

# the **check-in.**

## FAMILY FIRST

In this issue, we  
celebrate the HSPVA  
love story of Jamila  
Glass and Duke  
Gervais (Vocal '01)

# inside.

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## This Edition's Contributing Writers

Gabby Byrd

Denise Ward

Taylor Scott



## ON THE COVER

Duke Gervais (Vocal '01), Jamila Glass (Vocal '01), and their son, Jelani Glass Gervais. Photo by Malachi Middleton.



A NOTE FROM  
THE EDITOR



THE COMMONS



HAPPENINGS



## CONVERSATION: FAMILY FIRST



INTERLUDE



CALL BOARD



CLASS NOTES




WHO WE ARE

 @hspvablackalumninetwork

 @hspvablackalumninetwork

 hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com

 linktr.ee/hspvablackalumninetwork

**WRITE:** Share your thoughts on this issue and anything else PVA-related at [hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com)

# Dearest BAN Fam,

"Activist and feminist icon" are painfully inadequate words to describe the profundity of the late bell hooks and, though I'm almost ashamed to admit that I was unfamiliar with her work until recently, I am proud to say that I've been busy righting that wrong. Particularly life-changing for me has been her book, *All About Love: New Visions*, in which she shares a definition of love to live by, discusses why many of us fail to find love, and emphasizes the importance of, not just romantic love, but love for your friends and family, for your community, for yourself, and even for strangers.



With Valentine's Day in the not-so-distant past and with Black History Month going strong, it's easy to guess why Black love and love for Black people are both on the brain.

Like many of you, we know that Black history and culture is meant to be celebrated year-round. That's why we utilize this bi-monthly newsletter to publicly share our many accomplishments, our cherished HSPVA memories, and the joy that comes from simply being who we are. Now that we've been publishing *The Check-In* for a full year, let us know: do you like us or do you like-like us? Check yes, no, or maybe.

Regardless of your answer, know that we love us some you.

XOXO,

**Gabby Byrd**  
SECRETARY, HSPVA BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK

**a note  
from the  
editor**

# the commons.

## PAST EVENTS

### 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HOLIDAY JAM



#### DECEMBER 26, 2021

Our 4th annual Holiday Jam session took place at Day 6 Coffee in Downtown Houston. With a little over 25 attendees, a photographer, and a DJ instead of a house band, the Jam took on a new energy as attendees came from far and near to mingle and reminisce with old friends and classmates. The evening included sounds provided by Asa Davis (Instrumental '12), lite bites, and door prizes. Photography by J.Michael Photos (Instrumental '15).



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH



#### FEBRUARY 19, 2022

Join us for our next BAN Night Out event this Saturday for the 7pm showing of Kinder HSPVA's Black History production of *Dreamgirls*. At the end of the show, we'll take a quick photo and head to an establishment nearby for dinner and drinks.



#### FEBRUARY 21-27, 2022

During this last week of the month, we will be highlighting the Black businesses within the Network and encouraging everyone to #buyBlackPVA. If you'd like your business to be included in the list, don't hesitate to reach out to us.



### HOMECOMING: CELEBRATING THE GOLD STANDARD AUGUST 5-7, 2022

We're so excited to invite you all to our celebration of HSPVA's 50th Anniversary! This "homecoming" weekend will consist of performances, networking opportunities, lectures, and above all, camaraderie. Stay tuned for more details.

*We are closely watching the number of COVID cases and continue to place everyone's health as a priority. Out of an abundance of caution, please consider getting tested prior to attending, especially if you are unvaccinated. Masks are highly encouraged.*


# the commons.

*Knowledge ★ Accountability ★ Trust*

# KATHERINE THOMAS

*for Judge*

*184th Criminal District Court*



VOTE MARCH 1ST

## VOLUNTEER

**Katherine "Kat" Thomas (Theatre '10)** is looking for volunteers who will engage with voters at the polls and share the highlights of her platform:

**K.** Knowledge - She brings a wealth of knowledge and legal experience to the bench.

**A.** Accountability - She wants a safer Harris County.

**T.** Trust - She is passionate about ensuring trust back into communities that the criminal justice system has too often failed.

Click [here](#) to **find a polling location** near you or visit [HarrisVotes.com/Locations](https://HarrisVotes.com/Locations)

Click [here](#) to **sign up for an available time slot** or email her team at [katherinthomasforjudge@gmail.com](mailto:katherinthomasforjudge@gmail.com)

### Polling Hours:

Mon - Sat, 7am - 7pm and Sun, 12pm - 7pm

## IMPORTANT 2022 ELECTION DATES TO REMEMBER FOR TEXAS

**FEBRUARY 14-25, 2022**

Early Voting

**MARCH 1, 2022**

Primary Election Day

**OCTOBER 11, 2022**

Last Day to Register to Vote

**MAY 24, 2022**

Primary Runoff Election Day

**NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

Uniform Election Day

### Not sure if you're registered to vote?

Check your status at [vote.org](https://vote.org)

**Live outside of Texas?** Look online for important dates that apply to your local government.

## STAY TUNED

Though the Network is, first and foremost, concerned with the HSPVA Black community, we recognize the importance of engaging with and getting involved in our local communities as well as the global community. In the next coming months, Deputy White House Liaison **Chelsey Cartwright (Instrumental '08)** will spearhead our efforts to empower Black voters and aspiring social justice leaders with the education, resources, and experience needed to organize and affect positive change, whether large or small.



# Taylor's table

## By Taylor Scott

Whether you are trying to set the mood or just like good food, tap in with the Pushin **P** Pasta!!!

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### Ingredients:

- Pasta of choice
- Shrimp or chicken
- Spinach
- 1 can of Rotel, drained
- Mushrooms
- Heavy cream
- Shredded cheese
- Salt, pepper, and other seasonings to taste

### Recipe:

- Cook the pasta by following the directions on the box.
- In a skillet, sauté the mushrooms and spinach.  
Note: you can add as much or as little spinach and mushroom as you want.
- Once the spinach has shrunk, lower the heat, and add the shrimp (or chicken breast cut into smaller bite-sized pieces). After one side of the shrimp is cooked, flip the shrimp and add the drained can of Rotel.
- Once the shrimp is fully cooked, turn the heat to low and alternate between adding the heavy cream and cheese until you reach the desired consistency.
- Season like you mean it!
- Serve the mixture over the pasta and enjoy!



# happenings.

## houston.



**Brandon Wills (Vocal '12)** and **Dannie Walker (Vocal '01)** will be performing a Black History Month show with their group, The Everlasting VibeZ, at 7pm on February 26th at Riverside United Methodist Church, 4920 Cullen Blvd., Houston, TX 77004 (in the Third Ward). The show will feature music from NGUZO Saba, plus a few classics, both new and old.

## dubai.



**Tarion Anderson (Theatre '10)** will be performing at Q's Bar & Lounge located inside of Palazzo Versace Dubai's from now until April 2nd.

### GOT SOMETHING HAPPENING SOON?

Let us know and we'll help spread the word!  
Email us at [hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com) or send us a DM on Instagram.

## dallas/fort worth.



**Shelley Carroll (Jazz '82)** performs every Wednesday evening at Revelers Hall in the Oak Cliff/ Bishop Arts District of Dallas. Showtimes vary so be sure to check the venue website for updates. On February 26th, The Shelley Carroll Jazz Orchestra will be performing in the 8th Annual Harlem Renaissance Festival. Dress code (period attire) strictly enforced. Tickets available online at [verbkultureevents.com](http://verbkultureevents.com)

## nyc.



**Desiree Godsell (Dance '01)** teaches a Bachata dance class every Tuesday from 7-8pm at Open Jar Studios in Manhattan. Register online at [academicnetworkofdance.com](http://academicnetworkofdance.com) for the class or for private lessons.



## Family First

By Gabby Byrd

There are certain rumors one hears about HSPVA when you're in middle school: that it's just like the *Fame* movie, that none of the classrooms have windows, that all the guys are interested in each other, etc. While I knew that last one couldn't *possibly* be true, it did significantly diminish any hope I might have had of dating any of my classmates and made real the probability that I would have to look elsewhere for my high school sweetheart—perhaps at church or at my zoned school (yikes).

I'm sure some of you can relate, but for executive chef, **Duke Gervais**, and filmmaker/choreographer, **Jamila Glass (both Vocal '01)**, this was clearly a non-issue.

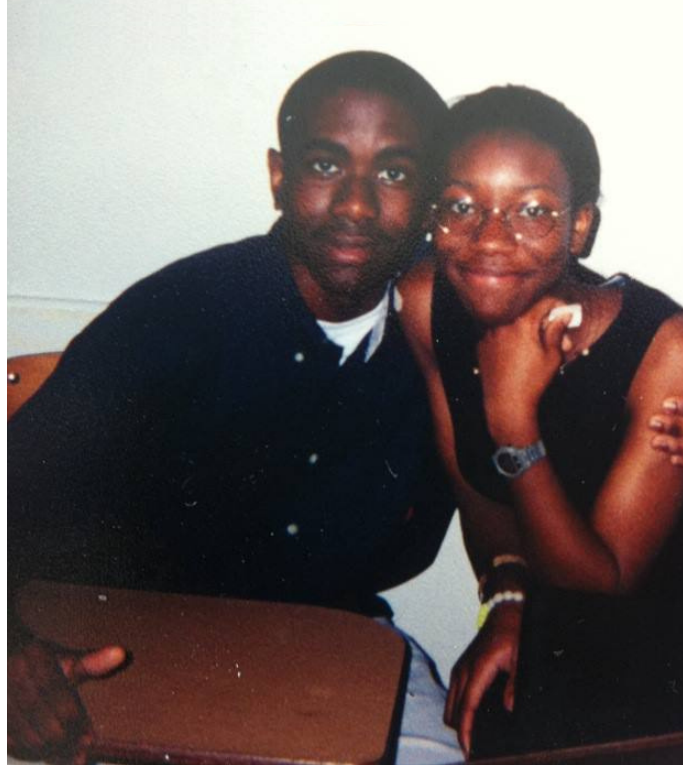


**I**t would appear that their story began in the halls of 4001 Stanford Street nearly twenty-five years ago—probably during Seible-cises in Room 111 if I had to guess—but, from what I could gather about their relationship, it's also very likely that it started several years before that in another life. After graduating from HSPVA in 2001, Jamila began studying film at the University of Southern California while Duke ventured east to study music in Nashville, TN at Belmont University.

Glass, when questioned about any pivotal moments or experiences that prompted the change of interest, explained that she never actually saw herself becoming a professional singer and was simply fortunate enough to possess the necessary skills to succeed in the program. She says, "Other mediums of art have always been a part of my life. I just turn the dial up or down depending on what makes sense at the time." Gervais seems to possess this chameleon trait as well.

As fate would have it, Duke discovered a new passion his junior year of college: cooking. While working at a restaurant, he befriended a chef who offered Duke an opportunity to shadow him and learn the ropes a few nights a week. It brought him so much joy, he ultimately decided to shift his focus from music to culinary arts and moved out west to begin his studies at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Pasadena, CA. Now, 18 years later, Glass is a well-seasoned and well-respected executive chef. "Don't get me wrong," he says, "I'll karaoke any day of the week, but I enjoy my life as a chef and culinary artisan." By the looks of it, he also happens to make a fine [mattress box rocket ship](#).

Looking back on their individual experiences at HSPVA, Glass and Gervais both have fond memories. Gervais says, "I loved it from the moment I got there. It's a significant change going from a regular school to an arts school. Daily immersion in an environment that cultivated and



Duke Gervais and Jamila Glass at HSPVA during their junior year.

celebrated excellence in numerous types of art forms was refreshing [...] I looked up to folks who were in featured small ensembles like Young Performers or excelled in arts competitions like All State Choir." Jamila reflects,

**"My memories are full of constant laughter, admiration, inspiration, and incredible talent..."**

And PVA for me was still a challenge, both academically and artistically. You definitely had to pull up to be there," and to actually stay there, I would add. One could argue that periodical changes in HISD's feeder patterns, Houston's demographics, and Texas politics are partially responsible for making that "pull up" harder than it needs to be for even the most talented students; however, adding adequate support to the equation can make all the difference. "It was competitive, but I felt supported by my Black teachers and peers," Jamila recalls. "Shoutout to the Black History show, one of the BEST times of the year." Duke agrees, "I'd definitely say there was plenty of support throughout my time at PVA. The Black students always showed up to support our people in pretty much every art area. Especially [for] senior recitals."

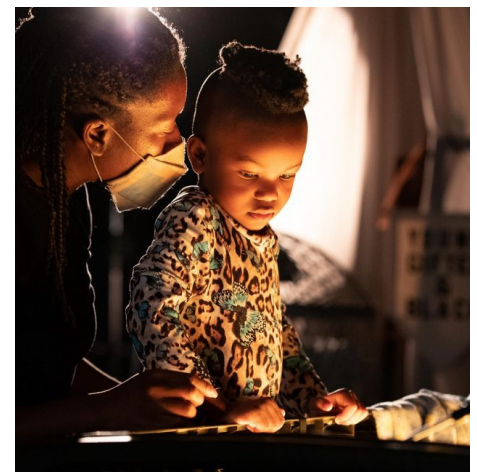


Left to right: photos of the couple from 2011, 2013, and 2017.

In many ways, that peer support system has remained intact. This year, Roderick George (Dance '01) will be completing a choreography residency at L.A. Contemporary Dance Company (LACDC) to redevelop his piece entitled "[Tainted](#)", originally performed by Jamila. Just last year, Glass became the first Black artistic director of LACDC after joining as a founding member in 2005. Off-stage and on-screen, Jamila Glass and Justin Simien (Theatre '01) have collaborated on multiple projects: the final season of the Netflix tv show [Dear White People](#) (an homage to HSPVA), the 2020 film *Bad Hair* starring Elle Lorraine (Theatre '03), and [this HSPVA Yearbook commercial](#) starring Jamila (and, for the comedy buffs out there, a young Harris Wittels).

In addition to the creative collaboration that is building a life together and raising a family, Glass and Gervais occasionally work together on artistic projects like Jamila's dance films. "Duke actually bought me my first video camera and became the main cinematographer for my independent projects," she says. Next month, LACDC will release a new film directed by Glass entitled [and then life was beautiful](#) that actually features both Duke and Jamila's vocals on the score—a first for them. Working on an LACDC film with their five-year-old son, Jelani Glass Gervais, was yet another first last year and, while it brought about its own set of unique challenges, Glass recalls that it was a special time. She's grateful that, with [FINDING MEEMOO](#), Jelani was "able to have such a unique experience and see that he too can be at the center of a story on screen."

About the current HSPVA community, Duke noted, "It's cool to see alumni from HSPVA thriving in their professional pursuits. We haven't kept up with most of the folks we went to high school with, but there are certainly a number of those we've maintained good connections with." Jamila even gave the Network some credit for helping to facilitate that but, because so many of their immediate and extended family members are also PVA alumni, spanning an almost continuous twenty-year period, it's unlikely that they really need our help staying connected. Collectively, in addition to Zakiya Glass (Instrumental '97), Dr. Aziza Glass (Vocal '06), and Mac Gervais (Vocal '03)—three out of the couple's four total siblings—three of Jamila's cousins are alumni as well: Jason Hainsworth (Jazz '92), Justin Andre Cunningham (Jazz '09), and Jalen Baker (Jazz '13). I mean, wow!



A *FINDING MEEMOO* production shot of Jamila and Jelani. Photo by Zach Whitford (2021).

As a DFW resident who, for the last few months, has been part of the planning process for BAN's "Homecoming Weekend" celebration of PVA's 50th Anniversary, I wondered where Houston fit into their idea of home. Duke explained, "Jamila and I are extremely close to our immediate families, and all of those people still live in Houston [....]"

**So, though we will live in L.A. for the foreseeable future, we will always have strong ties to H-town."**

Truly inspiring are the strong ties Gervais and Glass made at HSPVA, their devoted efforts to stay connected in the midst of physical distance, and their continued commitment to each other's growth and their family's wellbeing. In comparing their relationship then and now, Glass says, "We are both extremely busy with our careers, so we've found that we have to be really intentional about making time for each other... even if that means scheduling it. We laugh A LOT."

With nothing but time and endless firsts ahead of them and Jelani, I'm sure there'll be much more where that came from. Duke, Jamila, and Jelani, we look forward to seeing you in the history books someday.



Jamila, Jelani, and Duke in 2018. Photo by Abby Darby.



Jamila, Jelani (inside his rocket ship), and Duke, photographed by Rick Proctor for his 2020 "Stir Crazy" series.

# interlude.



## BLACK LOVE VOL. 2

- First Date** ● ● ●  
Lenora
- No One Like You** ● ● ●  
Robert Glasper ft. Alex Isley & KAYTRANADA
- Promised Land** ● ● ●  
Big Brandon Willis
- HER Love** ● ● ●  
Common ft. Daniel Caesar
- Cuz of U** ● ● ●  
Chris Dave & Daniel Crawford
- I Don't Wanna** ● ● ●  
Aaliyah (prod. by Donnie Scantz)
- I Want You** ● ● ●  
Chris Walker
- Bess, You Is My Woman Now** ● ● ●  
Charles Lloyd & Jason Moran
- Somebody Who Will** ● ● ●  
Jonquel
- Be Without You** ● ● ●  
Mary J. Blige (prod. by Bryan Michael Cox)
- Luv Speaks** ● ● ●  
Ashley Tamar Davis
- Love's In Need of Love Today** ● ● ●  
Jalen Baker



# call board.



**GUEST ARTIST AUDITION**  
FEBRUARY 24, 2022



Seeking BIPOC & People of the Global Majority dancers to join an LACDC x Roderick George residency as Guest Artist.

Dancers of all backgrounds are welcome to attend.

The L.A. Contemporary Dance Company, led by Artistic Director Jamila Glass (Vocal '01) and Executive Director Napoleon Gladney, will be auditioning dancers on **Thursday, February 24th** to potentially be Guest Artists for a choreography residency with Roderick George (Dance '03). Performances are in Jun., Nov., and Dec.

Learn more at

[lacontemporarydance.org/audition-2022](http://lacontemporarydance.org/audition-2022)

The Institute of Contemporary Dance has announced audition dates for its "Focus" Summer Intensives (ages 8-18) beginning June 27, 2022. Participants can attend all four weeks of the program or take advantage of the single-week options. Christian Warner (Dance '12) will be the Guest Faculty member for the July 25-29 Focus on Contemporary.

**Upcoming Houston audition dates:**

**March 6th, April 24th, and May 15th.**

**Video submissions accepted until May 31st.**

Learn more at [icdhouston.com/intensives](http://icdhouston.com/intensives)



**FOCUS** AN INSTITUTE INTENSIVE  
2022  
2022 GUEST FACULTY



ICDHOUSTON.COM



LABO DE MUSIQUE CONTEMPORAINE DE MONTRÉAL  
**LMCML**  
MONTRÉAL CONTEMPORARY MUSIC LAB

The Montreal Contemporary Music Lab (MCML) is a twelve-day intensive workshop in the performance, creation and exploration of music and sound. All artists who work with sound—composers, acoustic instrumentalists, improvisers, mixed, multimedia, and electronic artists, etc.—are eligible to apply. This year's virtual edition of the lab wishes to focus on relevant subjects affecting artists today, with themes touching upon expression, creation and remote collaboration.

**Applications due March 1st.**

Learn more at [labomontreal.com/apply](http://labomontreal.com/apply)



**WE'RE HIRING!**  
DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP AND ARTS

[PLEASE SEND INQUIRIES TO DR. CHAD BRAWLEY]  
CHAD@THEBRAWLEYGROUPCONSULTING.COM

The New Faith Church in Southwest Houston is seeking a new Director of Worship and Arts.

Send inquiries to Dr. Chad Brawley at [chad@thebrawleygroupconsulting.com](mailto:chad@thebrawleygroupconsulting.com)

# class notes.

straight A's



## a.cknowledgements

### Alexis "Fly" Jones (Visual '03)

Recognized as one of CORE Multimedia Group's 100 Most Influential Blacks Today and featured as the cover story for *Lavish Layout Magazine's* "Women in the Boardroom" issue last month (left).

### Cameron J. Ross (Theatre '06)

Selected to be part of Creative Collective NYC's (CCNYC) 2022 Creative Class, a celebration of Black culture-shifters. CCNYC is "a community and creative agency dedicated to curating Brave Spaces for creatives of color" (right).

### Charles Jones (Vocal '00)

Spot him in T-Mobile's Superbowl Sunday ad starring Miley Cyrus.

### Reggie Quinerly (Jazz '99)

Named the guest host of the Soraya Stage's inaugural "Jazz at Nav" livestream series (far left).

## a.lbums and other music

### Robert Glasper (Jazz '97)

Co-wrote the score for the *Bel-Air* tv show with Terrace Martin. "Black Superhero", his latest single from *Black Radio III*, features Killer Mike, BJ The Chicago Kid, Big K.R.I.T. and fellow alum, Lisa E. Harris (Vocal '98).

### James Francies (Jazz '13)

Produced and arranged Yebba's Live at Electric Lady album, now streaming on all platforms. His song "Crib" ranked #1 on Spotify's *10 Best Jazz Songs of 2021* (right).

### Chris Walker (Instrumental '86)

His single "Because I Love You" featuring Dave Koz is streaming on all platforms (far left).

## a.ppearances

### Jessica Thompson (Theatre '14)

Starred in a KTR Creation Films short film entitled *In Its Time* about a woman with a secret (above).

### Trevon Anderson (Dance '19)

Performing with Katy Perry for her *PLAY* residency at Resorts World Las Vegas now through August 13, 2022 (left).

### Grantham Coleman (Theatre '08)

Playing the role of Macduff in Broadway's *Macbeth* alongside Daniel Craig, Ruth Negga, and others. Opening night is April 28th, 2022 at the Longacre Theatre (right).

### Ashley Hildreth (Theatre '13)

Read her interview with Maggie Weston in *Playbill* where they talk about *The Play That Goes Wrong* and about women in comedy (bottom right).

### Justin Prescott (Dance '06)

Performing in Broadway's *Funny Girl* as understudy for the role of Eddie Ryan and in the ensemble. Opening night, April 24th at the August Wilson Theatre (left).

### Aziza Glass (Vocal '06)

Dr. Aziza can be seen in *Roman to the Rescue* on DisneyXD, Hulu, & Disney NOW (middle).

**WRITE TO US**  
 We want to hear what you've been up to!  
 Send us your stories and photos, and we'll share the highlights here.  
 Email us at [hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com)

# who we are.

The purpose of the HSPVA Black Alumni Network is to connect Black alumni of The High School for Performing and Visual Arts, support alumni and current students' endeavors, and provide resources, scholarships, and networking opportunities to champion the next generation of HSPVA artists and professionals.

## creative team



**DENISE WARD**  
Chair  
Vocal '12



**CAPRA FELLOWS**  
Vice-Chair  
Theatre '11



**GABBY BYRD**  
Secretary  
Vocal '11



**KIERRA MARTIN**  
Treasurer  
Dance '13



**HENRY ELLIS DAVIS**  
Technology Chair  
Theatre '09



**DABRINA SANDIFER**  
Scholarship Co-Chair  
Theatre '06



**TAYLAR LEWIS**  
Scholarship Co-Chair  
Theatre '11



**EDWARD BELL**  
Engagement Co-Chair  
Vocal '10



**MALCOLM JACKSON**  
Engagement Co-Chair  
Instrumental '10



**ALDARIAN MAYES**  
Jazz '10



**TAYLOR SCOTT**  
Theatre '19



**DJ CARR**  
Vocal '18



**CHRISTIAN WARNER**  
Dance '12



**STEPHEN HUDSON**  
Vocal '03

## how you can help

### Serve on the Creative Team

The Creative Team is a collective of HSPVA alumni who coordinate events, programming, and fundraising on behalf of the network.

### Support one of our Alumni events

We host the Holiday Jam Social every December, an Alumni Happening in the summer, and we currently have additional performance opportunities and collaborations in the works.

### Contribute to our scholarship fund

Support our 2021-2022 vision as we seek to increase our monetary giving and award at least (10) students with scholarships or grants.