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YEAR in

# REVIEW





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## Resource Center launches a \$4M capital campaign for LGBTQ-friendly affordable senior housing

Resource Center has launched a \$4 million capital campaign for the construction of LGBTQ-friendly and affordable senior housing, officials announced today (Wednesday, Dec. 16). The campaign, led by community advocates Lynn McBee and Phil Clemmons, was prompted by the need to “meet the growing demand for affordable housing and care and services for the aging lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning population in the Dallas community,” according to a statement released this afternoon.

Resource Center has partnered with Volunteers of America and developer Matthews Southwest, the press release noted, and has already purchased property in the Oak

Lawn neighborhood. A recent donation of \$150,000 by longtime Center supporters Stephen Tosha and Stephen Strecansky put the capital campaign over the \$1 million mark.

The Center’s vision for this project is to provide LGBTQ seniors with “affirming opportunities for socialization, recreation and emotional support” and to “transform the way LGBTQ older adults live, access services and develop community support for generations to come.”

The housing project will consist of an 84-unit building with amenities and open green space on a two-acre site near Inwood Road and Denton Drive Cutoff. The site, according to the press release “has excellent access to services and transportation, including the Inwood Road DART Station.” It will also be located about half a mile from Resource Center’s Community Center at 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

The overall budget for the project is about \$23 million; it is expected to be financed with public funds from state and local sources and private mortgage financing in addition to the money raised through the capital campaign.

Resource Center CEO Cece Cox, expressing gratitude for Tosha and Stracansky for their donation, added, “In the wake of COVID-19,

the need to address health and economic disparities is even more urgent. According to a 2020 briefing issued by the Human Rights Campaign, the impact of coronavirus places LGBTQ adults at heightened risk of these complications due to their experiences with poverty and unique medical challenges.

“With a global pandemic exacerbating the issues already faced by this population, a safe and affordable housing project is needed now

more than ever,” Cox stressed.

Resource Center has offered senior-focused programming and services since 2007, and in 2013 resolved to increase the size and scope of THRIVE, its community program for older adults.

For information, contact Senior Development Manager Dean S. Wilson at 214-540-4424 or visit [MyResourceCenter.org/capital-campaign](http://MyResourceCenter.org/capital-campaign).

— Tammye Nash

## pet of the week / ROXY



Meet **Roxy**, a 6-year-old pit bull terrier mix. She is a chunky monkey looking for a home where her adopter will help her regain her beautiful figure. Right now her shape is more of a 70-pound circle, but Roxy thinks that’s just more of her to love! Roxy is a bright-eyed beauty ready to do whatever she can to make her

human friends happy. She’s hoping her future family will spoil her rotten. She’s very playful and enjoys getting fresh air but is also good for a cuddle and a snore on the couch after a long day of playing with her toys. Her whole back end wiggles along with her tail when she sees her human friends coming to say hi to her. Roxy is looking for a home where she can be the only dog, as she would prefer to be your special princess and the center of your attention. Roxy, who is located at our Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas, is spayed and up-to-date on all vaccinations. To make an appointment to meet Roxy, please visit [sPCA.org/adopt](http://sPCA.org/adopt).

In an effort to reduce the potential for spreading COVID-19, the SPCA of Texas’ shelters, clinics, mobile adoption events and mobile wellness events remain closed to the public until further notice. Adoptions are available by appointment only. Adopters will need to submit an adoption inquiry form in order to begin the tele-adoption process and schedule an appointment to complete the adoption. Browse our available animals at [sPCA.org/findapet](http://sPCA.org/findapet) and visit [sPCA.org/dogadopt](http://sPCA.org/dogadopt) to inquire about a dog or [sPCA.org/catadopt](http://sPCA.org/catadopt) to inquire about a cat.

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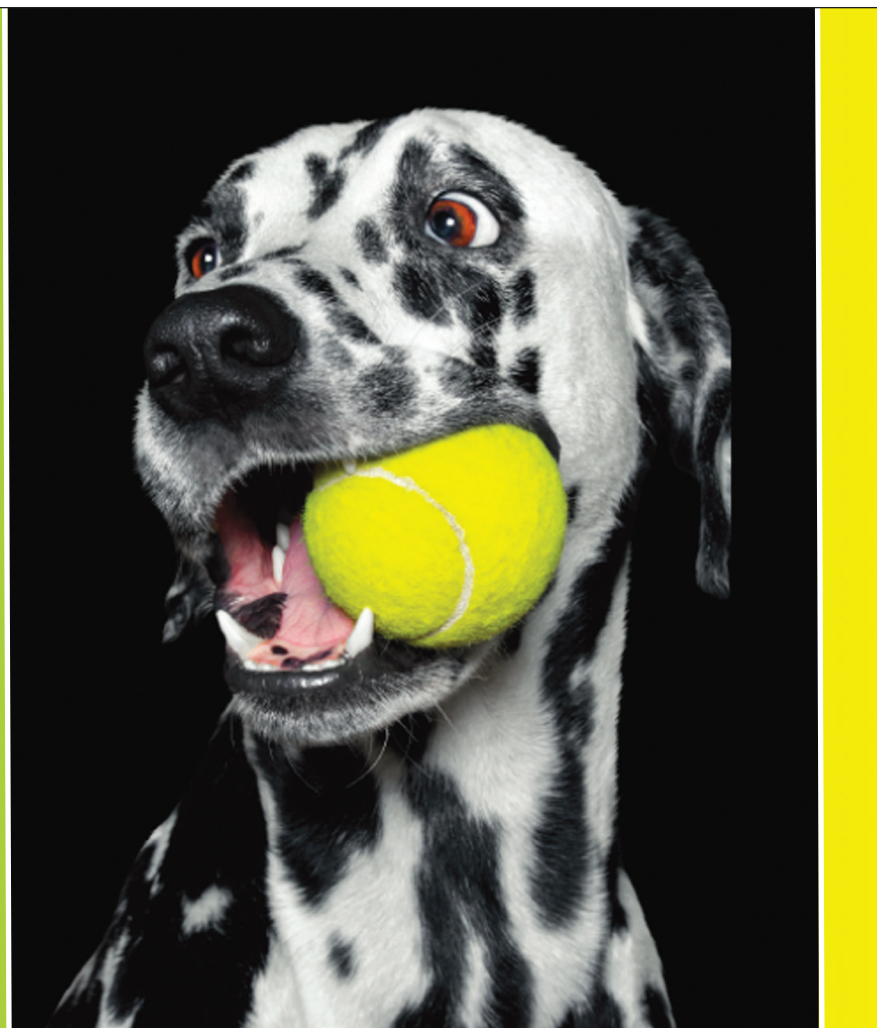
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# 2020: What a year!

**W**hat a year. We have seen pandemics before; we have seen social upheaval, and we have seen contentious elections. But all at once? Not in recent memory.

So how, in a year like this, how do you choose a single “biggest story of the year”? You don’t, of course. Because all of these stories played into and off of each other as the days turned into months. In truth, all these things swirled together to create a volatile mix that continues to fuel a powder keg of a year that might still explode before all is said and done.

This week, Dallas Voice recaps what we see as the top stories from a national perspective: the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 presidential election, the Black Lives Matter movement and social justice causes and the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Bostock v. Clayton County* ruling.

Next week, as we kick off what we all most sincerely hope will be a much better new year, David Taffet will recap our top local news stories.

— Tammye Nash

## COVID-19

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has struggled in the grip of a deadly pandemic that has claimed more than 1.6 million people worldwide — 306,000 in the U.S. alone — and counting. And still, even as the daily death toll in the U.S. has topped 3,000, there are those who insist that COVID-19 is a hoax, “fake news” generated by liberals to undermine Donald Trump’s already flailing presidency.

The first hint that the world was about to change came on Dec. 11, 2019, when the government in Wuhan, China, announced that health authorities there were treating dozens of cases of a new viral disease. Just days later Chinese scientists identified a new form of coronavirus, which would eventually be-

come known as SARS CoV-2, cause of COVID-19.

From the beginning, U.S. President Donald Trump downplayed COVID-19, refusing to listen to his own scientists and health experts, refusing to take any decisive action until it was too late, and refusing to encourage his supporters to follow the CDC’s best practices. In fact, in January Trump told CNBC, “We have it totally under control.” We didn’t have it under control.

The first known COVID-19 death in the U.S. was Feb. 29 in Seattle.

In mid-March Trump finally officially declared a national emergency and allocated \$50 billion in federal funds to states to fight the viral epidemic. The CDC advised against gatherings of 50 or more, and Trump told everyone to avoid gatherings of more than 10. New York City’s public school system — the largest in the country — shut down.

Here in North Texas, officials in Dallas County and Tarrant County began to respond in earnest.

On March 12, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins declared a public health emergency in Dallas County and issued an executive order banning gatherings of more than 500. Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson issued a similar order for the city. Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price followed suit the next day, the same day that Gov. Greg Abbott declared a statewide state of emergency.

At that point, there were 49 known cases in Texas. That number would soon begin to increase rapidly.

Silver Pride was one of the first organizations locally to start cancelling events. Officials with Texas Bear Roundup announced March 13 that the 2020 event — which had started that day — was being cancelled.

County and city officials in North Texas had already ordered bars, salons, gyms and theater venues and other non-essential businesses to close and for restaurants to suspend in-person dining, but Abbott waited until March 19 to is-



Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins announces that the county has declared a local state of disaster for public health emergency in the county, due to more cases of the new coronavirus, on March 12. At right is Dr. Philip Huang, director of Dallas County Health and Human Services. (Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News via AP)

sue an executive order making those restrictions statewide.

The shutdown hit the LGBTQ community hard, because many LGBTQ people depend on the service industry for their livelihoods. With the bars and restaurants salons closed down, all the bartenders, wait staff, drag entertainers, hair stylists and more suddenly found themselves jobless.

The order included hair salons, something that set up a confrontation between Texas’ top Republican officials — Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Attorney General Ken Paxton — and the Democrats in Dallas’ county and city governments after Dallas salon owner Shelley Luther defiantly declared her salon would open anyway because she needed to pay her employees and feed her children.

Luther was cited in late April for violating state and county orders, and then, when Judge Eric Moye gave her the chance to avoid prosecution by simply apologizing, she refused and was sen-

tenced to seven days in jail for contempt of court.

Paxton sent a letter chastising Moye, and gay Dallas City Councilman Omar Narvaez called Paxton out for violating the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct and for interfering in a case involving a white woman while two Hispanic women had been jailed in Laredo for the same offense without any outrage or outcry from the Republicans in Austin.

In the meantime, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the number of deaths attributed to the disease continued to climb. Schools and businesses around the country closed for the long haul while Congress passed a stimulus package many felt didn’t go far enough. Back in the North Texas LGBTQ community, more events were being cancelled. The city of Dallas closed its parks for the Easter weekend. Dallas Pride Executive Director Jaron Turnbow announced that the Dallas Pride festival and parade were being postponed until





Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and President-elect Joe Biden finally declared victory Nov. 7 in Wilmington, Del. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, Pool)

late July; the parade and festival were later cancelled and replaced with a virtual party.

By the week of Thanksgiving, COVID fatigue had set in in earnest. Despite warnings from health experts practically begging people to stay home and avoid large gatherings, people traveled; families gathered for the holiday. And the numbers of new infections and new deaths soared. In Dallas County, as the number of hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients topped 15 percent for the seventh day in a row, Jenkins once again ordered bars and restaurants to close.

As the year finally comes to a close, there is a glimmer of hope of the horizon. The Pfizer coronavirus vaccine was granted emergency use authorization by regulators in the U.S., and the first U.K. citizen was vaccinated on Dec. 8. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued the first emergency use authorization for the Pfizer vaccine in the U.S. on Dec. 11, and a second vaccine, from Moderna, was — at the time of this writing — expected to gain FDA approval by the end of the week.

But there is more darkness ahead before the vaccines bring a new dawn. Experts are warning of another surge to come over the Christmas/New Year's holidays, and as of Dec. 16, there have been more than 17.1 million cases and more than 310,000 deaths.

## The 2020 Election

There was never any question that Donald Trump would be running for re-election in 2020, and few if any questions that the GOP leadership would continue to support him. But the field of Democratic was, well, crowded to say the least. Among them was the former mayor of South Bend, Ind., Pete Buttigieg, the first openly LGBTQ candidate to mount a viable campaign for president and the first LGBTQ candidate to qualify for the Democratic debates.

By the time 2020 began, that field had narrowed to 15, still including "Mayor Pete," but he dropped out on March 1, just before the Texas Primary on March 3, and backed Biden.

That left just five Democrats still in the

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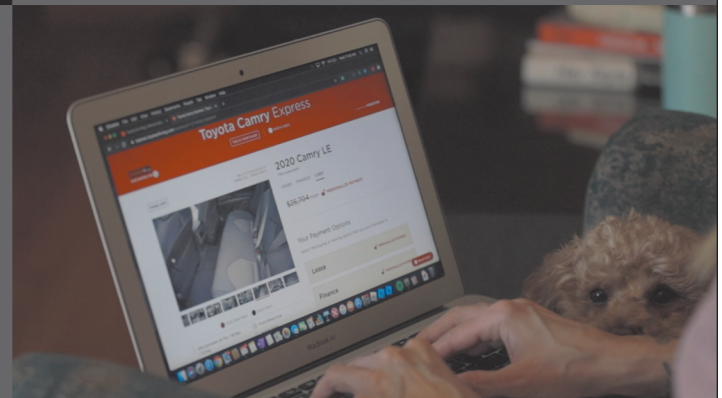
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race, including former Vice President Joe Biden who had been struggling to get any traction early on. But he won the South Carolina primary by a landslide on Feb. 29 and rode that momentum in a tremendous showing on Super Tuesday.

Of the 14 state primaries held on March 3, Biden won 10, practically guaranteeing he would win the nomination. All the others but one dropped out soon after. And at the DNC in August, Biden made history when he chose California Sen. Kamala Harris, herself a former 2020 presidential candidate, as his running mate — the first woman, the first person of Asian descent and the first person of African-American descent to claim that honor.

Trump's handling of the COVID-19 epidemic played a starring role in the campaign; he continued his rallies and refused to wear a mask, constantly ignoring or even countermanding the advice and warnings of his own public health experts. Biden, though, kept his campaign events small; he and Harris always wore their masks and were care-

ful to follow all CDC protocols.

Trump had — and still has — fervent supporters in the LGBTQ community. Richard Grenell, the gay man Trump appointed first as ambassador to Germany and early this year named acting director of U.S. national intelligence (making him the first LGBTQ person to hold a cabinet-level position), promised the community at a Florida rally in October that Trump is "100 percent with us."

But most LGBTQ people disagreed. According to a Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation poll, more than 81 percent of LGBTQ people favored Biden in the election, with 14 percent supporting Trump. Of that 14 percent, most seemed to focus more on what they saw as economic and fiscal issues rather than issues of equality.

The one thing everyone will remember about the 2020 presidential election is how long it dragged on even after all the votes were counted. By the time people started waking up on Wednesday morning, the outcome of the election was still far from clear. Over the



LGBTQ and BIPOC activists in Dallas joined forces for a July 3 march protesting racism and homophobia. (Photo by Nicholas Gonzalez)

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next three-plus days, as mail-in and absentee ballots in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Nevada and Georgia were counted, those states went from red to pink to baby blue to solid blue. And finally, on Saturday, Nov. 7, Biden and Harris claimed their historic victory. When all was said and done, after record turnout, Biden had won the popular vote 81,283,485 to 74,223,744,

Even then, Trump and his team refused to concede, filing lawsuits, demanding recounts and sowing seeds of doubt in the democratic process by continuing to push their false narrative of fraud and a “rigged election.”

## Black Lives Matter

Had a bystander not taken video of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling with his full weight on George Floyd’s neck, Floyd’s death might have been forgotten. Instead, it renewed the interest and outrage of the Black Lives Matter movement.

BLM — founded in the summer of 2013 when George Zimmerman was ac-

quitted in the murder of Trayvon Martin — had faded somewhat from public attention after the 2016 elections. But the movement surged back after Floyd’s murder, becoming a focus of daily protests in cities, large and small, around the country, with activists demanding that the country remember the names, not just of George Floyd but all those who had died at the hands of police or whose murderers had not been met with justice — Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Dion Johnson and so many more.

The Trump administration sent federal forces into the city of Portland, Ore., to quell ongoing protests there. But when officers without any identifying insignia on their uniforms began taking people off the streets at random in unmarked vehicles, the public outcry forced Trump to remove his forces.

Here in Dallas, the controversy over protests came to a head the night that Dallas police, according to witnesses, basically herded a large group of protesters onto the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, trapping them there and then opening fire with tear gas, pepper spray, rubber

bullets and other so-called less lethal ammunition. The city’s gay Mayor Pro Tem Adam Medrano, and gay City Councilman Omar Narvaez stepped in that night to help get those detained on the bridge released and charges dropped.

Also in Dallas, activists in the LGBTQ community — Black and non-black — joined together to hold the DFW Pride for Black Lives Matter protest through Oak Lawn, with hundreds of young people taking to the streets in a march that made a statement and that offered renewed hope for the future to longtime activists like C.D. Kirven.

The number of transgender people — mostly trans women of color — murdered this year continued to climb and now stands at at least 41. Protests like the DFW Pride for BLM march in Dallas helped stress the fact that Black Trans Lives Matter, too.

## Bostock v. Clayton County

With two conservative justices appointed by Trump — Justice Neal Gorsuch and Justice Brett Kavanaugh — already sitting on the U.S. Supreme Court,

activists in the LGBTQ community were leery of how the court would rule in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, a case that consolidated three cases (*Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda* and *R.G.&G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC & Aimee Stephens*) all dealing with employment discrimination against LGBTQ people.

But in a surprising and strongly-worded ruling issued June 15, the court declared that Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act does, indeed, prohibit discrimination in employment against LGBTQ people, handing the community a victory we have spent decades fighting for — one that many consider even more important than the court’s 2015 Obergefell ruling on marriage equality.

The ruling has been one of the few bright spots for the LGBTQ community in a year of strife.

The court’s ruling declared that the word “sex” in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity. But questions remained over whether that interpretation would hold true in other federal statutes, especially the Affordable Care

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Act, where the Trump administration has worked to delete protections for LGBTQ via rule interpretations allowing health care workers to discriminate based on religious beliefs.

The ruling held special meaning for North Texans who had known Don Zarda, especially his partner, Bill Moore, owner of Advanced Skin Fitness in Oak Lawn. Zarda was a skydiving instructor for Altitude Express in Long Island, N.Y., in 2010, when he was fired because he was gay. Zarda filed suit against Altitude Express but was killed in a 2014 base-jumping accident and never got to see his lawsuit help make history.

In the other two cases, Gerald Bosstock sued in 2013 when he was fired from his job with Clayton County after joining a gay softball league; trans woman Aimee Stephens sued in 2014 after Harris Funeral Homes fired her when she told them she was transitioning. Stephens died of long-term health issues in May this year before the Supreme Court issued its ruling. ■



Don Zarda, left, pictured here with his partner Bill Moore of Dallas, died in a skydiving accident in October 2014. But Moore and Zarda's sister continued his lawsuit against the skydiving company that fired him because he was gay. (Photo courtesy of Bill Moore)

## Holiday Greetings from the men and women of CCCC-D.



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## Looking back, looking forward

A holiday message from the publisher of Dallas Voice

As 2020 is (finally!) wrapping up, I decided to take a moment and look back at what has been one of the most trying — and yet satisfying — years I have ever seen. It's been a year of extraordinary challenges, of tremendous lows and tremendous highs.

But I'm also looking ahead and thinking about how excited I am to have supportive advertisers, and all of you, our loyal readers, along with my brilliant colleagues by my side in the new year.

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papers are flying off the shelves, and our website numbers are phenomenal, with more than 742,000 unique visitors

us to provide you with comprehensive news and updates. In this time, we have witnessed a community that craves the news, the

per month.

Over the years we here at Dallas Voice have witnessed and documented many changes that helped us create and write the narrative of our evolution. We continue to publish every Friday without fail, despite the challenges this year has presented.

From day one, we have focused on one mission: to be your voice.

From a new administration, to investments in our community, to promising new vaccines — our future is bright. And it is especially important to highlight the renewed and urgent attention on the Black Lives Matter movement addressing racial injustice, which is so important to heal our country.

The holiday season always reminds me of the many things I am thankful for — family and friends, our advertisers and readers and the staff here at Dallas Voice.

When I walk down the halls of our office, I can see first-hand the passion of our tireless staff. I am amazed at their energy. They have exhausted every talent and effort to bring your voice front and center.

I am filled with Pride at the strong sense of community we have, giving us a solid foundation on which to build a bright new future. I celebrate you; I celebrate what it means to be queer, out, trans, Black, Indigenous, disabled — all the things we are — without apology.

With joy, hope, and inspiration in my heart, I and the staff here at Dallas Voice wish you all the happiest of holidays and the brightest of new years. Looking back, looking forward. ■



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# A hard-working queen

While quarantining back home in Paris, Texas, Shangela found ways to stay active

**TAMMYE NASH** | Managing Editor  
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**S**hangela Laquifa Wadley — aka Paris, Texas native D.J. Pierce — is a “PRO-fessional!” She even has a song that says so — “Werqin Girl (Professional).”

So when the COVID-19 pandemic cut short the first season of *We’re Here*, the HBO docu-series in which she stars alongside fellow RuPaul’s Drag Race alumnae Bob the Drag Queen and Eureka O’Hara, and sent her back to her hometown to quarantine, Shangela used the down time to start up a few more projects. Those include her own line of scented hand sanitizer products (“Shanitizer”) and a new program, in partnership with Spotify, called “The Halleluo Happy Hour with DJ Shangela.”

Shangela also recently guest-starred in an episode of *Station 19* on ABC and in an episode of *Lovecraft Country* on HBO. And she hosted *12 Dates of Christmas: Unwrapped*, featuring the reunion of the cast of the HBO Max reality dating show. And that’s not even mentioning the organization she helped establish, in conjunction with the Actors Fund.

Shangela has been working really hard while she hasn’t been working.

When the country shut down last spring, Shangela headed home to Paris, choosing to spend most of the last nine months of quarantine staying with her grandmother, known affectionately to Shangela’s social media followers as “Grangela,” in the house Shangela bought for her.

Noting that her grandmother played a big role in her upbringing, Shangela said in a television interview last week that she really appreciates having had the chance to spend so much time with her over the last year. Grangela is, she said, “82 and in a wheelchair, and she has been in a tough fight with liver cancer. I got much closer with her during the last nine months, so it was really hard to leave” to get back to work.

“We had a lot of fun this summer,” Shangela continued. *We’re Here* was



Shangela helps you keep it clean with Shanitizer.

nominated for an Emmy Award for “Best Unstructured Reality Program,” but since COVID-19 forced the Emmy Awards program to go virtual, Shangela decided to bring the red carpet glamor home to Paris.

“I set up my own red carpet in the back yard and got everybody to dress up and walk the red carpet with me,” she said. “We had a great time.”

Also during her time in quarantine, Shangela has teamed up with Spotify to create her new podcast, *The Halleluo Happy Hour with DJ Shangela*. The show combines some of Shangela’s favorite music with interviews with some of her favorite people.

The new podcast kicked off Oct. 14 with a show featuring Shangela’s *We’re Here* co-star Bob the Drag Queen. Since then, a new podcast has dropped almost every week — they skipped Thanksgiving week — with each one featuring a different guest star, including trainer and fitness expert Shaun T, singer/songwriter Meghan Trainor and activist Eliad Cohen. Upcoming podcasts will feature composer Mark Shaiman and ‘80s icon Tiffany.

But, Shangela said, “my favorite new project” has been her new signature line of scented hand sanitizers called Shanitizer.

“I am a working girl, you know! Shangela is a pro-fes-sional! I am always looking for my next project, and I am just so thankful that I have people around me who support me in some of

these crazy ideas I have,” she declared.

Obviously, since we are living in the middle of a pandemic, keeping our hands clean is a top priority, and hand sanitizing products have taken on great importance. Shangela said that just like everyone else, she has been using a lot of hand sanitizer over the last year, and she noticed that “my hands always smelled like tequila!” So she got the idea to team up with Spirits Lab, who “helped me produce a line of hand sanitizer that smelled good but are still effective — Shanitizer!”

After going through about 100 different possibilities for scents, Shangela and Spirits Lab settled on three different options: Hallelomon “smells like a fresh cup of lemongrass tea, brewed to perfection,” while Sugar Daddy “smells like a sweet and airy swirl of strawberries and golden baked shortcake.” Then there’s ProFRESHional, which “smells like a clean blend of lush line-dried linen and fresh open air.”

You can purchase Shanitizer online at [Shanitizer.com](http://Shanitizer.com), where the different scents are available for \$10 per single 4-ounce spray bottle, or \$27 for a three-pack of either all one scent or one bottle each.

And here’s the kicker: \$1 from the purchase of each bottle goes to fund another of Shangela’s quarantine projects: Feed The Queens.

“I am always on the go, and I have always been a ‘save money for a rainy day’ kind of person. When you grow

up with not a lot, you learn that when you are making money, you always put some aside for the times when you aren’t making as much,” Shangela said.

“But there are a lot of queens, a lot of drag entertainers, who saw their work, their way of making money, just completely shut down this year,” she continued. “When the bars and the restaurants and the theaters had to close down, a lot of them lost their only means of income. And there were no organizations directly helping the drag queens. They had no checks, no money coming in to buy food. So I asked myself, how can I help? What can I do?”

What she did was to work with The Actors Fund to establish Feed The Queens, an organization that has, Shangela explained, already distributed some \$100,000 in the form of \$400 food grants to 250 drag entertainers in need.

“When you hear these stories from your fellow drag entertainers, it really touches your heart,” she said. “And this is not just me helping; it’s all of us coming together to help people who need help.”

To donate to Feed The Queens or to apply for a food grant, visit [FeedTheQueens.com](http://FeedTheQueens.com).

But now Shangela’s time in quarantine is coming to an end. She returned to Los Angeles last week and, with all the proper safety procedures in place, she and her *We’re Here* family are getting ready to start filming Season 2 of the wildly popular and unexpectedly moving HBO docu-series.

“I am happy to be back at work, and I am so thankful for IVC and HBO being committed to this show and to everyone being able to work safely,” she said. “Me and Bob and Eureka are back again to travel across America, finding these people and helping amplify their stories in these conservative spaces. And as you can see from the recent elections, we have a lot of work to do! We want it to be bigger, with even more sparkle in the second season. But you will see all the social distancing and other measures we will be taking to protect everyone.”

“This is a real-life series, so it will reflect what’s going on in the world right now. And if you thought Season 1 was something, just wait til you see Season 2!” Shangela declared. “And stay tuned to your girl; I am gonna continue to work and create and do what I can to make things better for our community.” ■



# Best LGBTQ+ movies of 2020



From docs to drama to horror, these films stood out

**GREGG SHAPIRO** | Contributing Writer  
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Let’s be honest: The moviegoing experience has lost its luster in recent years. Stadium seating is a good idea, but the pressure of having to choose seats in advance takes the fun out of the hunt. People still talk during the movie — to each other, to themselves, to the characters on the screen. Texting during movies is at an all-time high, and Apple watches illuminating throughout the theater are a distraction. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. Movie theater chains shuttered while the idea of sitting in close proximity to other audience members caused us to shudder. Not that they could have predicted a health crisis of this magnitude, but forward-thinking streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and HBO Max benefited in a big way from the pandemic. The following wrap-up of 2020 LGBTQ+ movies are drawn from traditional, independent and streaming sources.

## Dynamic docs

Lesbian filmmaker Catherine Gund, who has a history of choosing fascinating LGBTQ topics for her documentaries, shifted gears and got somewhat personal with *Aggie* (Strand Releasing), a doc about her mother, the art collector and philanthropist Agnes Gund. In addition to featuring filmmaker and visual artist John Waters among the interview

subjects, *Aggie* is populated with a variety of LGBTQ+ folks.

P. David Ebersole and Todd Hughes’ *House of Cardin* (Utopia), about fashion legend Pierre Cardin, ranks among the best docs on (or off) the rack. What makes this indisputable is that Cardin, who turned 98 in early July 2020, is a strong and vibrant presence in the film. His sense of humor, his indispensable wisdom, his ongoing work ethic and still sharp eye for detail makes him one of the most enduring figures in the world of fashion.

Gay writer and doc filmmaker David France has a knack for uncovering and bringing attention to subjects that deserve it, and that knack was on display in his 2012 AIDS crisis doc *How to Survive a Plague*, as well as in his timely — and somewhat controversial 2017 doc — *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*, which focused on the important role the transgender community has played in the LGBTQ movement. France once again made the most of timing with his difficult to watch but necessary doc *Welcome to Chechnya* (HBO Documentary Films), unflinchingly presenting the facts about the violent assaults, rapes and murders of gay men and lesbians in Chechnya and the efforts of the underground network to lead them to safety.

Documentary filmmaker Daniel Karslake (2007’s *For the Bible Tells Me So*) returns to familiar territory — religious mistreatment of LGBTQ people — in his new doc *For They Know Not What They Do* (DK Works Pictures), telling emotionally-moving stories of families of faith coming to terms with their LGBTQ+ chil-

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■ **MOVIES** From Previous Page

dren, not something that regularly makes the headlines, against the backdrop of the rise in religious-based homophobia and hate speech.

The focus of co-directors Patrick Sammon and Bennett Singer's documentary *Cured* (Story Center Films), is the historic (and revolutionary) 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to declassify homosexuality as a mental illness in the organization's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). While it opens with the viewer discretion warning that it "contains graphic images of past treatments used by doctors to 'cure' homosexuality," many of us are well aware that other insidious techniques, such as so-called faith-based "conversion therapy" are still in practice in 31 states.

First-time co-directors Jen Bagley and Mary Hewey's full-length doc debut *Jack & Yaya* (Freedom Cinema), got more right than wrong in their rendering of the touching true story of lifelong friends, Boston-based schoolteacher and visual artist Jack and waitress and performer Yaya, both of whom have their own transgender experience.

**Drama queens and  
laughing matters**

*Benjamin* (Artspolitation), from gay writer/director Simon Amstell (think of him as a gay male Hannah Gadsby), is easily one of the best 21st century rom-coms, gay or straight, that you can find. The titular character, Benjamin (a fantastic Colin Morgan) is a socially awkward and insecure gay filmmaker who falls in love with musician Noah (Phénix Brossard), and systematically destroys both the relationship and his new movie. Benjamin is laugh-out-loud funny, tear-jerker sad and thoroughly enjoyable.

In recent years, Sebastián Lelio's Oscar-winning 2017 *A Fantastic Woman* and Sean Baker's 2015 *Tangerine* have gone a long way in raising the bar when it comes to intelligent and powerful depictions of trans people on screen. The same can be said for gay filmmaker Flavio Alves' *The Garden Left Behind* (Queens Pictures/Autonomous Pictures). The garden in the title refers to the one in Mexico left behind by undocumented Tina (trans actress Carlie Guevara), who is in the process of her transition, and her abuela Eliana (Miriam Cruz) when they moved to New York when Tina was a young child. Alves has found a way to balance the daily traumas of their lives with incredi-

ble moments of human connection.

A queer 21st century take on Cyrano de Bergerac, *The Half of It* (Netflix), lesbian writer/director Alice Wu's first full-length feature film since 2004's *Saving Face*, takes viewers to high school where extremely bright student Ellie (Leah Lewis), who makes bank writing term papers for her classmates, is enlisted to write love letters from Paul (Daniel Diemer) to Aster (Alexxis Lemire). The problem is that Ellie is also in love. To say more would give away an essential plot point, but it's well worth watching the movie to see how it unfolds.

Gay filmmaker David Freyne's Ireland-set queer rom-com *Dating Amber* (Samuel Goldwyn Films) is a retro time capsule set in 1995, a couple of years after the decriminalization of "same-sex sexual activity" in that church-oriented country. Unfortunately, being queer is still considered cause for ridicule and abuse on the military base in the town where queer high school students Eddie (Fionn O'Shea) and Amber (Lola Petticrew) live. But Amber has a plan that forever changes the classmates' lives as it restores our faith in the power of love and friendship.

If you can overlook the confusing finale, James Sweeney's queer rom-com *Straight Up* (Strand), about the severe sexual identity crisis gay millennial Todd (Sweeney) undergoes, is funny and touching, often in the same scene. Sweeney deserves to be commended for creating an admirable and entertaining feature-length debut. ■

**this week's solution**

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To submit an item for inclusion in the Community Calendar, visit [Tinyurl.com/dvevents](http://Tinyurl.com/dvevents).





### Queen Nefertari's Egypt at the Kimbell

Nefertari was one of the most celebrated queens of ancient Egypt, the favorite wife of Ramesses II (reigned about 1279–1213 BCE). She was highly regarded, educated and could read and write hieroglyphs. Her tomb was discovered by an Italian archaeologist in 1904, and the pieces on exhibit at the Kimbell come from the collection of The Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy. *Through March 14 in the Piano Pavilion at the Kimbell Museum, 3333 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth. \$18. Tuesday-Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday noon-8 p.m. KimbellArt.org.*

### Dallas Zoo Lights has been extended

Dallas Zoo Lights has been reimagined for this year as a drive-through event. Cruise through a newly constructed pathway — and through familiar parts of the Dallas Zoo — while marveling at more than one million lights in elaborate displays, silk-covered animal lanterns depicting all your Zoo favorites, an ice palace fit for a trio of penguins and more along the way. *Dallas Zoo, 650 S. R. L. Thornton Freeway \$65 per car. From 6-9:30 p.m. Extended through Jan. 9. Tickets at ZooLights.DallasZoo.com.*

### Holiday at the Arboretum features 12 Days of Christmas and a Christmas village

Strolling through Holiday at the Arboretum has become a Dallas tradition. The gardens feature two large-scale exhibits: the classic 12 Days of Christmas depicting each day in the beloved carol with 25-foot tall elaborately decorated Victorian-style gazebos and the return and expansion of The Pauline and Austin Neuhoof Christmas Village highlighting 14 old world European-style shops in a magical setting. *Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Road. Check website for hours, prices and purchase timed tickets at DallasArboretum.org.*



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Friends at The Teddy Bear Party



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Hola papi

q-puzzle

Translating the crown

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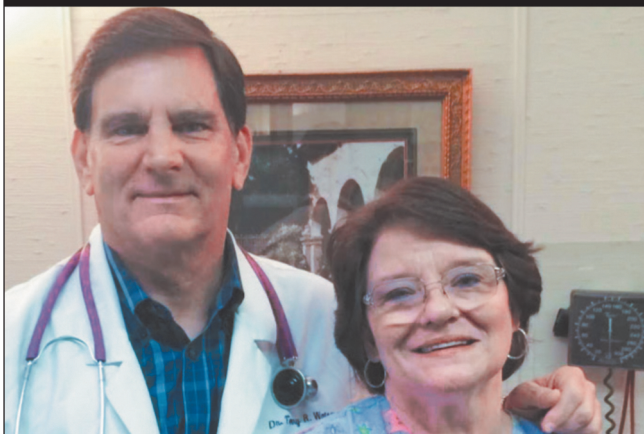
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