

Jamie Lee Curtis and Ryan Murphy to Bring an AIDS Story to the Screen

The story of Glenn Burke, a Black gay baseball player who died of AIDS, has long inspired HIV and LGBTQ advocate Jamie Lee Curtis.

November 3, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Jamie Lee Curtis, who won an Oscar this year for her role in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, is currently gracing the cover of the national LGBTQ publication *The Advocate* for a profile titled “[A Mother’s Nature: Jamie Lee Curtis Is Our Advocate of the Year](#).” The obvious reason for the accolade is that Curtis, 64, has been a vocal champion of her trans daughter, Ruby, and the [transgender](#) community. But read the interview and you’ll learn that Curtis has a long history of supporting the [HIV](#) and [LGBTQ](#) communities.

In fact, Curtis—the daughter of famed actors Janet Leigh (*Psycho*) and Tony Curtis (*Some Like It Hot*) and a film icon in her own right for roles in *Halloween*, *Freaky Friday* and other hits—is developing an AIDS-related film project. When the *Advocate*’s John Casey asked Curtis which queer people have impacted her, she first mentioned tennis great Billie Jean King, who “told her truth in a hurricane, and that takes guts.” Then Curtis added:

“There’s someone I didn’t know, but who has been with me in spirit for the last 12 years or so. I’ve been attempting to tell the story of Glenn Burke who invented the High Five and began his baseball career playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 1970s....

“He was a Black, closeted gay L.A. Dodger and was traded to the Oakland A’s, and ultimately kicked out of baseball for being gay and ended up dying of HIV/AIDS in Oakland.

“I read the first book about him, *Out at Home*, by Erik Sherman, and bought the rights to the book. It’s been an incredibly long journey, but I started working with Ryan Murphy and we just moved the project from Netflix to Disney before the strike, and Ryan and I are excited about getting the project up and going after the strike is settled.”

Burke publicly came out in 1982 (just one year after the first published reports of what became known as AIDS) and died in 1995. Decades later, his legacy continues to inspire. Last year, [POZ wrote about the Dodgers honoring Burke](#) during the team's ninth annual Pride Night. Here's a Dodgers post from the event:

Last night, the Dodgers welcomed the family of Glenn Burke, MLB's first openly gay player, in honor of [#Pride Night](#). His brother Sydney threw out the ceremonial first pitch to [@mookiebetts](#). pic.twitter.com/9OMp7cOsj
— Los Angeles Dodgers (@Dodgers) [June 4, 2022](#)

In 2011, [POZ covered the premier of the documentary Out: The Glenn Burke Story](#). For more on Burke, check out this 1982 video in which Today's Bryant Gumbel interviews Burke:

Curtis witnessed firsthand the tragedy, loss and discrimination— as well as the activism—that AIDS unleashed in the '80s and '90s, especially in the gay enclave of Hollywood. She tells the Advocate about her best friend Richard Lewis and his husband, George, both of whom died of AIDS-related illnesses. Curtis has long used her celebrity to promote awareness of HIV and raise funds for HIV programs. A photo accompanying the Advocate profile shows her rallying the participants at the AIDS Walk Los Angeles in 2003.

Of her support for transgender people, Curtis provided broader context for her advocacy. “This is way more than a trans issue,” she said, “so to me, it’s a human issue, although, of course, much of the focus of hate right now is on trans people. I am advocating as a mother with a trans child, but it is also as a mother to a community. I want to represent the voice of support for all other things be they trans, queer, gay, or Black, or even if they’re a rescue animal. I want to offer the same care and concern to them as I would to my own trans daughter.”

Actress, advocate, mother—whatever her role, Curtis is the embodiment of what she says is her motto: “Live wisely and love well.”

Jamie Lee Curtis is our 2023 [#AdvocateOfTheYear](#). The

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