

THE ROOM

A READING SERIES

via
ZOOM



ON THE GREENBELT

written by **KARISSA MURRELL MYERS**

Semi-finalist of 2021 Blue Ink Playwriting Award



BACKSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

ON THE GREENBELT
written by Karissa Murrell Myers
directed by Andrew Coopman

FEATURING



Isa Arciniegas



Jazmín Corona



Jessica Ervin



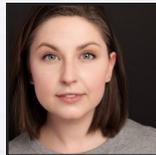
Philip Earl Johnson*



Peter Sipla



Grace Smith*



Karin Terry

Jules saw something in the Idaho hospital the night her mom died, but she'll never say what it was. Not to her ex, Olivia, and especially not to her brother, Jake, who keeps trying to convince her to go with him to the Greenbelt to spread their mom's ashes with their father, Alan. But try as she might, Jules can't shake the memories of the past that haunt her like a gin-soaked hangover as the day unravels the past events surrounding her mother's death come to light. A serio-comic play that jumps between past and present, *On the Greenbelt*, explores family, love, memory, and the question of "how do we process grief?"

*Ensemble Member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Artists Pages 4-5

Interview with Playwright Karissa Murrell Myers Page 6

About the *Blue Ink Playwriting Award* Page 7

Navigating the Grief of Losing a Parent Pages 8-9

The Association Between Grief & Addiction Page 10

Virtual Recovery Resources Page 11

LGBTQ+ Rights & Community in Idaho Pages 12-13

Additional Resources Page 14

About American Blues Theater Page 15

DIGITAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To create art in a new digital format, we use equipment and high-speed internet not available in many Indigenous communities. This technology, which has now become central to our daily lives, leaves a significant footprint and contributes to changing climates that disproportionately affect Indigenous people. As we make use of this digital format, it is imperative that we recognize the Indigenous Land, regardless of our geographical location. It is land once occupied and inhabited by hundreds of Native tribes and stolen from these Indigenous people by European settlers. The genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people from these lands is a history that must be acknowledged, and the current struggles of Indigenous people must be brought to the forefront, so that their plight is never forgotten.

This digital land acknowledgement is inspired by the work of producer & artist Adrienne Wong. Learn more [here](#).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



KARISSA MURRELL MYERS she/her (*Playwright*) is a hapa Filipino American theatre artist originally from Boise, Idaho and is currently based in Chicago, where she works professionally as an actor, playwright, casting director, and producer. She has a MFA in Performance from University of Hawaii at Manoa, a BA in Theatre Arts from Boise State University, and is a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf. As a performer, Karissa has worked at a number of regional theatres including Goodman Theatre, Remy Bumpo, The House Theatre of Chicago, Court Theatre, and Renaissance Theaterworks. Television work includes *Chicago Med*, *Chicago PD*, *Electric Dreams*, and *The Exorcist*. Her autobiographical play *FRAGMENTED* was filmed and released through *Our Perspective: Asian American Plays* in November 2020. Her most recent play, *HOW DO WE NAVIGATE SPACE?*, was filmed and released through Strawdog Theatre Company, where she is the current Casting Director and ensemble member. She also does freelance casting work for theatres around the country. Proud member of SAG-AFTRA. Represented by Gray Talent Group. www.kmurrellmyers.com



ANDREW COOPMAN they/he (*Director*) is a Seattle-based director, choreographer, teaching artist, devised theater artist, and playwright who is finishing up their Masters of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Washington School of Drama, graduating June 2021. They are super proud to make their Chicago directorial debut with American Blues Theater. Previous highlight credits include *RE: Social/Divide* (Cooperative Performance, Milwaukee), *FROZEN: A Play* (Cabaret Theater, Seattle), *I & You* (Burien Actor's Theater), *Into the Woods* (Studio East, Seattle), *Body Awareness* (Jones Playhouse, Seattle), Disney's *Beauty & The Beast* (EDP, Seattle), and *The Convent of Pleasure* (Ghostlight Ensemble Theater, Chicago). They have also directed the world premieres of *The Sunflower Sisters* by John Ruoff (Eclectic Theater), *The Sorry Play* by Chelsea Hackett (NYU), and ran a new play development for young artists as a part of The Scratch Workshop Series in Seattle. Andrew would like to thank Karissa for their collaboration and creativity on this journey, and much love to his husband, Jamey Cheek. AndrewCoopman.com



ISA ARCINIEGAS she/her (*Olivia*) Chicago: *How to Defend Yourself* (Victory Gardens Theatre); *Wolf Play* (The Gift Theatre); *First Love is the Revolution* (Steep Theatre); *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Emerald City Theatre); *The Wolves* (Goodman Theatre, Jeff Award—Best Ensemble), *Fun Home* (Victory Gardens Theater); *Buried Child* (Writers Theatre); *We're Gonna Die* (Haven Theatre Company, ALTA Award—Outstanding Actor in a Principal Role in a Musical); *good friday* (Oracle Productions); *You On The Moors Now* and *American Idiot* (The Hypocrites); *Romeo and Juliet* (Teatro Vista); and *Adventures With Aladdin* (Lookingglass Theatre Company with Chicago Symphony Orchestra). Regional: *Such Things as Vampires* (People's Light Theatre); *Stinky Cheese Man* and *Letters Home* (Griffin Theatre National Tour).

Isa is an ensemble member with Griffin Theatre Company and is represented by Gray Talent.

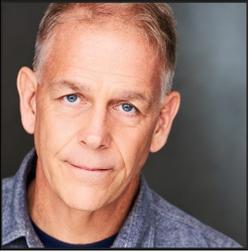


JAZMIN CORONA she/her (*Lydia*) Chicago credits include: *Roe* (Goodman Theatre); *Shrew'd* and *Macbeth* (First Folio Theatre); *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and *The Compass* (u/s, Steppenwolf Theatre); *1776* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *Women of 4G* (Babes With Blades Theatre Company); *Two Mile Hollow* (First Floor Theater); *Gender Breakdown* (Collaboraction); *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose* (Raven Theatre). TV credits: *Chicago Fire*.



JESSICA ERVIN she/her (*Mallory*) is an ensemble member at Rivendell Theatre where she has worked on many projects, and received an equity Jeff nomination for her portrayal of Ester in *Dry Land*. She's also an artistic associate with Bramble Theatre. Other theatre work includes roles with A Red Orchid Theatre, Walkabout Theatre, Route 66, The Public House, and Blue Goose. You can see her in an episode of NBC's *Chicago Fire* as well as the films *Princess Cyd*, *Teacher*, *Provo*, *New Normal*, and *Stalled*. Jessica is a graduate of the School at Steppenwolf and Ball State University, and is proud to be represented by Actor's Talent Group.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



PHILIP EARL JOHNSON he/him (*Alan*) is a proud Ensemble Member of American Blues Theater. Other Chicago theater credits include work at Goodman Theater, Paramount Theatre, Writers Theatre, Court Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, TimeLine Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Bailiwick Chicago and American Theater Company (Jeff Award – *The Big Meal*). National tour work includes *Angels in America: Parts 1 & 2*. Recent television credits include *Proven Innocent*, *Empire*, *Chicago Med*, *Chicago Fire* and *Mind Games*. One man comedy show: *MooNiE: Juggler, Ropewalker, Foolish Mortal!*



PETER SIPLA he/him (*Jake*) is thrilled to debut with American Blues Theater's The Room Reading Series! He was most recently seen on stage playing the drums as the character Rom in Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band* in a three-city co-production (Victory Gardens Theatre, City Theatre, and Merrimack Repertory Theatre). Peter facilitates a play-reading Facebook group comprised of 650 actors and playwrights from the US, UK, and Hong Kong, which has read over 150 plays in the last year. Other credits include Phra Alack in *The King and I* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), Henry in *South Pacific* (Drury Lane Theatre), Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Oak Park Festival Theatre), *Short Shakes!: Romeo and Juliet* and *Passion* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), *Newsies* and *City of Angels* (Marriott Theatre), *Wizard of Oz* and *Miss Saigon* (Paramount Theatre), and work with TimeLine Theatre, Writers' Theatre, First Folio Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre, Brightside Theatre, Red Tape Theatre, Steel Beam Theatre, and Disney Cruise Line. Television credits include *neXt* (Fox), and *Chicago Fire* (NBC). In Voiceover, Peter has recorded hundreds of commercials and industrials and has an upcoming short story podcast. He is a proud member of Actor's Equity, SAG-AFTRA, and AGMA, and a proud North Central College alum. Represented by Gray Talent Group. www.petersipla.com



GRACE SMITH she/her (*Stage Directions*) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater. Film/TV: *Knives and Skin*, *Dreaming Grand Avenue*, *The World's Astonishing News!*, *Hire Me Spielberg*, and *The Art of Sisters* (upcoming). Stage: American Blues, Northlight, Lookingglass, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Goodman, Vision Productions, Chicago Fringe, Live Source Theatre Group, The Tank NYC, The GYM at Judson, The Theatre Project (Brunswick, ME). As an Associate Artist with Undiscovered Countries, Grace has debuted numerous original pieces at their semimonthly Infinite Festivals; co-devised/produced all workshops, stagings, and the national tour of *MARYSHELLEYSHOW*; and successfully emceed a matching fundraiser for Chicago Freedom School entirely on social media. She is a proud AEA member and repped by Paonessa Talent. Learn more at GraceSmithActor.com or @graysmiff on Instagram.



KARIN TERRY she/they (*Jules*) is a Seattle based actor, singer, and teaching artist. Karin was seen most recently as Caroline in *I and You* with Burien Actors Theatre. Other recent credits include Toby in *Sweeney Todd* (Reboot), Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* and Sibella in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Driftwood Players), Max in *Cabaret* (Seattle G&S). Over the last year she has been performing virtually with the Memphis Belles, and 1940s style vocal trio.



CARA PARRISH she/her (*Stage Manager*) is a proud Ensemble Member of American Blues Theater where she is also the Human Resources Coordinator. Chicago credits: *Gem of the Ocean*, *Electra*, *Hard Problem*, *Photograph 51*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, & *Lady From the Sea* (Court Theatre); *WITCH*, *Port Authority*, *Yellow Moon*, *The Letters*, *The Caretaker*, *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf*, & *The Blond*, *The Brunette*, and *the Vengeful Redhead* (Writers Theatre); *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* & *The Vibrator Play* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *Jmes and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook); *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, & *Emma* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); *Beauty's Daughter* & *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (American Blues Theater). Cara is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT **KARISSA MURRELL MYERS**

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE *ON THE GREENBELT*?

On the Greenbelt was born out of my own journey of grief after losing my beloved grandma in 2019 after she had a long battle with a fatal disease. In many ways, I personally grappled with the same question as the characters in this play do: how can we move forward when there has been so much pain and loss? I wanted to record the impossible feelings of hope, love, and helplessness I felt while sitting there in that hospital room, next to someone I loved, one whom I knew we were about to lose for forever. The path of grief is not an easy road, and is one heavily and universally traveled by us all. I also knew that I wanted to set the play in my hometown of Boise, Idaho as the reality of living in Idaho is not something that I see often on the stage. As a multicultural human myself, I'm also very interested in writing about interracial relationships in all forms, and exploring the joys and challenges that go along with those experiences.



HOW DOES YOUR EXPERIENCE AS AN ACTOR INFLUENCE YOUR WORK AS A PLAYWRIGHT?

My perspective as an actor helps a lot in creating complicated, imperfect, human characters I myself would be excited to play if given the chance to do so. When I write dialogue, I tend to improv with myself as I “play” each character at a time, switching perspective and back again. It can be a fun and simultaneously frustrating process.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT?

I'm currently in the process of workshopping my youngest and rawest play, *Blood of My Mother's*. I wrote this play during the high heat of the pandemic when anxiety reigned supreme and my longing for my hometown and family was so palpable, I could almost choke on it. I'm very excited to hopefully bring this story to the Chicago stage very soon.

ABOUT THE BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD



On the Greenbelt was a semi-finalist for the 2021 *Blue Ink Playwriting Award*.

The nationally-renowned *Blue Ink Playwriting Award* was created in 2010 to support new work. Since its inception, American Blues Theater has named 11 Award winners, 95 finalists, and 139 semi-finalists.

Each year American Blues Theater accepts worldwide submissions of original, unpublished full-length plays. The winning play is selected by Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside and the theater's Ensemble. The playwright receives a monetary prize and reading at American Blues Theater in Chicago. Finalists and semi-finalists are also awarded a cash prize.

2021 BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD WINNERS

Winner: Yussef El Guindi (*Refugee Rhapsody*)

Featured Finalists: Juan Alfonso (*An Educated Guess*), Matthew Libby (*The Machine*), Wendy MacLeod (*The Good Samaritan*), chandra thomas (*The Buzzer*).

Finalists: Jaisey Bates (*When We Breathe*), Mardee Bennett (*CANE*), Xavier Clark (*backstroke boys*), Gina Femia (*the thing about air*), Nancy Garcia Loza (*RUST*), Keiko Green (*wad*), Zora Howard (*Hang Time*), Kristin Idaszak (*Tidy*), Sam Kebede (*Jericho*), Matthew Paul Olmos (*that drive through monterey*), Audley Puglisi (*the salt women*), Caridad Svich (*Albemarle*).

Semi-finalists: Ian August (*Everything You Can Do [To Make the World a Better Place]*), Melda Beaty (*Coconut Cake*), Brysen Boyd (*RD/Suite Meeting RM, 204*), Toccara Castleman (*Maybe a Mexican*), Harold Ellis Clark (*Back in the Day*), Greg Congleton (*High Ground*), Messiah Cristine (*The Topography of Dreams of Where Wolves Go to Whisper*), Angela J. Davis (*AGATHE*), Spenser Davis (*Underdogz*), Raul Garza (*Running Bear*), Patty Kim Hamilton (*Peeling Oranges*), Amina Henry (*Burned*), Michele Kushner (*Somewhere in My Sunset*), Rachel Lynett (*Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry [You Too August Wilson]*), Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj (*[Un]Documented*), Madeline Mahrer (*Arcade*), Eric Marlin (*Denial*), Katarzyna Muller (*American Monster*), Karissa Murrell Myers (*On the Greenbelt*), Paloma Nozicka (*Enough to Let the Light In*), Daniel Olivas (*Waiting for Godinez*), Zack Peercy (*Essential Starlite*), Kira Rockwell (*The Tragic Ecstasy of Girlhood*), Lia Romeo (*The Agency*), Andrew Rosendorf (*One-Shot*), Marcus Scott (*Sibling Rivalries*), Scott Sickles (*Pangea*), Kristen Spencer (*Dutch Kings*), Nathan Yungerberg (*THEA*), Emily Zemba (*But if the Train Comes to Her*).



NAVIGATING THE GRIEF OF LOSING A PARENT

On the Greenbelt explores the question of “how do we process grief?” The below article from *Healthline* offers some suggestions on how to begin to navigate the grief of losing a parent. It has been edited here for length. Read the full article [here](#).

KNOW THAT WHAT YOU FEEL IS VALID

Sadness is common after the loss of a parent, but it’s also normal for other feelings to take over. You may not feel sad, and that’s OK, too. Perhaps you only feel numb, or relieved they’re no longer in pain.

Grief opens the gate to a flood of complicated, often conflicting emotions. Your relationship with your parent might have had plenty of challenges, but it still represented an important key to your identity. They created you, or adopted and chose to raise you, and became your first anchor in the world. After such a significant loss, it’s only natural to struggle or experience difficulties coming to terms with your distress.

You might experience:

- anger or frustration
- guilt, perhaps for not contacting them frequently or not being present for their death
- shock and emotional numbness
- confusion, disbelief, or a sense of unreality
- hopelessness or despair
- physical pain
- mental health symptoms, including depression or thoughts of suicide
- relief that they’re no longer in pain

No matter how the loss hits you, remember this: Your feelings are valid, even if they don’t line up with what others think you “should” feel.

LET YOURSELF FULLY EXPERIENCE THE LOSS (NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES)

People react to grief in different ways, but it’s important to let yourself feel all of your feelings. There’s no single right way to grieve, no set amount of time after which you can automatically expect to feel better, no stages or steps of grief to check off a list. This in itself can be difficult to accept.

Denying your feelings may seem like a route toward faster healing. You might also get the message that others expect you to bury your grief and move on before you’ve come to terms with your loss. Remind yourself grief is a difficult process as well as a painful one. Try to not let the opinions of others sway you. Some people work through grief in a



short time and move forward with the remnants of their sadness safely tucked away. Others need more time and support, no matter how expected the death was.

If your parent passed after a long illness, you may have had more time to prepare, but no amount of preparation makes your grief any less significant when it hits. You might still feel stunned and disbelieving, especially if you held out hope for their recovery to the very end.

The unexpected death of a parent still in middle age, on the other hand, may force you to confront your own mortality, a battle that can also complicate grief.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR WELL-BEING

Grief often has a significant impact on daily life. Your state of mind might change rapidly, without warning. You might notice sleep problems, change of appetite, irritability, poor concentration, or increased alcohol or substance use. You might find it tough to work, take care of household tasks, or see to your own basic needs. The need to wrap up your parent’s affairs may leave you overwhelmed, particularly if you have to handle this task alone.

Some people find comfort in the distraction of work, but try to avoid forcing yourself to return before you feel ready, if possible. People often throw themselves into work, taking on more than they can comfortably handle to avoid scaling the ever-present wall of painful emotions. Finding a balance is key. Some distraction can be healthy, provided you still make time to address your feelings.

NAVIGATING THE GRIEF OF LOSING A PARENT

It might seem difficult, even inconsiderate, to dedicate time to self-care, but prioritizing your health becomes even more important as you recover from your loss.

Keep these tips in mind:

- **Get enough sleep.** Set aside 7 to 9 hours each night for sleep.
- **Avoid skipping meals.** If you don't feel hungry, choose nutritious snacks and small meals of mood-boosting foods.
- **Hydrate.** Drink plenty of water.
- **Keep moving.** Stay active to energize yourself and help raise your spirits. Even a daily walk can help.
- **Aim for moderation.** If you drink alcohol, try to stay within recommended guidelines. It's understandable to want to numb your pain, but increased alcohol use can have health consequences.
- **Reset.** Rest and recharge with fulfilling hobbies, such as gardening, reading, art, or music.
- **Be mindful.** Meditating or keeping a grief journal can help you process emotions.
- **Speak up.** Talk to your healthcare provider about any new physical or mental health symptoms. Reach out to friends and other loved ones for support.

SHARE MEMORIES

Talking to family members and other loved ones about what your parent meant to you and sharing stories can help keep their memory alive. If you have children, you might tell stories about their grandparent or carry on family traditions that were important in your childhood. It might feel painful at first to reminisce, but you may find that your grief begins to ease as the stories start flowing.

If you feel unable to openly talk about your parent for the moment, it can also help to collect photographs of special times or write them a letter expressing your grief about their passing.

Not everyone has positive memories of their parents, of course. And people often avoid sharing negative memories about people who've passed. If they abused, neglected, or hurt you in any way, you may wonder whether there's any point to dredging up that old pain. If you've never discussed or processed what happened, however, you might find it even harder to heal and move forward after their death. Opening up to a therapist or someone else

you trust can help lighten the load.

LET OTHERS COMFORT YOU

Friends and loved ones may not know exactly what to say if they haven't faced the same type of loss, but their presence can still help you feel less alone.

It's normal to need time to mourn privately, but at the same time, completely isolating yourself generally doesn't help. The companionship and support of those closest to you can help keep you from being overwhelmed by your loss.

Beyond providing a supportive presence, friends can also help out with meals, child care, or handling errands. Just be sure to let others know what you need. If you want to talk about your parent, you might ask if they're able to listen. If you'd like a break from thinking about their death, you might ask them to join you in a distracting activity, whether that's playing a game, watching a movie, or working on a project around the house.

TALK TO A THERAPIST

There's no shame in needing extra support as you begin processing your parent's death. In fact, many counselors specialize in providing grief support.

A therapist can offer validation and guidance as you begin working through the complex emotions that tend to accompany grief. Grief counselors can also teach coping strategies you can use as you begin adjusting to life without your parent.

Therapy also offers a safe space to unpack any guilt, anger, resentment, or other lingering emotions around a deceased parent's toxic or hurtful behavior, and to achieve some level of closure. If you want to forgive your parent but feel unsure how to begin, a therapist can provide compassionate support.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Grief after a parent's death can drain you and leave you reeling, no matter what kind of relationship you had. Remember, grieving is a normal, healthy process, one that looks different for everyone. Treat yourself with kindness and compassion, embracing patience as you take the time you need to work through your loss.

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GRIEF & ADDICTION

In *On the Greenbelt*, Jules turns to alcohol as she processes the grief of losing her mother. The below overview about the connection between grief and addiction is from American Addiction Centers. Learn more & find treatment resources from American Addiction Centers [here](#).

Grief is the natural response of pain and sadness that accompanies loss. There is no set timetable for how long grief will last. People will experience grief for as long as it takes them to adjust to the changes in their life that are associated with their loss. This process can last for months, or even years. Grieving individuals often feel numb and removed from daily life. Extreme emotional stress can make some people unable to carry on with regular duties and responsibilities while they are saddled with their sense of loss. Grief may cause anger and frustration, and for some it can lead to anxiety disorders and depression.

Our natural reaction is to avoid the pain associated with grief, although everyone approaches this differently. Some people change jobs or move away, while others may attempt to cope with the overwhelming pain of their loss by turning to drugs or alcohol.

RESEARCH ON THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GRIEF AND ADDICTION

Research shows that some forms of grief increase the risk of developing a substance use disorder. Several studies have shown a relationship between bereavement and hazardous alcohol consumption. One study found that men bereaved for two years are more than twice as likely to have an alcohol use disorder as men who are not grieving.

Other research shows that people suffering from complicated grief (a form of prolonged and unrelenting grief that occurs in approximately 10-20% of bereaved individuals) are particularly vulnerable to developing an addiction as they attempt to rid themselves from their severe and ongoing mourning. One recent study found that both men and women with major depressive disorder and complicated grief have significantly higher rates of alcohol dependence relative to depressed individuals without complicated grief. Interestingly, research investigating the effect of grief on brain function found that complicated grief activates the nucleus accumbens, a part of the brain's reward center that plays an important role in addiction-related behaviors. Brain scans taken during the study demonstrated that activation of neural pathways occurred in the area of the brain associated with the longing for alcohol and drugs, suggesting that memories of loved ones may promote addictive behaviors in individuals suffering from complicated grief.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Carrying the emotional stress and pain from the death of a loved one can be a difficult burden. Loss is a normal part of life and there are healthy ways to deal with this pain. Therapy through a counselor or a support group is usually the preferred treatment for grief, although antidepressants can be prescribed for people suffering from clinical depression or complicated grief. People struggling with grief and substance abuse will require additional interventions to address their addiction. Residential or outpatient integrated treatment programs can help individuals address substance use disorders and process their grief at the same time.

If you find yourself trying to overcome addiction while also dealing with the effects of grief, please take the first step toward recovery and contact a treatment professional today to learn about the programs that can best meet your specific needs.

VIRTUAL RECOVERY RESOURCES

During the pandemic, when social distancing and self-quarantine are needed to control the spread of COVID-19, continued social connectedness to maintain recovery are critically important. Virtual recovery resources can and should be used during this time.

The below tip sheet from [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) describes resources that can be used to virtually support recovery from mental/substance use disorders. Click on the boxes below to access each resource.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Offers online support

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Offers a variety of online meeting options

LIFERING

LifeRing Secular Recovery offers online support

IN THE ROOMS - ONLINE RECOVERY

Provides online support through live meetings

REDDIT RECOVERY

Offers a virtual hang out and support during recovery

REFUGE RECOVERY

Provides online and virtual support

SELF-MANAGEMENT & RECOVERY TRAINING

Offers global community of mutual-support groups

SOBER CITY

Offers an online support and recovery community

SOBERGRID

Offers an online platform to help anyone get sober and stay sober

SOBERISTAS

Provides a women-only international online recovery community

SOBER RECOVERY

Provides an online forum for those in recovery and their friends and family

WE CONNECT RECOVERY

Provides daily online recovery groups

NAMI HELPLINE

Coronavirus Information and Resources Guide

HAZELDEN BETTY FORD FOUNDATION

Online support meetings and community

SHATTERPROOF

Information about coping with COVID-19 for those in long-term recovery

SAMHSA'S DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE

Toll-Free (English & Español):
1-800-985-5990

SMS (English):
Text "TalkWithUs" to **66746**

SMS (Español):
"Hablamos" al **66746**

SAMHSA'S NATIONAL HELPLINE

Toll-Free 24/7 Treatment Referral Information Service (English and Español):
1-800-662-4357

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

Toll-free (English):
1-800-273-8255

Toll-Free (Español):
1-888-628-9454

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS & COMMUNITY IN IDAHO

In *On the Greenbelt*, Jules is a Pansexual woman who hasn't fully "come out" yet. She lives in Boise, Idaho. Below is a brief overview of some of the LGBTQ+ rights, legal protections, and community in Idaho.

IDAHO'S LGBTQ+ LAWS AND POLICIES

According to a 2020 study by the Williams Institute at UCLA, the approximate LGBTQ+ population in Idaho is 48,000 people — or approximately 2.8% of the adult population. While there has been some progress both nationally and statewide in expanding legal rights and protections to include the LGBTQ+ population, there are still many Idaho state laws and policies that do not protect LGBTQ+ individuals.

As a result of the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell*, same-sex couples can marry nationwide and all states must extend all the rights and benefits of marriage to same-sex couples. As a result, the following benefits are available to all married same-sex couples on the same basis they are available to married different-sex couples: marriage for same-sex couples, medical decision-making authority for married same-sex couples, stepparent adoption for married same-sex couples, and joint adoption for married same-sex couples.

Some Idaho laws currently support LGBTQ+ individuals. For example, there are no explicit prohibitions on adoption by same-sex couples or on second-parent adoptions, lesbian couples can access assisted reproduction services, such as in vitro fertilization, and state law recognizes the non-genetic, non-gestational mother as a legal parent to a child born via donor insemination if the parents are married. Idaho law does not regulate the practice of surrogacy. State courts have generally been favorable to couples, same-sex or opposite-sex, who have used the gestational or traditional surrogacy process.

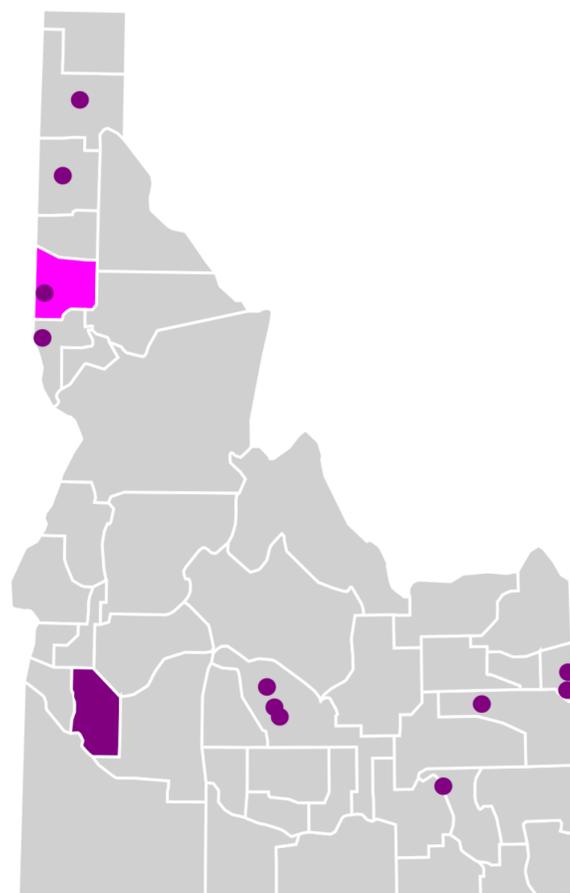
However, no provision of Idaho law explicitly addresses discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The map to the right shows the only Idaho counties and cities that have local ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Idaho law also does not address hate crimes based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

Other discriminatory state laws in Idaho include:

- A religious exemption law which permits people, churches, non-profit organizations, and some corporations to seek exemptions from state laws that "burden" their religious beliefs.
- State law that prevents transgender students from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity.
- Idaho explicitly excludes transition-related healthcare in their state employee health benefits for transgender employees.

The [Movement Advancement Project](#) rates Idaho's LGBTQ+ Policy as "Low" (1.75 points out of a possible 38.5 points). You can explore the full Idaho Equality Profile and read an explanation of the rating system [here](#).



- Has ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Has ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in public employment only

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS & COMMUNITY IN IDAHO

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN IDAHO

Idaho's state capital, Boise, has long been a refuge for LGBTQ+ individuals in Idaho. The annual [Boise Pride Festival](#)—which just turned 30—rallies large crowds each summer. Since 2017, Boise PrideFest has almost doubled in growth. In 2020, they originally projected close to 80,000 attendees, after 70,000 turned out in 2019. There is also an active, year-round LGBTQ+ entertainment scene in Boise, including the drag performance group LipsInc! which has been active for over 22 years.

Steve Martin, the regional philanthropy officer for Idaho's [Pride Foundation](#), explains that LGBTQ+ support extends beyond the entertainment scene. "Most high schools here, and even at least one junior high, have a gay-straight alliance club," he says. "Boise State University also has a GSA called Pride Alliance, as well as a very active Gender Equity Center."

One of the leaders in the LGBTQ+ community in Boise is [The Community Center \(TCC\)](#), which was founded in 1983. They began publishing *The Paper*—Idaho's first gay publication—in the 1980s, and were involved with presenting Boise's first Gay Pride Day in 1990. Today, TCC committed to uniting the LGBTQ+ community through educational and developmental programs by providing resources to the LGBTQ+ community. Among their other services, they provide a regularly updated referral directory for LGBTQ+ individuals seeking medical, counseling, and legal assistance. They also provide information for LGBTQ+ individuals considering relocation to Idaho, as well as for employers and organizations with a desire to encourage diversity.

Outside of Boise, the cities of Coeur d'Alene, Moscow, and Pocatello have also all been listed as some of the "[Best Towns in Idaho for LGBT Families](#)."



Pictured: Boise Pride 2011 at the Idaho capitol. Source: Wikipedia.
Sources: The Community Center, Boise PrideFest, Thrillist, and Movoto.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.



CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES

Extensive collection of Chicago-area resources compiled by the Chicago Department of Public Health, including local support groups, recovery groups, therapy, and more.



COVID GRIEF NETWORK

A volunteer-run mutual aid network that aims to undo isolation for young adults grieving the illness or death of someone close to COVID-19. COVID Grief Network connects individuals in their 20s or 30s to free one-on-one and/or group support from a volunteer grief worker.



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN (HRC)

The Human Rights Campaign envisions a world where every member of the LGBTQ community has the freedom to live their truth without fear, and with equality under the law.



SELF-HELP ADDICTION RECOVERY TRAINING (SMART)

A global community of mutual-support groups where participants help one another resolve problems with any addiction. Participants find and develop the power within themselves to change and lead fulfilling and balanced lives guided through a 4-point program.

ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

Winner of American Theatre Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

We believe in cooperative collaborations both on and off-stage. We provide community service for many not-for-profits, such as the Chicago Public Schools, The Night Ministry, Chicago House, Suits for Success, Misericordia, and the USO. Since 2009, we've held food, book, & clothing drives, distributed promotional tickets, and raised awareness for children's surgeries and health needs. We donate proceeds from "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

We are Chicago's second-oldest AEA Ensemble theater. As of 2020, our theater and artists have 221 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 40 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

American Blues Theater is committed to developing the classic plays and musicals of tomorrow. More than half of our mainstage productions are world and Chicago premieres. Our new play development consists of a variety of programs – including world and Chicago premieres, the nationally-recognized *Blue Ink Playwriting Award*, *Blueprint* play development, and annual *Ripped: the Living Newspaper Festival* of new short-plays.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

THE ROOM

A READING SERIES

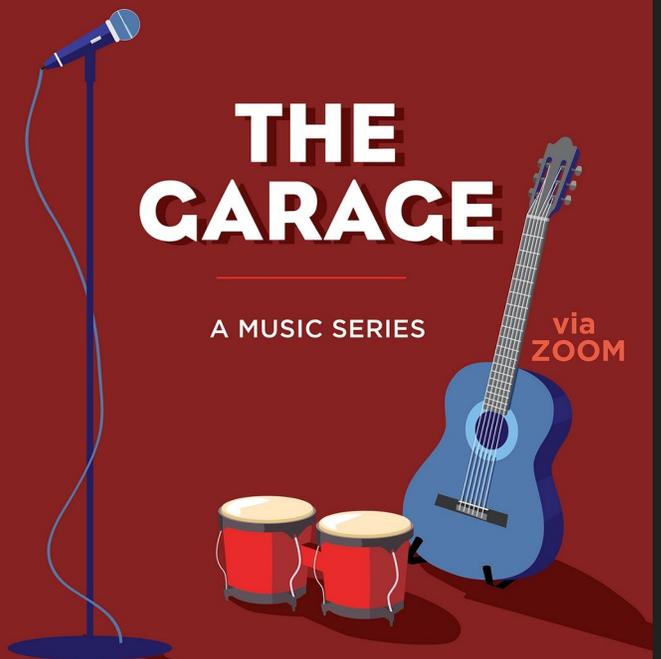
via
ZOOM



THE GARAGE

A MUSIC SERIES

via
ZOOM



Visit AmericanBluesTheater.com to learn more.