

# *Out*

Out100 2022: LGBTQ+ Policy Makers and Advocates Changing the World

[Out.com Editors](#) | 10/27/22

LGBTQ+ Policy Makers and Advocates Changing the World



It's a perilous time for LGBTQ+ rights. 2022 saw a record number of bills from conservative lawmakers attacking our community, including "don't say gay" laws and legislating targeting trans youth and athletes. And in addition to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, an outbreak of MPV sparked not only a new virus to contend with but stigma and misinformation as well.

Thankfully, LGBTQ+ activists, politicians, nonprofit leaders, and physicians are there to fight back and advocate on our behalf, be it on an international, national, or local stage. Below, see this year's Out100 list of folks on the frontlines.

Andrea Jenkins



Winning a seat to the Minneapolis City Council five years ago, Jenkins became the first out transgender African-American woman elected to office in the nation -- as a woman who identifies as bisexual and queer, she made history for those communities, too. This year, with the backing of her peers and constituents, Jenkins was elected council president, with a focus on fixing the institutional racism and disparities that led to the murder of George Floyd, killed by police officers two blocks from Jenkins's home.

"I consider the work that I do to be bridge-building, I work within systems to effectuate systemic change," she says.

Jenkins and Mayor Jacob Frey are currently vetting police chief candidates for a hire who will be tasked with moving the MPD in a more humane direction. The council president is also working to make the city carbon-neutral and defend Minneapolis against the effects of climate change.

Jenkins was first steeped in activism in 1960s Chicago, where she grew up, became involved with the Black Panther party, and developed a love for writing and art -- which flourished in the city's Black enclaves. She moved to Minnesota in 1979 to study at the University of Minnesota (she now has a master's degree in Community Economic Development, an MFA in Creative Writing, and, in 2018, completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at Harvard University). Her political ascent -- she worked as a staffer for the Minneapolis Council for 12 years before her 2017 election -- did not equate to a shirking of her identity. Jenkins was named curator of the Transgender Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota's Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies in 2015.

Jenkins considers her biggest accomplishment this year her election as council president, but also beams over receiving the Pauli Murray Award from Duke University.



"An award bearing the name Pauli Murray is such an incredible honor," Jenkins says of the priest and civil rights leader. "They revolutionized and embodied the idea of intersectionality prior to Dr. Kimberlee Crenshaw coining the phrase." [@shesgotgame1](#)

Lorri L Jean & Joe Hollendonner



Working in the community for decades, Lorri L. Jean has become one of the nation's most beloved and respected queer activists. Jean has led the Los Angeles LGBT Center as its CEO for over two decades and is now passing the baton to its new CEO, Joe Hollendoner -- a 41-year-old health specialist, husband, "doggy daddy," and former CEO of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

Among many other accomplishments during his tenure, SFAF's revenue increased by 84 percent. Now Hollendoner hopes to utilize his expertise to lead the Center into the future. "Following in the iconic footsteps of Lorri Jean is not only my proudest accomplishment this year, but I imagine it will be what I am most proud of for the rest of my life."

"My emerging vision for the Los Angeles LGBT Center is to expand our work to address race- and gender-based disparities within our community," says Hollendoner. "I intend to achieve this by group programming at our sites in East and South Los Angeles, as well as at our Trans Wellness Center. I also want to see our national work expand -- the Center's nationwide advocacy has become incredibly urgent as more anti-LGBTQ+ legislation gets passed and attacks on our equality are made within the courts.... I believe the Center is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in the larger LGBTQ+ movement."

Lorri L Jean & Joe Hollendoner



- 
- 
- 

Lorri L. Jean is "proud" of how the Los Angeles LGBT Center has handled the leadership transition. "[Hollendoner] and I worked together for an entire year before I retired to implement a very detailed onboarding plan. I believe that we were both very effective at doing everything that was required to ensure this transition went smoothly."

Jean also reflects on her more than two decades leading the Center: "I played a prominent role as an LGBTQ community leader and spokesperson locally, nationally, and internationally. I also was responsible for helping to set and drive the Center's mission and ensured that the Center consistently met the needs of our community, all while it remained well-managed and fiscally strong."

As for what's next, Jean admits she is looking forward to pursuing passions outside the realms of LGBTQ+ advocacy, such as painting and traveling with her wife of 30 years, Gina Calvelli, a recently retired attorney. "I plan to spend my remaining years traveling,

spending time with people I love and enjoy, and making meaningful contributions to building a better world." [@lgbtcenter](#)

Maria Sjodin



Nonbinary lesbian Maria Sjodin has held leadership roles at the LGBTQ+ organization OutRight International for more than eight years and recently stepped into the role of executive director. Since joining OutRight, Sjodin has made a huge impact. When the Russian war on Ukraine began, OutRight launched a fund to support LGBTQ+ people who were suffering. To date, OutRight has distributed over \$1.6 million dollars to 39



organizations to support LGBTQ+ people there in need of food, shelter, transportation, mental health support, and more.

"In time of crisis, LGBTIQ people face high risks and are more likely to fall through the cracks due to bias and invisibility," says Sjodin. "But thanks to individuals from over 80 countries who have donated to the fund, OutRight has been able to "channel that solidarity and help those in need."

Before joining OutRight in 2015, Sjodin was the executive director of RFSL, Sweden's largest LGBTQ+ organization (and also one of the world's oldest). In this role, she successfully advocated for marriage equality and abolished forced sterilization for trans people who want to change their gender legally.

As for the future of OutRight, Sjodin has big plans. Currently, the nonprofit has staff in 12 countries, and is hoping to expand, especially in the Global South. OutRight is also working to end conversion therapy practices in Africa and fight against gender-based violence and sodomy laws in the Caribbean.

"I very much believe in the idea that we are here to do what we can to leave this world in a better place than how we found it," says Sjodin. "I couldn't be more proud, galvanized, and excited to take the helm of this organization, the largest of its kind that is focused on global LGBTIQ issues, and to ensure that together, we make LGBTIQ lives better." [@outrightintl](#)

Rebecca Hart Holder



- 
- 
- 

A veteran in the fight for reproductive freedom, Rebecca Hart Holder had a sense that *Roe v. Wade*'s overturning was imminent and made a tactical decision to take the fight to where she could affect the most change.

"I began my work in abortion access at the federal level nearly 14 years ago. However, I soon realized that protecting abortion access in the U.S. Senate wasn't going to be possible with the filibuster in place and slim Democratic majorities," Hart Holder says. "I have for a very long time believed that the fall of *Roe* was coming and, so, pivoted to state-based work nearly a decade ago. The power of the reproductive equity movement stems from state- and community-based change."

As the executive director of Reproductive Equity Now, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that works to "make equitable access to all reproductive health care, including abortion care, a reality for all people," Hart Holder is on the frontlines of the fight for reproductive freedom. And as a queer person, she's uniquely positioned to understand the throughline from abortion access to LGBTQ+ rights.

"For me, the movement for LGBTQ+ liberation and the movement for reproductive equity are inextricably linked," Hart Holder says. "It is not a coincidence that right after Texas banned abortion they went after trans kids. Anti-choice and anti-LGBTQ+ forces are fighting for the same thing: to control our bodies; to control if, when, and how we form families; and to control our right to determine our own future."

In the wake of the leaked *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision that overturned *Roe*, Reproductive Equity Now, along with a broad coalition, shored up abortion access in Massachusetts through what she calls "visionary" legislation.

"Our law includes best-in-the-nation protections for providers of abortion and gender-affirming care, an expansion of access to medication abortion and emergency contraception, and the breakdown of serious cost barriers to abortion and abortion-related care," she says. "We did this because we know a tidal wave is coming."

Hart Holder, describes herself as, "mom to two little ones, wife, advocate, and amateur cook."

"My purpose is simple: leave my square of the Earth in better shape than when I found it. I've known for a long time that I wanted to be a mom," she says. "When my wife and I fell in love, we never imagined we would be able to get married but we always knew we would start a family. I am driven by a deep desire to make the world a better, safer, more just place for my kids." [@rhartholder](#)

Sharon Callahan





At age 60, Sharon Callahan is doing it all: working multiple jobs, raising four children, and sitting on the board of several organizations. In 2018, she was named Industry Person of the Year by Medical Advertising News, and in 2019, the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA) recognized her as its Woman of the Year. How does she do it all?

For more than 30 years, Callahan has been a leader in strategic healthcare marketing, where she developed skills in advertising, medical education, clinical programs, publishing, and digital. In 2016, she also founded her own healthcare advertising agency network: TBWAWorldHealth.

Currently, Callahan is the CEO of CDM, one of the world's leading healthcare advertising agency networks. Since 2016, she's also been chief client officer at Omnicom Health Group, which is the world's largest and fastest-growing network of health care communications companies. But her greatest accomplishment this year, she says, is surviving her first year with one-year old twins.

In her spare time, Callahan sits on the board of many organizations, including the LGBTQ Victory Fund, GLAAD, HBA, the Arthritis Foundation, Women Against Alzheimer's, and the Coalition for Healthcare Communications. Callahan sees being a board member for these organizations as part of her greater purpose. "Aside from loving my family, my purpose in life is to use whatever resources I have to amplify underrepresented voices," says Callahan. "That's why I sit on the boards of the LGBTQ Victory Fund and GLAAD, because representation matters -- in government and in the media."

As for the future, Callahan doesn't have any plans to slow down. Truth be told, we could all use a little bit of Callahan's dedication and energy in our lives. [@tbwaworldhealth](#)

Stacey Stevenson





Forty-two years ago at the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, a group of gay dads founded the Gay Fathers Coalition to fight for LGBTQ+ families. Decades later, the group changed its name to Family Equality, which has been led by CEO Stacey Stevenson since March 2021.

Stevenson came to Family Equality from Charles Schwab and Co. But working on issues of diversity and inclusion is not new for them. While at Schwab, Stevenson was the local and national co-chair of Schwab's Pride Employee Resource Group, where they advocated for safe and inclusive workplaces.

Since joining Family Equality last year, Stevenson has expanded the organization's focus from protecting LGBTQ+ youth and their families in schools to lowering barriers to parenthood in their community. But her proudest accomplishment this year was hosting Family Week in Provincetown, the largest gathering of LGBTQ+ families in the world.

"Due to the current state of affairs for LGBTQ+ families in this country, cultivating resilience in our community is just as important as the legal battles we face," says Stevenson. "So, hosting almost 2,000 people during Family Week in Provincetown...this year felt much more meaningful to our families. Nearly 600 families from nine countries and 35 states joined us this year, and the joy and tension release were felt throughout the week."

Stevenson knows that the fight for LGBTQ+ families is far from over, especially as one half of a Black, married, lesbian couple that raised two boys of color in Texas before their family moved to Washington, D.C. While in Washington, they hope to "stand in [their] power and create space for the underserved and marginalized so that no one is left behind." [@staceylstevnson](#)

E.C. Pizarro III



E.C. Pizarro III is a Black/Afro-Latino queer man of trans experience who is working at the intersection of social change and digital art. An award-winning designer with a BFA from the Art Institute of Virginia Beach, Pizarro simply describes his work as "liberation through tech and design."

Currently, Pizarro is the executive director of [TransTech Social](#), an organization founded by trans actress Angelica Ross to provide LGBTQ+ people, particularly trans individuals, with skills in technological literacy, programming, and coding. Pizarro has been involved with TransTech since 2017 and was named its executive director in 2021.

"With the work we do at TransTech Social, I feel like I can combine my passion for tech and love for my community," says Pizarro. "I do not take this opportunity lightly. I plan to continue working for our mission to employ, empower, and educate the most marginalized in our communities."

Pizarro is also the creative director of his own design firm called 1Z2R, where he works to create timeless branding for small business owners. One of his favorite projects this year was working with Minister Toya, a Black queer wedding officiant and marriage coach.

Looking ahead to next year, Pizarro is excited to grow TransTech Social and build his client base at 1Z2R. In addition, thanks to a community grant from the Transgender Justice Funding Project, next year Pizarro will launch Marsha's Web, a resource directory centering BIPOC, transgender, and intersex organizations.

"This year has been full of growth that is continuously blowing my mind. But I am ready for every new experience it brings," says Pizarro. "This is the first full year that I have worked for myself and my community. When I think of what's next for me, I simply think, 'More of this please!'" [@ecapthree](#)

Julian Cyr





It seems Massachusetts State Senator Julian Cyr, 36, was destined to hold public office. At age 16, Cyr organized a student-led effort on Cape Cod to ensure that education was fully funded in public schools. Later in life, Cyr led grassroots organizing for Governor Deval Patrick and President Barack Obama's reelection campaigns in Cape Cod and its surrounding islands.



Now, Cyr is in his third term as a state senator representing Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket, and is among the youngest senators in Massachusetts.

"I'm a collaborator and a big thinker," says Cyr. "I'm not afraid to shy away from the steep challenges that face the region I represent: a \$4 billion wastewater problem; the climate crisis that puts these coastal communities very much at risk; the deployment of harm reduction strategies to save lives in the opioid epidemic; [and] to the reform of a too-often racist criminal justice system on Cape Cod."

Since being elected, Cyr's determination has been met with great success. Earlier this year he introduced statutory protections for transgender people seeking access to essential healthcare, including individuals who may have to travel from out of state. These protections ensure that gender-affirming care is a civil right in Massachusetts, and were subsequently signed into law as part of a larger package related to abortion access.

Cyr is particularly proud of the work he has done for the LGBTQ+ community. This also includes his work on monkeypox, deploying hundreds of vaccines in a matter of days. He was also instrumental in orchestrating aid for the Venezuelan immigrants flown to Martha's Vineyard from Florida last summer and "calling out yet another political stunt by [Governor] Ron DeSantis going after vulnerable people."

"I represent and advocate for LGBTQ people across Massachusetts," says Cyr. "In a state known for historic LGBTQ firsts, in recent years, we've been resting on our laurels. I'm challenging Massachusetts to do better." [@juliancyr](#)

Karine Jean Pierre



American political advisor Karine Jean-Pierre made history this year when she was appointed as the White House press secretary in May. In addition to Jean-Pierre being the first Black person to assume this role, she is also the first out LGBTQ+ person to do so.

Jean-Pierre says it's among her proudest accomplishments to have become part of "the most diverse administration in history. And honestly, [one that] is delivering.... This president is delivering results for the American people. You just look at policy after policy after policy -- they are historic, and they lean in on equity. They lean in on not leaving anybody behind."

"And we are tackling problems other administrations have only talked about," adds Jean-Pierre. "Lowering prescription drug costs, investing in the fight against climate change, bringing student debt relief to millions and millions of people.... I know I'm on the right side of history."

Despite how far she's come in life, Jean-Pierre admits that self-doubt has been an obstacle for her at times -- but explains it can also be a gift.

"I actually think that sometimes we could be our own worst enemies, you know? We could be the ones that get in our own way, especially as women," she says. "I always am trying to break through that obstacle, making sure that I'm not the one that's getting in my own way.... We are our harshest critic -- but because we are our harshest critic, it makes us the best at what we do. It makes us so much stronger; it makes us so much better."

Born in Fort-de-France, Martinique, and raised in Queens, NYC, Jean-Pierre now lives in the Washington, D.C., area with her partner, CNN correspondent Suzanne Malveaux, and their daughter.

"I want to continue to be visible," says Jean-Pierre. "I *will* continue to be visible. I will continue to be public. I will continue to call out the bad behaviors from radical Republicans that we're seeing. And I will say that this country is stronger when we're united, and everyone has a seat at the table." [@kjp46](#)

Kenneth Russell DeGraff



It's a good time to be Kenneth Russell DeGraff. As senior policy advisor to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, DeGraff is riding a wave of recent Democratic wins. "I take a lot of pride in playing whatever part I can in enacting as much of President Biden's vision into law as possible," DeGraff says. "We have had a lot of success -- and the Inflation Reduction Act's historic climate investments are obviously close to my heart."

As part of his role as senior policy advisor, DeGraff helps the Speaker craft, promote, and pass bills with a special emphasis on technology and the environment. In practical terms, he helps disparate Democrats -- and even some Republicans -- coalesce around legislation by smoothing over disagreements, finding common ground, and employing just a bit of horse trading. His deft hand has helped Democrats expand low-cost broadband internet, boost America's scientific leadership and technology production, and ensure the new 988 suicide prevention hotline serves LGBTQ+ youth via a partnership with the Trevor Project.

DeGraff's ability to get things done and keep the Speaker happy has turned him into one of the most powerful gay men in Washington -- yet he stresses altruism over ego. "Whether we're tackling the climate crisis, addressing energy prices or investing in cutting-edge research, I have the amazing privilege of working with some of the nation's most talented, devoted public servants," he says. @russelldegraff

Sarah McBride





For most of Delaware State Senator Sarah McBride's life, politics and government have been at the forefront. At just 14, McBride volunteered on a political campaign and when she was a student at American University, she served as the institution's student body president. From there, McBride came out as transgender and landed an internship at the White House, where she was the first out transgender woman to work there in any role.

Since then, McBride's life has continued to include many firsts. In July 2016, McBride spoke at the Democratic Party Convention and became the first openly transgender person to address a national party convention. In 2020, she was elected to the Delaware State Senate, and became the first openly transgender state senator in American history.

Her decision to run for state senate was personal, as she lost her husband Andrew Cray to oral cancer in 2014. "When Andy ultimately lost his life, we were both lucky because he had the insurance necessary to get the health care he needed to live as long as possible and we both had access to benefits that allowed us to take time to focus on him, his care, and one another," shares McBride. "Those things shouldn't be a matter of luck or privilege; they should be the law of the land."

Since McBride was elected, she has had much success. Earlier this year, her Healthy Delaware Families Act became law, which establishes paid family and medical leave in Delaware and is the largest expansion of the social safety net in modern state history.

"[I hope to] do as much good as I can for as many people as can for however long I can," says McBride. "Elected people can't stop all loss or all pain, but we can make life a little bit easier for people when hard times hit." That she has certainly done. [@sarahemcbride](#)

Lama Rod Owens





Lama Rod Owens, 43, is a person with many talents: he is a spiritual leader, Buddhist minister, bestselling author, activist, yoga instructor, authorized lama, and queen who describes his teaching as "based on supporting people in embodying personal and collective liberation through the path of contemplative practice." He is also the cofounder of Bhumisparsha, a Buddhist tantric practice and study community.

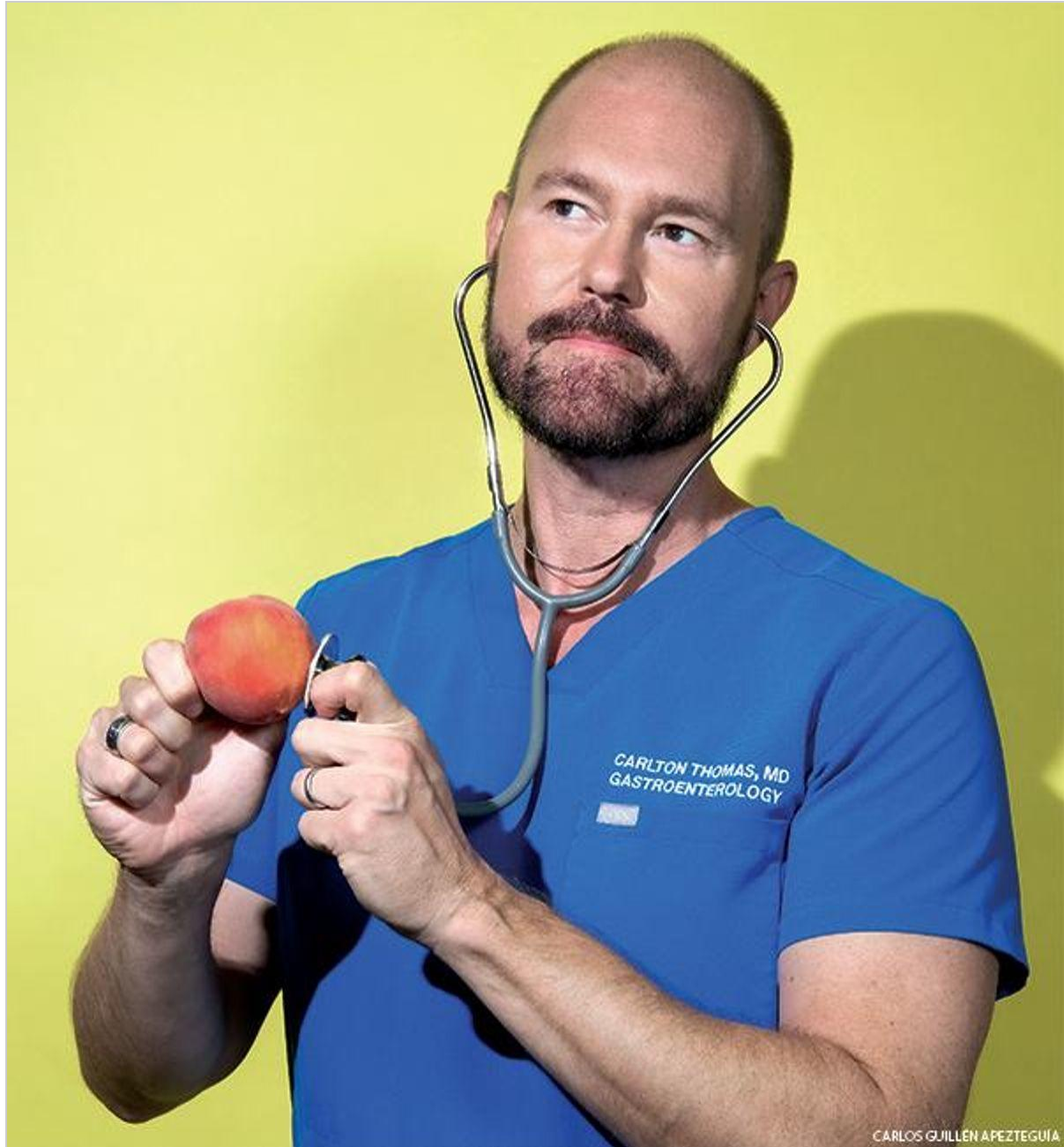
Owen's journey has been far from easy. "When I decided to train to become a lama or Buddhist teacher in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, I did so having no role models or examples of other Black queer people who came before me," said Owens. "On top of that, the training was spending over three years in a silent cloistered retreat as a novice monk, with no access to media or communication devices."

Despite these obstacles, Owens has become a leader in his field and is especially proud of the two meditation series he created this year for the Calm app. One is about helping people experience support through grieving and the other focuses on coming out.

"I am especially proud of the coming out series because it feels like a gift that I have been able to give back to the community based on the lessons I have learned in my own journey of coming out and developing deep self-love," says Owens.

The theme of self-love carries throughout his work, as Owens believes that his purpose in life is "to help people remember they have a right to be loved and to extend love regardless of who they are." He says that "this is the most powerful path to personal and collective freedom where we all can have access to resources we need to be well, safe, and cared for." [@lamarodofficial](#)

Dr. Carlton Thomas



CARLOS GJILLEN APEZTEGUIA



Sex education often leaves queer people out, which leads to knowledge gaps within the community. But Dr. Carlton Thomas, a Mayo Clinic-trained gastroenterologist, is seeking to change that with his sex-positive social media platform on [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#).



Dr. Thomas has made videos about PrEP, PEP, DoxyPEP, proper STI screenings, and immunizations. As a self-described "butt doctor" and gay man, he also lends his expertise on aspects of how to have great anal sex, including diet and douching, lubrication, and relaxation and positioning techniques.

"I feel like no one really got queer health and sex education in school and there is so much we all need to know," says Thomas. "My direct messages are always open for personal questions that people often find too embarrassing to discuss with their doctors."

Earlier this year, Thomas pivoted his work towards the monkeypox virus, or MPV. "There was initial chaos because the mainstream media and even many of our own community sources were not getting information out to where it needed to be," says Thomas. "I felt the need to step up and do my part."

Since May, Thomas has used his platform to make numerous educational videos about MPV, including a live video with White House deputy director Dr. Demetre Daskalakis. Thomas has also used Instagram to share the stories of people who were affected and post more than 1,000 vaccine clinic locations around the world.

"The biggest achievement so far this year has been seeing those case numbers drop," Thomas says. "I feel like my work is an example of the good that social media can do in this world and the difference that one person can make."

In the future, Carlton says he would "love to be the 'gay Dr. Ruth' and have an even larger platform to educate our community." [@doctorcarlton](#)

Dr. Keletso Makofane



The monkeypox, or MPV, outbreak of 2022 has disproportionately affected gay and bisexual men. But fortunately, there are many researchers, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, that are working hard to stop the spread.

One leading figure is Keletso Makofane, Ph.D., a public health researcher and activist at the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University.

Makofane's main research focus is the global HIV response among sexual minority men in eastern and southern Africa. But this year, he pivoted to MPV.

Earlier this year, Makofane and other activists initiated an effort to conduct community-based research to understand how to respond to the outbreak. The project later turned into an initiative to coordinate action across organizations and activists working to address MPV.

Even amid the MPV outbreak, Makofane remained devoted to HIV activism. He is a member of the governing council for the International AIDS Society and sits on the board of LVCT Health, an HIV service organization in Kenya. He also serves on the founding board of Global Black Gay Men Connect, an activist collective that aims to build power to stop discrimination and violence inflicted on Black gay men around the world.

"As an activist, I am down to do whatever I can to help queer people, particularly Africans, lead happier and more dignified lives," says Makofane. "On this front, I have done everything from helping to teach U.N. country missions about HIV among men who have sex with men in New York City to organizing a Pride festival that does not center white, rich people in Johannesburg."

Ultimately, he sees his purpose in life as learning and teaching. "I don't think there is a higher calling than teaching," says Makofane. "When you teach someone to make use of their potential, you fundamentally change their life." [@kts0](#)

Andy Reynolds



GREGORY TREANOR





New York City-based publicist and graphic designer Andy Reynolds's company, Popular Publicity, "represents a broad spectrum of unique LGBTQ authors, photographers, and artists." Projects and clients over the last 20 years include the first Cazwell album, the Miss Gay America pageant, photographer Ron Amato, the Black Party, and this year, the extraordinary queer artist Eva Mueller and queer memoirist Jonathan Alexander.

But Reynolds's interests expand beyond public relations. "As a graphic designer, I'm channeling my energy into my love of book cover design, a series of T-shirts for the HRC [Human Rights Campaign], and my online fashion and home accessories shop, the Tee Service," says Reynolds.

Reynolds says his two proudest accomplishments this year are raising over \$1,000 with his "Say Gay" merchandise -- to help fight the "don't say gay" bills cropping up across the country -- and launching his #AgeismSucks merchandise, or what he calls "battle gear for the war on ageism."

"I took this frank little hashtag to the streets to raise awareness of ageism, convey the pain and frustration it inflicts, and cue others to be mindful of their own attitudes towards people of different ages. And it's working!" says the 61-year-old gay man. "The T-shirts and totes reliably elicit thumbs-ups, positive comments and, as intended, actual conversations about ageism with strangers of all ages."

And the best part is, 10 percent of the proceeds from Reynolds's #AgeismSucks merchandise benefit SAGE -- a nonprofit that advocates and provides services for LGBTQ+ elders -- and the American Society on Aging. Reynolds's "Say Gay" and #AgeismSucks merchandise is available for purchase at [theteeservice.com](http://theteeservice.com).

[@ageismsucks](https://twitter.com/ageismsucks)



