening
Linkage to PrEP, PEP
Linkage to Care
Case Management/
Linkage Services

Weekly

Every Tuesday
BROTHERS REACHING BROTHERS,
Intergenerational social networking and discussion group.

Monthly

MYLIFE 2.0, Social networking and discussion group. Ages 18-39.

Quarterly

LOS ANGELES BLACK MEN'S TASK FORCE,
Intergenerational meeting FOR THE SAGES,
Social networking discussion group, and social events.

Annual Activations

February

National BLACK HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

June/July

Juneteenth/Black LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration

August

Black Gay Men's Wellness Month

September

Umoja Retreat


December


World AIDS Day Anniversary Celebration



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HOW'D I DO IT?

BY CHARLES McWELLS

They were my best friends: crack, marijuana, and alcohol. I did everything necessary to be with them as often as possible. They repaid my loyalty by doing for me what I could not do for myself: they took away the pain of not fitting in. Little did I know that these friends would one day take away everything I cherished in life: my family, my health, my home, money, and jobs. In the end, they nearly took away my life.

But I eventually found a way out of the nightmare of addiction. The 12-Step program of recovery gave me a new lease on life. In May 2008, I entered an addiction treatment facility. Three recovery groups a day, weekly mental health therapy sessions, meetings with a sponsor, maintaining a recovery journal, reporting on myself and other program residents when a house rule was violated. I had to learn how to live with people I didn't like, do chores I thought were beneath me, and be open to suggestions from others.

For six months, I labored to “uncover, discover, and discard” the

character defects that were blocking me from my Higher Power. And in the process, I learned a critical truth: Drugs and alcohol were only a symptom of my problem. In fact, after the first half of the first Step, drugs and alcohol aren't even mentioned. That's because my real problem wasn't that I smoked crack (although that definitely wasn't a good idea); the real problem was the way I thought. Changing my belief system would change the decisions I made, which, in turn, would change my actions, and that would change the results I experienced in life.

But I'm not sure that has been the case for a large portion of today's young newcomers. It seems as if relapse rates are higher among this population than they were when I was new. A number of factors may account for this. Rather than having hit bottom, many people in the new recovery generation are introduced to the Steps after getting “a nudge from the judge.” A traffic stop can lead to a minor possession charge, but the judge can offer to vacate the charge if

the defendant accepts a 30-day stay in a treatment facility. Many times, as soon as that commitment has been completed, the defendant is “gone with the wind.” This person may be a potential addict/alcoholic, but a 30-day stay in a program is probably not long enough for them to reach that conclusion, let alone do the kind of intensive Step work that is needed to change character defects. Similarly, treatment facilities may offer refuge from the streets for some unhoused individuals. But in many cases, their motivation may be “three hot's and a cot,” not long-term recovery.

Then there's the growing acceptance of harm reduction as a treatment modality. “Meeting the client where she or he is” can mean accepting the client's use of alcohol or marijuana. But does requiring that these individuals attend abstinence-based 12-Step meetings give them a mixed message?

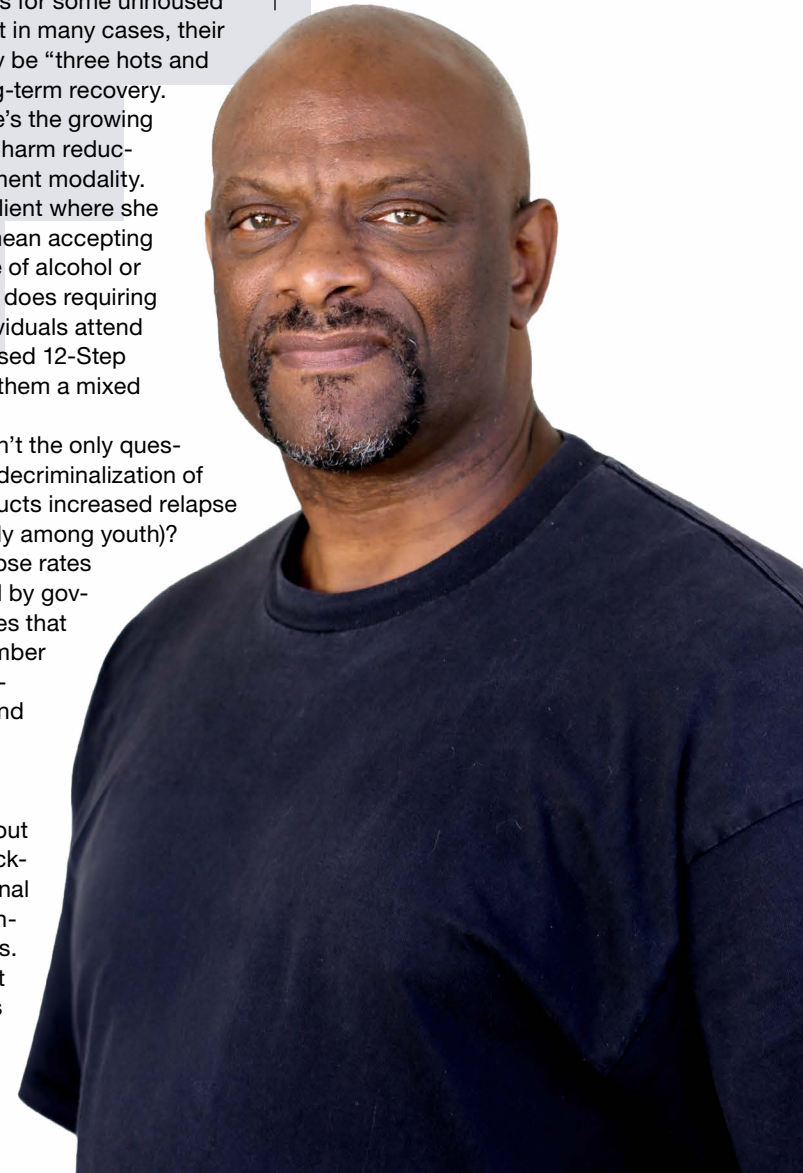
These aren't the only questions. Has the decriminalization of cannabis products increased relapse rates (especially among youth)? How have relapse rates been impacted by government policies that restrict the number of days an individual can spend in a treatment program?

And all of this is playing out against the backdrop of a national epidemic of fentanyl overdoses. We can't forget that thousands of people are dying every

year, long before they have the experiences to determine whether they are an addict.

For me, turning my life over to a Higher Power that directs my actions and keeps me safe, sane, sober, and serene has been the best decision I've ever made.

Charles McWells is a community cultural architect. He is a community-based researcher, HIV advocate, filmmaker, and playwright.



HAUS OF MERCIER

BY JUAN MERCIER



TURNING MY EXPERIENCE INTO PURPOSE AND MY PURPOSE INTO ACTION

To me, being a successful Black LGBTQ youth in America means learning how to exist fully and truthfully in spaces that were not designed with you in mind and then transforming those spaces through your presence, your voice, and your work. Success is not just academic achievement or financial stability; it is the ability to maintain self-worth, integrity, and vision in a world that often challenges all three.

Growing up, I experienced environments where identity felt like something to navigate carefully. As a Black queer person, I became deeply aware of how people perceive you before you even speak. That awareness shaped me; it made me observant, emotionally intelligent, and intentional about how I move through the world. At times, it also made me question my place and my voice. But over time, I realized that my perspective is not something to hide; it is something powerful.

My experiences have directly influenced my decision to pursue higher education, specifically in film and television production. Storytelling became a way for me to process the world around me and to give voice to people and experiences that are often overlooked or misunderstood. I am especially passionate about telling stories that center Black, queer, and urban experiences in an honest and nuanced way. Too often, these narratives are either erased or reduced

to stereotypes. I want to change that. Attending college has given me the opportunity to develop both my technical skills and my creative voice. Through my coursework, I have written scripts, developed original concepts, and studied the structure of compelling storytelling. More importantly, I have learned how to translate lived experience into meaningful narratives that resonate with audiences.

My goal is to become a writer, director, and producer who creates impactful film and television. I want my work to reflect the complexity of identity, the reality of our communities, and the emotional truth of human relationships. I believe that representation is not just about visibility; it is about depth, authenticity, and ownership. Being a successful Black LGBTQ youth, for me, means building a future where I am not only seen, but where I actively shape the stories that define culture. It means turning my experiences into purpose, and my purpose into impact.

Each quarter, ITMT supports deserving LGBTQ+ Los Angelenos with the King-Bremont Scholarship as they pursue academic or trade-focused higher education. The preceding essay was written by this quarter's scholarship recipient. Students who would like to be considered for future scholarships should visit inthemeantime-men.org, download the application, and contact In The Meantime at 323-733-4868 for further instructions.

FOR THE SAGES

WELLNESS

RESOURCE

Guide



Pick up your free
20-page guide
or scan for an e-copy



COMMUNITY WELLNESS RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Visit the websites of the organizations below to learn more about programs, services, and opportunities for engagement.

IN THE MEANTIME MEN'S GROUP, INC.

www.inthementimemen.org

IN THE MEANTIME Men's Group, Inc. provides social, educational, and holistic health programming that supports the wellness, empowerment, and longevity of intergenerational Black men, respectful of sexual orientation.

AMAAD INSTITUTE

www.amaad.org

The AMAAD Institute delivers holistic, culturally grounded services that promote healing, housing stability, leadership development, and overall wellness in communities disproportionately impacted by health and social inequities.

BETTER BROTHERS LA

www.betterbrothersla.com

Better Brothers Los Angeles creates affirming spaces and culturally relevant programming that celebrates, connects, and empowers Black LGBTQ+ individuals through community engagement, events, and advocacy.

BLACK LESBIANS UNITED

www.blunited.org

Black Lesbians United advances social justice, health equity, and leadership development by advocating for the visibility, wellness, and empowerment of Black lesbian and LGBTQ+ women.

EARTHLIDGE CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATION

www.earthlodgecenter.org

Earthlodge Center for Transformation supports personal growth and collective healing through culturally rooted wellness programs, community education, and holistic approaches to mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

INVISIBLE MEN

www.invisibletmen.org

Invisible Men uplifts AFAB transmasculine and gender-expansive communities through healing, storytelling, leadership development, and advocacy focused on reproductive justice, HIV prevention, and visibility.

MINORITY AIDS PROJECT LOS ANGELES

www.minorityaidsproject.org

Minority AIDS Project provides comprehensive HIV prevention, testing, treatment support, and social services aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing disparities in communities of color.

UNIQUE WOMEN'S COALITION

www.theuwc.org

Unique Women's Coalition empowers Black transgender and gender-diverse communities through advocacy, leadership development, health education, and programs that promote social and economic equity.

PRIDE SEASON CAMPAIGN

BLACK LGBTQ+ WELLNESS

BY JEFFREY C. KING

This PRIDE season, In The Meantime has launched a series of community billboards throughout South Los Angeles featuring a simple but powerful message: “Black LGBTQ+ Wellness.”

Each billboard invites community members to connect with our homepage, www.inthymeantimemen.org and explore an evolving directory of Black LGBTQ+ led wellness organizations serving Los Angeles County.

We have much to be proud of. Together, we continue to stand in formation, “Deeply Rooted” in our foundation of Service and Civility. Today, we celebrate our supporters and allies that stand alongside us. We are the world!

Our individual and collective holistic wellness matters. Our ability to thrive depends on how we navigate both historical trauma and present-day realities.

We are called to remain grounded in ancestral wisdom, drawing strength from our elders, saints, and sages as we move forward together in healing, resilience, and pride.

Jeffrey C. King is a Community Social Architect and Founder of In The Meantime Men’s Group, Inc.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS BILLBOARD LOCATIONS

Unit 1: La Brea Ave, between Coliseum St & Obama Blvd
Unit 2: Crenshaw Blvd, between W 43rd St & Stocker St
Unit 3: Crenshaw Blvd, between Coliseum St & Obama Blvd





MORE THAN A RED CARPET

THE RADICAL VISIBILITY OF THE TRUTH AWARDS

In 2014, the spark that would eventually ignite a national movement began with a simple text message. Founders V. Scott Hamilton and Vincent Holmes invited a small group of friends to a happy hour at a now-closed spot in Downtown Los Angeles. Their

goal was simple: create a space for the Black LGBTQ+ community to network and socialize.

What began as a monthly gathering of 40–50 people quickly evolved into Better Brothers Los Angeles (BBLA).

But the journey wasn't always



In The Meantime at Truth Awards

comfortable. Holmes recalls early mixers where their presence was met with confusion and “uncomfortability” from other patrons. It was clear that the community didn’t just need a place to meet—they needed a place to be celebrated.

The Birth of “Truth”

The ambition for BBLA soon shifted from mixers to a larger vision of celebration: The Truth Awards. The catalyst for Hamilton was watching a major awards show where a Black gay man failed to acknowledge his partner from the stage.

“There needed to be a space where individuals could be their authentic selves,” Hamilton explains. “It goes hand in hand with visibility. We’re not only affirming ourselves—we’re showing the larger Black community that we exist.”

Financed with personal savings, the first gala was booked at the Ebell of Los Angeles for 150 people. By showtime, they were squeezing in extra tables. For 12 consecutive years, that momentum has never stopped.

A Platform for Pioneers and Allies

From the legendary Jewel Thais-Williams (owner of The Catch One) to icons like Colman Domingo, Lee Daniels, and TS Madison, the Truth Awards has become a premier stage for Black LGBTQ+ achievement. It has also become a home for fierce allies like Jenifer Lewis and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. Emmy Award-winning actress Sheryl Lee Ralph and her D.I.V.A. Foundation have been partners since day one.

“Celebrating these pioneers is

not just an acknowledgment; it’s a call to action,” Ralph notes. That call to action has resonated far beyond Los Angeles.

From Local Mixers to Global Impact

In 2020, the Truth Awards “set Black Twitter on fire” when Zaya Wade made her first red carpet appearance alongside parents Dwyane Wade and Gabrielle Union. This viral moment coincided with a pivot to a virtual format on FOX Soul, bringing the “ballroom experience” to screens from Mississippi to Ghana.

For Holmes, the goal was always global: “We wanted to make sure boys and girls... could see themselves and be proud of their identity.”

Investing in the Future

While the Hollywood glitz is undeniable, with the event moving to the iconic Beverly Hilton in 2024, the true heart of the Truth Awards lies in its investment in the next generation.

■ **Scholarship Milestone:** To date, the event has awarded over \$400,000 in scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students.

■ **Historic Giving:** A major highlight of the 2026 ceremony was an anonymous \$100,000 donation, the largest single contribution in BBLA history.

As Hamilton and Holmes prepare for 2027, their mission remains as clear as that first text message. The Truth Awards isn’t just an awards show; it’s a living testament to Black LGBTQ+ resilience, ownership, and the power of living out loud.

“The Truth Awards was our opportunity to say, ‘Here we are!’” says Hamilton. Twelve years later, the world is finally listening.

MORE THAN A RED CARPET



MORE THAN A RED CARPET



MORE THAN A RED CARPET



Free STD Screening & Treatment,
HIV Testing & Linkage to HIV Care

WELLNESS ON
ADAMS

Extended Hours



2146 W ADAMS BLVD

Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri: 12pm-8pm
Sat: 9:30am-5:30pm

freeSTDcheck.org



PUBLIC HEALTH
DIVISION



JAMIL A. FLETCHER

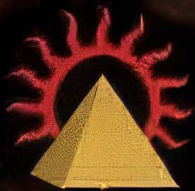
*Entrepreneur
Activist
Community Organizer*

The publisher of *SWERV Magazine*, the nation's leading Black LGBTQ periodical, shares his message on the importance of owning your story. For more than 16 years now, *SWERV Magazine* has been at the forefront of celebrating the culture and community of Black LGBTQ people in this country.

Now Available for Speaking Engagements

Contact:
JAMIL@SWERMAGAZINE.COM

swerv
M A G A Z I N E



IN THE MEANTIME
MEN'S GROUP
PRESENTS

DEEPLY ROOTED STILL RISING

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

FREE EVENT

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

3-7PM

FOOD
DANCING
SPADES TOURNAMENT

2146 W. ADAMS BLVD.
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