



“Feliz Julio everyone, and welcome to the Mid-summer Month’s Dream volume of A Ray of Sunshine; it’s time to give you all another update to how my summer reign, as Mr. Gay America 2022, has been going. July brought with it new experiences, new audiences, and new connections all around.

The tenth month of my reign began with a humbling start as I was featured in our newspaper (The Kansas City Star) in a front page article covering my reign as Mr. Gay America, my work in the LGBTQ & POC community, and my experience being out as a gay teacher. The article was both in print and online so I was very proud to share it with my family and friends who didn’t live in Kansas City; showcasing the work of the Mr. Gay America system locally and nationally. The same week the article was published, I was also invited as a spotlight guest on the 89.3 NPR radio show “Up To Date”. I was able to speak about my reign and share some of the most memorable moments of my year. “Up To Date” allowed an opportunity to reach a wider audience and spread the message and meaning of Excellence to local listeners and online audiences.

The next weekend gave me time to spend with my friends and family in Kansas City. Specifically I was able to spend time with my Missouri America brothers, Felix & Dan James, and our promoter Thomas Hall; we enjoyed dinner and Missouri America family time. We were also joined by Summer Hall Knight (Miss Gay Kansas City America), and our good friend David Robins as he traveled through Kansas City for a weekend. There’s nothing like reconnecting with my hometown friends and have family time.

After a couple weeks home with my husband, some relaxing and some landscaping & house work, it was time to get back out on the open road for a 3 city tour in 4 days. The second July 13 took me first to Tulsa, Oklahoma where I joined the cast of The Majestic Nightclub for 2 nights in their Thursday & Friday shows- Dragnificent & the Bad Boys on the Block. It had been over 10 years since I performed with my Oklahoma friends, and the casts, hosts, and bar staff made me feel right back at home. After 2 nights in Tulsa I was on the road to Springfield, Missouri where I would host & perform in the double Saturday night shows at Martha’s Vineyard, and wow was that a great time. The Springfield crowd was crazy fun and the energy of the bar was great to be part of. The next morning I was up early for Des Moines, Iowa to support and be part of the NextGen show at The Garden Nightclub.

This was a monthly youth show that welcomed families and friends of all ages, and featured new and young drag performers. This month’s show had entertainers as young as 4 years old getting on the stage and enjoying the art of drag! It was great to see so many beautiful families in the audience as they cheered, supported, and tipped the young, upcoming performers. I commend The Garden for opening their doors and creating a safe space for the future stars of our community to express their art.



Returning back to Kansas City after these 4 amazingly fun days of shows, I took a few days to rest and recuperate just in time for Entertainer of the Year weekend. The weekend of July 21-23 I was off to Louisville, Kentucky for the National EOY 2023 pageant; honoring the reign of Jericho Habib & Shontelle Sparkles. EOY was an absolutely gorgeous pageant to witness, both on the Mr and the F.I. side. Our newly crowned EOY court, Twila Holiday and My'Kel Knight-Adams Iman, each put on an amazing show with their packages and their new titles are so well deserved. It was a special treat to also reunite with my best gals, Dextaci (MGA 2022) and Tatiyanna Voche (MGA 2023), and spend the weekend together along with Miss Gay America owners Mike & Rob. There's never a dull moment with Dex, Tati, & I and every moment I get to spend with them only adds to our amazing friendship. Perhaps the biggest highlight during EOY weekend for me was getting to meet the legendary Aurora Sexton! I have admired her work as an entertainer, humanitarian, and activist for so many years, that meeting her was truly life changing. She is a breathe of fresh air in the this world and I count myself so lucky that we were able to talk briefly, sharing our thoughts and ideas of how we can keep fighting for a better, safer world for our community

Before leaving Louisville I also had the opportunity to join the cast of Play Louisville and perform in their weekend line up. That crowd knows how to have a great time and the Playmates cast backstage were some of the most welcoming and hospitable performers that I've had the pleasure of working with during my reign. We were also joined by the talented and hilarious Heidi N. Closet from Rupaul's Drag Race; this was the second time she and I had worked together and once again she didn't disappoint at all.

I rounded off my July month by partnering with Monarch Conservatory of the Arts to put on a youth day camp called "Drag Me To Camp"; a series of workshops that focused on teaching the art of drag to the students. During the 3 day camp, myself and 3 other drag entertainers from Kansas City (Summer Hall-Knight, Florence Faye, & Didi Cumswell) each mentored a group of 3-4 students (from ages 7-16) teaching them about the aspects of drag. Each of the 3 days focused on a different area; Lip syncing & performing, costuming, and hair & make up. The camp was a huge success, receiving praise and support from all parents and guardians and the Monarch directors invited us back in 2024 to lead another camp. We would finish the camp and prepare the students to showcase all they had learned in a family friendly show at Hamburger Mary's in August; a show that would also serve as a benefit for PFLAG - Kansas City. Stay tuned for my September issue to hear how that show went.

July ended 10 months of reigning, and opened the door for some great opportunities for the future, so be sure to stay tuned to see where these new connections lead before my step down takes place in October.

Keep shining & until next time,
Be A Ray of Sunshine in the world.

KC Sunshine,

Mr. Gay America 2022

