

JAISHREE DREPAUL-BRUDER | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 09, 2019

Ann Arbor YMCA offers gender expression workshop series

Elizabeth Terrel hosts a gender

The [Ann Arbor YMCA](#) will offer a Gender Expression Workshop series geared toward the LGBTQ community on Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec. 17, and Jan. 21.

The four 90-minute sessions aim to help participants express their gender through voice and movement. [Elizabeth Terrel](#), a voice and movement specialist who is also an associate professor at Western Michigan University's theatre department, will facilitate the sessions. She says the series will be beneficial to anyone who is dealing with a gender transition or has gender questions. Any person who has an interest in voice and gender is welcome to attend as well.

Terrel, who has been offering gender embodiment training since 2010, says the environment will be like "a zany, loud yoga class." The space will be safe and empowering as participants do exercises to free the body and voice.

"For a lot of people, our voices can leave us feeling vulnerable. It can be especially so for those of us especially conscious of the way we sound," Terrel says. "Exploring gender constructs and learning basic information about the mechanics of voice, like what resonance is and what pitch means, can be liberating."

She explains that many people believe the voice's relationship to gender is all about high and low pitches, but there's actually much more to consider. How air is used, where voice resonates in the body, how a person starts phrases and sentences, and the use of intonations are also important factors.

"We'll be bringing awareness to the range of vocal expressions and all the possibilities for vocal choices," Terrel says. "Over time and with practice, the participants, whether they identify as male, female, or non-binary, will be better equipped to choose how they want to sound."

The cost for the series is \$100 for members and \$200 for community members. Registration can be completed online at www.annarborymca.org.

"It's exciting that the YMCA has stepped up to present these workshops in support of the LGBTQ community. I have never heard of any similar classes being offered locally on an ongoing basis," Terrel says.

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