

# BeLONGING:

REIMAGINING THE FAMILY TREE

A DRAMATURGICAL EXHIBITION FOR FAT HAM  
NYC PREMIERE

CURATED BY  
NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

FAT HAM



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# BELONGING

noun

belonging | \ bi-'lɒŋ-ɪŋ, bē- \

- a feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you:
  - A sense of belonging is one of humanity's most basic needs.
  - It's a book about humanity, loyalty, and belonging, and about the ties that bind us to places and to each other
- Cambridge Dictionary



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**Belonging** is intrinsic to the human experience, but unfortunately all too often for communities that have systematically been marginalized and “othered”, belonging is not a given; it’s a privilege. This privilege is worth pursuing at all cost and often indeed costs queer youth in particular everything. Isolation, ridicule, abuse and judgment are often the catalyst to leave behind one’s home in search for family.

Many LGBTQIA folx have to build their own chosen family trees in the face of rejection from their biological ones. In such chosen families, friends or groups act as stand-in parents for those who have been rejected or have difficult relationships with their families of origin. Chosen families are essential in forming bonds not only to escape homophobic ideologies but also to find pleasure and communion with others.

**BeLONGING** explores the journey of identity and belonging through the lens of self-identified southern queer photographers, iconic images of ball culture and excerpts from James Ijames’ Pulitzer Prize winning play, ***Fat Ham***.

With the continuous assault we are seeing on sexual orientation and gender identity today, branching out to create new family trees is more than just an act of survival but one of resistance, restoration and liberations!

We hope that this digital dramaturgical exhibit awakens a deep sense of care and awareness for how we belong to ourselves but most importantly to each other.

**This dramaturgical exhibition is part of National Black Theatre’s holistic producing pedagogy which is spearheaded by the Alternative Learning & Social Impact department.**

**- NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE**



**35%**

of the United States LGBTQ population  
lives in the South.

*Source: LGBTQ population data from The William's Institute's 'LGBT Divide'.*

# THE SOUTH

is home to:

**53%** of all Black people

**36%** of all Hispanic or Latino people

**36%** of all non-Hispanic white people

**32%** of all multiracial people

**31%** of all Native Americans

**21%** of all Asian People

## IN THE UNITED STATES

*U.S. Census Bureau. 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.*

**47%**

have been taunted or mocked by family for being LGBTQ

**19%**

say they can “definitely” be themselves at home

**26%**

had family get involved in the larger LGBTQ community

(attending pride events, advocating for LGBTQ inclusion in their workplaces, or learning about LGBTQ identities and experiences)

*Human Rights Campaign, Black And African-American LGBTQ Youth Report, 2019*

**“I’m sick of people in this town  
calling me names and talking about me.  
Yes. I’m a big ole sissy. So what.  
I’m not the only one.”**

**-JUICY**



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**UNTITLED** | KENYATTA BOSMAN

**LGBTQ** people who lack family support are more at risk of homelessness and mental health issues, including depression and suicidal ideation, compared to people who are accepted.

*NBC NEWS: How the Black Queer Community is Re-imagining The Family Tree, 2022*



**ANGEL** | JUPE JAVETA

**“We got a hard road.”**

**- JUICY**



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*BLACK BEFORE I WAS BORN* | KENYATTA BOSMAN

**“Don’t go crazy, son.**

**I need you.**

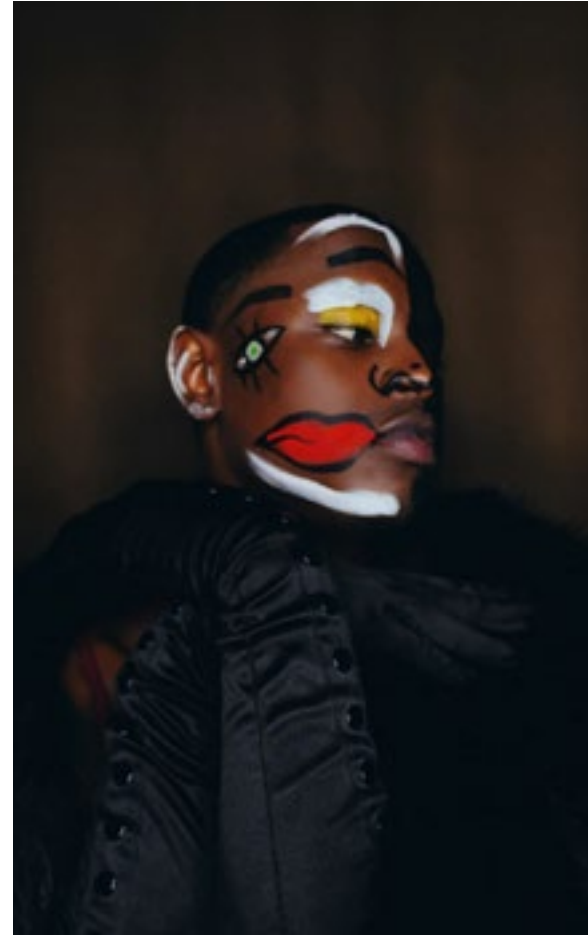
**I know its hard..being someone like you.**

**in a place like this.”**

**- TEDRA**



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**49%**

of Black LGBTQ youth reported wanting psychological or emotional counseling from a mental health professional in the past 12 months, but not being able to get it.

*THE TREVOR PROJECT: All Black Lives Matter:  
Mental Health of Black LGBTQ Youth, 2021*



*UNTITLED* | JUPE JAVETA

**“I want to be soft.**

**I want to arch my back.**

**I want to bless somebody with how soft I can be.**

**I want to lay my head in your lap...”**

**- LARRY**



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**16%**

of Black LGBTQ youth who reported high levels of support from at least one person reported attempting suicide compared to

**24%** who did not.

*THE TREVOR PROJECT: All Black Lives Matter: Mental Health of Black LGBTQ Youth, 2021*

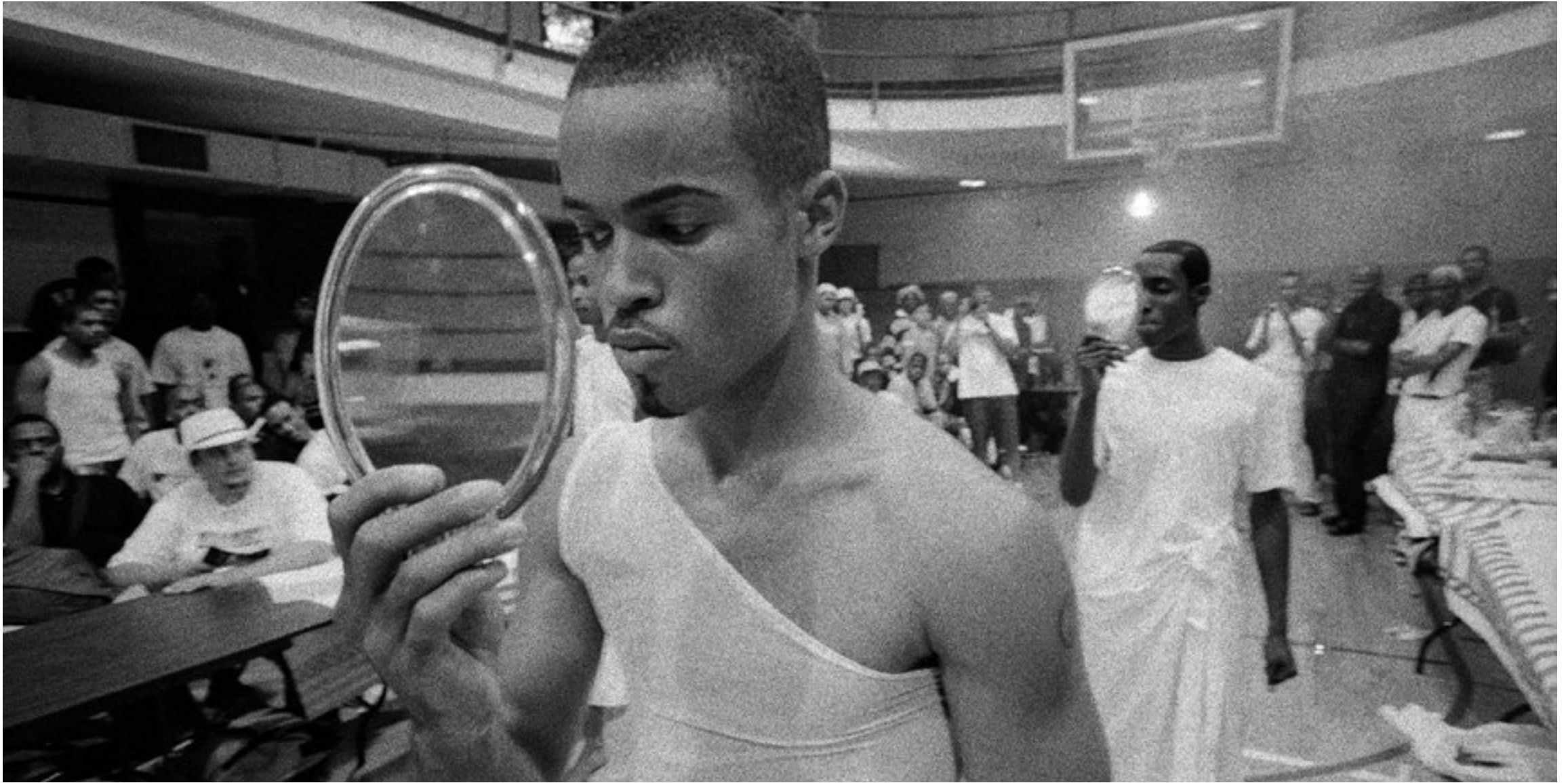


**“Can I  
be your  
mirror?”**

**- LARRY**



**PUBLIC.**



*WALKING FOR TENS #24* | GERARD H. GASKIN

**“You carrying around your whole family’s trauma, man.**

**And that’s okay. You okay.**

**But you don’t got to let it define you.”**

**- TIO**



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# CHOSEN FAMILY —

also known as *found families* — friends or groups act as stand-in parents for those who have been rejected or have difficult relationships with their families of origin.

*NBC NEWS: How the Black Queer Community is Re-imagining The Family Tree, 2022*



**HOUSE OF OMNI CHILDREN,  
HOUSE OF OMNI PICNIC #1  
CENTRAL PARK NYC JULY 1989 | CHANTAL REGNAULT**

# 35%

of Black LGBTQ youth  
have experienced  
homelessness, been  
kicked out, or run away

*THE TREVOR PROJECT: All Black Lives Matter:  
Mental Health of Black LGBTQ Youth, 2021*



**PEPPER AND TOMMIE LBEIJA**  
**HOUSE OF LA BEIJA PICNIC**  
**CENTRAL PARK NYC JULY 1989**  
CHANTAL REGNAULT



**LUIS, DANNY, JOSE AND DAVID IAN XTRAVAGANZA,**  
**TRACKS W.19TH MAY 1989** | CHANTAL REGNAULT

**“What he thinks is your weakness**

**gonna save you.”**

**- OPAL**

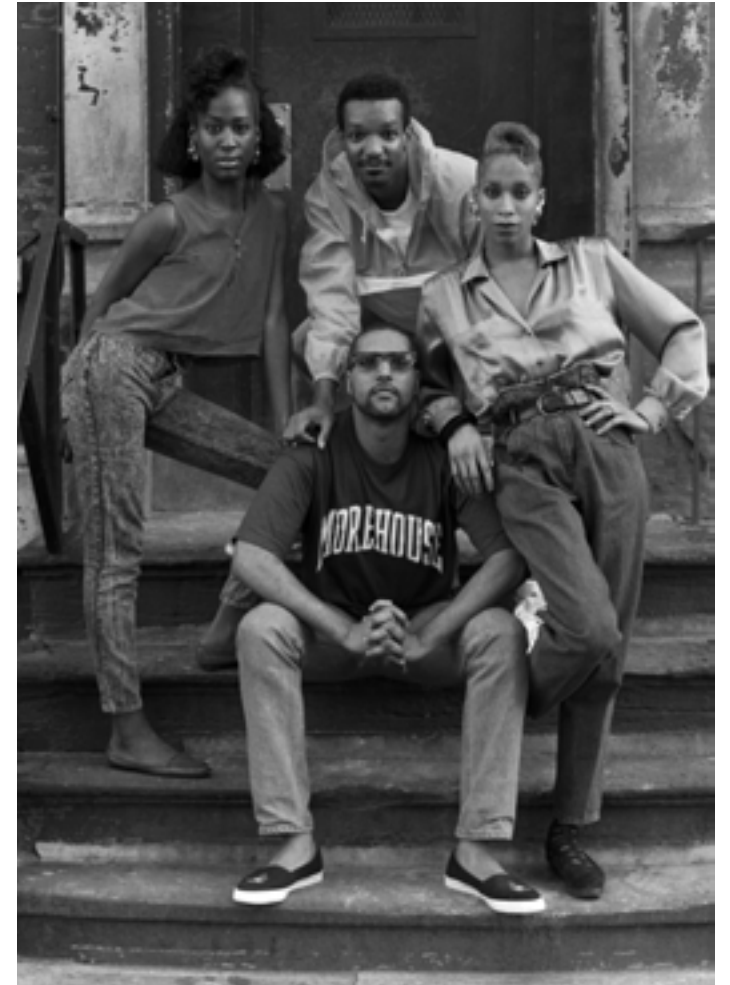


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**WHITNEY ELITE GARCON, IRA EBONY APHRODITE, STEWART LABEIJIA, CHRIS LABEIJIA  
REVLON, IVAN ADONIS CHANEL, JAMAL ADONIS MILAN AND RONALD LABEIJIA REVLON,  
HOUSE OF JOURDAN BALL #1 NEW JERSEY JUNE 1989 | CHANTAL REGNAULT**



**TEMPERANCE TERRY, OCTAVIA AND  
ROBBIE SAINT LAURENT,  
HOUSE OF SAINT LAURENT  
HARLEM W.117TH STREET MAY 1989  
CHANTAL REGNAULT**

**“Your third eye is all open and you start to see better.  
And you begin to consider what your life would be like  
if you chose pleasure over harm.”**

**- TIO**



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# Resource Guide

Ali Forney Center  
aliforneycenter.org

Black Trans Liberation  
blacktransliberation.org

Brooklyn Community Pride Center  
lgbtbrooklyn.org

Campaign for Southern Equality  
southernequality.org

The Center  
gaycenter.org

The Door  
door.org

Hetrick-Martin Institute  
hmi.org

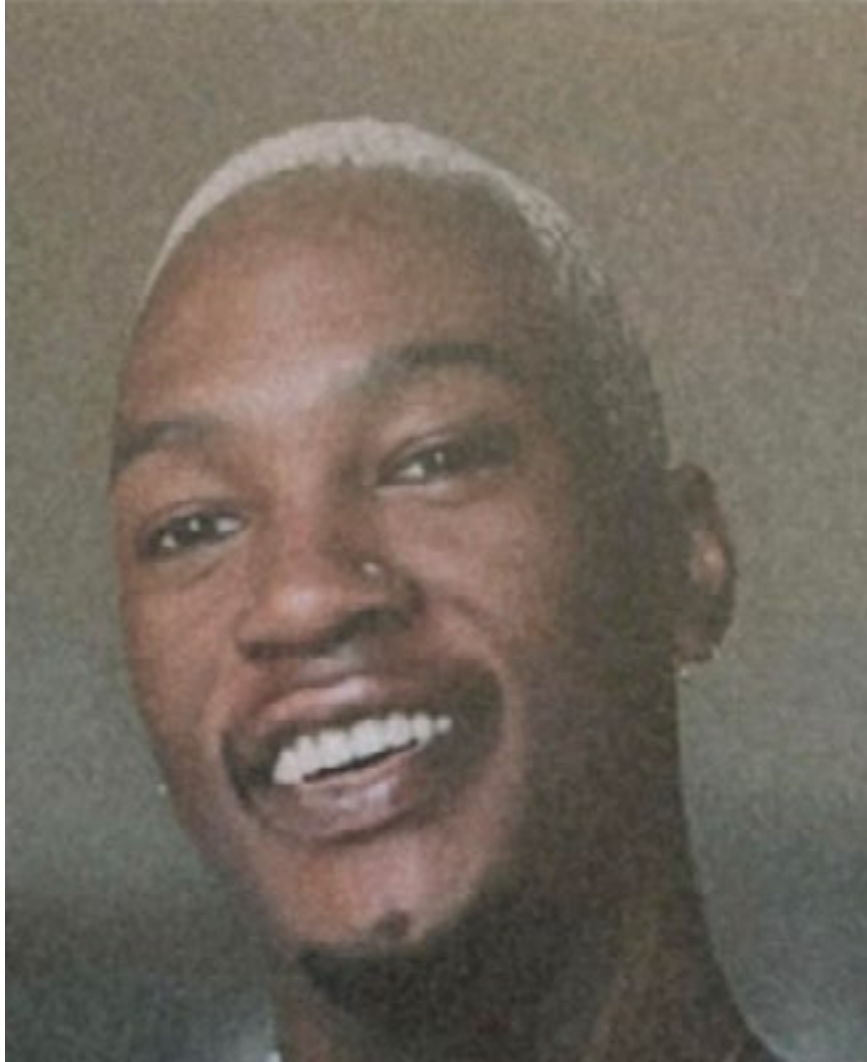
Human Rights Campaign Foundation  
hrc.org

Prideland  
pbs.org/show/prideland

Queer Food Fund  
queerfoodfoundation.org

Son of a Southern Chef  
sonofasouthernchef.org

The Trevor Project  
thetrevorproject.org



## KENYATTA BOSMAN

Kenyatta Bosman is a non-binary visual/multimedia artist who focuses on realism and being in the moment. Their inspiration comes from black and queer cinema and the Queer Black Experience.

[@KENYATTABOSMANART](#)

[WWW.KENYATTABOSMAN.COM](http://WWW.KENYATTABOSMAN.COM)



Photo by Mark Gellineau

## GERARD H. GASKIN

Gerard H. Gaskin is a native of Trinidad and Tobago. His book, *Legendary: Inside the House and Ballroom Scene* was published in 2013 from Duke University Press. As a freelance Photographer his work is widely published in newspapers and magazines in the United States and abroad including: The New York Times, Newsday, Politiken, Black Enterprise, Ebony, Teen People, Caribbean Beat and Inc. Magazine. Additional clientele are North Star Fund, Syracuse University and Colgate University. Gaskin's photographs have also been featured in solo and group exhibitions across the country and abroad including at the Duke University Gallery, the African-American Museum in Philadelphia, the Brooklyn Museum, the Queens Museum of Arts, CM2A in Madrid, Spain, Galvanize in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Goethe-Institute Accra, Ghana and Fototeca de Cuba Habana Vieja, Cuba. His work is represented in the permanent collections at Duke University, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, the Museum of the City of New York and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Gaskin has won many important awards, grants and residences such as the CDS/Honickman First Book Prize (2012), the Woodstock Center of Photography Arts-In-Residence (2011), Light Work's Arts-in-Residence (2010). In 2005 he also won the Queen's Council on the Arts Individual Artists Initiative Award, and in 2002 he was awarded The New York Foundation for the Arts Artist fellowship for Photography. He was also included in the "Gordon Parks' 90" that brought together 90 of the top black photographers in the United States to celebrate Gordon Parks' 90th Birthday.

[WWW.GERARDHGASKINPHOTO.COM](http://WWW.GERARDHGASKINPHOTO.COM)



Photo by Mark Gellineau

## JUPE JAVETA

Jupiter “Jupe” Javeta is a Black southern, queer, nonbinary person who resides in Albany, Georgia where they were born and raised. They are an artist, culture keeper and community member who practices community healing through visual art, documentation, written work, and installations. Having grown up in the small city of Albany, Jupe fully believes in the power of intentionality + integrity. Jupe founded dts (down the street) media as a culturally insightful and community minded arts platform. Their visual work (photography & documentary short films) center reconciliation and re-prieve for Black folks in the Deep South. Their written work centers grief as a ritual and rites process, and digs into the transformative potential of grieving. Their community work (events and arts spaces) focuses on marginalized communities and connecting people across those communities to places/spaces of rest, affirmation and communion. In each modality, they are driven by a deep love for their people and a determination to reflect it back to the communities they come from.

As a compliment to their upbringing, they also have an educational background in Design & Media, Carpentry and Afro-American Studies. With their lived experiences and educational experiences, Jupe brings an intersected lens that guides their creative processes.

**[DTSMEDIA.WEEBLY.COM](https://dtsmedia.weebly.com)**



## CHANTAL REGNAULT

Between 1989 and 1992 in New York City , French photographer Chantal Regnault captured the Harlem House Balls and Voguing scene rise to fame. Regnault had the privilege to photograph the culture at this important turning point of its history. She took her lens to Balls , Aids Benefits and Clubs, brought the Ballroom to the studio and outdoors, producing electric, alive, loving and tender images. They feature the legendary Houses and their Founding Mothers, the famous Voguers and Runway stars of the Ballroom scene back then. The Houses also provided a family structure where the most socially fragilized members of the community, often the younger ones, could take refuge and find protection and advice from the older Mothers.

Chantal Regnault's work is an important part of the LGBTQ+ history shining a light on those courageous enough to be who they are, in a time when tolerance , let alone acceptance, was not a privilege given to them.

[@CHANTALREGNAULTPHOTO](#)



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