



Elder Bios

Celebrating Intergenerational Connection Oral History
Project presented by Lambda Archives

Overview:

When conducting oral history interviews it is good practice to match interviewers and interviewees with shared interests, experiences, or identities (when possible) to help foster an engaging and informed conversation. Please read through the bios below and consider who you would like to pair with and why, then take notes so that you can express your interest in your video for the application. Don't worry about narrowing it down, you can mention each person you're interested in pairing with and why.

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Tracie Jada O'Brien (she/her)

Since surviving the mean streets of San Francisco's Tenderloin District in the 1970s as a young transgender street kid, Tracie Jada O'Brien has become one of the most respected and elegant role models of our community – a testament to beauty, survival and perseverance. O'Brien is a certified addictions treatment counselor and spent six years as a counselor and coordinator of Extend Services at Stepping Stone of San Diego, a nationally renowned Alcohol and Drug Treatment Facility specific to the GLBT community. O'Brien is also the co-founder of Transaction, San Diego's first political/social/transgender group that succeeded in having cross-dressing laws in the county repealed. O'Brien is active with the San Francisco Transgender Law Center, The California Transgender Leadership Summit, The California Office of AIDS Transgender HIV Equality and Party Conferences, and the Center of Excellence for Transgender HIV Prevention. She is also the coordinator of the Family Health Center's Project S.T.A.R., which provides services for the transgender community.



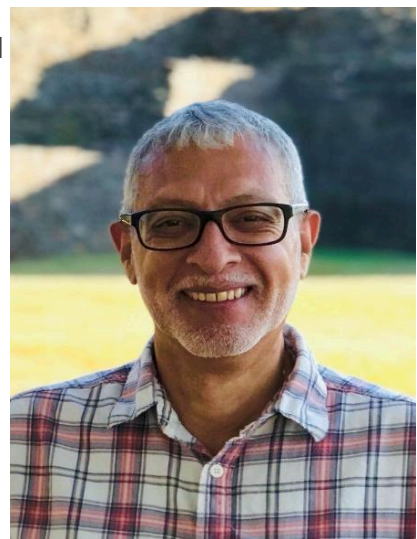
Teresa Oyos (she/her)

Teresa Oyos' activism began in 1970 while she was attending San Diego City College. During that time, she became involved with the Chicano Newspaper, La Verdad and MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan). Eventually Oyos began volunteering for The United Farmworkers Union. Several years later, she came out as a lesbian and began volunteering at Las Hermanas Women's Coffeehouse and Cultural Center which provided a safe, warm space for all women and children. In 1986, she co-founded the first LGBTQ+ Latin organization, Orgullo, which translates to "pride." Throughout the years, Oyos has served on a number of boards and planning committees, including AIDS Walk San Diego, The Western Regional Conference on HIV, AIDS and Women, The HIV Care Partnership for Women Children and Families, and Vagina Fest. She also served on the advisory council of the Latino/a Services at The San Diego LGBT Community Center and on the County of San Diego Human Relations Commission. She also spent several years serving as a Senior Community Program Representative at UCSD's HIV Neurobehavioral Research Center. Oyos lives in San Diego with her partner, Rose.



Hank Ramírez (he/him)

Hank Ramírez (he/him), a Queer Indigenous Chicanx man, is a native of Alta California (Southern California) and was raised in the former Mexican land called Rancho Santa Ana del Chino (Chino). He moved to unceded Kumeyaay land now known as San Diego to finish his education at the University of San Diego where he studied to be a Roman Catholic priest and has lived here for over 40 years during which time he has been actively involved in the local LGBTQQIA2S+ community. Hank worked in LGBTQQIA2S+ non-profit organizations such as the San Diego AIDS Project, Being Alive, the AIDS Foundation and the LGBT Center as well as for St. Vincent de Paul Villages. He has also served on the Boards of Directors of Dignity/San Diego, the San Diego Men's Chorus, Mama's Kitchen, and the LGBT Center. He retired in January 2018 after 20 years working for the County of San Diego overseeing funding and community services provided through the Ryan White CARE Act and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs, as well as other community services, and assisted in the resurrection of the County's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Allies Association employee resource group prior to his retirement. Hank has lived in unceded Kumeyaay land (now known as Normal Heights) since 1991 with his husband of over 30 years and their 4 feline babies. Hank continues fighting for justice, equity, and social change through his service as a Board member of Lambda Archives San Diego and through giving voice for the oppressed, the marginalized and the voiceless members, human and non-human, of our planet.



Drew Searing (he/they)



Born in New Jersey, 1961 - Drew Searing became aware of his attraction toward other boys as early as kindergarten. Having two gay uncles, a gay aunt and countless other gay relatives, Drew never felt reproached for liking members of the same sex. Despite his homophobic father's attempts to belittle and shame his son, Drew wasn't affected because he never respected his father to begin with. Throughout high-school and college, he remembers being told by a number straight men that they couldn't help but admire Drew who "doesn't take shit from anyone just because he's gay!" During his last year of grad school in June, 1987, Drew showed his gay pride along with 600 other activists by getting arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court amidst the historic Bowers vs. Hardwick decision on sodomy. Drew then began working for the National March on Washington for LGBT Rights just prior to moving to California, where Drew became a founding member of SAME (San Diego Alliance for Marriage Equality). In his retirement, Drew continues to create

politically-based artwork supporting a variety of peace and justice issues, including Migrants' Rights, Womyns' Rights and Anti-Gun Violence.

Big Mike Phillips (he/him)

My introduction to the world was January 18, 1957, in Frankfurt, Germany. I was given up for adoption and was incredibly fortunate to be adopted by two loving and compassionate human beings, which I became my true Mom and Dad. They raised my brother and I to become individuals who grew up to find goodness, kindness, and love for not only ourselves but to our fellow human beings. My Dad who was in the United States Air Force, was stationed in Paris, France. He was being transfer back to the United States, to retire at Randolph Air Force Base in 1962. We as a family settled in Universal City a suburb outside of San Antonio, Texas. I grew up and went to school there, came out as a big homo there and had the time of my life coming out as gay in 1975.



Fast forward, I have lived in New York City, Los Angeles, and finally ending up in San Diego to take care of my dying Friend Tino Graziano, who died of AIDS, on November 18, 1989. It was losing my best friend at that time in the world that I decided my life would be dedicated to doing what I could to help raise funds for the organizations that were there to help Tino die with dignity and love. Being Alive was the first at that time to help, especially compassion in helping with his needs in those days.

Christmas morning, December 25, 1989, I started my new job working at the Brass Rail, which opened the doors for me as a member of this amazing LGBTQ community. The Brass Rail gave me the resources to learn more about how to raise money for charity. The Imperial Court had fundraisers every week on Wednesdays and Sundays the entire three and a half years I worked there. I was witnessing everyone's generosity, including my own.

In 1993 my best friend and fellow bartender Nigel Mayer and I started a nonprofit organization called Ordinary Miracles, bringing together bartenders, waiters, restaurant owners, and finally all types of businesses together to donate a percentage from their tips and sells to raise money for so many needed organizations. Bringing our entire community together in the effort. With the help of our community, within five years we were able to raise over three hundred thousand dollars, which was a great amount in the 1990s.

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After Nigel bought Flicks Bar in Hillcrest and decided to no longer to be involved with Ordinary Miracles because he needed to focus on running his business, I decided on moving forward myself as well. It was then I found myself wanting to still be involved with my community and city I lived in. Over the last thirty-five years, I have proudly served on many boards including the last five San Diego Mayors, and co-founded a couple other charity organizations. One being the Rob Benzon Foundation, now called the Rob Benzon/ Dan Ferbal Foundation, and along with Nicole Murray Ramirez, re-founded Grocery Hearts a grocery store at Mama's Kitchen, where clients are able to shop for canned goods and fresh food to cook at home themselves.

I have served on several charity organization boards, serving three terms as President of the San Diego Imperial Court just to name one of them. I love being able to give back, meet new people, bring awareness, and be an example of giving, and sharing with compassion.

As I get older and retired from the food and beverage industry, I find myself doing a lot more photography, which I have loved doing for the last thirty-five years. All and all I am so grateful for my life and all it has afforded me. Staying involved, meeting incredible people, both those I work with and those in need of our help. Every day is a good day to be alive and to be able to pass goodness forward.

Donna F. Walker (she/her)

Donna F. Walker is one of the two founders and co-owner of South Bark Dog Wash, an award winning self -service dog wash, established in San Diego, California in October of 2000, and also South Bark Professional Pet Products a pet shampoo wholesaler and distributor. She is directly credited for the co-development of a very popular product and process, “South Bark ‘s Blueberry Facial®” and other successful private label items that are sold for retail and wholesale. She has successfully navigated the most recent Pandemic by modifying her over 20 year old businesses to reflect current challenges.

Donna is a published writer, her latest book is “The South Bark Blueberry Girls’ Guide To Success In The Self-Service Dog Wash Industry” and authored many pet industry magazine and newspaper articles, she is considered very credible within the Professional Pet Industry and is on the Seminar Lecture Circuit. She also has a degree in Animal Health Technology.



Donna F. Walker retired honorably after 20 years as a Chief Photographers Mate and filmmaker for the United States Navy. PHC (AW) (RET) D.F Walker is married to Lorna Cannon and lives in San Diego, CA.