

# ◆ The Tackle Box ◆

## Awareness Month & Days

- [LGBTQIA+ Pride Month](#)
  - [Michigan Pride Events](#)
- [National Migraine & Headache Awareness Month](#)
- [Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month](#)
- [African American Music Heritage Month](#)
  - [The Gospel According to Detroit: Black Music Month Celebration](#) - Detroit Public Library, June 29<sup>th</sup>
  - [Ann Arbor African American Festival](#), June 6<sup>th</sup>
- [National Caribbean American Heritage Month](#)
- [Immigrant Heritage Month](#)
- [PTSD Awareness Month](#)
- June 2 - [Indian Citizenship Act of 1924](#)
- June 5 - [World Environment Day](#)
- June 12 - [Loving Day](#)
- June 18 - [International Day of Countering Hate Speech](#)
- June 19 - [Juneteenth](#)
  - [Michigan Events](#)
- June 20 - [World Refugee Day](#)
- June 27- [Helen Keller Day](#)



A smiling Alexis sits in a sunny field holding native flowers.

## Bring Reperasation to the Table

Growing up immersed in nature is a common experience that many aquatic science professionals share. Without even realizing it, many of us have used this shared experience to build lasting connections - from finding fishing friends in college to talking about foraging for wild foods in the breakroom at work. It can be jarring when you discover that something you take for granted is not a common thread shared by everyone.

This is what happened to Alexis Nikole Nelson, also known as [@blackforager](#) by millions of followers. Growing up, Alexis attended a nature-centric Montessori school until junior high when she transferred to public school. It was at this point that she discovered that her childhood growing up in the outdoors was unusual to her new African American school friends. To fit in, Alexis stepped back from nature, and it was not until adulthood that she rediscovered her deep love for nature, conservation and foraging.

On the surface Alexis's story seems to be about a person finding themselves and embracing what they love, but when you look deeper the story becomes

more complex. While Alexis's story is undoubtedly about using her ebullient personality to educate others about foraging, it's also about reshaping societal norms by addressing the lack of representation, systemic racism, and classism. There is a reason that Alexis's junior high friends thought Alexis's outdoorsy childhood was unusual, and it goes beyond a failure of directors to include African American people enjoying the outdoors in movies and on TV shows.

Alexis talks openly about representation and how difficult it can be to often be the only African American participating in the foraging events she's attended. She talks passionately about making room at the table for other people of color, so they feel welcome in the foraging community. In her videos Alexis also does a wonderful job of explaining how unseen factors shape how we interact with nature. For example, in her February 12, 2024, [Instagram video](#) she explains how racism and classism interact to create a society where people of color are underrepresented in outdoor activities. In this video she explains that historically

African Americans had a deep understanding of foraging due to the need to feed and support themselves during chattel slavery. After emancipation white landowners passed laws that prevented people from accessing resources on private and public lands. The intention behind these laws was to limit the ability for poor people, African Americans and Indigenous people to support themselves and thus diminish their ability to gain power and influence. The broad adoption of these laws combined with racial violence and a shift in how society viewed people that foraged to support themselves (i.e., as poor and less than those that could afford store-bought goods) has contributed to the erosion of foraging traditions within many African American communities and helped create barriers to participation in outdoor recreation.

Alexis's work not only spreads knowledge about foraging but is also helping the African American community to heal from the trauma of slavery and the Jim Crow era by helping them to reclaim cultural knowledge and traditions that were nearly lost due to the interaction of racism, classism, and other discriminatory policies. It seems appropriate to talk about Alexis's work in this month's edition of the Tackle Box not only because many wild foods are abundant in June, but because Juneteenth is also celebrated this month. By highlighting African American history, addressing disparities and reclaiming cultural practices Alexis's work aligns closely with the core values of Juneteenth. Through her videos Alexis not only teaches people how to source free, sustainable, and nutritious food but also shows that the outdoors is for everyone.

More places to find Alexis:

- [Going Wild with Dr. Rae Wynn-Grant](#)
- [Code Switch Interview](#)
- [Happy Snacking, Don't Die](#)



The cover of Alexis book "Happy Snacking Don't Die" in which a comprehensive foraging guidebook and vegan cookbook.



# Michigan Pride Events

**JUN 5-6** Kalamazoo Pride

**JUN 6** Keweenaw Pridefest

**JUN 6** Muskegon Pride

**JUN 6-7** Motor City Pride

**JUN 13** East Lansing Pride

**JUN 13** Marquette Pride Fest

**JUN 16-19** Battle Creek Pride

**JUN 18** Flint Pride

**JUN 18** Ypsilanti Pride

**JUN 20-21** Grand Rapids Pride

**JUN 27** Bay Pride

**JUN 27** Lansing Pride

**AUG 1** Ann Arbor Pride

Michigan Pride Event Calendar

## Ally Corner: Pride Glossary

Being a good ally means using correct and preferred terms with LGBTQIA2S+ coworkers, friends, family, and community. Learning the terminology can feel overwhelming, so we compiled this list of key terms. Unless otherwise noted, definitions are from [GLAAD](#) or the [Human Rights Campaign](#). This is not an exhaustive list—we encourage you to explore their websites for more information.

### Gender

**NOUN**

Stanford Medicine defines gender as “the socially-constructed set of ways that people understand and express themselves along the continuum of masculinity, femininity, both, or neither. Gender is distinct from sex”.

### Sexual Orientation

**NOUN**

A person's romantic, emotional, and/or physical attraction to another person, which can include, but is not limited to: straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and asexual.

### Gender Identity

**NOUN PHRASE**

How a person perceives themselves and how they express this perception. This can differ from their assigned sex at birth, as it is a person's internal concept of self.

### Sex

**NOUN**

Stanford Medicine defines it as the “biological distinctions that exist between male, female, and intersex people with respect to reproductive anatomy, sex chromosomes, and/or specific genes”, none of which are binary characteristics.

### Gender Expression

**NOUN PHRASE**

The external appearance of a person's gender identity, expressed through behavior, body, appearance, and/or voice characteristics.

### Sex Assigned at Birth

**NOUN PHRASE**

The sex (i.e., male, female or intersex) that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth. Most infants are assigned a sex based on external anatomy according to the binary-framework of male or female.

### Nonbinary

**ADJECTIVE**

A person whose gender identity and/or expression is outside of the binary gender of female and male. Nonbinary may be shortened to “enby”, and some individuals may also use agender, bigender, demigender, pangender, genderqueer, gender-fluid, etc. to describe the specific way in which they are nonbinary. See GLAAD's [In Focus: Nonbinary People](#) for more information.

### Gender-fluid or Genderqueer

**ADJECTIVE**

A person who embraces an unfixed gender identity and who may see themselves as both male and female, neither male nor female, or something outside of these categories.

### Gender-Expansive

**ADJECTIVE**

Used to describe concepts of gender that are broader than the male/female binary. Often used to describe the experiences of children exploring their gender identities and expressions.

# Michigan Juneteenth Events

**JUN 13** [Ann Arbor Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 13-19** [Kalamazoo Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 15-19** [MSU Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 18-21** [517 Juneteenth weekend](#)

**JUN 19** [Traverse City Community Day](#)

**JUN 19-20** [Battle Creek Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 19-20** [Ypsilanti Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 19-21** [Northern Michigan Juneteenth](#)

**JUN 20** [Holland Freedom Festival](#)

**JUN** [Detroit Juneteenth Events](#)

**JUN** [Flint Juneteenth Events](#)

## LGBTQIA2S+

ADJECTIVE OR NOUN

Is an acronym used to represent a broad spectrum of sexual orientations, gender identities, and lived experiences. The terms of this acronym are defined below:

### Lesbian

ADJECTIVE OR NOUN

Primarily used by women and nonbinary individuals to describe emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction to women. Some people also use it as a political identity and/or related to their gender identity.

### Gay

ADJECTIVE

Originally used to describe a man attracted to other men, now used to describe a person who is attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender, or as an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual.

### Bisexual

ADJECTIVE

A person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to more than one gender. Sometimes the term pansexual is used synonymously, but sometimes to specify lack of preference.

### Queer

ADJECTIVE

A term used by people who are not exclusively cisgender and heterosexual; have an identity or orientation counter to the mainstream; and/or feel that terms lesbian, gay, and bisexual are too limiting or have cultural connotations that do not apply to them.

### Transgender

ADJECTIVE

A broad term used for a person whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender person may use other terms to more specifically define their gender, see GLAAD's [Transgender Glossary](#) for more information.

### Intersex

ADJECTIVE

A person that falls outside of the traditional concept of male and female due to differences in sex characteristics, including variations in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits. See GLAAD's [In Focus: Intersex People](#) for more information.

### Asexual, Aromantic, and/or Agender

ADJECTIVE

These are three different terms used by people who experience little to no sexual attraction (asexual), romantic attraction (aromantic), or specific gender identity (agender).

### Two-Spirit (2S)

ADJECTIVE

A broad term used by North American Indigenous and First Nations people to describe individuals who historically and contemporarily exist outside colonial gender, often with spiritual significance and should only be used by/for Indigenous people. Many Indigenous languages have terms describing experiences outside sex, gender, and sexuality binaries.



SYMBOL

Used to denote the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities possible.





The Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society invites you to join the

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026 - 2027

Hosted by the Michigan FishCAST

## What's MI AFS?

- MI AFS is a professional organization interested in maintaining high standards for the fisheries profession and ensuring conservation of Michigan's aquatic resources.
- Activities of the Michigan Chapter revolve around annual meetings, continuing education workshops, newsletters, and committees.

## Mentorship Program:

- Participants will be paired with individuals in different stages of their career to foster a sense of belonging and provide mutual learning opportunities
- People of all experience levels and backgrounds are welcome
- AFS Membership is not required

## Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability Team Mission (FishCAST):

- Cultivate a chapter culture that ensures all members feel welcome and respected
- Recruit and retain members with underrepresented identities and backgrounds
- Create and advocate for policies and procedures that promote DEIJ at the chapter, regional, and international levels

If interested, scan QR Code or email [mifishcastafs@gmail.com](mailto:mifishcastafs@gmail.com)  
[michigan.fisheries.org](http://michigan.fisheries.org)

# RECOMMENDED WATCH:



# POSE



The television series *Pose* depicts the experience of transgender and queer people of color in 1980s New York City. In the midst of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the main characters must fight for respect, justice, and even healthcare in a world that would rather pretend they do not exist. Based on many real events, *Pose* highlights the people and the fight that took place for real change to occur for queer people.

This show boasts the largest transgender cast in scripted TV history and with each character you learn the complexities of self-discovery and embodying who they were meant to be. After being outcast by their friends, family, and society, the characters form chosen families — a practice that has been quite common amongst queer folks throughout history. A strength of the show is the variety of emotions you will feel as you become connected to the characters. One moment you're laughing, the next you're crying, and you may even find yourself voguing along with the characters performing at Ballroom. This show is a great reminder of who we have to thank for the leaps and bounds this country has traveled toward a more inclusive and vibrant country.



You can stream *Pose* on Hulu, Amazon Prime, and Disney+

## Featured Artist:

# PATTIE GONIA



Pattie Gonia is a drag queen who is taking the country by storm. A fierce performer and a guru with the makeup brush, Pattie is a queen that ranks among the best of them. What makes her such an iconic figure, however, is her vehement commitment as an environmentalist. She fights for inclusivity in the outdoors and has donated over \$4.7 million to LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and environmental non-profits. As a testament to her fealty toward such causes, in 2025 Pattie Gonia raised \$1 million by backpacking 100 miles across the state of California. Doesn't sound too bad, right? Well along with the challenges of a 100-mile backpacking trip, she vowed to do so in full drag. So, each morning, she unzipped her sleeping bag and zipped right into a full fit — finished off with a wig and a full beat of course!

Pattie Gonia fights for natural resources as well as the people trying to protect them. Following the massive federal employee layoffs in 2025, she organized the Queer Outdoor and Environmental Job Board, a website that queer folks can utilize to find new employment and volunteer opportunities across the country. This website helps people find meaningful careers while promoting inclusivity in the field, as natural resources positions are often lacking rich diversity.

Pattie Gonia's vision for the future is simple; she wants to see "a world where we don't see each other as parts of a well-oiled machine, but as a well-nurtured meadow, where everyone has a role to play, and so much is possible when we work together".



# The Voting Rights Act & Recent Changes

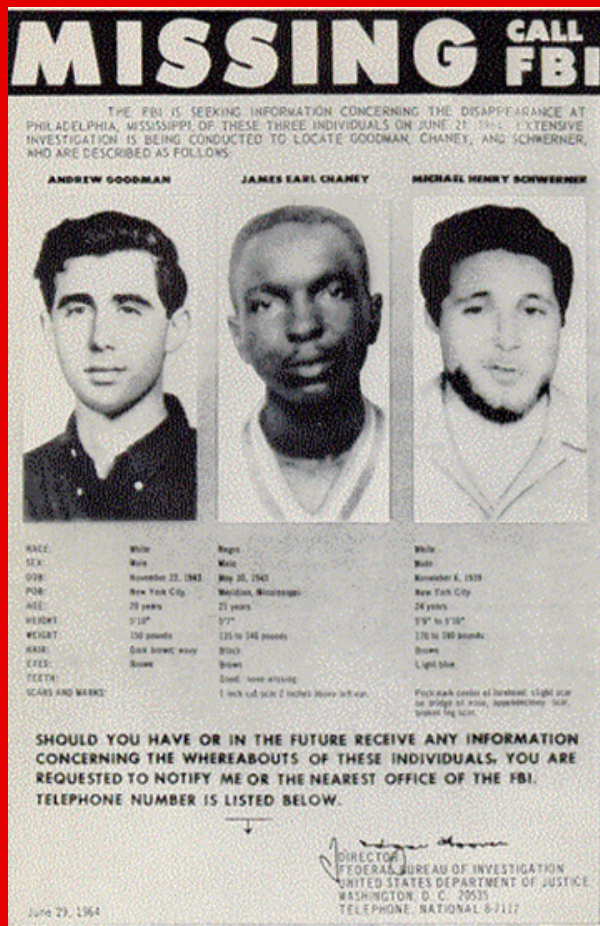
In 1869, the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution which prohibited the federal and state governments from preventing a citizen from voting based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Although this law should have protected all citizens to be able to exercise their right to vote, there were many tactics, some still used, to prevent people of color from voting. Some of the tactics included poll taxes (charging money or creating something required that cost money), literary tests, or other bureaucratic restrictions (documentation, restrictions on where to vote, etc.). People of color also faced extreme harassment, physical violence, intimidation, and even economic consequences such as losing work or a job.

Though all citizens had the right to vote, it was obvious that many people were still unable to. People of color and their allies began organizing and in 1964 much of the year was dominated by Civil Rights leaders and activists protesting. Many of these protests became violent, including instances where U.S. citizens were killed in Mississippi and state police attacked peaceful protesters marching in Selma, Alabama. These violent acts prompted the U.S. government to act eventually passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) which prohibited discriminatory practices inflicted on voters – 95 years after the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, guaranteeing all citizens the right to vote, was added to the Constitution.

According to the [National Archives](#), the VRA had an immediate and enormous impact, registering ¼ of a million new Black voters by the end of 1965. At the end of 1966, over 2/3 of southern states had achieved over 50% of all African Americans registered to vote. Through the 1970s and 1980s under both Republican and Democratic control, the VRA was continually strengthened. The 1982 ruling was especially important because rather than intent being clear (i.e., a state saying “I want to keep Black people from voting”), any change in state law to voting that would have discriminatory effects regardless of intent, would be prohibited.

More recently, the VRA has been weakened. In 2013, a major decision led by Chief Justice, John Roberts, [who has written significant criticism of the VRA](#) since the 1980s, diluted Section 5 which provided states federal oversight to any changes in their voting laws. While typically all voting is handled by the states, because southern states historically have been discriminatory, the federal oversight was important. Roberts argued that there’s “less racism” and therefore Section 5 isn’t as relevant – many Civil Rights leaders and people of color would argue that racism still impacts voting especially in southern states. Southern states immediately started drafting new voting laws as a result.

In 2019, the Supreme Court stated that determining if a state can gerrymander based on political party affiliation is beyond their scope and



Flyer created in 1964 after the three Civil Rights activists went missing and were ultimately found murdered. James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner helped register voters in southern states and were ultimately killed for it.

thus states immediately responded by drawing new congressional maps to divide districts in a way that would allow whatever party was in power to remain in power.

Section 2 was slowly chipped away beginning in 2021. The U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) heard arguments in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*. Earlier, a federal judge had blocked two new policies in Arizona that created discriminatory practices in new state voting laws. The SCOTUS reversed the decision made in federal court and made it more difficult for lawsuits to be brought, resulting in only 1 case that has been heard since this decision.

In 2026, the VRA was weakened further when SCOTUS ruled that a district in Louisiana was an “unconstitutional gerrymander” that relied too heavily on race. The justices were split by partisan affiliation and Justice Elena Kagan read her remarks aloud which indicates the strong dissent of the decision. The decision was met by strong criticism and led to states drawing new districts immediately, including Louisiana cancelling an election that had already begun.

We should all care about all U.S. citizens and their rights to vote, regardless of their identities. However, all of the recent rulings could impact all of us as well. Any erosion of current voting rights for anyone indicates a weakening democracy. Cancellation of elections, poll taxes (i.e., requiring a passport to vote as could be required in the proposed SAVE Act), partisan gerrymandering, etc. will have negative consequences on ALL voters.

As slavery was put to an end officially on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1865, there are still forms of slavery that exist, including the dilution of votes of Black Americans. While this may not be the same slavery as it was prior to the Civil War, this is still a form to make sure voices of Black Americans are not heard in a country that brought them here to exploit them. We must all continue to advocate for the protection of voters rights’ throughout the country.



Under the heading of “JuneTeenth” is a multi-panel illustration depicting Black Americans across various historical eras.

Juneteenth, often called America's second Independence Day, marks June 19, 1865, the day that Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas to announce that the Civil War had ended and that enslaved people were free. What started as an annual celebration in Texas has now been adopted nationally to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. In communities across the United States, Juneteenth is celebrated with parades, historical reenactments, family gatherings and educational events. For more information about the history of Juneteenth and why recognizing this day is important we recommend you watch TED-Ed’s [“What is Juneteenth, and why is it important”](#).

# Intersex Advocacy & Pride

## Jackie Blankenship's Story

Jackie Blankenship is the first Mrs. America from Michigan, a dedicated marathon runner, and a former Grand Rapids radio personality. Jackie is also a member of the Intersex community. Many people have heard the term LGBTQ+ or maybe even LGBTQIA+, but a lot of folks are still unfamiliar with the Intersex community, the I in the acronym. Intersex people have physical or genetic traits that don't fit into a binary definition of male or female. Jackie has XY chromosomes, but her body developed female external characteristics due to Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. There are many different types of intersex traits, and intersex people make up ~2% of the population. This means being intersex is about as common as being an identical twin, having type 1 diabetes, or being a natural redhead. Jackie has become a content creator working to advocate for the needs of the often overlooked intersex community. She fights to end the stigma surrounding being intersex by sharing her life and making informative videos. To learn more you can follow her at MrsJackieBlanks on social media, read her [West Michigan Woman blog post](#), or visit [mrsjackieblanks.com](https://mrsjackieblanks.com).



An ecstatic Jackie, dressed in a white ball gown, is crowned Ms. America at the 2022 pageant.

Know you are part of a caring community and never alone. The FishCAST Committee is working to foster an inclusive environment, ensuring MI AFS is welcoming to all. Get involved by reaching out to share resources or connect. Your voice matters! Contact us at [mifishcastafs@gmail.com](mailto:mifishcastafs@gmail.com) or submit items [anonymously](#).



Warm Wishes -

Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)

