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Oral history interview with Joey Terrill, 2017 December 30-31

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Joey Terrill on December 30 and 31, 2017. The interview took place at the home and studio of Joey Terill in Los Angeles, CA, and was conducted by Alex Fialho for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project.

Joey Terrill and Alex Fialho have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ALEX FIALHO: This is Alex Fialho interviewing Joey Terrill at the artist's home and studio in Los Angeles, California, on December 30, 2017 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Card number one.

Joey, thank you for being involved in this project. When and where were you born, and can you describe your childhood and your early family background?

JOEY TERRILL: Sure. I was born in Los Angeles, October 8, 1955. And where we lived as a—you know, I would say newborn—was Santa Fe Springs, which is a suburb of Los Angeles. My mother and father were Inez Terrill and Salvador Terrill. For four years, I was an only child, until my sister was born.

I think I was precocious. My parents doted on me. I like to say that my dad gave me art and my mom gave me music and dance. Working class, Chicanos, Mexican American. My dad was an ex-Marine. He was in World War II. He had a Purple Heart. And I mention that because he mentioned something to me about that when I was about four or five that stayed with me for a long time. My mom was a native Angelino as well. She was born here. My grandparents came from Mexico, and—let's see.

ALEX FIALHO: What does it mean to you that your dad gave you art [00:02:00] and your mother gave you dance and music?

JOEY TERRILL: So, my dad was an artist, a frustrated artist, and he was always working on projects. As far back as I can remember, growing up in the house, there were paintings that he had done that were on the walls, and as well as projects, carpentry work. He made some of the furniture in our home, which was all sort of '50s modern. And also, ironwork chairs that, again, were kind of '50s modern. And he worked out of our garage, and I used to watch him, and I used to help him.

So, you know, I just thought that that's what everybody did, that you always made art and stuff. My mom was always singing. She seemed very happy. I know that she loved to dance. She just, you know, graduated high school, went to Roosevelt High School, so she didn't have any other education. She was a housewife. She was a mother. She was very happy at that point because, she was a success in all the ways that she was raised to be a success: good Catholic marriage, and she had a son and a husband.

But there were underlying things that were going on. My parents got divorced when I was seven, and when they did, my mother had a nervous breakdown, and she was institutionalized. She was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic. So for the rest of our lives, me and my sister, living with my mom, were in the role of caregiver. Even though, you know, she worked and was taking care of us, our roles were slightly reversed. My dad also suffered from post-traumatic stress from World War II, which I didn't really know about and didn't [00:04:00] find out about until he was on his deathbed in 1999 at the VA Hospital in Tucson. And that's when the doctors there told me about that.

And it sort of explained to me a lot of the mood swings, things that I used to perceive. It also explained some of the conflicts between my mom and dad. When I was—I think I was still in kindergarten—my dad—I knew all the storybooks, and children's books, and poems. I was constantly reading, looking at pictures. I was interested in cartoons, Disney animation, the illustrations in all these children's books. And one day, my dad asked me what are my favorite pictures in some of the books there? And I chose out of *The Three Little Pigs.* At the very end of the story, there's this great drawing of the three little pigs, an illustration where they're celebrating that the wolf is dead. One of them has a flute, a piccolo, and they're each dressed in their little outfits of matching colors. So one is in blue, I think one's yellow and one's purple. And then I also chose a picture of Popeye and Olive Oyl. It's Popeye sitting at the table with Olive Oyl, and there was a can of spinach, and he's flexing his arm, and he's saying, "I am what I am."

So I had gone, I think, for the weekend to stay with cousins, and when I came back, my dad had painted the two walls in my room in tempera of Popeye and Olive Oyl and *The Three Little Pigs*. So, of course, I just thought my dad was the best artist in the world, and, I mean, I was so thrilled. Every night, I would go to sleep [00:06:00] looking at Popeye, you know, flexing his arm with his little tattoo. And I was constantly drawing and coloring, and my parents encouraged it. One thing that I realize my dad also tried to encourage me—to do things, like, you know, maybe I would want to learn how to box or play football and—not so much. I wasn't that interested.

ALEX FIALHO: Where did his interest or art talents develop? And then how did he impart that to you, if at all?

JOEY TERRILL: So, he grew up in Tucson. He was born in Miami, Arizona, which is outside of Tucson. And my paternal family was based in Tucson, and Cananea, which is the northern state of Sonora over the border. He had one brother and seven sisters, and so every—the way that I understood it—and I only met my aunts when I was like three, and then again in my 20s. But everyone in the family had some kind of craft or art that they would do. So, one aunt worked with, like, silversmithing and another one would do sewing. And my dad—I think even before he went into the Marines—was doing silverwork and turquoise jewelry, things like that. So that was sort of known. It was known that the Terrills, on my dad's side, everyone was sort of creative in some way. Not necessarily commercially so, but it was something, a craft that everyone would do.

My mom was someone that was—she was a very beautiful woman, physically beautiful. And in the [00:08:00] early '50s, before she married my dad—one of the stories in the family was that she was named *la reina de la mambo* because she won the dance contest. And my aunts would always talk about how, "Oh, your mother was always the one that was the best dancer," and what have you. My mom was always singing in both English and Spanish to me as a kid. So that's why I say she gave me music and my dad gave me art.

When they started having problems, that was a big deal to me. I saw my dad get violent with my mom, once that I can remember. It terrified me, and I was—I cried, and I said, you know, "Oh, please stop, please stop." And I think later that evening, my dad was sitting at the table with his head in his hands, and he was crying silently. He had these tears. And that was the first time that I recognized or realized that, "Oh, adult men can cry." It never occurred to me before. And I knew that there was trouble brewing. So, when my parents divorced, my sister and I—my sister is four years younger than me, my sister Linda. We were very close, and when my parents divorced, Linda and I lived with my mom, and that's when she started to have her—what I call spells, related to her mental state. There was a period—I think it has to be five days, four days—where my mom was just talking to herself. She was in her own [00:10:00] world, and I was fearful of—[cries] excuse me, just—fearful that for some reason I thought, "Oh, you know, my sister and I could get sent to an orphanage or something." So for a week, my sister and I, we pretended that my mom was okay. So when the lady that would come to pick us up to go to school—you know, when she said, "Oh, how come—where's your mom?" Like my mom wasn't out there to put us in the car, I would say, "Oh, she's sleeping in" or something.

And then, I don't know, one day I came home from school, and my mom had walked out of the bedroom. She was in her dress and her hair was a mess. She hadn't showered or—and I knew she was sick. I knew she was already—had been talking to herself. But apparently, she had started menstruating and she was covered in blood, and I didn't know exactly what that was. I just thought, "Oh, she's hurt herself really bad." So I went to the neighbor's house. I went to Luis and Chela. They were our neighbors, and I really liked them. They were from Mexico, and, you know, Luis was very *ranchero*, and Chela, his wife, was—they sort of reminded me of Natasha and Boris from *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, because I was totally into cartoons. Chela was really tall like Natasha, and she had kind of dark—wore her hair up. So, I just went in and I said to Chela, "You know, [00:12:00] I think my mom's hurt herself. She's bleeding." She said, "You stay here," and she went, then the next thing I know, my uncle and aunt had come. And my mom was in the hospital and then I went to go live with my aunt and uncle.

My mom had five sisters, all in Los Angeles, and that was the main thrust of my family, this family circle. And at various times up until 1966, my sister and I would go live with one of the aunts while my mom was in the hospital. And then my dad would—through the courts, he would fight for custody, and sometimes they would give him custody, and my sister and I would go live with him. And then when my mom got out of the hospital, we would go back and live with her, and then if she got sick again, we would go live with an aunt. So, by the time 1966 came around and my mom came out of the hospital for the last time, we had moved maybe five, six times, staying with different family members. On the one hand, it really reinforced in me that my family loved me and loved my sister, and we felt that. But I was always aware that my mom was frail, emotionally, mentally.

One time in—I think it was '64, '65—we were living with my mom. We used to take the bus into Los Angeles to visit with my aunts, whether it was for the weekend, or whether it was for somebody's birthday or a holiday. But she had a friend who—eight years later, I realized that they were friends because Nora was also a divorcée, and so my mom was seeking support from other women. And Nora also had a little boy [00:14:00] named Frankie, who I thought was kind of dumb. And we went to go visit them, and they lived in these old apartments where—you know, we were coming from Santa Fe Springs, we had this house, and we had a little yard. I had a little tiny blowup swimming pool. We had a playhouse in the back. I loved that house, and of course my room with my murals. And we go to visit Frankie and Nora, and they lived in this crummy little apartment. And I remember once we left there—and Nora was so sweet. They were Italian. And when I told my mom, I said, "How come Nora and Frankie live there in that little apartment?" And she said, "Well, that's all that they can afford." So I felt sorry for them.

So in 1966, my mom comes out of the hospital. My aunt arranges for me and my sister to go, actually, out and meet her as she approached the front gate, so that we would talk with my mom. And she was going to take us to our new apartment. My mom was saying that she would never go back in the hospital and that everything was going to be different now. And the best thing is that we've got new neighbors. We're going to be living next to Nora and Frankie. So, we actually went and lived in those crummy apartments. And I went in my—what became my room. I went in my room and just cried my eyes out because I thought, "Okay, it's all different now."

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. You said you felt a bit in the role of caregiver to your mother. What does that mean to you?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, what that meant was—and, you know, my aunts and family reinforced in a loving way, and—perhaps, I don't know if naïve is the right word. But they would say, "Now that your mom is out of the hospital, you're back together as a family, and you're now the man of the house [00:16:00] because your father is not there." So, I took that role seriously, to look after my mom and sister. You know, but I was like 12 years old. And what that meant, in real terms, was that occasionally—I could tell easily when my mom was veering off into one of her depression, her moods, and I knew that there was medication, pills that she needed to take. Over the years, it became very frustrating for me because she would take her medication, and she would feel good. And at some point, she would say, "Oh, you know what, I feel good. I don't need this medication." I was like, "No, Mom. The reason you feel good is because you take the medication." And so I was constantly having to monitor and make sure that she took her medication. And when she didn't—if she really went off into a spell, I would contact my aunt, and there was a therapist or a psychiatrist that she would need to see.

My mom also worked at LA Unified School District as a clerk-typist, and they were very supportive. Her boss understood her situation. And so there were a couple of times, not a lot—I think two times—where I received a phone call from her job where her coworker would say, "Hi, it's Hortense. Your mom wasn't feeling herself, so we're sending her home today." And, you know, at that point, we didn't have a car, so she would come on a bus. So, she would say, "So, Joey, can you make sure she takes meds?" So I said, "Yeah, okay, I'll handle it." So instead of, like, me being a truant student, where the school calls the parent, instead it would be that they would call me. And, you know, part of that led into, as a teenager, being angry with the situation, frustrated [00:18:00] with it, but also, like, really truly loving my mom. It wasn't—she wasn't mean to me or anything.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. How did your family end up in Los Angeles, both your mother and your father and their sort of lineage to LA?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, my mom was born here in Los Angeles. All of her sisters, they all grew up in East LA. And their parents, my grandparents who died before I was born, I think came from Durango, Mexico. I think in the teens or the '20s, 1920s. And so, my aunts and my mom all grew up here in LA, you know, in the 1940s. And then my dad was from Arizona. After the war, he came to Los Angeles. One of his sisters had also moved out here to LA, so she and her husband and—you know, I knew my aunt Estella and uncle Ben and then their kids lived here in Los Angeles. But yet, we knew that most of my dad's family was still in Arizona, and Cananea in Mexico. So that's how they were in LA.

ALEX FIALHO: At what point did you feel like you started to become politicized? Or was it a politicized household that you were growing up in, in any way? Where did politics come in for you?

JOEY TERRILL: Okay, when you said politics, in terms of shaping my sense of politics—one thing I mentioned earlier, about my dad being a Marine. There was one day, I think I was four or five, and he was looking for something in the closet. And there were things that were stored, and I pulled out [00:20:00]—there was an annual that was from the Marine Corps. Like they, I guess, used to have this yearbook or an annual from the Marines, and it had all these black-and-white photographs of the different—here they are in the South Pacific, here they are in Germany, or whatever.

And in fact, I remember opening it up and seeing this image from, I guess, the South Pacific, you know, during the war. And it was R&R, and there were all these soldiers at a big lake, and they were all naked. And they were swimming and stuff. And I was very aware that, "Oh, this is intriguing, these naked men," you know? And my dad was—he saw me looking at the book there, and he said, "You know, I'm really proud of being a Marine," but he got—in a really short, short burst of anger, he said, "I hope you never ever have to go into the military!" And I was a little bit surprised. He says, "They treated me like a dog because I'm Mexican, and they treated the black man worse."

And that was my first ever thinking about, or idea that, oh, that we're discriminated against for being Mexican, and somehow that, oh, and black people are [treated –JT] worse. And I started to—obviously, you know, in the early '60s, I started to see all around me discrimination on television, the civil rights movement. And my parents appreciated and supported Dr. Martin Luther King, and—you know, so I grew up in a household that was for social justice and—then there was an incident where we had neighbors there.

We lived in a cul-de-sac. It's a little enclosed community there in Santa Fe Springs. The neighbor's name was Sam—they were white—and his wife. And I just remember my mom and dad coming [00:22:00] back home from having gone over there for—I don't know if they went for dinner, or they just went for some social occasion—and my dad was fuming. He was so angry, and my mom was trying to calm him down. And all I remember is that it had something to do with whatever Sam said about—I think about being Mexican. And, you know, it was probably something racist or stupid, and—but again, my dad blew up about it. And, you know, when I say that my dad blew up about it—my dad didn't blow up about things like that, he was just the nicest, sweetest man. He was very gentle. You would never think of him as a Marine. You thought of him more as, "Oh, he's the carpenter, he's the artist," right? But I realize now in retrospect, that was part of his issues.

So I was always aware of that, and then in the 1960s, I was seeing Cesar Chavez and the grape boycott on the news, and the lettuce boycott, and the farm workers. And, you know, in grade school, in grammar school, I mean in 1968, it was the—well, first of all, I remember in '63 when John Kennedy, the President, was shot and killed. And that is—I mean, I still to this day, I really—I was sitting in the classroom at Our Lady Help of Christians in LA, in third grade. And I remember Sister Lillian Martha coming over the intercom and saying [cries], "Attention children, boys and girls, we've just heard the news that the President has been shot in Dallas, Texas. Could we all get up and say a prayer for him?"

And I remember us all standing up and praying, but none of us was focusing on the praying. We were like, "What? The President got shot?" [00:24:00] It was unbelievable to me. And then about 15 minutes later [cries], she announced that he had died. And what I remember at that point was that it was a warm day and the doors were open. It was all part of a quad, so all the classrooms were next to each other. And Miss DeLash who was a lay teacher––she wasn't a nun, she was a lay teacher in fourth grade in the next room. All I remember hearing was her howling, screaming, and we were all excused for the day. And it's—you know, I realize I'm getting choked up just thinking about it. And it's amazing how that stays with you as a kid. They let us go from class and walked home and my mom, my aunts, everyone was crying. We were glued to the television. It was just unbelievable, and it was—so I was starting to get this sense that, gee, things are not as [laughs] peaceful and hunky-dory as one might think or as I naively thought.

You know, that was '63, and then by '65, the Watts Riots had occurred. And I remember at midnight or something, my aunt Marylou and uncle Joe came to our apartment because the apartment that they managed down in South Central was right in the heart of the rioting. And so, you know, I was very aware of upheaval and racial discrimination. And then by '68 Robert Kennedy was assassinated, Martin Luther King, and all the riots. I remember my mom shaking her head and saying, "You know, I don't blame black people for rioting." She said, "This is [00:26:00] horrible that they assassinated him and Martin Luther King." And I also know that that assassination, you know, and Robert Kennedy, caused my mom to go into one of her depressions.

And that led to one of our strategies. My sister and I—growing up with my mom was—we edited and tailored the information we presented to my mom, because we knew it could trigger one of her spells. And so, you know, just for peace of mind and to make less work on ourselves, we would sort of—and the irony about this—and this is interesting. I wonder—I'm sure there's probably other kids who've grown up in this situation, where if your mother is paranoid schizophrenic, one of the things that she would say is that she thinks that people are plotting against her or they're saying things about her and whatever. And because she would do that, and things would trigger her spells, we actually were editing what we were saying to her. And, in fact, we were in a sense, plotting how we negotiated what she was exposed to, because we knew it could trigger something in her.

ALEX FIALHO: Are there—I liked how you said it stays with you. Are there any experiences around seeing art or making art in an early age that stay with you?

JOEY TERRILL: Art or making art?

ALEX FIALHO: Viewing any shows, or were you seeing art at a younger age?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, yeah. Well, there's—so one thing, and I don't know if this is along the lines of what you mean, but I used to—I mean, I had to have been like three or four. My sister wasn't even born yet, but I would—with my colored pencils, I would draw everywhere. And I would even draw on some of our books. And I think I still have some of the books that were like, you know, fairy tales and things. But I would draw [00:28:00] on the empty pages, the blank pages. But there was a TV show called *The Roaring 20s* in the early '60s, and it starred Dorothy Provine. And one of the things about it if you've never seen the show—oh, you probably haven't, but—you know, the black-and-white. And the show would always open with a big, huge close-up of a mirror ball from the 1920s. Like, the dance, you know, the mirror ball, like a disco ball, which I just loved. I was like, "Oh!" I wanted one of those at the age of three.

And I remember I drew this little scribble-like drawing, but it was Dorothy Provine in her little fringe dresses that she would do from the 1920s. And I remember my mom and dad saying, "Oh, what's that? Who's that?" I go, "Oh, that's Dorothy from *Roaring 20s*." And they said, "Oh, that's your girlfriend?" And I was just like, "No, just—[laughs] I liked her dress." That was one of the first times that I was starting understand that, "Hm, I don't know"—you know, like I think they're expecting me to want girlfriends and somehow—be a husband.

And I knew already I wasn't interested in that. I was having crushes on who I was seeing on TV, like Dr. Kildare, Dr. Ben Casey, you know, different actors. *Bonanza,* Little Joe Cartwright. I had a dream. I totally still remember this dream. I was the age that I am. I'm little—I was, what—four or five, and I was in a barbershop, but it was in an Old West town. And I knew that the person that was sitting in the barber chair, I never saw their face, but I knew it was Little Joe from *Bonanza*. And he was sitting there and then a woman—again, I couldn't see who she was, but she was dressed like a saloon girl with a big, ruffly [00:30:00] dress, and she sat in his lap. And all I could see was his boots, the pants, and then her dress and her legs sitting on his lap. And I just remember thinking like, "Oh, I want to do that." I wanted to be that. I wanted to be her.

So at a very early age, I already knew that I was I guess what you would call queer, that I liked men. And I was already getting signals from my parents and society at large with the expectation that a girlfriend or—so if I was talking to one of the girls next door who is also four years old. You know, "Oh, that's great, you have a little girlfriend," and I would be like, "No, I don't think of her that way, but okay." You know?

And then looking at magazines, that was one thing. I was always obsessed with visual popular culture. *Look* magazine, *Life* magazine, the *Home & Living* magazine inserts with the *Herald Examiner,* and the *Los Angeles Times*. And I remember this. I think it was *Life* magazine, and they were showing the new art, and it was Pop art. And they showed Andy Warhol, and Marilyn Monroe, and they showed [. . . James] Rosenquist.

And I just remember, "Oh, wow, I like that." I responded to it, and it's sort of like, I got that art. Obviously, I was [laughs] too young to understand the complexities of Pop art, and what it meant. And then my parents would—we would go to museums, and that included everything from looking at art and historic arts, LA County Museum, as well as the Natural History Museum. So whether it was dioramas with some stuffed animals, things like that, I was always intrigued by the idea of making things, creating things. [00:32:00] That's what I wanted to do.

It's funny, I just remembered this too. So, I guess it had to have been second grade or fourth grade because my dad was around. Second grade, I guess. We were learning about the planets and the universe. I went to St. Pius X School in Santa Fe Springs, and the nuns were actually an order that came from France originally. So, by the second grade, I knew the Hail Mary and the Our Father in French. I also knew some of the hymns in French, even as I didn't even know Spanish. We did a project. We were doing a project on planets and the universe, and I was supposed to do this planet with pictures and drawings. And I had [laughs]—I don't know. I thought it was a cool idea, and my dad agreed, but I did this. My project was I pretended like it was one of the magazines, so I then did fake advertisements of like, "On Mars, this is the kind of lipstick that the Martian ladies wear and"—you know?

And anyway, I got a B-minus or a C on it. I was a straight-A student, and I was really disappointed that I got a low grade. And the nun had said that, "You didn't follow what the assignment was. That it was supposed to be about"—but I said, "Yeah, but it was like—it was fun, and, you know, like"—and she didn't get it. Anyway, my dad was upset. Like, "Oh, she doesn't know what you're—it was great. It was good. It was funny."

And so, you know, then, I think, I also started to draw and paint as sort of an activity that I could escape perhaps from, you know, some of the [00:34:00] turmoil that was going on around me. But also when I went to go live with—it was 1963, I went to—and that's when I was at Our Lady Help of Christians when Kennedy was shot. But I was living with my aunt Sara and uncle Rudy, my mom's sister Sara and her husband Rudy. And Sara and Rudy became kind of secondary parents to me. I love them dearly, and they both died about two years ago. They were both in their '90s. They were married for 72 years, and they still made each other laugh. I totally respected both of them.

My uncle Rudy was a—you know, he didn't have but a high school education. He was from El Paso, Texas. He was sort of a *pachuco* in the '40s, always working class. He worked in the bakeries, the Ralph [Supermarket] bakeries, and—but I recognized in him and appreciated that he was wise beyond any kind of formal education. And when I went to go live with them and my cousin Pat, Corrine, and Mike—Mike was one year older than me. We were almost like twins, but I—you know, Mike was into football. He was a jock and definitely heterosexual, heterosexually inclined. I, on the other hand, was there with my crayons and coloring, and stuff.

And I remember a couple of times where everyone was going to play football out in the street, and my cousin

Pat would even go play—Patricia—and Pat was a tomboy. And, in fact—she's four years older than me, and I recognized way back then, that she's like me. And she is, of course, a lesbian. And being the gay man and the lesbian in the family, we were very close, and we still are to this day. But I remember my uncle Rudy saying, "You know what, if Joey wants to color and draw, let him." "What?" Like, "Yeah, [00:36:00] like let him just be who he is." And I just remember thinking, "Thank you, Uncle, like what a great"—that was such a great thing, mantra, and strategy for me, and I always appreciated it. And it wasn't until years later that I realized or understood that his brother Angel that he grew up with was gay. And Angel and his partner Ray, I think they're still together. They've been together for 40, 50 years. Angel was a big contributor to the Gay and Lesbian Center here in LA. So, I—

ALEX FIALHO: Also, your uncle?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, by marriage because—

ALEX FIALHO: Oh, I see.

JOEY TERRILL: He was. My aunt Sara was my mom's sister.

ALEX FIALHO: Great.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. So that was—you know, I think that probably was part of why my uncle was so open to just allowing people to be who they were. That was really helpful to me. I loved living with my cousin Pat and Mike because I was sort of—as they would probably have said, I was a spoiled brat. I was uptight. You know, I was a good Catholic boy, and they were more like *traviesos*. They were more devilish, and looking to get into trouble, and doing things, and—you know? And I was always shocked, like, "Oh my God, they cuss!" You know?

And then like [laughs], one time, we—my cousin—I realize I'm going off on these tangents but—

ALEX FIALHO: That's the point.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. But one time where, you know, my cousin Pat—I mean, I must have been like—okay, [eight –JT], so she was 12. But she was left to watch me while my aunt was out or whatever. She came out one time. I was like, "Where did she go, where did she go?" And I said, "Cousin Pat, where are you?" And she came out, and she had a cigar, and she was smoking a cigar. I mean not really smoking but trying to at 12 years old, and I was—and she was laughing, and I was like, "Ew!" That was the last thing I want to do [00:38:00] is smoke a cigar, but I also thought, "Wow, how adventurous of her, how daring," and—you know, and also investigating, like getting into trouble.

ALEX FIALHO: How did Catholic school and your emerging queerness come together?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, that was interesting. So I was a good little Catholic boy. In 1966—when my sister and I ended up living in Highland Park with my mom, you know, for the rest of our adult lives, whatever—I went to Divine Saviour School. I used to go to Mass, eight o'clock Mass every day before school. No one had to ask me. No one had to tell me. I just—I totally bought into the whole idea of being Catholic. I loved the Latin Mass. I was in the choir when I was at Saint Pius, and I loved singing in Latin. I loved all the ceremony. I loved the costumes. I loved the imagery, the statues, the stained glass. You know, everything that was visual and decorative was—I loved it.

What I didn't quite get was the homophobic underlying messaging. And it wasn't until I was—I guess I was 12. I think it was—I wasn't quite 13. I think I was 12, and I was at Divine Saviour on Sunday at Mass by myself. I didn't even—you know, no one had to force me to go. And I was sitting there, and it's the first time that I heard the priest talk about homosexuality from the pulpit and [he] said that it was the devil and whatever else. And I sat there, and I just thought, "Oh, my God, he is so fucking wrong." I said, "He's talking about me, and I know me. I'm the best goddamned Catholic boy that one could have, and he's wrong. And if he's wrong [00:40:00] about me, if he's wrong about homosexuality, what else is he wrong about?"

And, you know, I really started to challenge and question all sorts of things. And this was also happening at a time where my mom, I remember one day coming—she came home from the parish, and she was a little bit upset. And I said, "Mom, what's wrong? What's going on?" Because my mom and I were close, and we were like friends at times. And she said, "Oh, the women in the parish, I'm so upset with them." I said, "Why? What's going on?" She goes, "You know, they're going to have the dance this weekend for the parish to raise money. They do a dance." And she said, "They're not inviting me." I said, "What? Why? What do you mean? Like you participate, you're a volunteer in the parish and stuff." And because she was a divorcée.

And then she said, "These women are jealous. They think I want their ugly husbands, and I don't." You know? And so, I was starting to realize, "Wow, so, you know, they're rejecting my mom, and, like, they shouldn't. That was just wrong." So, I really started opening up to [questioning –JT] people that positioned themselves as being authoritative and should know things, really didn't know, in my opinion. So I walked out of Mass that day when I heard the priest talk about homosexuality, and I never went back. I just decided right then and there. And at that point in time, in my mind, I still believed in God. I don't anymore. I believed in God and thought, "Jesus loves me just how I am. Jesus made me gay." So that was my—you know, at 12 years old, and 13, that's how I thought about it.

And then I actually had sex for the first time when I was 13. Now, I had [played with my cousin when I'd sleep over at –JT] my cousin's house, my Cousin Danny who was [00:42:00] already like 15, we kind of felt each other, you know, when I slept with him, but he never talked about it, but I loved it. I was like, Oh, this is hot. I mean I—and I don't remember feeling guilty about it necessarily. But I just thought, Yup, this is what I like, this is what I want. And, um.

I'll just mention to you regarding the first time I had sex in 1969. But the year before that, in 1968, I was—at Divine Saviour School, there were—along with our regular academic classes and stuff, there was a husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Pavini, who weren't clergy. They were laypeople. But Mr. Pavini taught art and Mrs. Pavini taught music. And they would offer these lessons to us for kids that wanted to do it, like after school or on weekends and extracurricular, and that was my introduction to acrylic paints, which—lifelong love with acrylic painting. I excelled in it, and I loved it, and it was fantastic and amazing. Mr. Pavini was sort of short and Italian and had curly hair. I remember that he and Mrs. Pavini met in the Village in New York, so I already had this romanticized idea about the Village in New York City. And Mrs. Pavini was tall and Irish, red hair, and she had a fiery temper. And they kind of reminded me of Stiller and Meara, the comedy team that I used to see on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on TV. And even though I knew that Stiller and Meara, [were a Jewish and Catholic couple –JT], with Mr. and Mrs. Pavini, it was Italian Catholic and Irish Catholic.

But during this summer, [00:44:00] the art lessons continued, and we would do field trips. In 1968, Mr. Pavini said, "We're going to do this field trip, and it's going to be very cool." And I was like the oldest one in the class. I was like 12 or something and the other kids were like eight, nine. Maybe one was 10. There were about seven of us. And we went to the Spahn Ranch, the old movie set where they used to make Western movies and film them. There was a corral, and there were buildings like the saloon, and the schoolhouse, and a barn. And he told us that, "Well, you know, old man Spahn lives there, but he's getting older now, and he's gone blind, and so a bunch of hippies live there. And they've taken it over and they're, you know, caretaking."

And I was like, "Cool!" I was like, "Wow, I'm going to meet some real, live hippies." I was very excited about it because that's what I—at that point, that's what I kind of wanted to do. It's like, I wanted to be involved in hippies and go listen to rock and roll. And I was totally interested in psychedelia and certainly the visual. Not the drugs at all. I wasn't—I was totally afraid of that, wouldn't even do that. But we went to the Spahn Ranch and we—there were these hippie girls that came out, and it was Squeaky [Fromme], and Susan [Atkins], and Linda [Kasabian]. And they sat with us kids, and we sat on the wooden planks, the sidewalks near the saloon. And we did these drawings and stuff, and they drew with us.

And then it came time for me to rinse out my brushes, and I said, "Where can I rinse these out?" And they pointed over to the shack. There was a wooden shack with a door. It was all dilapidated, and they said, "Oh, go over there. There's a sink in there. There's a bathroom." I said, "Okay." So I walk over there, I go in. And immediately to my [. . . left –JT], there's a sink and it was all kind of dirty and stuff. But right next to it was a toilet, and there was a man sitting on the toilet. And he was naked, [00:46:00] and he had, like, this hair and beard, and his eyes were real big. And he was like, "Howdy, I'm Tex." And I was like, "Oh!" I said, "Uh, hi, I'm Joey." And I was really excited because here was this naked man, and I became very aware that, you know, okay, I already knew. I played with my cousins. I already thought I was gay-ish or whatever, but this is confirming for me. I was very, like, heightened by—I was turned on. And I said, "I'm just going to rinse my brushes." He says, "Oh, that's all right, go ahead." And so I did that, and I got back. And I just—it stayed with me that, oh, you know, I—that was like an inkling. Well, and then it was the following summer that it was—well, the following summer when I first had sex, but it was also just after the Sharon Tate, Rosemary LaBianca murders.

And it was in December of that year when they arrested Charles Manson and the Manson family at the Spahn Ranch. And when they showed Charles "Tex" Watson, I realized that that was Tex. That was Charles "Tex" Watson, the naked guy in the bathroom. So, my first naked man was—and I believe he actually—he's the one that actually stabbed Sharon Tate to death, which is—you know? I don't romanticize that at all. Some people do, like they think it's hip or cool. Not me. I'm—you know, disgusting, horrible, whatever. You know, he's now—I don't know if you know this or not, but Charles "Tex" Watson—he's been in prison, he's still alive, and he's since become a born-again Christian, and he has a ministry. So, go figure, right?

But, anyway. [00:48:00] So that happened that summer and it was a little later that summer that I was walking from my aunt's house in Highland Park to the other house on Avenue 43. She—my aunt Josie who was the second-eldest sister, and she was the matriarch of the family. She was the one that sort of took over overseeing my mom and finances, and then would go and represent my mom in court. And she hired a lawyer who's named Barbara and my aunt would say, "You know, she's a female lawyer!" You know? That was unusual back in the day.

But I was walking to my aunt's house, and this VW pulled up as I was walking down the sidewalk in Highland Park. And a good-looking guy—I mean, he was like in his early 20s, Chicano, had kind of long hair, and he asked me if I knew where the library was. And I was like, "Uh, yeah, sure. It's right on Figueroa." You know, I said, "Just drive down there, make a left, and you can go down." And he goes, "Oh, could you, like, get in and show me where it is?" I was like, "Well, no. It's real easy." I said, "No, I can't." I said, "I've got to go to my aunt's house." He goes, "Oh, well, I have another question for you. Do you know anyone that could use a blow job?" And I was like, "blow job?" I was like, blow dryer, paints job—I was like, "Oh, my God, he's talking about sucking cock." And I was like, "No, I don't." And he goes, "Well, what about you?" "*Moi*?" I'm like, "Wow, it never occurred to me that somebody would want to suck my dick." And I said, "Well, I don't know." He goes, "Oh, come on, it'll be this and that," you know? And he seemed really nice, and I said, "Wow, this is my opportunity. This is what I've been wanting. Should I do this?" And I said, "Okay."

And the minute I got in the car, and closed the door, I was like, "Oh, my God, [00:50:00] what if he's a serial killer? What if he's like these people that killed Sharon Tate?" You know, I was getting all—but it turned out he was a student at Cal State LA. He was involved in the Chicano politics at the time. He was smart, and he really—and I think, you know, obviously he was a chicken hawk. Technically, it was statutory rape, but I didn't give a fuck. And we went to his apartment, and we had a great time. It was wonderful. I mean, when he first kissed me, it was like, you know, fireworks, and I heard music, and it was wonderful. And we actually ended up like kind of seeing each other for two years after that. And one of the things that I realized in retrospect, I really thank him for, was that he was always asking me how I felt about myself. What did I think about myself, and my being gay, and how did I identify? And then always reinforcing, "Don't let anyone ever put you down." And then, he opened up my eyes to: "Well, you know, that over there is a gay bar." And I was like, "No, I had no idea!" And, you know, that there's a lot more gay people than you might think.

Because at that point, at about 12 years old, I thought, "I know there's some gay people that probably live in the Village in New York. I know there's some in San Francisco. I don't know that there's any in LA." And I had a feeling that there's probably no Mexicans. Okay, naïve, right? Well, I started to learn very quickly, and then he started filling me in with lingo. He says, you know, [. . . –JT] "If somebody ever approaches you, and they're—they want you to have sex or something and you don't want to, you just say, 'You know what? I have a lover, sorry.' And they'll leave you alone." Like that was—he was giving me the code of, you know, what was what and stuff. And that really helped me to get a better idea about [00:52:00] the fact that there were many gay people around. Also, where we lived in our apartments there on Sycamore Park Drive, we lived across the street from what was then the Lucky Supermarket.

And, you know, I used to go there at least every other day, to just run across the street to the supermarket to get things. I sort of knew the staff, certainly by how they looked and their names. You know, they wore little nametags. And then one day, I was there, and I was checking out, and there was a new person working there. He kind of stood out because he was black, whereas most of the other employees were Latino or white. He was really tall, and he had this 'fro and a big smile. And he looked at me and he said, "Hi, how are you?" And I said, "I'm fine." And he said, "Can I ask you something?" I said, "Sure." He goes, "Are you gay?" [Gasps.] And I was like, "Well, yes." He goes, "Oh, good!" And then he—you know, he was what I would call, like, kind of femme-ish, femme. And he said, "Let's go talk," and we were talking.

He was from Jamaica. His name was Carlton Dinnall. He had moved to Hollywood or LA because he was trying to make it in the business as a singer-songwriter. And he was working on a song for a movie that Quincy Jones [. . . doing –JT] the music—I guess oversee the music for [*Honky*. –JT] And it was a blaxploitation film. This was before Quincy Jones made it really big. But Carlton was saying, "Oh, so you don't know Charlie, who works here?" I go, "No, I know who he is." He goes, "Well, you know, he's gay." I was like, "No, I didn't know that." He goes, "And you know Susan?" "She's gay too?" It turns out like half of the staff at the supermarket that I had been going to right across the street from my house was gay.

Highland Park [00:54:00] in general was always an artistic enclave, since the turn of the century. Highland Park and Mount Washington collectively had a lot of artists, musicians, and therefore, gay people. And Mount Washington, Carlton told me, was like—you know, it's called the Swish Alps. I said, "Oh, didn't realize that." So I started to get a much broader perspective of the fact that we were everywhere. And that the little bar like half a block down, Tykes, was a gay bar. And the Bon Mot two blocks down was another gay bar. But these were the kind of gay bars where there was nothing that identified them as gay, but the—you know, they would always be men who would going there to drink and meet and stuff.

So, I just started to have this new understanding of being gay. And then Carlton had said, "You know, I need to run over to West Hollywood." He had to go meet somebody and drop something off. He goes, "Would you want to come with me?" And he goes, "I'm going to go to the Outside Inn." That was the bar. It's now called Fubar, on Santa Monica Boulevard. But back then it was called the Outside In. And it was on Thanksgiving, and we were—it was like early in the afternoon, but the bar was already open. They would be open, like, early in the afternoon, and they also had a little buffet at Thanksgiving, like turkey and stuff.

So, I was 15, and I went in, and I said, "Aren't they going to card me or whatever?" He goes, "No, you'll be with me." And, yeah, they didn't say anything. I walked in with him, and, you know, he chatted with them. So I was like, "Wow, this is a gay bar!" And I'm also getting some Thanksgiving buffet, you know? So, you know, my appreciation for—my embracing of gay culture, was incrementally expanding, a lot.

ALEX FIALHO: From an early age too, it sounds like.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. [00:56:00]

ALEX FIALHO: And one of the thoughtful pieces that I read in preparation for this [. . . was –AF]*Being and Belonging: Joey Terrill's Performance of Politics,* by Richard T. Rodriguez. It's a biography. And one of the things that Richard noted is that—what was the name of your first sexual encounter, the person from Cal State?

JOEY TERRILL: Mario.

ALEX FIALHO: Mario.

JOEY TERRILL: Mario Beanes.

ALEX FIALHO: That Mario also introduced you to a certain sort of activism direction, Cesar Chavez.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: So, can you talk a little bit about your experience in that arena? Maybe through Mario, or with Mario, or not.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. Well, with Mario, it was—it wasn't any active, you know, political activity or endeavors. It was him talking to me about how he was involved with MEChA at Cal State LA. And you know, I—

ALEX FIALHO: Which is?

JOEY TERRILL: I had already heard of MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán]. MEChA was sort of the Latino—and I forget the acronym, but, you know, it's a euphemism for like, a match, like a flame. But it would—people referred to MEChA as the Mexican students' associations that were springing up all across California at the university levels advocating for more inclusion of Latino studies, Chicano studies. And in some cases, you know, fighting back against racist policies, or like, you know, there were—back in that day, and other artists have talked about this. I know Harry Gamboa [Jr], Patssi Valdez had the same kinds of experiences where they were told in high school: "Well, you know, you really should not even think about college. You need to think about taking mechanics, auto shop, because—you know? And you need to do—the girls should all take home economics and learn how to cook because they're going to end up being maids." I mean, that was the level of encouragement, or lack of encouragement, [00:58:00] for Mexicans.

And then Mario told me, "Yeah, well, so-and-so in MEChA, you know he's gay too, but he's closeted. And this one, and that one." So, I was beginning to realize that some of these people that certainly didn't advertise that they were gay or lesbian, were. And so, that was, you know, something that I became aware of. And in fact, when I introduced Mario to my mom—and I did feel—I felt very guilty. The Catholic guilt came out. I felt very guilty about it, but I felt like I had no choice. I lied and said, "Well, I met Mario through some of the Chicano activities, you know, the Chicano Power movement and Cesar Chavez, the grape boycott."

And my mom looked at it as—gee, she felt glad that here was this student that was very supportive of me, wanting to further my education, and whatever, and that he was like a father figure or a mentor. She didn't know that we were lovers. I do feel bad about that, I have to admit. But, you know, he was—and then my mom loved him because he was so polite, he was so—you know? He made her feel good, you know, as he should. And anyway, so that was good.

So, once I was in high school, I went to Cathedral High School, and it was the Christian Brothers—you know, who did the wineries, the wines, Christian Brothers Wine—were the order that taught there, and their vocation was to teach inner city youth and to promote furthering our education and social justice. So, there were some of the Chicano Brothers that had first talked to us students about—for those of us that were interested to volunteer, [01:00:00] to work with Cesar Chavez, and the grape boycott, and the lettuce boycott. I, of course, was already ready to do that. I said, "Hey, yeah!" And it was Brother Gerard Perez, Brother Richard Orona, Brother Richard Figueroa. And so, you know, we would go to meetings where there were representatives from the Farm Workers

Union there. I think we saw Dolores Huerta, you know, speaking one time. I was very enthralled in this. And then taking on this identity as a—"yeah, I'm Chicano!" You know?

And we would go to the supermarkets with petitions and ask people, as they were walking into the market, if they would boycott this market or please sign the petition to get rid of non-union lettuce and grapes. And that was an eye opener for me. As, you know, people would come by and [01:01:00]—we were spit at by people like, you know, [demonstrates] or "Fuck you!" Of course, there were people that were like, "Yes, absolutely, let me sign."

And then, one time, in particular—and I think Professor Rodriguez might have written about this—we were outside the market in Hollywood at Franklin and Western across the street from Immaculate Heart College. And Immaculate Heart College, at that time, was where Sister Corita Kent had held sway, so I was in awe of the college being there as well. But, one time when we were there in front of the supermarket, there were these two guys on a motorcycle that passed by. And it was obvious to me that they were, like, hip and gay. And one guy had really tight, you know, white pants, bell-bottom pants. He was wearing sunglasses, and [01:02:00] as they drove past really slow, they were totally checking me out, totally cruising. And I remember—

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK1.]

JOEY TERRILL: —Brother Gerard saying to Brother Richard like, "*Mira*. Look at them, they're checking out Joey." So that was like this sort of idea that, "Wow, I'm out here in the world working in, you know, this social activism." And it had never occurred to me that I might actually get to meet gay people coming up to sign the petitions and engage with them. So—oh.

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK2.]

ALEX FIALHO: How did the context of Los Angeles, Southern California, impact the kind of Chicano activism that you were working on? How did site and being here play into that moment for you?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, I think having grown up here and being, you know, only in LA, I don't have—I really wasn't concerned with, or even thinking about, what was going on other localities or cities outside of what I might see on the news, or read about. I was growing up on the East Side. Highland Park is northeast LA. The Chicano Power movement and the student walkouts in 1968, was, you know, the big news, big issue. And in fact when I became a freshman at Cathedral High School in 1969, oh—

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK3.]

JOEY TERRILL: When I became a freshman at Cathedral High School, the Chicano walkouts had been the year before, but they were still kind of percolating around in '69. And we actually held our own little walkout at Cathedral. And I should state about Cathedral, Cathedral was a college prep. There were only two college-prep high schools on the East Side that I was aware of: Salesian and Cathedral. Both Catholic, and we were archenemies. And so, my freshman year, I remember—there was a program at Cathedral where as freshman, you would have frosh week, and, you know, there were seniors, and they would tell you "Wear your clothes backwards, carry my books," do all this, you know, kind of [light hazing. –JT] And then they would—after that week—the seniors took it upon themselves to mentor us and be like big brothers to us. So there were a couple of seniors that I was hanging out with.

Edmundo Duran was the one that I most remember. He was a good guy and he was totally into, you know, the politics of being Chicano, and needing to further our education, and all this stuff, and I really liked him. But we had gone to a football game, the Cathedral football game, and I wasn't interested in football. But I thought, "You know, well, hey, that's part of what we're doing and I'm with Edmundo." But when we came back, and we were in one of the school buses. And when we pulled up at the school bus at night, there behind the school, there were some rival—I think from Salesian—guys, drove by, and they started shooting. So, it was like [scared –JT] people were ducking and stuff. And I was like, "Oh, my God, this is really real." And, you know, the rivalry between the two schools had reached a point where, okay, it's not just about having [00:02:00] a fistfight. Now, somebody's shooting, and—which I also recognized as one of the problems within, you know, Chicano barrio culture was that you had all these rivalries, and people internalizing all of that negativity and killing each other or fighting each other. So I was very aware of that. But at Cathedral, there was a change that was happening, and it was reflective of what was going on in the dominant culture, you know? I mean, regarding sexual liberation, the Chicano Power movement, Black Power movement.

You know, we had—we were about, I think, probably about 80, 85 percent Chicano. Then the next majority was African American, and maybe one percent was white, and I think a few Asian exchange students, Chinese students. So we had a—there was a black student union group at Cathedral. We also had a MEChA at Cathedral. But, you know, we also had a chess club and academic club. But Brother Gerard and Brother Richard Orona really took me under their wing, you know, so to speak. I started to become aware of the need or the desire to be out, to be open. And that was rough. That was tough. Because Cathedral was—academically, it was for folks that could get in there because of their grade point average. But guess what? There's some really smart *cholos*, gangbangers [laughs], you know? And so, I would get harassed, I would be called, you know, *puto*, [00:04:00] because I wasn't your typical *cholo*.

Then also during my freshman year, there was a new principal, Brother David, who had taken over being principal of the school. And he held a session, a talk with all of the students. So, up in the bleachers inside the gym, you know, on one side would be us freshman, and then on this side, the sophomores. And then down below, on what would be the floor where the basketball is played, were the chairs and there was the juniors and the seniors.

And Brother David got up, and he was very effete. He's, you know, one might call gay-ish. I think he was probably, like, closeted gay. He actually looked like Tiny Tim with the haircut, which was to his detriment. Guys made fun of him. But he got up and was trying to instill new discipline in the school, and the dress code. And he said, you know, "We're going to institute a new dress code, and no T-shirts would be allowed." There was never a uniform, but by default, the uniform of choice was, you know, khakis and white T-shirts. Very, like, barrio, very cholo. Or flannel shirts. It impressed me and the rest of the student body and freshmen that when Brother David said that no T-shirts would be allowed, there was a group of seniors that were all wearing t-shirts sitting there, and they all just stood up and removed their T-shirts.

So, there they were, with their naked torsos, right? Do I even have to tell you? You know, when you're a freshman, the seniors are men, right? So, I was like—visually and sexually, I was totally digging it. But I was also like—at the same time, it was like, "Wow, they're really challenging power." But [00:06:00] it also had an underlying—I felt sorry for Brother David, because I recognized in him that, "Oh, he's gay, I think," or, "He's like me," you know, and the guys were being macho. They weren't calling him names, but by standing up and taking off their T-shirts, right? And that caused a lot of upheaval. So that was the kind of school I was in. There were only about 400 students, so everybody knew everybody else.

And then in 1970, again with Brother Gerard and then some of the advocates that I already knew from volunteering with the grape boycott, we participated in the Chicano Moratorium, which was the big march to protest against the disproportionate number of brown soldiers and Chicanos who were dying in Vietnam. And how the policies would, as you know, allow for people to get a college deferment for those who could afford to go to college. That meant that a lot of black and brown boys were being killed. We marched in East LA, and it was my first march, you know, that I was marching in, and was great. I was really surprised by how many people participated. It was families, it was, you know, hardcore Brown Berets—but there were also, I think, like some of the Black Panthers. There were these, like, Jewish leftists from the West Side had come. I was meeting these old Jewish ladies who were like—I guess they were diehard socialists. They were participating.

And it was fun and friendly. And then when we got to Belvedere Park, and we were all lying out there waiting for Cesar Chavez to come and address us, that's when there was a skirmish in the corner of the park. And apparently, the LA sheriffs had said that somebody was stealing beer from one of the liquor stores. And their response was to just [00:08:00] push into the park, and they started beating everyone. It was my first experience with violence. And I call it a police riot. That's what it was. Whatever was happening out there, they just brought it in, and they didn't seem to care. They just moved forward and were pushing through. And there were *abuelas,* there were grandparents and kids sitting on blankets, and picnics, and—you know, I mean the response was, well, people started fighting back, and we were tear-gassed, and it was crazy.

The way the park was structured, too, at my corner, there was a wall on both sides, so there was just one little entrance that you could enter, exit, in and out. So, here were these hundreds of people being shoved into this one entrance. And I just remember my cousin Ruby was there. She was two years older than me, and we ran into each other during this whole skirmish. And this car pulled up and said "Come on, get in the car!" Because everyone was trying to escape from the police with their batons as well as the tear gas. We jumped in the car, and as we started to take off, we were trying to roll up the windows, but the tear gas came inside. So we were—our eyes were stinging and burning.

I remember we just rode up the hill to—it was all residential, and people had their water hoses out as marchers were fleeing, you know, using the hoses to wash our faces and stuff. And so that's where we were this—I don't know who this family was, but they were there with their hoses. So that we could see that, you know, within a half hour or so, there was smoke coming up from Whittier Boulevard, so I knew that somebody had started fires and looting was taking place. And that's when Ruben Salazar, the news reporter for the *LA Times*— he was one of the first or only Chicano news reporters—[00:10:00] was killed in the Silver Dollar Bar by the sheriffs. They shot a tear-gas canister at his head.

So that was a day of reckoning for me. It encouraged and sort of inflamed my fervor for, and my commitment to, wanting to make change. So that was that. And I remember reporting back [about –JT] it at school. And not every student at Cathedral was adapting to my radical way of viewing things. But again, through Brother Richard and Brother Gerard—and I realize now in retrospect, and I realized after high school, that what Brother Richard Orona and Brother Gerard were doing was that they recognized that here is this fatherless kid who is, you know, really smart and creative, artistic. And, you know, we want to mentor him, and help him, and that's what they did. And I really—I'm thankful for that. I'm still in touch with Brother Richard all these years later. And I actually got to see Brother Gerard—I hadn't seen him in 40 years—about 2 years ago, 3 years ago. He's no longer a Brother, but lives in Northern California.

ALEX FIALHO: Cool.

JOEY TERRILL: That was really cool. But one of the things about Brother Richard that I'll tell you is that—so, you know, at the same time, at the age of 15, I then also started to look around and explore gay community. I went to the MCC Church, Metropolitan Community Church, which I had first heard about in—I think it was *Dear Abby*. Or was it Ann Landers' column? Where she mentioned about, you know, somebody was telling that they were gay, and God was going to—and she mentioned about, "Well, you know, things are changing, and there's this gay [00:12:00] church in Los Angeles." So, I was like, "Oh, my God, really? Wow!" You know, you asked about Los Angeles, right?

So I found the church, and it was Reverend Troy Perry who was the pastor, and it was downtown over on 21st or 22nd Street, near the freeway. And I joined and became part of the youth group at MCC Church. And I would go to the evangelical services on Sundays in the evening because they were really fun. You know, there was all this singing and—you know? And there were all these people who were from more of a Southern Baptist tradition, evangelical tradition, but they were all gay, or they were drag queens, or they were really—butch dykes were the ushers. And it was just this sense of like, "Oh, my God, this is where I belong. These are my people." And in '71, I attended my first wedding.

ALEX FIALHO: [Sneezes.]

JOEY TERRILL: Bless you. My first wedding, it was two women. And as part of the youth group, we would meet there at the church, but we were told like, you know, "If we all want to participate, we're going to celebrate the union of these two women." So, it was my first time the concept that, Oh, wow, you know, we are worthy of getting married. You know, in the eyes of God. I remember I liked that the two women both had shag haircuts, which was really cool to me. And they weren't dressed in the traditional wedding gowns at all. They were totally, like, in slacks, you know? And I think they had velvet coats. It was very cool.

And then I met some friends through the youth group there, that we ended up becoming friends that continued to go out to bars and later on and do stuff. And then I also went to the Gay Community Center, which also had youth rap groups. "Rap" meaning, [00:14:00] talking. I joined in those. And I know it sounds really bizarre, but I remember distinctly one of our rap sessions [the] topic was, "Are we mentally ill?" And I was surprised that some of the youth that were there were like, "Well, I guess we're mentally ill," because of this or that. I was like, "No, we're not! We are not mentally ill." I knew mental illness. I knew my mom, you know? And there's no way. And I advocated that, "No, you might be mentally ill, but it has nothing to do with being gay." You know what I mean?

ALEX FIALHO: Yes.

JOEY TERRILL: So I—you know, so I was really getting strong in my embracing of who I was, and sexuality. And then—

ALEX FIALHO: How—

JOEY TERRILL: What?

ALEX FIALHO: Or—

JOEY TERRILL: Go ahead.

ALEX FIALHO: I want to—you were saying.

JOEY TERRILL: Oh. Well, I—so one of the things that I did—and there's several instances and incidences at high school. But one in particular, I had a—because now I'm going to when I was a senior. When I was a senior, I had already come out to some of the students at school. I was already participating in, you know, MCC Church, and gay liberation at the Gay Community Center. I had already marched in our first gay pride parade, which was called Christopher Street West Parade, down Hollywood Boulevard. And during the summer, I mean, I was hanging out with all these queer youth, at the gay liberation dances, at the gay funky dances at Trouper's Hall.

And that's where I met Mundo Meza, and Jim Aguilar, who we called Pretty Jim, and Gronk, and Cyclona, Roberto Legorreta, and—you know? [00:16:00] And Cyclona, Gronk, and Mundo were the genesis of Asco, which became the Chicano art performance troop. That ended up including Harry Gamboa, and Patssi Valdez, and Willie Herrón. And then over the years, I was on their periphery, so whenever there was going to be a—you know, "Oh, Asco is going to be doing a film shoot or something. They're going to do one of their *No Movies*"—and so I would tag along and just be part of—like an extra in the background scene. I was never an official member of Asco, but that was like the art scene. And well, it was both gay and straight, and it didn't really matter because we were artists. That was the way I was thinking about it.

But when I was a senior, I was—so when I was a junior, I should state, my best friend at high school was Terry. Terry Saunders, and he was African American. And it was just one day when we were freshman, I—you know, they had us sitting in alphabetical order. So he was Saunders, I was Terrill, so I sat behind him. And then at lunchtime, like all the jocks were already congregating together. The other people that knew each other from their grammar schools, and they were all known high schools, they already had their cliques. And I didn't connect to anyone there, and I saw Terry sitting alone, so I just went over and said, "Hi, do you mind if I sit here, and have lunch with you?" He's like, "No, I don't mind." And we immediately—and we've been friends ever since, and he's my best friend. And we've gone through a lot of stuff together. One of which was by the time we were juniors, I had just sort of had it with—you know, I was frustrated with my mom and all of that, and I was upset with people calling me names, and homophobia, [00:18:00] and I just wasn't feeling it.

Terry said he was going through stuff at home. And we didn't even acknowledge—oh, we hadn't acknowledged that we were gay to each other, but one morning—we used to always wait for each other in the morning before we went into class. But one morning, Terry was late, and it was like, "The bell is going to ring." It's like, "Where's Terry?" And I walked over to the front of the school, the library, and there was Terry sitting on the ground, leaning up against the library wall, the brick wall, and he was bent over. And I went over, like, "Are you sick? What's going on?" He's like, "Oh, Joey," he goes, "I took some pills," blah, blah, blah. I'm like, "What! Why?" He goes, "I wanted to kill myself." I'm like, "Oh, my"—I was shocked. The concept of suicide was like, you know, I'm a Martian from another planet. I mean, I just couldn't even—I was—I said, "Oh, my God," I go, "Terry," and I put him on my shoulder, and we started walking.

And there was one of the senior—one of the counselors was Mr. Peltier, who had a beard and was kind of handsome. He wasn't a Brother. He was a lay teacher. And I was like, "Mr. Peltier." He goes, "Oh, what's wrong? What's wrong with Terry?" And I said, "He took some pills" and whatever. He goes, "Okay, come into my office." He goes, "Come into my office. You're going to stay here. I'll get you out of first period," whatever. He goes, "Keep him awake." He goes, "I'm going to bring you some coffee." And he goes, "You just keep him awake." He goes, "I've got things to do, but I'm going to come back." And I was like, "Thank you, Mr. Peltier." And so, I was sitting there, talking to Terry, and he was crying.

And I said, "Terry, what's wrong? Why would you want to kill yourself?" He goes, "Oh, there's three things, three things that are just so horrible. Like, I can't even tell you." I said, "Yes, you can. Tell me, what's going on?" And he said, "Well, I think I'm flunking out of school." I'm like, "Give me break." I said, "Please, that's nothing to kill yourself over. Like, you know, your grades, you can fix that, whatever. What else?" And then he said, "I think my mom is a heroin addict." And that one I was like, [00:20:00] [demonstrates braking sound], the brakes. I was like, "Okay, you know what, why do you think that?" He goes, "I found some syringes and needles." And I'm like, "But Terry, your mom is a nurse." He goes, "No, no. She's—I know she uses them." I was like, "Wow." That one really freaked me out, the idea of it, right?

And I said, "What's the third?" And he's like, "I can't tell you. If I tell you, you won't want to be my friend. You'll never talk to me. You'll hate me," blah, blah, blah. I was like, "Terry." I said, "Are you gay?" "Yes, I am," and he was crying and sobbing. I go, "Terry, so am I." And he goes, "You are?" I go, "Yeah!" "Really?" I go, "Yeah." He goes, "Don't you think Mr. Peltier is cute?" I said, "Yeah, absolutely."

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: We were—and we immediately we were like, "Oh, my God." You know, somehow, it's like, I think, subconsciously, we knew. But, you know, it wasn't—and so we then became very close, and determined that we were going to explore. So, we went to our first Gay-In together at Griffith Park, which was really cool, which is a whole other story.

But this one day, we were juniors, and I was there at school, and it was midday, lunchtime, and I was just fed up with everything, and Terry was too. And Terry said, "You know what, I feel like running away." And I said, "Oh, so do I," and I go, "Do you want to?" And he goes, "Do you want to?" I said, "Yeah, let's do that." So, the year before, Brother Gerard, being the mentor to us, had taken us to San Francisco for the first time. Terry and I didn't know that we were gay. And when we went up—and it was just like for three or four days, like a long weekend—we stayed with Mrs. Lara, who was the mother of Brother Sean Lara there at the school. Brother Sean was one of the finest men I've ever seen. He was so handsome, and he was also very entrenched in, you know, the Chicano [00:22:00] student activism and Power movement. He had this beautiful beard and mustache, and I had this big crush on him.

And so, when we went up to go stay at Sean's mother's home, where Sean grew up, you know, Mrs. Lara greets us like, "Hello boys." And she said, "You know, I'm afraid you guys are going to have to sleep in Sean's [old –JT] room in his bed." Like, "Hello!" [Laughs.] Like, "Yeah!" And, you know, she was like, "Oh, here's one of his old jackets that you could wear," because it was cold in San Francisco. We didn't bring the proper jackets, so, you know—and that was a very cool weekend there with Brother Gerard.

I actually got to go to the Fillmore West, which was—I was in heaven. It's like, "Oh, my God, it's hippies!" I got to see Mott the Hoople, and Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Quicksilver Messenger Service is one of the definative San Francisco bands that was popular. Then Mott the Hoople had the song "All the Young Dudes," which is a total—that was the gay anthem, I mean, before there was such a thing as gay anthems. And if you don't know the song, please look it up. You'll love it. I guarantee you, you'll love it. "I can dance"—what is it? "[He dresses like a queen, he can kick like a mule, but we're a real mean team because we can love. . . –JT]" So, blah, blah, blah, anyway.

But, so, the following year when we were talking about, "We should run away! Well, where will we go?" I go, "Let's go to San Francisco!" And he goes, "Yeah, let's do that." And he goes, "We'll go to Mrs. Lara [ph]!" And so, we made the decision to run away from home, and we went. We took the bus down to the beach to the Pacific Coast Highway, and then started hitchhiking. You know, it took us two days to get there, but once we were about an hour or two up the Pacific Coast Highway, I was aware that, you know, my mom and my family, they don't know what's going on. So I went to a payphone, and I called my cousin Pat, you know, the lesbian in the family, [00:24:00] and she answered the phone. I said, "Hi, Cousin Pat." She goes, "Oh, my God." She goes, "Your mother is here. We're all"—I go, "Listen, just tell them that we're okay, me and Terry," that—you know? And, "We're going be okay, and we'll be back in a few days or something," blah, blah, blah.

And she's like, "Oh, you know"—it really put Cousin Pat in a spot. I also, again, felt horrible about what I put my mom through. I mean, you know—and I can't excuse it, but hey, what can I say? I was a teenager. I was overwhelmed. And then that first evening, you know—and we didn't have coats or anything, so we just had our little sweaters, and we were freezing. We were by the freeway entrance trying to thumb a ride. And this van pulls up, and it had one of those—the Ichthus, whatever, the Christian fish, on the side. And it was about six surfer guys that were Christian. And they had a commune there near Santa Barbara right on the beach, right on the ocean. What they would do is they would go up and down Pacific Coast Highway, go off the exits, and pick up runaways and throwaways. Because back in—by, you know, 1970, '71, there was a lot of—everyone was going to San Francisco. They were hitchhiking. It was, you know, the youth movement.

They picked us up, and they gave us something to eat. They were going to have their Bible study. They said, you know, "Do you accept Jesus as your savior?" or whatever, and I knew enough to say, "Yes, I do." And they said, "Okay, would you like to join us in the Bible?" I go, "No, we're okay." He goes, "Okay." So, they let us, but I mean, we were sitting there on the edge of this porch of this little wooden house, you know, right on the beach. And there were rocks right here, and the waves were approaching the rocks, and the sky was just all these sparkling stars and, like, diamonds. I felt so free. I just felt so, [00:26:00] like, relief.

Anyway, we ended up—it took us another day to get into San Francisco, and I was like, "Oh, Mrs. Lara [ph] is going to be so surprised." And then when we get there, we knock on her door, she's like, "Oh, hi, boys. Come on in. I've been expecting you." And I was like, "Oh, my God, how did she know?" And she goes, "You know what, we need to call your moms right now because they're waiting." So, she put us in a Greyhound bus back to LA and, you know—and I realized the pain I must have caused my mom. But when I got home, my room—my room was my escape, it was my cave, it was my world, everything. I had pictures of, like, everything. *Glitter Rock,* and I had psychedelia, and some of my drawings, and paintings, and things cut out from magazines, and just all kinds of stuff. It was really congested.

But I got in there, [and] my mom had ripped everything, destroyed everything. Even my little antique bottle collection, she had broken it, all this stuff. And I mean, I was so hurt. I just remember crying. I was weeping. I go, "Mom, how could you do that?" And she just said, "*Mijo*, I was so angry. I was so angry. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't help myself. I just had to tear everything." And I'm sure she's looking at this and thinking like, "All of this stuff is influencing my kid," you know?

But got through it, got over it. And then—oh, go ahead.

ALEX FIALHO: If that works.

JOEY TERRILL: Alright.

ALEX FIALHO: So, from there, you go to Immaculate Heart College. Can you talk a little bit about that space for you? I know it had a particularly political context, and then also your art-making development into college.

JOEY TERRILL: Sure. Well, I—you know, back in that day, [00:28:00] there was State of California Academic Scholarships. And I placed because—I don't know—at the top five percent or whatever it was in the SATs. I was accepted at UC Berkeley and Immaculate Heart College. And when I looked at the two choices—I had visited both. Brother Gerard had taken me up to Berkeley so that I could explore the campus, and, you know, I realized it's a big city, you know, like its own city. And I knew that if I went up there, I would have to try to get housing and then figure everything out.

Whereas in LA, I was graduating from high school in '73, and there were these new apartments being built half a block away, and my mom wanted to move to them. And I asked my mom, I said, "Mom," I said, "We have moved around so much. What do you think if you and my sister moved to that apartment and [let –JT] me stay here at this apartment, and Terry will be my roommate?" My mom actually agreed to it. She goes, "You're a rebel. I'll just do that." So instead of me moving out of my home, my mom and sister actually moved out, and I kept the apartment.

So at 17, I was the one with my own apartment. So I had my own apartment, I was working waiting on tables. And Immaculate Heart was just two bus rides away. And I really liked Immaculate Heart. I had actually toured that campus because of the legacy of Sister Corita Kent, and the art department there, that was my attraction to Immaculate Heart. She had left there in 1968, but by 1973, I knew that some of her students were now instructors, and I actually studied under some of them. So that's why-—

ALEX FIALHO: I love that because I'm seeing this—like the Sister Corita Kent book here.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah [laughs], yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: And I'm thinking about the Pop influence, but also some of the religious influence that comes into some of the work, [00:30:00] your work. So it feels like it's all in the mix, at that early stage even.

JOEY TERRILL: And the thing is, is that—and I actually—I mean, I'll just—I know it's—but I think it's important. I actually never got a high school diploma, and the reason I didn't—I was a straight-A student, and I had—from graduating from eighth grade going into high school, I had a four-year academic scholarship for high school. But it was predicated upon my maintaining, I think, a 3.8, 3.9 grade point average, which was no problem. I had straight A's. I think I got a B every now and then.

But my senior year, because of a homophobic instructor, Brother Gary York, who didn't like—I mean, and I can—that's a story or whatever, but I'll—anyway, long story short, he failed me in my class in English lit, which I was the top of the class, but—so because I had that incomplete, they told me two weeks before graduation that, you know, "You owe for all this year's tuition, based upon failing Brother Gary's class." And I was like, "Well, there's no way I'm going to go tell my mom, 'Oh, Mom, you know, we owe a year's tuition, so I couldn't get in.'" So Immaculate Heart, obviously, along with your transcripts, they wanted to see evidence of your diploma, and I didn't have it.

So, Brother Michael [Xavier], who was one of the other brothers who was cool, and I think he's gay, but he wrote this—I came across it years later. He wrote this beautiful letter to the President of Immaculate Heart College, Sister Helen Kelley, and said that, "Please excuse the fact that he doesn't have a high school diploma." So again, it was one of the Brothers at Cathedral that really helped [00:32:00] me get into college. And then once I was in there, at the time, what—the prevailing art instruction and theories that were going on, it was all the feminists' art strategies that were going on at CalArts, as well as Immaculate Heart. And I remember that. So I took all of these classes that were very feminist in their perspective and bent. "Woman as Image and Image Maker," then looking at different artists like Frida Kahlo, Romaine Brooks, Florine Stettheimer. And I embraced all of that. I embraced the concept of the personal as political.

And then with Frida Kahlo, I absolutely appreciated her work, but unlike a lot of the Chicano artists that I knew that were investigating Frida Kahlo—and it was relatively new back then. She's not the icon that everyone knows today. People didn't know who she was. "She was the wife of who?" Like, that kind of thing. You know, they would do art that imitated or replicated her [visual –JT] style. And for me, what I liked about her work was its confessional, personal narrative, and how—I mean, I just thought, "Gosh, she just puts everything out there." And one of the most haunting images for me was her birth. It's her mom with her legs open, and there is her little head. And I thought, "Oh, my God, would I ever be able to have that courage and have the balls to be able to do something like that?" But I wanted to do that, so I was already thinking about, you know, "I need to show myself as a gay man." So in my serigraphy classes, my first silk-screening classes—

ALEX FIALHO: What was the—in your—

JOEY TERRILL: Serigraphy or silk-screening. [00:34:00] Which was taught by Dick Crawford, Richard Crawford, who actually studied under Corita. So I felt like, "Oh, it's, you know, twice removed from me." And in fact, we would—there were a lot of, like, old prints still left over from the Corita Kent days, of the students. They were either unfinished, or unused, or they were mistakes. And we would take those and use those as kind of scrap. So I was totally, like, thinking that I'm getting Corita Kent's spirit here.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, Julie Ault's Corita Kent show—

JOEY TERRILL: Huh?

ALEX FIALHO: Julie Ault did a show of Corita Kent's work at Artists Space that blew my [. . . mind –AF]

JOEY TERRILL: And then in '75, she actually came to visit the campus, the college, and I got to meet her. I actually showed her the silkscreen that I did. I had tried to start a gay and lesbian group at Immaculate Heart College.

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: And it's in the *Axis Mundo* show that there's a—it's "Immaculate Heart Gays Come out to Dinner at Eric Weber's House." We were going to get together there, and topic of discussion is pro and con for having a gay group on campus. But I showed it to her. I said, "Look, this is what I'm doing. Is there"—and I think she was a little bit taken aback, but she was very cool about it. She's like, "Oh, good, thank you." So, I mean, I was in awe that I met one of my heroines, right? To me, it was almost like if I were to meet Frida Kahlo, right?

ALEX FIALHO: Did you have a sense of her work before you went to Immaculate Heart College?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: From—because it was down the street, or—?

JOEY TERRILL: So like, in—you know, when I was still—in the mid-'60s, I mean, she was already getting recognition for her very colorful, Pop art imagery that incorporated, like, spiritual quotations and things. And I responded to it. I responded to it visually, and the color, and then also for where I was at the time [00:36:00] as the Catholic school kid. Like, "Oh, wow, yeah, this is my kind of socially progressive Catholicism." That's—I don't know how else to put that. And then when I knew that, you know, she was chosen for the *LA Times* Woman of the Year or something, or several women that were honored.

And I think it was Cardinal McIntyre at the time had criticized the Immaculate Heart order and said that they're communists, and their anti-war, anti-Vietnam war advocacy was communist-inspired. He threatened with disbanding them or kicking them out of the Catholic Church. And it's my understanding—I don't know all the details—but they were like, "So what? Go ahead." And they actually were, you know, disbanded as an order. And what I loved was that they said, "So what? We still consider ourselves immaculate heart, being clean of heart," which I loved. And then they said, "Well, let's rethink this. As a religious order, why do we have to be women? Why not have a religious order where men are included? And by the way, why do we have to be Catholic, if there's a Jew or a Muslim that wants to be part of this religious order for socially progressive spirituality?" And I just thought that was a brilliant concept.

So that's how I went, and then in these classes, you know, there were still mostly women. Because it was up until like'68, '69, or something, I think it was still an all-women's college. Then they went coed, so I was able to go in at that time. So I was at Immaculate Heart, studying art, trying to get a gay group on campus. And we actually had about three or four meetings, but it never went anywhere that was substantial. But at the same time, [00:38:00] I was going out to the clubs, and dancing, and getting—engaging with the gay, homosexual male community big time, and loving it. And in fact, back when I was in high school, in class of '71—so first of all, there are a couple of crushes that I had when I was a freshman.

One of the crushes I had was Joey Arias. He was a senior, and I thought, "Oh, my God, he is so handsome. He's got these beautiful eyes, and he's got this great shag haircut, and he's so cool." And he lived in Highland Park too, so we used to ride the same bus together, and we would chat a little bit. But there was also Steven Fregoso, who I never talked to. I didn't really talk to him. He was a junior when I was a freshman, and he was so handsome, I thought. He looked like a movie star to me. And there I was my second year at Immaculate Heart, and who do I see walking across the campus, but Steven Fregoso?

And I was like, "Oh, my God, he's here, but I don't know that he even knows who I am." But I was also minoring in English, so I would write for the Immaculate Heart student newspaper. And I wrote about how I spent my summer vacation, and I talked about going to the gay clubs and bars including the Paradise Ballroom. So one evening I'm at the Paradise Ballroom—and I know I'm going off on a tangent here, but I go to the Paradise

Ballroom, and who do I see there, but Steven? And I thought, "Ah, he's gay," right? So, I go up to him, and I go, "Hey, Steven, how are you?" He's like, "Oh, he-le-le-le-le-lo, J-J-J-Jo-Joey." And I realized he has a stuttering problem. I had no idea. I had been, you know, idolizing him and lusting after him for a while, and I had never heard him speak. Anyway, I laughed, but I wasn't trying to make fun of him. I was laughing at my own, like, "Oh, I had no idea."

Anyway, we became really fast friends, really close [00:40:00] friends, and we had an affair for about two weeks, and he said he was in love with me, but I knew. I was like, "You know what, yeah, it's not going to happen." In fact, at Immaculate Heart, there was a hallway that was sort of like a student free-for-all, or a billboard ,where you could paint, write, do things, put anything on there. And he wrote this big, long poem about me. But, you know, he hadn't signed it, and then he got really pissed because some girl took credit for it. And he didn't name me. He just—you know, he was like, "You are this and that, and your eyes," whatever. And so that—he got pissed at that, and so he went and signed his name, and he made sure that people knew that it was gay and queer.

And so, you know, we would hang out and go to clubs. And in fact, in 1980—when I introduced him to my friend Victor Durazo, who was an artist, they ended up becoming lovers. And in 1980, when I moved to New York, it was just coincidence that Victor and Steven moved to New York. And then my sister was at UC Santa Barbara, and she called me up. It was her third year, and she said she needed to take a respite, and she's just rethinking whether she wants to get her degree in psychology, or business, or whatever. And she goes, "What do you think if I went with you to New York?" I was like, "Oh, my God, that would be great! Let's do it!" And so, she went with me. And so Victor and Steven were in New York, and me and my sister went, and to me that was like, you know, the universe was telling us that's what we should do.

And, of course, I went with $400 in my pocket, right? No real plan for where I was going to work or anything, but it was—and my sister only stayed for three months, and she was smart. She was like, "You know what, I don't have to live this way." We were staying in a tenement, [00:42:00] and she says, you know, "It'll be easier for you to stay here, and you can get a gay roommate, no problem." And she was right. But for those three months, we had the most wonderful adventure in New York. That included Steven and Victor. And they were together for, I think, like—I don't know—10 years, close to 10 years.

But once my sister—once I moved back in 1981—and that's where in 1980, I was infected with HIV. When I moved back in '81, then I would go back and stay with Steven and Victor all through the '90s. They were both very dysfunctional. They ended up—you know, they were part of the—on the periphery of the East Village art scene, and they would go to parties with Keith Haring, and Klaus Nomi, and Joey Arias and stuff. But they weren't doing anything. All they were doing was getting drunk and then fighting with each other. They both gained tons of weight. And so, I would go—I hadn't seen them for five or six months and then I would go and visit. And I was like, "Guys, guys, what are you doing?"

Anyway. I've lost touch with Steven, but I painted Steven about four or five times. He was my muse, and he would do images. He used to work in advertising, Benton & Bowles, and he would steal paper and all kinds of stuff, and he would make these cutouts of us. So he's done images of us, like, in New York walking around, being drunk, et cetera. But I've lost touch with him. He was someone that I thought was going to end up being a friend forever. It didn't work out that way.

ALEX FIALHO: How about—one thing I've really been stuck by so far is that it seems like you've had a very strong sense of self from an early age, and community has been really important to that. Especially community at the intersections of both your identities as Chicano and queer, and [00:44:00] the *Maricón* shirt. And the Christopher Street West Pride Parade feels like a moment, an early moment, where that comes together for you.

Can you talk a little bit about those shirts, the process of developing that? I think you're probably still in Immaculate Heart College at that time, or almost finishing? Just place us in that moment for you and kind of walk us through those shirts and how they sat in the community.

JOEY TERRILL: So, in '75, I was still at Immaculate Heart. I was working at Sears Roebuck, in their coffee shop in Hollywood. There's all kinds of stories related to that coffee shop too. But one of the things that—in the boy's department at Sears, they were having a special where you could buy a T-shirt, and then they would take letters, and they do a steam-press thing, and they would [press –JT]—so your name, right?

So, I got to work early one day and went in there, and I made a T-shirt for myself that said "Faggot." And I made one for my cousin Pat that said "Dyke," and then for Martha—her partner, who was actually a friend of mine, and I introduced them—"Lesbian." We made those T-shirts, and we used that to march in the Christopher Street West Parade.

ALEX FIALHO: In '75?

JOEY TERRILL: In '75. And so then, by the following year, me and Teddy Sandoval had already been participating in ideas around maricónography or visualizing a queer or gay Chicano identity. And it was specifically Chicano. We weren't thinking of ourselves as Latino, you know, the broader diaspora. We were being specific to East LA, Chicano-Mexican.

So I had done—we had done the *Maricón* shoot. I think I had done the T-shirt, and so when it came time for Christopher Street West, I said, "Oh, instead of Dyke and Faggot, we need to make *Maricón* and *Malflora* T-shirts. And that's when I asked some of my friends who we called the *Escandalosas*. I said, you know, "Who wants to [00:46:00] participate and march with us?" They say, "Oh yeah, I will, we will." So, I think I made eight, maybe nine. There were seven of us and then there were two, my cousin Pat and Martha who were the *Malflora*, and they were all hand-done. They were yellow T-shirts that I went and bought. I was taking textile silk-screening at Immaculate Heart, so I had all these dyes. And I used the dyes to make the *Maricón* and *Malflora* T-shirts, and they were a hit.

Everyone—we all loved them ourselves, and then we marched and the response was great from all the Latinos, you know? Like "Oh, my God, that's so cool," and "Where did you get them?" I said, "We made them," and then we all had this big picnic in De Longpre Park, where we took pictures and just celebrated that way. But I had never thought of it as something that would be ongoing, or that these were going to be for sale, or anything like that. It was all about that moment, a declaration of ourselves as a group. Yeah, and it was just very cool. It was great.

ALEX FIALHO: What about the idea of "Role Model" on the back of the shirt?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, yeah. So one of the things that was going on at that time was about, you know, this whole idea about, "Who are good role models?" And one of the pushbacks against the idea of gay people coming out was that, "Oh, they would be terrible role models for children, and"—you know? There was talk about—especially within the Chicano community—about who would be role models. Martha and I had already gone to—there was a class at Cal State LA that a friend of mine, an acquaintance that I knew, Vincent Robles, was taking. He was gay and Chicano, and he says, "Joey, it's a Chicano studies class," and he goes, "And they're talking about all these different members of the community. And so people are coming in who are far more [scholarly – JT], people that are coming and are talking about [00:48:00] academia," this [and] that. He goes, "But I want to have—would you go and speak about being a gay Chicano?" And I said, "Yeah, sure." And I got Martha to go with me, and we went to the class, and the instructor was very homophobic.

He was in—and he's well-known. And in fact, Professor Ricky Rodriguez, in our conversations—he actually studied under him years later. And he said that he was always, you know, rejecting or pushing down on Ricky Rodriguez trying to do anything that was queer or *maricón*. And so, in the presentation that we did, I talked about how I was involved with MCC Church. I talked about how, you know, I was at the Gay Community Services Center. I talked about my activism within the La Huelga, and the grape and lettuce boycott, and Cesar Chavez. So indicating that I was a good role model, right, trying to counter that other narrative.

And when we were all through—and we got some great, great feedback from some of the *cholos* and the straight guys, like, "Alright, *órale*," you know, whatever. But when we were through, the instructor said, "Well, I want to thank you for having your presentation today. But I have to conclude that there is no room for gays or lesbians in the Chicano Power movement, and for students," blah, blah, blah, and whatever. I was outraged! And I told the students, I go, "See? See what we're up against?" So, I mean I kept having this in mind, that we are worthy of respect, and we are good role models. And I know my cousin Pat is a great daughter to her parents, and—you know? And so that was my idea for putting "Role Model" on the back there.

And I think, you know, back in the day when people saw that, especially if they saw "Role Model" first, like from our behind, and then they turn around and they would see "*Maricón*," it was like it caused them to smile or a thumbs up.

ALEX FIALHO: I think, too, *Malflora*, with the literal, like, bad flower—and "Role Model" [00:50:00] as being one and being possible to be embodied in the same person. It's a really powerful statement.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. The other thing is that—you know, when we were talking about that, I asked Martha, I said, "Now, Martha, now I've heard like, *manflora*, or is it *malflora*?" And she goes, "I don't know," because we've heard it both like *manflora*—which I wasn't quite sure which was which. And there was no Wikipedia to look up at that time. And I said, "But you know what, *malflora*, the idea of a bad flower, I just love that." I picture a cartoon-like flower with a machine gun and being—you know, like with their fists up or something, and a powerful woman. So that's why we chose *malflora*. Yeah, that was very cool.

ALEX FIALHO: I'm really interested, too—and you said you were having conversations with Teddy Sandova—around maricónography. Talk to me a little bit about what those dialogues were. And was it in an art context too?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, yeah. No, absolutely. So I had first seen—you know, I might get some things a little bit confused in terms of memory. But I think it might have been at the *Chicanarte* show, that was at Barnsdall Park Municipal Art Gallery, where I first saw this collage by Teddy Sandoval, this piece. I [. . . hadn't –JT] met him yet. And I saw this collage, and it was a sort of a variation of an odalisque, but it was a female body, but with male genitalia. And I was like, "This is brilliant!" I mean, this was among all this other *Chicanarte* show that showed, you know, cactus, and Frida Kahlo, and big Olmec faces, and brown fists, or whatever. But this was like totally queer and mixing up gender. And I was like, "Oh, my God, who is this person?" And then we met, I think, at the *Escandalosa* show at Hazard Gallery. And [00:52:00] our first-time meeting, there were maybe like, I don't know, eight or nine of us. And there was Teddy, and I said, "Teddy." I go, "You're Teddy Sandoval. I love your work." And we immediately bonded, and we just became friends. And Teddy was going to Cal State Long Beach and that put me in touch with all these other art students from Cal State Long Beach.

And at that point, I had——I dropped out my third year at Immaculate Heart. And the reason was that, to renew your scholarship each year, it was required to fill out this paperwork, and mail one copy of all the paperwork and everything filled out to Sacramento, and then another one to somewhere in Los Angeles, and then somewhere else. It was, like, maybe three places where I was supposed to do it. Well, I think, I forgot. I missed one. I mailed in two but not the third, and so I get this letter. I was already ready to go to school, and they sent this letter that since they didn't receive that, blah, blah, blah, they were going to hold back my scholarship for one year, that I could reapply the following year.

And I was like—oh, I was so upset because then I was kicking myself in the head. But, whatever, it was meant to be, I guess. So, I'm the proverbial third-year dropout because of that. But, Teddy and I were interested in looking at ways to show, you know, queerness or gayness at the time. And it was Teddy who was already involved with, and I think introduced me to the Mail art [scene –JT]. You know, the New York Correspondence School, Ray Johnson out of New York. And so he was showing me images of, like, queer men, but maybe like with cactus that looked kind of phallic, and this and that. And I was like, "Oh." So he was—you know, we used to just play around with ideas and stuff.

He said, "We really should do something that's *maricón*." And that's when I first [00:54:00] said, "Oh, what about"—you know, again with my textile dye from Immaculate Heart, I made the *Maricón* T-shirt. And he said, "Yeah, I love that." He goes, "So would you model for it?" And to be honest with you, there was a little part of me that thought for just a split second—not longer than that but for a split second, I thought, "Oh, wow, I'm going to put myself up publicly as a *maricón*. And I'm going to be sending it out, mailing it out all over the place, and what if my mom sees it?" I was worried what my mom would think, and then I said, "Oh, fuck it, I'll just do it." And we did. We did a photoshoot, and the idea was that it was never about having these for big prints or anything like that. It was all about having them for Mail art, so they would be on postcards that we would mail out to artists in New York, or San Francisco, or Coum [Coum Transmissions, an art collective from England founded by Genesis P. Orridge. –JT] out of London. And I'm sure that for some of them it's like, "*Maricón*, what is that?" Like, they didn't know, and it didn't really matter.

And then, of course, we would mail them to all the Chicano artists that we knew. And I think, you know, people were loving it. It was like, "Oh, that is so weird, or so cool." So that was our impetus and then it was, I think, the following year that I ended up deciding to do the T-shirts for the parade.

ALEX FIALHO: How does it feel for you now? I know that work, if you would call it a work—[an intervention—in the context of the *Axis Mundo* show. –AF] You know, there's the cover image of this amazing tome of a catalogue, that it's on the cover, and then, you know, you see the show. You walk up the stairs, it's a portrait of you by Teddy in the *Maricón* shirt from '76. How does the way that that—literally 40 years-plus later—has translated, and really been a powerful image, sit with you?

JOEY TERRILL: It feels wonderful. I'm not sure I [00:56:00]—and when I say "wonderful," in all aspects of the word. First of all, with that image of us marching, I had never seen that image. Those were photographs by Teddy Sandoval. And it wasn't until David Frantz and Ondine Chavoya were doing the work for getting everything together, that they said, "Oh, we visited Paul." I had some images of us wearing the T-shirts where we were off on the sidelines, we're not looking at the camera, we're looking away, you know. And then there were some where we're having our picnic.

So it was just like a year before the show, a year ago or so, when they said, "Hey, look what we found from Paul Polubinskas, Teddy's partner." They said, "Had you ever seen this before?" I said, "No! Oh, my God!" So for me to see that image was brand new for me, and it brought up all of these emotions. And I might get emotional, because Danny is in there, and Efren is in there, and they were two of my best friends. They were Escandalosas, and they're gone, they're dead.

ALEX FIALHO: What are their full names? Danny?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, Danny Ramirez, Daniel Ramirez. And Efren Valadez. We were part of our group that we loosely called Las Escandalosas. There were about 10 of us altogether. Most of us all went to Cathedral High School, and we all came out together, and then we would all party together, and get together for meals, and celebrations, and sometimes doing art.

So when I was doing *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, it was the Escandalosas that I would say, "Hey, I want to do this photoshoot, whatever, for *Homeboy Beautiful.* We're going to do a homo-homeboy party, like, who's available? Who wants to come?" And they were like, "Yeah, sure, let's do it," you know? And even though they weren't necessarily artists themselves, they wholeheartedly participated in it. [00:58:00] So, I mean, my seeing this image—I saw it for the first time about a year ago, and I loved it. I love it because it—well, I think, for obvious reasons. We're all basically looking at the camera except for my cousin Pat.

ALEX FIALHO: This is the image on the cover of the *Axis Mundo* exhibition catalogue. *Queer Networks and Chicano LA*.

JOEY TERRILL: You know, and I like that we're all smiling, and we look defiant, and proud, and happy. I think it captured a moment, you know, at that point in time. And it's an authentic moment. It's real. We weren't faking anything. That was totally us. Yeah, so it was great. It was an exhilarating feeling. And then when I went to *Axis Mundo*, the show, I had no idea they were going to do that blowup. It was very emotional when I saw it because the image is of me, but it's really—it's Teddy's photograph, and it's Teddy and my collaboration, and that's how I always viewed it.

And then on another personal note, the background of it is this Mexican blanket that—when I was 15, my uncle Rudy and aunt Sara took my mom, and me, and my cousin Mike, and we went—for two weeks, we went to Mexico. We drove down to Mexico City, and one of the things—one of the only things—that my mom bought was that beautiful blanket, which I still have. It's tattered and worn, but the fact that that was in there, to me it's like, "Oh, it's the blanket, it reminds me of our trip to Mexico City, which we drove down "—and it was my mom's. So there's this personal connection to it that when I saw it blown up, I was like, "Wow." It just hit all these different points of my brain. Yeah, I loved it. It was a total surprise, and David and Ondine said, "Yeah, we didn't want to tell you. We were holding it back from you," [01:00:00] because they wanted to surprise me. I don't know, I can't say enough about it.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, it's really powerful too. And as somebody from a different generation you know, [. . . I –AF] first learned about largely this group of artists from that exhibition. I think both it's a powerful image in and of itself, and it's a really powerful context to learn about community in that way, and to have it really embodied in that photograph.

JOEY TERRILL: And then what has happened, as I'm sure you realize, is that in this age of the selfie—right? I mean, all these people, even for the opening, they were all choosing to take pictures of themselves in front of it, you know? Like they're standing in front of the Statue of Liberty or the Golden Gate Bridge or something. And I felt—I don't know. I don't take it for granted, I really don't. I mean, I felt honored. And I loved that it was resonating with this whole younger generation. I mean, that is amazing to me.

ALEX FIALHO: Even in the book, there is the *Maricón* Collective afterword. I just think it really visualizes this idea of maricónography in a way that perhaps prior is not—there just really wasn't an image in my mind's eye, or in a lot of people's mind's eye, for that. So that's what we're really—

JOEY TERRILL: So, you know, when we did those T-shirts back then and marched in the Christopher Street West Parade, I mean, I knew that it was us, the Escandalosas, and then all the other Chicanos who might be there. That was my audience, and that was it. I never expected they would go beyond that. Today, with social media, and Instagram, and Facebook, I mean, the image is going all over the world literally, and it blows my mind. It blows my mind that I've lived this long to see that. One of the other things about it though, is that the people involved—I mean, I'm so [01:02:00] glad to see them having themselves recognized or being—

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK 4.]

JOEY TERRILL: ––part of this *Axis Mundo* show, particularly because we have all gone through so much loss and grieving. It's exhilarating to me. I'm—I don't know. An endorphin rush? I definitely had. Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: Good?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: I want to just, on a personal note, say a thank you to, or for, David. Or an acknowledgement of David Evan Frantz, in particular, who gave a lot of support to my research process in getting to know your work better and the work of a lot of artists in *Axis Mundo* that we'll go over, over course of the interview. I know that

that show—I mean, I'm the Programs Director at Visual AIDS and we support artists living with HIV, and preserve the legacies of those lost to AIDS. And that show was a real landmark exhibition for the work that we do, and I'm excited to continue to tell these histories that that show really brought to the fore. The exhibition is at Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles [. . . organized by ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries. –AF]

In that vein, you have been speaking about the Escandalosas, and I know from the ONE show that that might have been one of the earliest moments in which your work was shown. A cookbook context from 1975, and also *Dormido,* the piece that's in the ONE show. Can you just talk a little bit about that group coming together to show your work? Or what that—maybe that particular show from '75 was, or largely the collective?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. So in the early '70s—and by, you know, '73 when I entered Immaculate Heart College, the prevailing view in the art world was that painting was dead. You know, that was yesterday's news, and it was gone, and particularly in the sense of all of the social movements and advocacy. People [00:02:00] were looking at installation work. They were looking at objects outside of painting, and so we were—everyone was looking at investigating strategies for making art that was separate from painting. I still love painting, and I still was doing it, but I was trying to come up with different ideas.

One of the things I came up with that worked for me was taking books that were—because I had a couple. Like I had a Kahlil Gibran diary that I had maybe filled in like two or three pages, and then it was like it was last year's. So, I thought, "Oh, should I throw it away?" I go, "No, I shouldn't. I should recycle this. I should make it into art." And there is an element within Chicano art of *rasquache* or *rasquachismo*, which is taking something and turning it—usually, you know, throw-away, low culture—and turning it into art.

For me, one of the best examples, one of my first examples of that that I saw, and I loved—Clorox bleach used to come in this bright blue, aqua-blue [plastic –JT] bottle. It was beautiful. And I remember several times in East LA, there would be gardens that had a little—you know, an altar in the garden or whatever to the *Virgen de Guadalupe.* And sometimes, they would cut out the blue, aqua, Clorox bottle to have as the background, which became the sky with her in the middle of it. And I just thought that was clever, and I liked it. So I was always thinking of, "How do I turn something and to make it into art?"

So, at the time color Xerox was brand new, and I loved color Xerox, as did Teddy. And so, we were always thinking of what can we do with color Xerox, and how [00:04:00] can we play with it? So one of the things I had come up with was that I ended up deciding to turn books into books that looked at queerness, or gayness, or whatever. And for the *Escandalosas* show, I had that diary that I turned into a cookbook. And what I would do is I would pass it around to different artists and say, "Here, pick a page. You know, you have two pages there when you open up the book, and just give me a recipe, whatever you want. It could be for food, it could be a recipe for happiness, it could be a recipe for good sex, it could be a recipe for whatever. Just do that."

And I might have had about four or five entries, and it was going to be a continuous, you know, collaborative effort, whoever wanted to participate in it. That was one of the things I exhibited along with my silkscreens at the *Escandalosas* show. And the opening was kind of wild, and it was kooky, crazy, but by the time I had left—there was somebody named Fernando Torres who actually ended up becoming a friend of mine, who I didn't know. And at that point in his life, he was very—what we would call—*escrapa*. Like he was getting drunk, and being outrageous and kooky and crazy. And apparently, I forget who it was, but they had brought in this severed head of a pig as part of performance in this space. And I think—I was told that Fernando pissed on it, urinated on it. I mean, so talk about Escandalosas*.* It was really bizarre. And then somebody was throwing water around, and they ended up splashing water on my book, and it ruined it. And I was so pissed. I was like, "God, what disrespect for another artist's work," and, you know, whatever. I don't care what they were trying to do. And Richard Nieblas ended up putting an entry in the cookbook that was an apology [00:06:00] for the destruction of art.

One of the other things that I did, again out of Immaculate Heart, along with the silkscreens, I did the lesbian book, the *Thirty Lesbian Photos*. So I was in these classes that were looking at—you know, from a feminist perspective, looking at western art and culture. And one of the things that came up was the male gaze, and how women were always portrayed through the way that men saw them, either as sexual objects or as desire. You know, looking at everything from Greek mythology to current manifestations to *Playboy.* And then in one of the discussions, it came up about how lesbians are visually accepted and encouraged by [. . . –JT] men, thinking of them as erotic and funny but never, like, women themselves being able to show themselves. And there were all these other women, feminist artists who were looking at, "How do we do that?" So, I was thinking to myself, "How do I, as a gay Chicano man, how would I portray women or Chicanos?" And in fact, I got pushback from some women. Like, "How dare you try to"—you know? And my response was, "You know what, fuck you. I'm an artist. I can do whatever I want."

But what I did was I took a book, and then I put the color Xerox cover, and I kind of tried to intentionally make it look provocative. *Thirty Lesbian Photos*! Like, very, you know, exploitive and stuff. The images [. . . on the cover, –JT] it looks like there's flesh, but it's like the knee, or the leg, or the foot of women, you can't really tell. And then what I did was, inside the book, I reached out to women that I knew: My cousin Pat, my friend Martha, [00:08:00] women I knew from the clubs, the gay liberation dances, the Gay Community Center. And I just said, "This is my project, this is my art project, and please take a page, pick a page. What I would like to ask is that you provide an image of yourself as a child or a baby and then a contemporary image. Your choice, choose whatever you want." So that I was presenting 30 lesbian photos, and the idea was that people would think it was an exploitive sexual[ized –JT] looking at women. And then you would open it up, and you would see actual real women, and see them as children first of all and then how they choose to represent themselves. And so that's what I was doing with that.

There's an interesting aspect to this that I mentioned today on the tour I was giving. Professor Rob Hernandez was presenting, I guess, on my work at UC Berkeley. He was doing a slide presentation, and he showed *Homeboy Beautiful*, right? And then he also showed *Thirty Lesbian Photos*. And a woman—

ALEX FIALHO: And you still have that piece, *Thirty Lesbian Photos?*

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, it's in the show. One of the women, you know, a young, Chicana, Latina, lesbian woman in the audience stood up and kind of said, "Well, it's obvious that Mr. Terrill chose really handsome men for his *Homeboy Beautiful,* and he chose really homely women for *Thirty Lesbian Photos*." And Rob said he was kind of taken aback and didn't quite know [how to respond. –JT] And Rob hadn't known what my strategy had been. And I said, "I wish I had been there, because I would have told her: 'Well, first of all, I take that as a compliment, thank you.'"

But I was never concerned—with the maricónography and the *Homeboy Beautiful*—like how handsome or muscular someone looked, or sexually alluring. It was just who was there, who's available. Me, my friends, the Escandalosas, [00:10:00] without ever thinking about, "Oh, wait, you go in front because you're more handsome or you're more muscular." That wasn't part of the thinking. I mean, if it was, I would tell you. And also, I would have chosen probably [laughs] some more muscular guys, but—and then with the women, it was like, "You know what, that says more about you and your perception of them." And I said, "These were women that chose their own pictures." I said, "It was also the '70s, and there wasn't necessarily a lot of lipstick lesbians." I don't know if that's what she was referring to. But they were authentic women who represented themselves. So that was my take on that.

ALEX FIALHO: This is all great. And I'm really struck by the way that you are presenting all of this history sort of unabashed, and that you had a really—like I said earlier, a strong sense of self. But I'm responding to the fact that you were doing this frank work about sexuality in the '70s, which is not to go without acknowledgement. And at a religious school. You know? So that's striking to me and powerful to me.

JOEY TERRILL: In fact, in school, when we did the critique—because I think it was—Carole Caroompas was my instructor, and I loved Carole Caroompas. She's an artist. I think I was the only male in the class. But, you know, one of the women in the class who still considered herself Christian or Catholic—she said, "Oh, I'm totally offended by your lesbian book." You know, the whole idea of lesbianism, first of all, was something that she was abhorred by. And mind you, she's saying this, and I don't know if she was clueless or she didn't see what was in front of her. But several of the women that were in there, you know, wearing their Doc Martens, and they were all like really butch [laughs] and stuff, it's like—because there were women [00:12:00] at Immaculate Heart who were also either monitoring or participating in classes at CalArts, and there was this give and take. And one of the things I loved about being at Immaculate Heart was that there were small classes. I mean, sometimes, we were a class of 8 or 12, which—you know, as opposed to Berkeley where you go into an auditorium with 300 students for lecture, right?

So it wasn't always accepted. And in fact, you know, I had mentioned earlier how I would write for the Immaculate Heart newspaper. There was one issue where Sister Helen Kelley, the President, was interviewed. And she was talking about how the college was getting less and less donations, and she was mentioning how either people that used to donate, they don't—you know, that were part of Catholicism. And she mentions, "And then there's, like, this person Joey Terrill, who"—you know? She actually mentioned my name, and [laughs] I was very hurt. I was offended because I loved the college, I loved the classes, and—you know? So, I requested and met with her, and we had a conversation. She was very pleasant, she was very nice, and she didn't—you know? She said that she wasn't against me as an artist or whatever, but she said, "You have to understand that a lot of their donations were old money, older folks that were used to it being an all-women's college run by nuns." And so a lot of that was drying up and that—you know, that all the new activism was interfering. So it wasn't totally accepted across the board.

ALEX FIALHO: We've gestured towards *Homeboy Beautiful*. And I think that having talked about Teddy Sandoval and maricónography, it seems like a nice segue to talk really in depth about that project. [00:14:00] I'm opening up the *Axis Mundo* book and Richard Rodriguez's essay there, "Homeboy Beautiful: Or Chicano Gay Male Sex Expression in the 1970s," is really a thorough read of that. But I also think that there's more to hear from you directly. And I'm curious, too, just about some of the details.

It's really amazing to me in a similar way to the *Maricón* in the Christopher Street West Pride Parades, the way that a small production, like a 100-print run, 2-run magazine has a real life and a longevity. And I completely understand it because it's such a thoughtful project. But I love that it has continued interest, similarly, four decades later. You know? And I just want to point to that. But yeah, tell me a little bit about *Homeboy Beautiful* from the start with you.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. So from the start, I was working. At that point in time, I was working for the Automobile Club of Southern California, dispatching emergency road service. Talk about an LA story, right? I mean, I'm dispatching emergency road service in a car culture. And there were times though, where we would be sitting there, and we had the little paper cards that we had to write all the information on when the calls would come in. But during the downtime when we were sitting there, and no calls were coming in—I mean, I was always doing little sketches and stuff. And I just started playing around with the idea of doing something that was indicating gay homeboys.

And I thought, "You know, there should be a magazine. And what would I do if I had a magazine?" And then I was thinking of it like, "You know, and what would Teddy do?" And I came up with this idea. And this was all also around the time [00:16:00] that at Immaculate Heart, there was Skot Armstrong, who is an artist who I met at Immaculate Heart, and we're still in touch with each other today. And he was doing this sort of Dada-inspired, printed works and little—not even magazines, but little pamphlets, booklets that were—didn't make any sense. They were nonsensical. They were sort of surreal, fetish confidential, master birthday. And they were just all these images without any real narrative, so it was very Dada-esque.

And I was thinking, and I had actually talked to Skot and said, "You know, I want to do some kind of a magazine, but I want it to be, like, gay, and I want it to be homeboy." He's like, "Yeah, that would be cool, that would be great!" You know, a little white boy, he's like, "Yeah!" And I said, "I want to parody all of the white culture magazines, all the magazines geared towards the upper-middle class. You know, *New West* magazine, and *Architectural Digest,* and *House Beautiful,* and all that." And in some way in discussing, he goes, "Oh, you should think about doing *Homeboy Beautiful*." And when he said that, I was like, "Wow." So the title—it actually came from a suggestion from Skot Armstrong, a white boy [laughs], right? But when I heard that, I thought, "Oh, that's it! That's what I'm going to do."

So, I would sit at work and just sketch out different ideas. And I thought, "Oh, I'm going to have an advice column, and then I want to do—you know, but I want to do like—have it do a journalistic investigation of homeboys." And I just sort of like plotted it out. I mean, it took me months and months to do it, because there was no set timeline. I was making it up as I went along. You know, I had never done anything like that before. But when I started to express my ideas to my friends about wanting to do a homo-homeboy party, they were like, "Yeah, yeah, let's do it!"

So, [00:18:00] my friends Eddie and Louis, both went to Cathedral, and they were both gay. Eddie was one year younger than me and Louis was one year older, so he—you know, when I was a sophomore, Eddie was a freshman, Louis was a junior. And they were two gay brothers who hated each other, didn't speak at all, which I could never understand. I was like, "God, I would kill to have a gay brother that I would love to do things, explore things with, and have fun with." You know? So I was friends with both of them, but they were part of our Escandalosas*,* especially after high school. After high school they sort of reconnected as friends, and I pushed them towards it. I was like, "You guys need to—alright? "

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: But they lived in East LA, and in their backyard, they had an Airstream trailer, like a 1940s Airstream trailer. And at various times, either Louis would live in the trailer instead of one of the bedrooms in the house with his mom and sister, or Eddie would live in the trailer. But after high school, for the Escandalosas*,* there was also a little shack in the back that had weights, because Louis started lifting weights. So we all used to go. Believe it or not, I used to lift weights and I, you know, had a little bit of a bod, whatever. But we would go, and we would work out there sometimes together. Sometimes, we would schedule ourselves, "Okay, I'm going to be there in the morning," "Okay, I'll be there after." And then inevitably, we would end up in the trailer either smoking a joint, or listening to music, or catching up, or gossiping, or whatever.

So when it came to do the homo-homeboy shoot, you know, Louis said, "Oh, we should do it in the trailer." I said, "Oh, absolutely, let's do that." So that's where it was photographed, there in this trailer in East LA. So I had an idea about how to proceed, what to do, but [00:20:00] it was totally open to—you know, if Teddy had an idea because Teddy would say, "Oh, well, we should have two of the homeboys having a—fighting over each other."

And I was like, "Okay, like, how would we do that?" So, we—I just took tons of pictures. And remember, this was back in the day when, you know, you had a 35-millimeter camera, you took all these pictures, and you would hope that they would come out because you had to wait until they were printed.

So we did all kinds of configurations. And then once I got the pictures, I sort of just looked to see what will fit nicely in a visual narrative for what we're doing. I can tell you this much, though: I don't think anyone has ever had more fun in East LA [laughs] than that night that we did that photoshoot. And, you know, we were all friends. None of us were lovers with each other or partners in any way. But, obviously in the context of a homo-homeboy party, we had to show each other as being romantic, or being in bed with each other and stuff. And so that just added to the fun because [laughs] we were totally making it up.

And then I was living on Mariposa Avenue in my apartment there, and I would just—I did the homo-homeboy photoshoot [pages. –JT] And then like, maybe within a few weeks, I would write some of the "Ask Lil Loca" advice column, and then I would—it took a long time just because I didn't have a timeline to follow. And then once I printed it up—and also, I should say that I wasn't sure what to do with the cover. You know? It's my image on the cover. But—

ALEX FIALHO: Of you?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. Dick Crawford, who was my serigraphy instructor at Immaculate Heart College, who studied under Corita Kent, and was gay himself—he had done [00:22:00] a photoshoot with me and Steven Fregoso in 1974. And he said he wanted to do a nude photoshoot, so he did, with me and Steven. And he just did it, and he had given me some of the images. And I said, "Well, I just—I want an image of someone that is looking like he's in love." And I said, "Okay, that's the one." But it could just as easily have been Steven if the photo [would work –JT]—but it turned out it was mine.

And so, the little thought balloon I have there, I know it doesn't make any sense and it's kind of Spanglish. But it's a Spanish translation of, "Oh, my man, I love him so," [laughs] which was the Billie Holiday song that was done by Diana Ross in the film *Lady Sings the Blues*, which was really popular with us. We all loved to go see that movie, and, you know, we must have said those lines and sang those songs back and forth to each other all the time.

The other thing is that I was looking at magazines like *Vogue*, and magazines that came from Europe, and there was always this one price for the United States and one price in Europe. I thought that was interesting, so I put, you know, $3.50 in the USA, like, based on that. And again like maybe indicating that this is somehow, not necessarily from the United States. Like, this is—we're in our own subculture of being Chicanos, and then even more so of being queer or gay. So that's how the cover came out like that.

ALEX FIALHO: I love, too, that—the sort of play with character and also your play with your own relationship to it. In that, you know, you're on the cover. [00:24:00] You're the investigative reporter. But it's not signed "Joey." It's Saint, you know?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, it was Santos.

ALEX FIALHO: So, can you just talk a little bit about the thought process behind that sort of tongue-in-cheek way that you're—it's about you and your specific experiences and your community's experiences. But how you're having a play with both insider-outsider, looking and being looked at.

JOEY TERRILL: Well part of that—I think the gist of that came from the Mail art strategies that we were doing. Teddy Sandoval, you know—okay, first of all, Ray Johnson out of New York would send things out of the New York Correspondence School, I think it was called. You know, it's the idea that we were anti-art institution. And so in doing Mail art, you know, if you're receiving mail, it had to come from someplace, and so he made up this New York Correspondence School. That was kind of the inside joke. And so, Teddy Sandoval had his own called Butch Gardens School of Art, right?

ALEX FIALHO: Which is the gay bar, right?

JOEY TERRILL: Which was named after a gay bar, yeah, in Silver Lake called Butch Gardens. Which, in and of itself, I love the name because that was a parody of Busch Gardens, which was the Anheuser-Busch brewery in LA that used to have a tourist attraction called Busch Gardens. And you could go on a little tram, and there was peacocks, and wild animals, and stuff. And so, I determined that *Homeboy Beautiful* was going to be the, you know, *Homeboy Beautiful* Publishing Industry, or—right—a magazine. And as such, I thought, "Well, the contributions could also just be made up," and that's what I did.

I toyed with the idea of like having people contribute to it, but I thought, no, I wanted to keep it my own. And I was actually kind of influenced by looking at things like John Waters films, [00:26:00] and *Monty Python*, and all these parodies of history, of popular culture. And so, I just took it as, "You know what, this is going to be about me but not about me," and that's what I did. So I just made it up as I went along, and I came up with idea of Santos. I liked the idea of being a saint and being the investigative reporter. Some of the artwork that's in there was done by me, some be Efren, some by Teddy.

But, you know, I also wanted to give credit to everybody who participated in it. And again, making it up as we went along, when we did the photoshoot for the *Homegirl Makeover*, Virginia Leibowitz, the librarian from Gardena, that was Janet Lementine [also known by her other name: "Kitten Sparkles" –JT] who was a friend of Skot Armstrong's from Immaculate Heart. So, I knew her through Skot, and I said, "Hey, Janet, would you want to pose and be like this?" You know, I didn't even have to finish. She was like, "Yeah, sure!" And so she became the librarian that we end up doing the makeover and turning her into a big *chola*, right?

So I mean, again, she was a white girl, and so within the context of the *Homeboy Beautiful*, I wasn't trying to be politically correct even in as much as anybody that wanted to contribute to it could and should. Essentially anyone who's available. In the second issue where we do the East LA terrorism, and we were going to kidnap the white family. Greg Poe—Greg Poe was another friend from Immaculate Heart College, and Greg Poe actually went on to have his own designs of doing wallets, and these really kind of kitschy, fun designs that were plastic and used color Xerox images that were kind of [00:28:00] retro. And they were selling at Fiorucci's. He became a star, and had his work in Japan.

But he lived in Westwood, and he said to me, "Oh, Joey, my parents are going to be on vacation this weekend." He goes, "Do you want to use our house for the photoshoot?" I'm like, "Sure." So—you know what I mean? There was no—I didn't choose a house. It became available and we just did it. And then when we were doing that, he said, "Oh, would you mind if my friend Rea Tajiri"—who, I think, is herself now a fairly recognized video artist or something. She was an art student. He said, you know, "Can she participate?" I said, "Sure." I said, "Rea, do you want to be the maid?" And Rea is Japanese or Japanese American, so the maid became Japanese American. If she had been black, she would have been a black maid. If she had been Latina, she would have been a Latina maid. Again, it was all just made up by circumstance who was available.

ALEX FIALHO: Why was parody an interesting strategy for you?

JOEY TERRILL: Because I think what it did is that it—I loved the way that, you know, *Monty Python*, John Waters, comedy was able to look at and address certain issues, and get people to look at things and laugh at things in a way that was politically incorrect, and have an impact that might not otherwise. I was also aware of looking at serious investigations of racism and culture. And they're certainly within the Chicano art world. There were all these sorts of artwork that were very serious and looking at, you know, how our culture has been either erased and or ignored, and been very politically strident.

And I was much more invested in wanting to—at the same time that I was parodying and making fun [00:30:00] of the dominant white culture in those magazines, I also felt it was necessary to call out homeboy culture for their entrenched homophobia and misogyny. And that's what I tried to do in the magazine.

So, like even when they kidnapped the white people, when we go in and we tie them up, they had been playing backgammon, right? And so, I have the homeboys there, we take a pause. After we've tied them up, we're going to take a pause before we actually take them and kidnap them. And I have the little thought—the little balloons there where they're talking. And one of the homeboys goes, "Oh, king me," and he goes, "This is backgammon, *pendejo*. It's not [. . . checkers." –JT] So I'm even making fun of ourselves there.

And then Virgie, the homegirl who used the car, she was a friend of Ricky, who was the partner of my friend Eddie. I mean, I don't even know who she was, truthfully. All I know is that she was an actual homegirl, a lesbian that wore a bandana on her head. And she had a car. And I said, "We need a car," [laughs] and she goes, "Okay, I'll do it." So she was part of the photoshoot, and she participated. And I don't know that she ever has participated in anything related to art ever since. Don Krieger was also a friend of Skot Armstrong's and Greg Poe. And I said, "Hey, we need a white guy to be the husband," and he was like, "Okay, I'll do it," you know? And he now, I mean, teaches art and whatever. So he participated in that. So, again, that's what made it fun. It was that sort of impromptu, making it up as we go along, kind of strategy.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. How about—you spoke to it a little bit—the relationship of the aesthetic to the barrio and homeboy culture, and how you're borrowing but also perhaps subtly or not so subtly critiquing? How does it [00:32:00] play out for you?

JOEY TERRILL: So, I mean, one of the things that I was very aware of was that within homeboy culture, even for the gay—

ALEX FIALHO: Homeboy culture meaning?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, homeboy culture meaning, you know, the barrio and either association with a particular gang or neighborhood. It doesn't necessarily always mean that you were entrenched in violence, but that was an underlying element that—you know, I don't like fighting. And I used to see these beautiful brown boys fighting with each other because they happened to come from a different neighborhood. That's so stupid to me. You know, you're probably all cousins anyway if you go back far enough in your lineage. And I just thought, "You know, we have enough oppression from the dominant culture, why are we fighting amongst ourselves?"

And then to have homeboys that were—you know, they were gay, but they couldn't come out, didn't want to come out, they fought it. I had a boyfriend named Ron, Ron Garcia. I don't know if he's still alive, but he was kind of homeboy-ish, and I don't think that he was actually ever in the gang. But I think we dated for about six or seven months, and he was very handsome, and I thought he was really cool. He seemed like a real sweetheart. But he had an alcohol problem and once he got drunk, all his own internalized self-loathing would come out, and he would get violent and horrible. And I recognized that. I said, "That's because of our own internalized homophobia."

So I was trying to look at that. So, in the *Homeboy Beautiful*—one of the things about homeboy culture at the time in the '70s, one of the costumes of homeboys was to have a bandana around your forehead, right? But this was also at the same time of, you know, the hanky codes of the gay male culture.

ALEX FIALHO: I love that so much.

JOEY TERRILL: I just [laughs]—yeah, I just thought that's so incongruous that, you know, the handkerchief means one thing in one context [00:34:00] and totally different in another. And so, I came up with the idea that—that was one thing that I said, "My idea is that when we do the homeboy party," I said, "Once everyone gets drunk, you need to take off your bandanas and you put them in either your left- or your right-hand pocket," which we did, and that was fun. And I think in the narrative there, I have Santos, the reporter, talking about how, you know, once he had put his handkerchief in his back pocket, you know, the homeboys were lining up. And he didn't realize what he was doing, but he was setting himself up to get fucked and get raped.

And one could say that I'm also parodying or making fun of rape or rape culture, and I'm not. I'm trying to make fun of and point out the inherent, internalized homophobia and violence within our culture. And it's not just homeboy culture. I mean, that's in general. So that's what I was trying to do with that.

ALEX FIALHO: I think also, too, what's important is the—in the second issue, that demand for self-representation.

JOEY TERRILL: Yes.

ALEX FIALHO: And it's so brilliant to me how it's couched in the takeover by the homeboys themselves, the homo-homeboys, and how that plays out, and then they have their own pages. And I'm just curious how that developed for you.

JOEY TERRILL: Well, that one came to me because—I think it was in '71 maybe, or early '70s. There was a feminist takeover of *Ladies' Home Journal* magazine in New York, which I thought was a brilliant thing. That all these feminists chained themselves to the desks of the editorial offices of *Ladies' Home Journal* and advocated for articles about issues relevant to women. Not just, you know, ladies [00:36:00] and what kind of silverware you have at the dinner table or whatever. That they were looking at things like health concerns and abortion, et cetera, et cetera. And the *Ladies' Home Journal*, in response, did an insert. They did the pages, and I think they actually printed them a slightly different color than the rest of the magazine, so it was all of the feminist demands.

And I thought that would be the natural conclusion for me or response to homeboys looking at this exploitive, you know, homo-homeboy party. And saying, "Hey, rather than you guys looking at us, and doing this photo-documentation, like a photo-novela and exploiting us, we demand that we have our own art, our own writing, our own whatever." And, of course, making those demands—it was me making those demands. [Laughs.] And then the contributions were from me, Jack Vargas, Teddy Sandoval, and we chose to do our own homo-homeboy takeover at the editorial offices. And that was at Teddy's studio over on Banning, over in the arts district—what is now the arts district, which no artists actually live there anymore. And then, again, it was just who's available. And so my boyfriend Rick, at the time, who was the love of my life, he actually participated—which I was shocked that he was, like, willing to do it. He said, "Yeah, I'll do it," so—

ALEX FIALHO: What's his full name?

JOEY TERRILL: Richard Gildart was his name. So, you know, he and I and Ronnie Carrillo are the homeboys that take over. And Ronnie's cousin, Jesse or "Beno" [Beno was Jesse's nickname –JT], who is actually one of the East LA terrorists that kidnapped the white family. There, he plays the secretary. Then Jesse puts on a wig, so he's [playing the secretary named –JT] Tencha [00:38:00] trying to stop us from taking over the offices. You know, in that, what we're doing is we're painting *placas,* [a Spanish slang term meaning our name, your gang name. It's derived from the Spanish word *placa,* meaning name plate or inscription. –JT] but we're also challenging Proposition 6, which was the John Briggs initiative. That was a reflection of Anita Bryant's success in Florida in turning over gay rights. Proposition 6 was calling for the elimination of gay school teachers, that you could be fired, right? And that was the political initiative that Harvey Milk really came to prominence on, because he fought against John Briggs and Prop 6. And one of the issues [laughs], at that time, was about "the role models" [laughs], like—you know?

And I think it was a—there's a quote, and I know it's in the—I think, in the documentary where Harvey Milk says, you know, "If that were true for role models, there would be a lot more nuns running around today if they role modeled after their teachers." Right? So, in that, I did want to declare that we have a presence, that we have art, we have our own sense of identity within the barrio, within Chicano culture, within homeboy culture. And if I had done an additional issue—I was trying to think or theorize, "Okay, what would that next look like?" Like, "If there was a magazine called *Homeboy Beautiful*, that now was really going to acquiesce and listen to those complaints of homeboys, what would that look like? What would they present, and how would I do that?" But I ended up not doing a third issue.

ALEX FIALHO: It was going to be *Homeboys in the Arts*. Right?

JOEY TERRILL: Yes.

ALEX FIALHO: Tell me a little bit more about that. Just curious, what could it have looked like? Part of me was like, you should do a *Homeboy Beautiful* [00:40:00] in 2017. Issue three.

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, gosh.

ALEX FIALHO: In 2018 [laughs], excuse me.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. [Laughs.]

ALEX FIALHO: But I'll let you think of your directions.

JOEY TERRILL: Well, so I—you know, again keeping it in terms of, like, parody and making fun. And I would absolutely have consulted with Teddy Sandoval and Jack Vargas, my other artist cohorts, and even maybe Skot Armstrong. Like, "Okay, give me some ideas, what would that look like?" And I would think that we would have probably have looked at parodying other Western arts, whether it was Pop artists or not and saying, "Okay, what would a queer homeboy's version of Ed Ruscha look like? What would a queer homeboy's version of Andy Warhol look like?" And in fact, I did a piece with the Frida Kahlo show, which I actually have here, which was called *If Andy had been Born in Mexico City*. And I did sort of my version of replication of the repetition of Marilyn Monroe, but instead it's Frida Kahlo. The idea being that if Andy Warhol had been born in Mexico City, he would have chosen, as the female icon, Frida, not Marilyn Monroe. But so I was thinking in terms of those things, how would it be reinterpreted through the lens of a queer Chicano homeboy?

And then even with *The Adventures of Spooky and Puppet*, which was a comic strip, you know, that was in response. At the very end of the comic strip, in trying to escape and find a safe place, they leave East LA, and I have them getting lost on the Hollywood Freeway. And they leave the open-ended question, "Maybe we can find a place in Hollywood that we can be safe." So I was again thinking, "Okay, what would that look like, the next installation of Spooky and Puppet going into Hollywood?" And, you know, how would homeboys react to being in a gay club with, like, I don't know—a country Western gay club. You know, the two-step, [00:42:00] right? You know, I was trying to think of how would gay homeboys meet up with white gay culture, and what would that look like? And do it in kind of a fun, funny way—but never got around to it.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. Why didn't it continue? Because it sounds like you had ideas or directions—

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, I did.

ALEX FIALHO: —even for the next sections.

JOEY TERRILL: Mostly because, I think, real life and work just kind of got in the way of things. Like, I totally did *Homeboy Beautiful* all by myself.

ALEX FIALHO: Of course.

JOEY TERRILL: And I know it sounds [laughs]—but it probably cost altogether about $400 to $500 to do an issue, because of the film, the prints, the Xeroxing. And then when we would do these things—I mean, and not that it was all that expensive, but I would provide food and let's have a party. After we do a photoshoot, you know, we would all get together and celebrate, and drink, and have fun. So it just became—I just felt it was too much for me at the time. And then by 1980, I moved to New York. And probably in '79, around the time when I would have been doing the third one, Rick and I were having our problems. So, my real life gay homeboy turmoil was interfering with my art production. I mean, to be honest.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, of course. That's life.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: Just one thing—one particular detail that I'm always interested in is the—I love when there's something like an address, like 322 North Mariposa. Are there any anecdotes about that address and, I don't know, people reaching out to you there? Any dialogue back and forth with that address? I just always love when artists put addresses.

JOEY TERRILL: I think I got two postcards from people. Because in the back of the issue, I do list my address, [00:44:00] that was my apartment, for any—

ALEX FIALHO: Is it the same one that you were at in [your –AF] Immaculate Heart College days? Or is it—have you shifted—

JOEY TERRILL: No, that wasn't. That was different.

ALEX FIALHO: Okay.

JOEY TERRILL: I was living where I had lived with my mom when I was at Immaculate Heart. Well, I mean there's another [laughs]—I don't know. It's a story that might be tangential, but it's Babette and Francois, the two French punks that ended up living with me for two weeks there at Mariposa. But that's—I don't know—that's another story peripheral to *Homeboy Beautiful*.

ALEX FIALHO: Well, I guess the postcards gets me to another thing I'm curious about, which is reception of *Homeboy Beautiful,* both then—I mean, now it has a whole essay in this very, to my mind, landmark exhibition, and has been really widely considered as a central work for you. And I'm curious, did it have an impact—a similar sort of impact then? And did you have a sense of how it might have such an importance across decades?

JOEY TERRILL: Short answer: No, it didn't, and no, I didn't realize. So, *Homeboy Beautiful* was—I shopped it around and then there was only three locations where it was sold. One was at the Soap Plant, which now, in its current iteration, is Wacko over on Sunset, which is—you know, if you haven't, check out that store. And they have the Luz De Jesus Gallery, which does everything from like really bizarre—kind of like *Juxtapoz* magazine, that sort of art—and that was in Silver Lake. Peter Shire was the—it was his ceramics, his art that was being shown there. And they had a little stand for artist-made magazines.

And then Chatterton's Books, which is now Skylight Books. Chatterton's was gay-owned, [00:46:00] and the owner was Koki. His name was Koki, that's all that I know, and he was Japanese American, very handsome. And he saw *Homeboy Beautiful* and said, "Oh, absolutely, let's have this here." Because they had a lot of self-published poetry books by people, and pamphlets and stuff. So *Homeboy Beautiful* sold there.

And then, it was over at A Different Light Bookstore, the original one in Silver Lake. But I had also taken it to—I tried, "Well, let me try the West Side." I went to Papa Bach's, which was the premiere independent bookstore on the West Side, that had arts-related ephemera and publications. And when I went in there and showed it—I don't know if he was the manager or the owner. I don't know who it was, but he looked at it and was just like, "This is a piece of shit." He goes, "You call this art? This isn't art. Get out of here." And I was livid [laughs], I was furious, and I was like, "Well, you don't know about Dada art, and surrealism, and parody." And I go, "This"—you know? I was just so upset and, he just didn't want anything to do with it.

When I got in the car, I remember Rick was still in the car, and I went in the car, and I started crying. I was very upset. But I realized, like—you know? And Rick said, "You know what, fuck him," and then he goes, "That shows that you're—you know, that somehow it's working. It's powerful." I was like, "Okay." So I thought it's very limited, and there were a couple of people that actually reached out to me from seeing *Homeboy Beautiful* that I ended up becoming friends with. And then I thought, you know, that was its day. That was then and it's never going to—nothing is ever going to come of it.

Then it was like about three years ago—maybe, yeah, three years ago now—where Professor Rob Hernandez emailed me an image of Maricón Collective, you know, with their T-shirts. And he says, "Have you heard of these guys?" And I said, [00:48:00] "Oh, no, I hadn't." And he goes, "Well, they've heard of you." He goes, "They—you know, they're your fans. They like your—you know, they follow your work." And I was like, "Really?" I was like, "Wow, that is so cool."

And so, I saw that they were doing one of their mixtape, you know, dee-jaying gigs at Akbar on a Sunday afternoon. And it was for Rudy Bleu, the head guy with Maricón Collective. It was for his birthday in August. And I thought, "You know what, I'm going to go down there and introduce myself." I mean, I walked into Akbar, which I had been to many times but never when Maricón Collective was dee-jaying. But I went in, and I saw Rudy from across the room. And I was going to go introduce myself, but he looked at me and he goes, "You're Joey Terrill!" I was like, "Wow!" [Laughs.] It's like, somebody recognized me, you know, and he recognized me as an artist, which was very cool for me. And I said, "Yeah," and we immediately became fast friends. And he was just saying how he really appreciated my work, what he had known of it and what he had seen online.

And then they were coming up the following February, the LA Art Book Fair at the Geffen Contemporary. And he goes, "You know, we're going have a table there for Maricón Collective." He goes, "What about if we reissue *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine?" I was like, "Really? I said, "Would you think that would be something?" He goes, "Yeah, let's do it." And long story short, we ended up doing 100 copies of each, and I thought, "You know, if 10 sell, like that would be cool, right?" I was shocked and amazed at all these young people, you know, queer Latinos, and artists, and even straight people, coming up and saying, "Oh, my God, can I—I want one issue. I want—can you sign it?" I was there signing. I was autographing these *Homeboy Beautiful* magazines, this reissue.

And it totally breathed new life into its appreciation and distribution in ways that I had never imagined in the '70s. It was also featured in the [00:50:00] *Chapters* show that looked at book-related art, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum. And there was a poster that they did, which again, I was surprised that that happened. So it had this new—you know, the reissue of it has opened up this whole new audience and appreciation for—and because of *Homeboy Beautiful,* there is now this investigation of all my other work as well. So, it's all good.

ALEX FIALHO: Amazing. So we already went down a little bit of a path to talk about 1980, moving to New York City. And I wanted—we're reaching sort of the end of our day today. Thank you, again, for being so forthright in all your great stories and histories.

I wanted to talk a little bit about that move to New York, which I know was a quick one. And then tomorrow, we'll sort of dive more into a thorough conversation around HIV, and how that's impacted your life, and your artwork, and all your activisms. I'm just curious about the inspiration to move, which you talked a little bit about, with Victor and your sister. But how that time in New York went and then the decision to move back to LA, shortly thereafter.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. Well, in a nutshell, I first visited New York in April of 1980, just as a vacation, about four or five days, and I stayed with an ex-boyfriend, Bruce Rosenthal, who had a place in the Village. He had always been saying, you know, "Oh, you should come out, you should come out," and so I did. And I thoroughly—I just loved New York. I fell in love with it. And it seemed very familiar to me, I realized, because of, you know, movies, novels, plays. It was great. And I thought, [00:52:00] you know, "One day I want to come back here for an extended visit."

But I was with Rick, and we lived in Santa Fe Springs, and Rick and I used to hang wall-covering. That's what we did as a living. And when later that summer, Rick and I broke up, I took stock of myself. I said, "Okay, what am I—what do I really want to do? Where am I going? Who am I? Why—[laughs] you know, what's my direction?" And I heard that Victor and Steven were moving to New York, and then I thought, "Joey, you've always wanted to, you talked about—hey, you love New York, why don't you try"—and especially with Victor and Steven there. So I made the decision to move to New York.

And then about a month before I was scheduled to go, my sister called me up and said she was going through her own little existential thing and decided to take some time from school at UC Santa Barbara. And she said, "How about if I go with you?" That clinched it. I was like, "Absolutely, let's do it." And so, you know, our months in New York were exhilarating and fun, but there were also situations that maybe one could say were negative and unforeseen, but I stayed.

I had two criteria for being in New York, two goals. One was that I wanted to stay at least until I exhibited my art, which I did. The other was that I wanted to see John and Yoko. I said, "Even if I just see them in Central Park and can wave to them, you know, that would be great. That would be cool." As it turns out, I was living with Steven and Victor at their sublet apartment, which was actually the apartment of Bill Harrison, the porn actor who was most famous [00:54:00] for *Bijou* by Wakefield Poole, which was still one of my favorite porn films. To me, it combines porn with art.

But anyway, so we were on 72nd Street, about four or five blocks away from The Dakota, when John Lennon was shot. And my sister was staying over on 89th Street, and she called me up and said, "Joey, did you just hear John was shot?" I was like, "What?" and ran down there, and they had just taken the body away. The police cars were there, and I stood there stunned. And slowly, more and more people gathered, and we ended up—so I got to see

New York in a way that many people don't. The whole city was depressed. It was actually kind of remarkable, and it was so sad, so incredibly sad. You know, you would be in the subways, and you could hear a pin drop. Everyone was with their heads bowed, and people looking at the newspapers, so on.

And then there was one—I was on the subway, I forget where I was going, and the only sound you could hear, there was this punk rocker guy with, like, white hair and he had a trench coat and he had the paper. He was reading it, and he was howling, crying. I mean, so there were these very interesting and pivotal experiences. And one of the things that I got out of that, you know, in John Lennon's death, was that 1980s are coming, and they're going to be different. And I just had this sense that, you know, Harvey Milk was assassinated, John Lennon was just killed, and—I don't know, the '80s, I just had this feeling. You know, of course, it was, one year later that[00:56:00]—the report of the first cases of Kaposi sarcoma.

When I was in New York, I worked at Conran's department store. When we were there, when John Lennon was killed, one of the managers, Bruce—he said, you know, on that following Sunday there was going to be a moment of silence throughout New York in homage to John Lennon, and there was a big ceremony at Central Park. But we were at work, and he said, "I'm wondering if we should do that here?" He goes, "Will people honor it?" And I said, "Yeah, do it." So, he made an announcement: "Could we have a minute of silence?" And I was surprised. Everybody, everybody, from the most Upper East Side ladies that were purchasing very expensive things, to Harlem kids, everyone just stood silently. And it was this sense that it is pretty rare, you know? And I know this happened in San Francisco when Harvey Milk was assassinated, where as a community, we're all experiencing the same emotion.

And then, you know, it was, again, at Conran's where my manager, Ava, who was—she looked like a skinny Goldie Hawn. I think she was doing cocaine, and she was Swedish, and she hated me. She only liked black guys for some reason, but she mistreated all the rest of us. And—oh, well, this was about my seroconversion. So, you know, one day I wake up at home in my apartment, where I was living with my roommate George, and I felt just itchy and hot. And I looked, and I had all these red blotches all over my arms. And I looked in the mirror, and they were all over my face, and it was horrible. I looked like a monster. [00:58:00] I had no idea what it was. I had never had anything like that before, and I was scared. I didn't know what it was.

I remember I called into work and said, "Ava, I'm sorry, I can't come in. I'm broken out in all these hives." And she was like, "Yeah, sure, uh-huh [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative], hives? Okay, whatever." You know [laughs], I was like, "I know she doesn't believe me," and I went to a doctor. The doctor said he didn't know what it was. "It could be one of 3,000 things that you might be allergic to. We could do all these tests. It would be really expensive." I had no money. I was like—but it kind of went away, so—you know? And then it flared up again, then it went away again, and then it—by the second day, it really had disappeared. So, I went to work, and Ava, you know, said, "Oh, so I guess it went away?" And I said, "Yeah, it did," and I know she didn't believe me. But I was there folding durries, Indian durries, the rugs in the rug department, and I felt my arms getting hot again. And I looked, and I could see that. I went over to her, and I said, "Ava, look, look." And she goes, "Oh, my God!" She saw my face. I hadn't seen my face. She goes, "Go home, go home, get out of here! Oh, my God!" She totally believed me then because it had come back and it reoccurred.

And so for about a three-to-four-day period, I had this reoccurring rash, hives, that was, I mean, really truly [laughs] just almost disfiguring. I mean, these red blotches, and I didn't know what it was. And, you know, I later found out with my doctor, we theorized that it was when I seroconverted. And, you know, to be frank about it, while I was there, I—the reason I moved to New York was because I had broken up with Rick. Almost the minute I got to New York, Rick was, like, calling me, mailing me, sending me—sending me mail, postcards, things like that, saying, "I miss you, I want you, please come back. It'll be different," this, that, and the other. You know? So I was like, "Well, I don't know, I don't know." And I hadn't really been promiscuous necessarily, but I did date this one guy, [01:00:00] and I had been a top kind of by—I usually say I'm a top by default because my partner usually wanted it more than I did.

But there was this one guy that I actually was the anal receptive partner. I got fucked, and I'm pretty sure that probably was the incidence, because it's not like I was getting fucked a lot. So that was probably it. I don't really know. And, you know, it really doesn't matter, but—so, yeah. And it was shortly after that that I broke out in this stuff. And again, once it went away, I never really thought about it until nine years later sitting in the doctor's office. We were looking at—trying to figure out how long I might have been carrying HIV. And he asked whether or not I had any incidence that might have been a mysterious illness or would seem like an allergic reaction with no known source. And I mentioned to him that occurrence in New York, and he says, "I guarantee you, that's when you seroconverted." So again, it was '89, that was 1980. We determined I had been carrying HIV for nine years, so I had one year to go before I would develop AIDS. And that—

ALEX FIALHO: Because?

JOEY TERRILL: Because at that time, the prevailing thought was that HIV would lay dormant for 10 years and then develop into AIDS. And so, that's the theory we were thinking of, that I probably had a year to go. And so, our strategy was for me to enroll in clinical trials—I think the first one was Crixivan—to see whether or not being on medication could—not prevent AIDS, but could delay or stave off what we called at that time full-blown AIDS. And so that's what I was doing. I was devastated. I was just devastated. I already had had [01:02:00] many friends already dying of AIDS. My coworkers, and people I went to school with, and you know, some of the Escandalosas. And so to me, it was like, "I'm no different than anyone else"—

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK 5.]

JOEY TERRILL: —"and I'm probably going to die, and I wasn't"—[Exhales.] And for me, it wasn't even that I was that afraid of dying, but I just kept thinking of my mother and my sister, and the idea that they would have to experience the death of their son and brother. And then in our particular case, that I would then also leave my sister to then have to deal with my mother's grieving and her mental illness, whereas we had always been a team together in doing that. You know, as it turns out, as of today, I've outlived my family. My mom died 17 years ago and then my sister died of a rare form of cancer five years ago, which I just never, never anticipated, never thought. I mean, I was the one who was supposed to die of AIDS, and instead, it's I who now think of them, so, you know?

And when I have talked about this, I have stated that I do take some comfort in knowing that neither of them had to grieve over my death, you know, which is a good thing, but—so, yeah. So that was the legacy of New York. [Laughs.] But, I also was able to connect with an artist-run venue for exhibiting art in Tribeca called Windows on White Street. And it was a very—you know, not much protocol. It was just like, "Hey, get together, and you want to schedule yourself? You want to go in April? Okay, it's yours. You got three windows." And what I loved about it, the Windows on White Street—there was a manufacturing company there, and there were these big, huge windows that whatever I put in there on display would be available to the public 24/7, and they would be illuminated at night. So at three in the morning, you could walk by and see Joey Terrill paintings hanging there. And that's where I did my *Chicanos Invade New York* series.

ALEX FIALHO: Which was?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, [00:02:00] there were three paintings. One was called *Reading the Local Paper*, and it was me with the *New York Post* with the headlines of "John Lennon Killed." The other was—

ALEX FIALHO: Photo of you or a painting of you?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, paintings. Yeah, painting—a painting of me.

ALEX FIALHO: A painting of you reading the *Post?*

JOEY TERRILL: Reading the *Post, New York Post*.

ALEX FIALHO: And so a visible Chicano figure in the window?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. And then the other one was *Making Tortillas in SoHo* because I found myself craving tortillas, which you could not find.

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: Back then in 1980, you could count the number of Mexicans on one hand in New York. I know it's—there's 30,000 there now, but back then it was—you know, we were few and far between. And I got so desperate, I—we were living in what is now called Nolita. But I called my uncle Rudy in LA and just said, "Uncle Rudy, give me your recipe for tortillas." I said, "I am desperate, I need to make them." And so I did. And so I was making them, I thought, "Oh, you know, people come from all over the world to come to SoHo to make art," and I said," I come here to make tortillas."

So that was my *Chicano's Invade New York* series, *Making Tortillas in SoHo*. And then the third one was *Searching for Burritos* because—and it was me, and Victor, and Steven, and my sister, and Laura, and Eddie Dominguez, who were visiting. And I have us in a snowstorm, in a blizzard, and we're in front of the Guggenheim, and we're like this. We're like searching, trying to find a burrito, because you couldn't find one.

So again, I was—you know, parody and kind of sarcastic, and making fun, but also showing that we were definitely—it took me moving to New York to really kind of come into focus about my identity as being Chicano. Like, "Oh, that's right I—you know, it's like, we are who we are." And it was very different. My sister, when she was there, there were several things [00:04:00] that were really positive for her. One was she—I remember her coming in one day. She ended up working at Lord & Taylor's. But she came in one day and she said, "Oh, my God, Joey." She goes, "Again, today, somebody stops me and says, 'Oh, my God, you're so pretty. Oh, your eyes are beautiful. You know, where are you from? Are you Italian? Are you Russian? Are you Polish? Are you—?' You know? They named everything [laughs] and no one guessed Mexican." And then when she tells them that she was Mexican or Chicana, they're like, "Oh, that's wonderful. Oh, my God, that's"—and with her so, like, "Wow, we're so used to being a dime a dozen here in LA, right?" Or like, "Oh, you're Chicano, so you're Mexican." And there we were in New York, and we were being treated [laughs] like exotic creatures, which I reveled in, I loved.

ALEX FIALHO: And I love the way that the *Chicanos Invade New York* windows have a similar sort of visibility, parody—

JOEY TERRILL: Yes. Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: It's representation, demands for self-representation in a public space. It's all sort of a through-line. What area did you live in?

JOEY TERRILL: We lived in what is now Nolita. Or, we called it, well, Little Italy at the time. And we were staying with an artist named John Henninger, and he had a—because we didn't really have a place to stay. I mean, it was my introduction to the tiny spaces that people call apartments in New York, where—

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: You know? And it was built at the turn of the century, but you walk up four flights of stairs. And then once you walked in, immediately to your right was the sink, which was the sink where we washed up and everything, but also where we did cooking. So it was—the little stove was right there, and then on this side was the bathtub. So, it was, like, kitchen, bathtub, all in one. And so, we initiated a thing where we put a curtain there so that my sister could have her privacy when she bathed. And then we had the one room [00:06:00] that had a little—there was a little alcove. I looked at it as like a closet space, and that's where John Henninger slept, and then my sister and I just kind of slept on the couch and on the floor. And we lived there for a couple of weeks—actually a couple of months—before John Henninger asked us to leave. [Laughs.]

ALEX FIALHO: When did you move back, or why did you move back?

JOEY TERRILL: I moved back because once I exhibited my art, Rick had come to New York and was visiting me, and totally stole my heart again. And, you know, I'm a romantic sucker, and he's like, "It'll be different, please come back, please come back the minute you exhibit your art." I said, "Okay." And so in April in '81 when I exhibited my work, he came for the show, for the opening and stuff. And he's like, "Well, you've got to come back and—you know, it'll be different." I'm like, "Okay." And I came back, and we only ended up lasting for another four years and then it was over. But we ended up being best of friends for 38 years. And he's now passed. He is the closest thing that I could call a soulmate. And part of our friendship was based upon he knew—he was fucked up. He was bipolar, he was a cocaine addict, and I knew he was nuts and crazy, and he was finally diagnosed. Once we were broken up, he was diagnosed, and I was like, "I knew it, I told you, and that explains it." And I am also very aware that, you know, psychologically, metaphorically, it keys into my being a caregiver with my mom [laughs] that—but Rick—

ALEX FIALHO: Diagnosed?

JOEY TERRILL: Who?

ALEX FIALHO: He was diagnosed?

JOEY TERRILL: Diagnosed bipolar, yes.

ALEX FIALHO: Bipolar?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. But he also had addiction problems. And he would also have ethical and moral problems where he would do things like, "Rick, no, that's against the law. No, you can't"—you know? And this is—we were just friends now. I wasn't involved with him, but it's like, "You what? You crashed the car that you—so you didn't have to pay the insurance?" Like, you know what I mean? Like, crazy schemes and stuff. [00:08:00]

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah.

JOEY TERRILL: But at the same time, he would give you the shirt off his back. And when we were together, when my mom would go through her things, he was right there for me. He was so good with my mom, and maybe because he kind of knew that—you know, he sensed something.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah.

JOEY TERRILL: So he was—the extreme is the bipolarity.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah.

JOEY TERRILL: He could be the best, most supportive, most loving, hot, sexual, erotic, this and that. And then he could flip and be like, "I never want to see you. You're horrible," this and that. And I'm like, "Oh, my God," like—

ALEX FIALHO: [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: And I mean even to a point where it didn't even hurt anymore. It's just like, "Rick, you're just being, like, crazy now. Come on, stop it." You know? And it was just—it was nuts. But, funny we had our own way of joking with each other. We had our own whole, like, references of things that made us laugh. And then we also hung wall-covering together for, like, 20 years, and that provided us with entrée into all these homes and mansions, from Santa Barbara to Pacific Palisades to Beverly Hills, that I never would otherwise have had a social context where I would be present.

So there was a lot of things that I observed from that. From either, like—you know, how the hired help, who were mostly Latinos, were being treated or not. But also from each of the jobs, there was usually a roll of wallpaper, too, that was leftover, and the designer would say, "Oh, just toss it." And I was going, "No, this is great." Again, rasquache: "I'm going to use this someday in my art." And when I decided to do the HIV still lifes, that's when I started to put in the wallpaper that I had been carrying for 10 years.

ALEX FIALHO: Amazing.

JOEY TERRILL: And that's—see that gold? That's wallpaper, too, from our jobs.

ALEX FIALHO: Perfect. Well, I think, this has us back in LA. We'll dive into some more of the '80s, '90s, and onwards. [00:10:00]

JOEY TERRILL: Okay.

ALEX FIALHO: And it's a perfect sort of segue into some of the still life work for tomorrow too. So, thank you. Day one.

[END OF TERRIL17_1OF2_TRACK 6.]

ALEX FIALHO: This is Alex Fialho interviewing Joey Terrill at Joey's home and studio in Los Angeles, California, on December 31, 2017 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Card number two. So, Joey, thank you for yesterday. I wanted to start off today squarely in the conversations around HIV/AIDS, and start there by asking you to describe your first memory of what would become known as HIV/AIDS.

JOEY TERRILL: Well, two things come to mind: One is when I first had a reaction when I seroconverted, which—I mean, I can start there and—but, of course, at that point in time, you know, they hadn't the name for HIV. They didn't know anything about it. But it was when I was living in New York, and I woke up one morning and had—

ALEX FIALHO: Heard.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay.

ALEX FIALHO: If that makes sense.

JOEY TERRILL: So, the first time I heard about HIV was I—and I forget, but I think it was the *New York Times.* And it may have been even followed up at another newspaper, maybe *LA Times.* But it was Dr. Michael Gottlieb reporting on—I believe it was five cases of homosexual men coming down with this rare cancer, which had only been seen in 70- and 80-year-old Italian men in the Mediterranean, [called –JT] Kaposi sarcoma. And trying to determine what—[00:02:00] you know, what was the connection to them being homosexual. I found it alarming, and I sort of knew in my head that this was just going to be fodder for the homophobic, right-wing pushback against all the things we had done.

And then I started to read more and more. I think [. . . –JT] *Blue Boy* magazine at the time had an article, and I'm pretty sure I still have the magazine in my cardboard box archives here. But it—I think the title was "The Gay Cancer," which—again, you know, even right now when I said that, I got little chill bumps. So I was starting to get alarmed and frightened and—but somehow, it still seemed far away. It didn't seem like it was close to home. It seemed to me like it was New York. It was, you know, like maybe people who were shooting up drugs, and I certainly had never done that.

And then I was—it was at the time when in the early '80s, my friend Danny Ramirez, one of the Escandalosas, had moved to San Francisco, and so his—we always had a place to stay. So we were—groups of us would either—three at a time, five at a time, or just myself, I would go up to San Francisco because I could always stay at

Danny's place to party and have fun. And it was in the Castro—at 18th and Castro, there's a pharmacy there, Walgreens, but at that time, it was a different pharmacy, Star Pharmacy or something. And there were some Xeroxed flyers in the windows, and I think maybe even a Polaroid of somebody with KS, and maybe thrush. A Polaroid. And it said, you know, "Hey, everybody, [00:04:00] this is happening here." And so, it was the first time that I was actually seeing images, and it was very frightening. It was very scary. And I talked to Danny, and he said, "Yeah." Danny said he was getting really—it was very scary, and no one knew what it was. Everyone was wondering if it was because you're doing drugs or because you're using poppers, or what was the cause, nobody knew.

I think it was at that same time, that same weekend when I was up there, Danny and I had gone to the Jaguar sex club, which was right on Castro in an old Victorian. And when we were in there, he came up to me, and—we would go together, but then he would go off and do his thing and I would do mine. And I remember him coming up to me, and he said, "You're never going to believe what a guy just asked me." And I said, "What?" And he said, "He asked me, 'Do you exchange bodily fluids?'" And I'm like, "What? He asked what?" I didn't—I was clueless. I go, "What do you mean bodily fluids?" And he said, "Saliva or semen." He goes, "That's how they think it's—this cancer." And I—you know, again, it just was frightening, and I couldn't even concentrate on enjoying [laughs] myself.

And then I'm trying to recall—well, I do recall the first time I actually saw KS lesions. It was Bob McCormick, who was a friend of Steven Fregoso. Bob McCormick was an artist-illustrator who's—I think one of his achievements was he did one of the covers for the album by Dan Hicks and his Hot Licks. And so, I was always like—I thought that, wow, that is so cool that he's done this. But we were in a bar called [. . . Griffs –JT] on Melrose, and it was a sort of a, you know, Levi jeans, [00:06:00] maybe leather, kind of bar. And Steven and I were in there, and Bob McCormick came in. Bob McCormick was always sort of talking fast, just as his natural energy. And he said, "Oh, my God." He says he's been freaking out, and he just—he rolled up his sleeve and there were these dark lesions on his arm. And I mean, my eyes must have just gotten big like Buckwheat. I was like, "Whoa. Wow." It just was this realization that this is real, and it's going to be scary. And, of course Bob died, I think within the year.

And I started to recognize that there were people around me who were starting to get sick. My friend Craig Brown was another person in early '80s, someone who I had dated and I really liked. And he was starting to get sick, and—you know? And there was a lot of denial for a lot of us. We were like, "Well, you're probably just—it's probably just something—or you're just going to get"—you know, nobody wanted—we didn't want to really face it, deal with it, believe it. And I think that denial helped us psychologically to, you know, kind of get through our fear and anxiety.

And then, I remember when Craig was really, really sick, and he was starting to get emaciated. Without even really talking about it, we all would just say "Craig is sick." All of our friends, I don't even think we used the word AIDS. We just knew that that's what it was. And Craig was very fearful. He went from being a very handsome—[00:08:00] it sounds cliché—very handsome, athletic man, to a very skinny, gaunt-looking person. And with Craig, I recall going to visit him in the hospital, and he had been working as a waiter, a busboy at this Italian restaurant that was owned by this family who were Christian. They had been trying to talk to him about their religion, and they didn't know that he was gay. They didn't know that he had AIDS. And he was starting to adopt this feeling that—he thinks God is punishing him.

I was in the hospital room with him, and I kept telling him—it was just he and I, and I told him, I said, "Craig," I said, "God's not punishing you." I said, "God made you. God loves you just how you are." You know. Even if I wasn't believing that for myself, I wanted him to know that—you know, not to think that way. And then the owner of the restaurant and his wife, and one of the adult kids, came in to visit him. And I could tell from their conversation that they thought that Craig had some kind of cancer, but they didn't associate it with AIDS. And I knew—I said, "If they knew that he had AIDS, they would not be here to pray for him." That they would, you know, totally judge him because that—there was very, very few religious people that I knew, at that time, who were coming out in support of gay men with HIV. And then they were going to—they were going to reach out to him to touch him, and I said, "Excuse me." I said, "You need to put on gloves." And they looked at me, and I said, "You know, that's because his immune system is compromised." I said, "He could catch something from us, so it's for his protection." And they said, [00:10:00] "Oh, okay."

But, you know, and again, I was like, "Gee, didn't they talk to them when they came in to visit?" And they put on gloves and then they asked, "Oh, we're going to pray for him right now, would you join us?" I said, "No. No, thank you," and I stood there and watched. And I mean, I stood there silently, but I was fuming in my head because I already knew. There was already stuff on the radio, and Jerry Falwell, and all this homophobic bullshit. And here were these people praying for him because he was—they didn't realize he was gay. It just seemed really odd.

ALEX FIALHO: How did you respond with maybe both your art or your activism? I'm thinking about, like, *Chicos Modernos* or Stop the AIDS Quarantine Committee. Can you describe some of those involvements and how they came to be?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, so, by—it was 1986 when Proposition 64 was put on the California ballot. That was a proposition by Lyndon LaRouche, which called for quarantining all people with HIV. And I was scared shitless. I was just—

ALEX FIALHO: California ballot?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, California ballot. And, you know, in the newspaper, the survey showed that 75 percent of the electorate would vote in favor of it. So, I—and some of the conversations in the editorial pages, they were talking about reopening Manzanar, where they had interned the Japanese Americans, to take people with HIV. So, again, it was just unbelievable to me, and it was very scary and real.

I was walking through Silver Lake, and there was—on the telephone pole, there was a flyer posted that said, "Stop the AIDS Quarantine. Come to a Meeting." And it had the date and time. So I went, and we met in the back of a furniture store on Melrose. It's the—I know it's the Hollywood Hotel. I mean, I think it's called the Hollywood Hotel on Melrose, but there was a furniture store in the ground floor, and we met in the back. [00:12:00] And it was Michael Weinstein. It was Chris Brownlie, Richard Starr, Paul Coleman, a couple of punk rockers, some artists. I think there was one minister with a collar who was there, which I realized, I thought, "Okay, good, that somebody from the clergy is"—and we all said we need to stop this and we need to educate the public. And so that formed the Stop the AIDS Quarantine Committee.

We—and when I say we—not me directly, the folks. I was just there as a volunteer, but they rented an apartment—it's actually a commercial space on a second floor—over in Silver Lake. And as a volunteer, I went in there and we had the voting rolls, the registered voters' rolls, with the phone numbers, and back then it was all by rotary phone. So, I would, you know, take a couple of pages and start calling people who are registered voters and ask them if they knew about Proposition 64, what it does, what it doesn't do, and why we think it's not in the best interest of public health, et cetera, et cetera.

And, you know, sometimes people would hang up on us, sometimes people wouldn't listen, or some people were very supportive. Some people were legitimately perplexed. They didn't understand it and then—you know? So, I—you know, I don't know. We think we did a good job. And then under the leadership of Paul Coleman, and Michael Weinstein and Chris Brownlie—you know, and Chris Brownlie, at that time, was lovers with Phil Wilson. Phil Wilson later went on to become the—had found Black AIDS Institute. And Phil Wilson and Chris Brownlie, I just thought they were the cutest couple. We would meet at their house, we would meet at the office, we would just meet at different locations, but we had planned to do a demonstration in front of the LaRouche headquarters.

They had set up their Proposition 64 [00:14:00] headquarters on the second floor of a building in Atwater, right near Silver Lake, and the ground floor was Mr. Mikes, a gay bar. So, I was like, "How dare they? They're right here in our neighborhood, in our territory, in our space." We held a public demonstration. I think there were 2,000 to 3,000 people, which was unbelievable to me. There had never been such a large public demonstration around HIV and AIDS. And Patty Duke, the actress, you know, from Screen Actors Guild, she—I remember that she spoke, and—so I always had a—she's one of my heroes because she was one of the only people at that time that dared to speak up publicly about it.

And again, at this time, even when we would go to get people to sign petitions against Proposition 64—like at the Sunset Junction Street Fair in Silver Lake—as I would go around, and I would meet gay men, I go up to gay men and say, "Oh, this is for Proposition 64." They would say, "Oh, we don't—we really don't"—and shake their heads and they [would –JT] say, "No, we don't want anything to do with that." They were so fearful of even signing a petition behind it. And it was during those times when I would go out and, you know, do the petition-signing, and working with Chris Brownlie, that he and I talked a lot. Or he talked to me a lot. And I'm really grateful to him because I got a lot of strength from him. He was my hero, and he was a mentor. He was out, you know, about his status of having AIDS. I hadn't been tested [00:16:00] yet. I saw no reason to be tested. At that point in time, you know, if you did test positive, essentially it was a death sentence. And I knew that for me, that would just freak me out, get me depressed, push me over the deep end, and I—it was just abysmal.

Anyway, long story short, we defeated Proposition 64, and then we did—and there's more to it than that, too, because there was when we—the committee led by Michael Weinstein would go up to the county board of supervisors, some of the responses—one of which, Mike Antonovich, a white, Republican, conservative a-hole, he said, "Well, you know, the cure for HIV—we could contain this. All gay men have to do is just be straight." I mean, that was the response to this health issue. And people were—there were already stories of people getting kicked out of their homes, getting evicted from their apartments. People going to the county hospital, and once they're admitted into it, the nurses wouldn't go in to change the bed linens. They would leave the trays of food outside their door. It was really getting scary and ugly.

After it was defeated, the committee reorganized and said, "We've got this great synergy here, what are we going to do? What's necessary?" And what was necessary was hospice care. And so, the group incorporated as AIDS Hospice Foundation and then advocated for LA County to open up a facility that was HIV-specific, because people were not dying with dignity in the county hospitals, and certainly none of the other locations or medical centers or hospitals. And we were successful on that. They opened up within a year. It was at the Barlow Respiratory Hospital in Elysian Park. It was the former dorms of the nursing staff [00:18:00], is my understanding. And we named it after Chris Brownlie. It was the Chris Brownlie Hospice, and that was the first, certainly here in Los Angeles, if not California.

And then also it was around, I guess, late '80s—'89, was it?—something like that—that I was at the Sunset Junction Street Fair. And my art was always a personal narrative. I was painting my friends, and family, and partners, and I realized that at some point, I need to and want to do some art that shows what's going on, you know, with HIV and AIDS. The directness of my paintings, I was also tempered by the idea or the fact that, "Do I want to paint a picture of my friend Craig looking so sick and horrible?" I mean, you know, I don't know that I wanted to do that to him. And I don't know that he would have allowed it if I had asked him, so I was conflicted.

But it was at Sunset Junction when they were passing around this little comic book in Spanish called *Chicos Modernos*, which was instruction in safe sex education, and about using a condom, and, you know, why it's important for gay men and bisexual men to take care of themselves. And it was done through the CORE Program. The CORE Program was set up in West Hollywood, and they were there to provide information and services, specifically to the hustlers, and Latinos who—many of whom didn't identify as gay but were sex workers for survival. And so they—you know, CORE realized, "We need to reach out to them because they're not accessing [00:20:00] the services at Being Alive. They're not looking at the newsletters that have all the up-to-date medical information, and clinical trials," and all this other stuff that was coming up.

But I saw this comic book, and I loved it. I just said, "Oh, my God, I should be doing something like this. This is what I should be doing." And it was literally four months, maybe—four, maybe five months later—that my friend Steven Muñoz [who is also on the cover of the Axis Mundo Catalogue –JT], who was one of the Escandalosas that I went to high school with and that, you know, we used to party up in San Francisco with Danny—he called me up, and he said, "Hey, Joey." He goes, "You're familiar with *Chicos Modernos*?" And I said, "Yes, I am." And he goes, "Well, you know, that's—my boyfriend, Bill is the head of CORE." And he says, "I'm the one that wrote the text." And I realized that on the—you know, in the—*Chicos Modernos* had said, "Text by S. Muñoz," but it didn't occur to me that it was my friend Steven. But he told me that the artist who did the illustrations, Bruce Rapp, was now too sick to do the second edition. And he said—

ALEX FIALHO: From AIDS-related illness?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, he was dying from AIDS. And he said, "Would you—we were wondering if you would be willing to do the illustrations for the next one?" And I said, "Yes." I said, "Please, I would love to." And, you know, on the one hand, I thought, "Oh, wow, this is what I've been wanting." On the other hand, I felt, "Oh, what a horrible way to get this," because Bruce Rapp was dying. And so, you know, the cartoon illustrations by Bruce, I—the first edition are beautiful and wonderful. And I knew, "Okay, my—I'm not going to try to copy him exactly," but I did try to do my own version of his illustrations. And I did. I ended up doing the next three issues.

It was distributed at gay bars that were, you know, Latino gay bars. And CORE would go in, and they would do a presentation in both English and Spanish [00:22:00] and then distribute the comic books. There was a—we got good feedback on it because the—we would go back and report. You know, that we would ask the bartenders and the bar owners, and they said they didn't find any in the trash; they didn't find them in the bathrooms, like, thrown away; that people actually took them home with them, and—you know? And it was something that was nonthreatening. It wasn't something that was overtly gay, gay, gay. So, even if they were closeted or if whatever, you were taking back this little comic book that was very non-threatening, informative. And also, it was written at a very—I think we were at a fifth- or sixth-grade level in terms of comprehension. Because we were aware that a lot of the targeted audience, some of these guys were not literate even in Spanish. And so, we weren't going to be putting up big words and medical information that people wouldn't understand. That would defeat the purpose.

So that's what we did, and then Bill Green had told me that—and, you know, Bill Green died of AIDS eventually. But Bill Green had told me that they were so thrilled from the response—this was for LA County, an LA County project—but that they were getting requests for the comic books from San Francisco and also from Tijuana. So, they were just printing them up and sending them, and that was outside the scope of the grant. And the grant was for HIV prevention and was subject to the Jesse Helms amendment that said that any funding regarding HIV prevention could not promote in any way homosexuality. So, I—in talking about sex, I couldn't show the men in sexual positions. I couldn't show them putting on a condom. I couldn't show a penis. I couldn't even show them kissing. So, it was very [00:24:00] restrictive.

Later on, there was a different grant—or a sponsorship—that CORE got, and we did pamphlets on how to use a condom. And it was—my illustrations would just show the actual somebody with a hard-on, and how to put on the condom, and leaving a little space for the semen at the top, and then showing them fucking. So that was—you know, that was different. It was a little printout, pamphlet. And I know that probably—knowing Bill as I do, I'm sure that what he did in some cases if an agency asked for, you know, *Chicos Modernos,* that he would send the comic books, and then he would probably send a few of the pamphlets that were more explicitly rendered.

ALEX FIALHO: How about—I love the way that your interest in—I love the dialogue between *Chicos Modernos* and *Homeboy Beautiful* in a way, and they're completely different platforms. But there's also a—you navigate both with an interest in distribution, an interest in portraiture and sort of mass portraiture and Pop. And I'm curious how you see those two very different projects relating and also being distinguished.

JOEY TERRILL: Well, first of all, the biggest difference, you know, to my mind was that*Homeboy Beautiful* was done in '78 and '79, before there was anything called HIV. So, I didn't have any of those concerns at all. And I could show, you know, the homeboys at the homo party, like in bed with each other, and kissing, making out, whatever.

ALEX FIALHO: And it wasn't for a grant either.

JOEY TERRILL: Right.

ALEX FIALHO: You know, that—

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. It was my own. You know, and I felt like what I was trying to do was to have some kind of media, popular culture representation based on, like, novelas, magazines, [00:26:00] comic books that showed, gay homo-homeboy culture. And with *Chicos Modernos*, there was this part of me that felt like the characters that I was illustrating could very well have been homo-homeboys a few years before in the '70s.

ALEX FIALHO: Exactly.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: [. . . Are –AF] there any specific anecdotes from *Chicos Modernos*? Like any of the particular comic narratives that people mentioned in specific? Or is it just largely the project as a whole that felt like it had an impact?

JOEY TERRILL: I can't recall right now any, you know, specific things. I just remember that they were popular. I remember going into—you know, I was already working from 1984 for about 12 years. I worked at The Center for the Partially Sighted, which was a low-vision optometric and rehabilitation center. There was only five in the United States at the time. And the focus was on vision enhancement, as opposed to vision substitution. Everyone was familiar with the Braille Institute, where you learn to read braille, to use a white cane, you can get guide-dog instruction. And that's perfectly fine for people who are totally blind or functionally blind. But for the legally blind, that usually meant you had some residual vision—and so most people who had partial vision were born fully sighted, you know? And as they got older, they usually developed something like macular degeneration or cataracts that impaired their vision to some degree.

And it could be—you could maximize that with optical devices, closed-circuit television, magnifiers, special kinds of glasses. We had low-vision optometrists who specialized in [. . . low vision. –JT] And then it was '89, '90, around that time, [00:28:00] that we had our first HIV-related case of vision loss. I remember my colleague Toya, who was one of my best friends, and she still is to this day. We still are in touch with each other. She came in to me and said, "You know, this person is coming in. He's got AIDS-related vision impairment, Joey, so just be prepared." Because I would do the intake with everyone, the new patients who would come in. And, you know, there was an intake process, and I would try to figure out where they were at emotionally. Because for a lot of people who were fully sighted, they would go through a grieving process about losing their vision, and it was losing their independence. So not able to drive—and in LA, that's a major thing. You know, you can't see the oven dials, you can't see the clock, tell time, or read your mail. I mean, there were lots of issues.

And when he came in, it turns out it was Roger Horwitz, the lawyer who was well-known. And I I knew of him. I didn't know him, but I knew of him just from reading the different gay mags and stuff in West Hollywood. And his partner was Paul Monette, the writer. And Roger came in, and he was in pajamas and in a robe, which I think that was the first time I had a patient come in to keep their appointment in their robe and pajamas, PJs. So I had read up on, and knew about, CMV retinitis, cytomegalovirus—that if it would attack the retina, you would develop CMV retinitis and you could have your retina detach and go blind. But he had PML, which is progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy. And I didn't know that much about it, so I looked it up, I read up on it, I read the materials from Being Alive, and it was very scary. So [00:30:00] that's—PML affects the brain, and so the messages to the optic nerve are what's impaired.

So it's different than macular degeneration, which affects the macula and your central vision. So, as I was working with him there, and even with the doctor, he was able to read letters. I remember him saying, "C-A-T. Cat." And then he says, "But I forget what that means." I mean, it was devastating. You know, I recognize that everything that I was trained to do in providing services to people with vision loss was going to fly out the window. How could I instruct somebody whose memory was—you know, even as they could read the letters, not understand the letters that they were reading. And this from a lawyer, right? So, I felt so helpless. I felt really awful. Paul Monette was actually really great, and I could tell that he was—he thanked me for being—he said they had a phrase that they would call people who are out, as being "on the bus." And he says, "Joey, I love that you're on the bus. You're one of the first people that is treating us with such respect." Apparently, there was a lot of homophobia still at that time. And then with the overlying phobia around HIV or AIDS, they didn't necessarily get a lot of respect when they would go to keep doctors' appointments and things.

But once we had that patient, I mean, I knew. And I went to Dr. Phyllis Amaral, the clinical director, and I said, "Phyllis, we need to do something." I said, "We just saw Roger Horowitz. He has AIDS-related sight loss, and we're going to see more people like that." I said, "I think we need to step up and do something, provide services, or [00:32:00] see"—and she asked me, she said, "Well, Joey, okay, find out. Find out what's available. Why don't you call around some of the AIDS organizations?" And so I did. I called AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which I wasn't—I was no longer a volunteer with them. They were opening up clinics, and I wasn't an employee at that point. I called APLA. I called AIDS Service Center in Pasadena. I called the Gay and Lesbian Center. I called Being Alive, and Shanti. There were [laughs] all these different organizations at the time.

And I asked them, I said, "What do you do when you have somebody who's going blind?" And across the board, they all said, "You know what, we don't know what to do. We're not sure. We think that we will send them to Braille." But, you know, Braille is learning to read a new language, and you have to use your sense of touch. That was not going to work for people who were having AIDS-related complications and problems. Also, I already knew and was familiar with Braille. We would refer clients back and forth to one another, right? And I knew that when you called Braille, it would be like, "Okay, we can set you up for an appointment in four weeks," and, you know, "We have a 13-week educational program." It's like, "No, these are people that have five, six doctors' appointments in a week. They've got 10, 15 different medications that they need to take to treat all these different things that they're going through from diarrhea to, you know, I mean, wasting syndrome. And they might have KS, and they might have thrush." And there were just all these multiple onslaughts to their health.

And so, long story short: With my colleague, Javier Gomez, who was actually someone that I met at Immaculate Heart College—and he was studying gerontology, and we became fast friends, and we later became roommates—and yeah, he became [00:34:00] one of my best friends. He was the one with the—what I like to say—the degree and the education. So, between him and myself, my passion, we sat down, and we figured out or determined what we thought would work for this population. And we came up with a plan or an idea to provide like four-to-five-week sessions. And we thought, to make it most easy, instead of the clients having to come to us in our office in Santa Monica, we would go to the location that they were already familiar with. We would hold these at APLA. We would hold them at AHF. We would hold them at Shanti. We would hold them at AIDS Service Center. We would schedule them where there would be, you know, separate support groups. Because we were being told that there were folks that were part of the support groups at these locations. And once they started to develop vision problems, they would be shunned by the other group members. And say, you know, "The last thing I want start to deal with now is the idea of going blind. That freaks me out. I don't want to deal with it." So, far from being a supportive environment, they would get ostracized.

So we held these sessions, and if I recall, I think they were two hours long. The first hour was counseling with Dr. Ladonna Ringering, who was the clinical psychologist at the Center for the Partially Sighted. And then the second hour would be informational instruction on options for vision problems. So I would go in and do a session on independent living skills, where I would talk about going in to do a home visit and that I could make adjustments in the home that would compensate for the vision problem. Sometimes that meant labeling the medications, so that if this is the medication you take in the morning, we're going to put one rubber band on it. So you don't even have to try to read the label. You can just feel [00:36:00] the rubber band and know, "Oh, that's the one I take in the morning." The one that's two rubber bands is the one you take in the afternoon—or things like that, or we would locate them in a certain way. And literally, I'm not exaggerating, some of these folks had a dozen, 18 different medications.

And then also on top of it, you also had some that had to be taken with food, some that had to be taken on an empty stomach. Some that had to be taken every four hours, which meant you had to set your alarm at two in the morning, three in the morning, to wake up to take your medication. There were so many complicated procedures in order for a person to just stay alive. So that's what we would do. And at that time, there was the first—I think what it was called was the LA AIDS Regional Board. It was the first federal and state funding that was coming into Los Angeles County, and it was individuals and groups, people who were working in HIV that got selected to be on a board.

I went, and I know that I was selected because I was Latino and gay. They wanted to make sure that they had representations from the gay community. So there were medical doctors who had been working with clients with HIV, but they didn't know the personal experience of what the gay community was going through. So we were on that board, and then on that board, I then presented and advocated for a grant for this specific program. I said, "I'm Latino and I'm gay, but I'm here specifically to ask for funding for people with AIDS-related sight loss."

And no one else was doing it, and so we did get the grant, and so we did do this program. And I managed it for six years, and that—tons of stories on that, that I could share if you want. So, [00:38:00] you know, I remember one of my first clients. I got phone calls. We started out—once we started to advertise it, we would get two, maybe three calls a month, the first couple of months, and then we were getting two and three calls a week. It really just started to expand larger and larger. One of the first things I had to learn, and this was through the counseling with Dr. Ladonna Ringering, was—you know, she was counseling me as well about how to manage my own emotions and feelings of dealing with folks. And that we—the one phrase I kept remembering is that I was learning to measure my successes in very small increments.

So that I would go in, and sometimes in my home assessment, we would determine that there wasn't anything that could be done, you know, which just left me feeling so horrible. But at least, I was then surprised that family members, or the lovers or the partners, who would say, "We're so grateful that you came in, and, you know, at least we know that we're not missing something, right?"

But I remember going to this—I remember it was a beautiful day in LA, and it was, like, South Central and residential neighborhood, great palm trees. I went into this home, and it was a woman. It was my first female patient. She was from Belize and when I walked into the living room, when they let me in—she was living with her sister, you know, an adult woman—and I remember seeing her nephew who must have been 16, 17, and he was just this handsome, you know, handsome, black guy, a teenager sitting there. And you could [00:40:00] just see how sad he was over his auntie. But I went in and I could tell right away that she was already pretty far gone in terms of even her awareness of where she was, who she was. But I reached out. I held her hand, and I was asking her what she needed to do or wanted to do. And we barely found out that she already was totally blind. There wasn't anything that I could do, and I felt terrible about it. And then as I was leaving, I told her sister that there wasn't anything, and her sister said to me, "I want to thank you." [Cries.] I said, "Well, you're welcome." She said, "No one—you're the first person who has touched her. None of the doctors, none of the nurses, no one has ever touched her," and that I went in and touched her hand.

I was aware that sometimes the smallest things like that—right? Another client that I had, who was more able-bodied, and he had some residual vision, but—and he was Latino. He was Chicano, and he was like my age, and I looked at him, and I totally identified with him. I said, you know, "We could have been partners," or he could have been one of the Escandalosas, or—you know? But he was living in a converted garage of his sister and brother-in-law's home in the Valley. And the brother and sister-in-law were like Jehovah's Witnesses or something, so they were religious, and they were reluctantly letting him live there. And when they would go in, I mean, they would, like, wipe everything down with alcohol. He didn't really feel supported. And I went in, and all that I could do for him was, [00:42:00] mark the microwave oven dials and the dials on the oven so that he would know with a—there was a [. . . product –JT] called Hi-Marks, which [a plastic squeezed out of a tube, like toothpaste. –JT] And you can make a notation or line with it, and it hardens.

So, you can, on an oven dial, put a line at 325 or 375 so you know that if you would line it up with that, that's what it is. You want it a little hotter, you can go one way or the other, right? But, even for that and for the microwave oven, at least he can say that he could heat up a cup of water for tea without having to bother anyone. It was trying to stay as independent as one could. And he had been a barber, and when I was about to leave, I said, "Well, is there anything else that I can do for you?" He had blurry vision, and he could see that I had had my hair freshly cut. I have really thick hair, just like he did, you know? We have that Mexican hair that's real thick. And he said, "Yeah." He says, "Could I—could I touch your hair?" I said, "Sure," [laughs] because when you get your hair freshly buzzed, it's sort of like—it's like a brush, you know? Like even when I was in school, like whenever kids—we would get our hair cut, the girls would go, "Oh, let me touch your hair." You know, it's kind of a thing. And he touched, and he's like, "Oh." He goes, "I miss that." And I just—I got in the car. I mean, I cried all the way home.

And then there were—you would set up an appointment for someone. They would call up, we would set up an appointment for the next day on Tuesday. If you call up on Monday, I would set it up for Tuesday. I would always call before I went out, and sometimes they would say, "You know what, he's too sick right now, we need to cancel the appointment." Or there were a couple of times when, [00:44:00], "I'm sorry, he's unconscious now," or—I mean, it was just—there's so—you just didn't know what was going on. And remember, I had been working at the center where I worked with older adults who were—they come in at age 65, and they were losing their sight, they had macular degeneration. They would get some glasses, some magnifiers, even a closed-circuit TV, get counseling. And a year later, five years later, they would come back, and they were fully functioning, and they were happy. [At that time,] my clients had a six-month life expectancy, and there were all sorts of issues.

ALEX FIALHO: How did the experience of you finally going and getting tested come to be one that you were comfortable with, and end up happening?

JOEY TERRILL: In, 1989, I—my boyfriend Robert and I, we had been together since '85. We had both been volunteers, and we had been active, and we did the AIDS Walk, and Robert was a volunteer at APLA. And to show you how small APLA was at the time—

ALEX FIALHO: APLA is?

JOEY TERRILL: AIDS Project Los Angeles. I think the office was on [. . . Romaine –JT] Street. But Robert had the keys to the office. [Laughs.] You know, that's how grassroots and small it was at the time. So he would go in to open up the office for the volunteers and stuff.

But there was a new way of thinking about testing. And that was that if you got tested, that there was—the idea was that you could probably start on some of these medications. Not AZT. We already knew that AZT was bad or at least the way that they were—the huge, huge doses they were giving to people. But that you could start on medication, and it wouldn't prevent AIDS from developing, but it would at least delay the onset of AIDS. And so, I thought, "Okay, that makes sense to me now. There's a reason for me to get tested." We both went and got tested, and at that time everything [00:46:00] was confidential, or anonymous. So, you got a number and then you had to wait two weeks and then go back after two weeks to get your result. And I had—well, even though I had thought to myself, "Well, you know, I'm probably going to test positive," I still, deep down, I thought, "No, it's not going to happen to me. It can't happen to me." And when the tester, the woman at the Gay and Lesbian Center, told me that, "You are positive," she said, " Would you like some counseling, someone to talk to?" And I said, "No, I'm fine. I'm okay, thank you."

But I got in the car and just cried all the way home. And what I was thinking about—because I had already seen friends die and waste away, and I knew it was going to be awful and painful. I also, though, was really mostly thinking about my mom and my sister. I thought, "Oh, my God, now—my mom, with everything she's had to deal with, and her mental illness—now her son is going to die." You know? I grieved over that. And then my sister, that her only brother was going to die. And then, that my sister would then be left to deal with my mother's grieving, as well as my mother's probable breakdown over my death. So it was just this cloud over my head.

But I went right away to Dr. Eugene Rolgolsky at Pac Oaks, Pacific Oaks, which was at that point the premiere, or one of the best, HIV-specific medical groups. And Dr. Rolgolsky had also been the doctor to Carlos Almaraz who was an artist, whose show—retrospective was recently at LACMA. And Carlos died in, I think, '89. He had just died. And Dr. Rolgolsky was friends with him [00:48:00] and Carlos's wife Elsa Flores, and he also collected Chicano art.

So I had actually seen him at different art receptions and stuff, and then here it is '89, and now I'm going to him as a patient. And then that's when he said to me, "The first thing we want to do is determine how long it's been since you've been infected." And that's when he asked about if there had ever been an incident with—you know? And I relayed it back to the—there was only one time, that was in New York, 1980. And he said, "I can guarantee you that's when you seroconverted." And so there it was '89, the prevailing thought at the time was that HIV would lay dormant for 10 years and then become AIDS. So, I thought, "I have one year before I'm going to get AIDS," which, you know, didn't make me feel good. I was battling with depression on it.

And at the same time, I was also managing the HIV and Vision Loss Program. So, I would see clients who are going blind and dying of AIDS and thinking, "That's my journey. I'm going to be there at some point." So I enrolled in a clinical trial for Crixivan, and I ended up having to get out of the trial because of the side effects. I ended up getting kidney stones, which was, you know [laughs], a journey into hell. Because, I mean, at various times, it felt like my penis was going to just split open. It was so painful, and then, you know, when the kidney stone would pass—I mean, it was like half the size of a grain of sand, and it was perplexing to me how something so tiny could provide so much pain. You know?

ALEX FIALHO: How did—in terms of your art, because it was such a personal [00:50:00]—it's been such a personal—so grounded in your identity and your person. How did it begin to shift? And I'm thinking specifically about a couple of works. There's, you know, in 1989 *Remembrance*, or in 1993 *Patron Saint Praying for My Immune System*. In 1994, *La Historia del Amor*. I'm curious about those pieces, or generally how AIDS shifted your work.

JOEY TERRILL: So, I knew that my work had to start to reflect my reality, because I always painted my reality, and personal narratives, and my friends in figuration. So when I did *Remembrance*, I was familiar with the art that came out of [a response to AIDS, –JT] the kind of Agitprop art out of ACT UP, which I loved. And I thought that was great and that was powerful. I was also aware of a lot of art projects around town, and they would do—the AIDS Service Center would do the *posada*, you know, the Christmas walk. There were all these memorials and altars commemorating people. And I wanted to do something that wasn't so religiously or spiritually oriented, like a lot of the work that I was seeing. I also wanted to do something that wasn't the angry ACT UP kind of stuff. And I just came up with this idea of, "How can I present my emotions of what I'm going through, in wanting to remember all my friends that were already starting to die?" And I just came up with this idea of doing a painting called *Remembrance.* And I wanted to show myself holding flowers but not at any one specific site or grave. I left it a little bit enigmatic.

So I created the actual posing for it. Whereas usually, I would work from image sources that were photographs. You know, people at parties, [00:52:00] and sort of un-posed and candid shots and things. But this one, I actually posed, and I had my boyfriend Robert who was a florist at the time—I said, "Robert, so I want some birds of paradise and maybe some other flowers, like gladiolas or something." And I specifically wanted birds of paradise because that's the official flower of Los Angeles. And I wanted a background that would be a garden, but I thought it has to be succulents or cactus, to show that it's LA or the Southwest. I didn't want people to think that it might be out of New York, or San Francisco, or anywhere else. That I wanted it visually to look like it was in the Southwest. And we went down for the photoshoot at—and we [laughs] went down in Beverly Hills. Off of Santa Monica Boulevard, there's a park and gardens that kind of runs the length of Santa Monica Boulevard. And there's a whole section that's a cactus garden or a desert garden. And we just parked, and I went, and I posed, holding the flowers, and then I had Robert then pose holding the flowers. I wasn't still quite sure how I was going to put it together.

But it was one of the first paintings that I did where I actually kind of spliced in imagery, as opposed to just working from one photo source. I also chose to wear my favorite shirt at the time, which was designed by my friend Arnie, Arnubal Araica, who was my good friend Curtis's boyfriend. Arnie was a Salvadorian. So it had this houndstooth pattern on the shirt, and so I'm just bent over with the flowers, but you can't really see: Am I bent over a grave? Who am I looking at? But I think you can see by my expression that I was very serious and [00:54:00] maybe contemplative. I then posed Robert behind me holding the flowers, and I intentionally did that because there was a 10-year age difference with Robert. He was younger, and the deaths that we were experiencing were my friends of my generation. No one yet from his age group, at that time, had been diagnosed with AIDS. And he was there supporting me emotionally, and so I had him right behind me, like support.

When I did the painting, Arnie saw it and said he was [pleased –JT]—and I know that Arnie didn't really like my paintings. He didn't like my art. [Laughs.] He had a real—he wouldn't come out and say it, but he would say these little things and talk about how, oh, he really liked this painting that he saw because it was so expressionistic. "And, Joey, you know, with brushes, you can do it." I said, "Yes, Arnie, I know about painting, I know about expressionistic brushstrokes, but I prefer a more Pop art-ish cartoon, that's me." But he saw that painting, and he said, "I'm so glad you painted my shirt." He said, "Because I'm not going to live, but," he says, "my design will live on in your painting." And, you know, he turned out to be right. So that's what I did there.

And then I did a—well, there's a painting here called *My Friend Peter.* And in '92, the organization VIVA, which I used to go to their art shows, you know, as a spectator and a patron. They called up—Mario Perez called me up and said, "Joey, we're going to have our annual fundraiser dinner for VIVA, and we wanted to—and we give out awards. We want to give you an award for your work that you've been doing, you know, like *Chicos Modernos*." [00:56:00] And I said, "Sure." I said, "Great. That would be wonderful." I was—it was a very happy moment for me. And I remember telling my cousin Pat, and my sister, and friends, and there was going to be the dinner—reception was going to be at the Friendship Auditorium on Riverside Drive. And my cousin Pat called me up a couple of days before and said, "You know what, Joey, we're not going to be able to go, because Peter Egnozzi"—who was a friend of ours, and he was the ex-partner of Dr. James Adame, and we were all friends, part of our social circles—"he took a turn for the worst. He was really bad and he's in the hospital, so we're going to go visit him." I said, "Hey, I understand, no problem. You know, that's okay."

And then I show up at the auditorium that evening for the dinner, and they had lied to me, because they were there and there was Peter. And knowing Peter as I do, I'm sure he put Cousin Pat up to it. I'm sure he said, "Oh, you know what, I'm going to be out of the hospital, and so I'm going to go," but he goes, "Tell Joey that I'm still in the hospital, and we can't make it," you know? So it was a big surprise to see him. [. . . –JT] He was a muscular, Italian, good-looking, bearded kind of guy, really funny. And here he was, 90 pounds lighter. He was swimming in this white shirt that was so baggy on him, and he was gaunt, and with medications, his eyebrows had disappeared. He was losing hair. He looked really, really bad.

But I was so thrilled that he was there, and he was happy to see me. And we took pictures there at the dinner, and it was actually the last time I saw him alive. A couple of years later, I came across one of the pictures of us there, and—so I painted it, and it's called *My Friend Peter*. So it's a homage to [00:58:00]—and it's one of the only—I think it's the only painting I've done where my friend is actually—I'm showing somebody who's actually sick and gaunt. And also, the reason I liked it—because I think while I was there, hugging Peter, I was angry. I was very angry, and I think that shows in my portrait of myself. I don't know if you can see that in there.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, definitely. How about *Patron Saint Praying for My Immune System*?

JOEY TERRILL: So, then in the early '90s—around the same time, but '93 maybe, something like that—the Vatican published this edict on homosexuality that was extremely homophobic. And it essentially said—and this was in the *New York Times*. And in the article, it said that all these activists need to understand if people's reaction is—I forget how it was worded, but essentially, it was condoning gay-bashing, right? And gay activists were outraged, and everyone was pushing back on it. And I was outraged, and I said, "Okay, you know what"—I was really angry with the Catholic church, and again, I viewed it as even though I'm no longer a Catholic and I don't believe, my moral framework, my ethics came from that. And I also was familiar with social activism and being socially progressive, from a Catholic theological viewpoint. And that what the Vatican was saying was just horrible. So, I—and it might have been when I was falling asleep or dreaming, or maybe I was stoned. But I thought to myself that, "Oh, my patron saint, San Martin, is probably just as outraged as I am."

So I came [01:00:00] up with the idea of doing an image. And I had already taken on some religious iconography, like this painting called *Mother and Son*, which I had done a few years earlier in '87. And it was my version of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. And, you know, then the cliché was that every Chicano artist had to, at some point, do a Virgen de Guadalupe. And I had resisted doing it because I just thought, "That's too cliché and I don't want to do that." And I didn't want to honor or make people think that somehow I am a believer in the Catholic dogma and stuff. But I came up with this idea that looking at the Virgen de Guadalupe as the iconic female image of Mexico and what that represents. And I thought, "Well, the iconic image of femaleness in my life is my mother." And I realized that, you know what, similar to the Virgen de Guadalupe, enshrined in mystery is my mother with her mental illness.

And so, I substituted a picture of my mother and myself in that, and it was from a black-and-white photograph that I always loved from 1957, where I was, like, two years old. It was Christmastime, and we were visiting my grandmother, my paternal grandmother Beatrice, in Cananea, Mexico. And I put that in there. And instead of the usual images of the story of Juan Diego seeing the Virgin and then going back to the village and then holding open his *tilma* or cape with the roses, I instead put images that were about our life in LA around it. And so, some people looked at it as very sacrilegious. And if they did, so what? I thought my mom would think that way too, but she ended up loving it. She said, "Oh, I think it's great." She loved it. But so, I already had done that, [01:02:00] and I had already been thinking in my head, "You know, gee, that's some idea. I would like to sort of re-appropriate some of the religious images of saints, and martyrs, and things that I grew up with on holy cards, and how could I"—

[END OF TERRIL17_2OF2_TRACK 1.]

JOEY TERRILL: —"do that?" And that occurred to me when I read that article. So San Martin de Porres is known as the black saint. And my middle name is Martin, so that was—I don't know who designated it, but it was just adapted that that was my patron saint. He's usually represented showing standing up wearing his green cloak, and he has a broom in his hand. And he's in a room where behind him, there is someone who is sick in bed—because he would take care of people who were sick and dying. And I thought, "What an appropriate patron saint image." And because he would take care of the sick and dying, that meant that he would also bathe them and cut their hair, and so he is officially the patron saint of hairdressers as designated by the Vatican. So, I thought, "Okay, San Martin is outraged with this edict by the Vatican, and he's so outraged that he puts his broom down, and he kneels down to pray for my immune system." And in that painting, on the lower left-hand corner is myself asleep, and it looks like I'm dreaming up this image of San Martin.

And the banner up above, which is usually a herald that, you know, on a lot of religious paintings would have the name of the saint, or something that they did, or something—I instead cut out [and] collaged, the *New York Times* article on the edict on homosexuality. The person I got to pose for that was Roberto Herrera, who was the other case manager at the Center for the Partially Sighted. There were three of us: Javier, Roberto, and myself. We were all three Chicanos, and we were all gay, and I'm the only one that's still alive. [00:02:00] So Roberto posed for it. And Roberto is actually kind of fair. He had curly hair, but he was fair, but I made him dark to be like the black saint. And he ended up dying within a year after that painting was done. So, that's how that came about.

ALEX FIALHO: How about *La Historia del Amor* for the VIVA calendario*?*

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. So, you know, after I got the award from VIVA in '92, I was asked if I would be on the board of VIVA, and I said—

ALEX FIALHO: Does VIVA stand for something?

JOEY TERRILL: No, it's not an acronym, just, you know, like, to life and live. What was happening at that point in time in the history of VIVA was that the board was being replaced or displaced by an artist-only board, and I was one of those artists. And so I came on board, and Jef Huereque was on there, Teddy Sandoval was on there, Beto

Araiza, Miguel Angel Reyes, Guillermo Hernandez, Monica Palacios. And I was thrilled to be working with all these Chicano and Latino artists of different disciplines.

One of the things that VIVA would do is they would submit for grants. Like they did one—a grant for HIV education where they did a *teatro,* they did a performance, *Somos Humanos*, "we are human." That was in Spanish and geared towards the Latino population. They had submitted for another grant for education to do an art project, art piece, and we have come up with the idea of doing a calendario. Like the calendars that usually are provided at markets and restaurants. And [00:04:00] there is usually an image by Jesus Helguera, the Mexican illustrator who was known for doing these very—some would say—kitschy representations of Aztec mythology or indigenous imagery that could be criticized for having European [or] Western ideals of beauty, as opposed to the indigenous.

So I took one of his most iconic works, which is—it's called *El Popo*, is the short name for the volcano in Mexico City. And the way that the range of the volcanoes are, it's supposed to be a representation of an Aztec warrior who was in love with the princess, and she died. And he takes her up to the mountaintop to the volcano—and usually, she's shown lying there, and she's pale white because she's dead. And he is bent over in grief, and it's that silhouette of her body and his bent over in grief, that is the silhouette of the mountains in Mexico City. So, I changed it. I tweaked it, and I had—instead of a female body, I had an Indian young man, body. And I intentionally made him definitely brown, golden brown, alive, but sick. And it said *apoya a tus hermanos con VIH,* or "support your brothers with HIV," and I called it *La Historia del Amor,* "the history of love." And one can interpret that as brothers—as gay brothers, or brothers as familial brothers who might be sick or dying. [00:06:00] When I did the painting for it, Jef and I think—I forget who else from VIVA, they took it to the printers.

And they were taking it to a printer who's here in LA that actually printed up the actual calendars for all the restaurants and stuff. We were afraid that they would look at it and say, "Oh, we don't want to print this because it's gay or it's about AIDS." And instead, they loved it. You know, our order was—what we could afford was for 500, and they doubled the order. They made a thousand for us without charging us additional money. So that was distributed to AIDS organizations, Latino organizations, and I was really pleased to see that it was taken up by all these folks. I would go in—in my role as manager of the HIV and Vision Loss Program, and in working in HIV, I would go into offices for HIV or the Department of Health. And I would see people in their cubicles, and they had the calendars hanging, and they were like, "Oh, my God, is that you? Oh, we love it. Thank you." And I was like, "Great." I know that it also reached distribution in some parts of Mexico as well.

ALEX FIALHO: That's one of the things that I think is powerful about your work that you've talked about thus far, is that it has a reach maybe even beyond the art world, in the sense of *Chicos Modernos*, or the calendar, or your thinking about distribution in those ways. But I'm also curious about, for instance—this is sort of a two-part question about your histories with VIVA, and maybe even just a bit more of the importance of that organization to you, and also the '93 show *Chico Moderno* at Norris Fine Art Gallery. And then sort of having the work in the context of an art gallery in that moment too.

JOEY TERRILL: So, I was on the board of VIVA for five years, '92 to '97. [00:08:00] And those were—I recall them for myself personally as five of the best years. I loved the collaboration with the other artists. You know? And really, truly, when I look around and I see—so many people have all these conflicts with one another. I've talked to the VIVA board members, and we didn't really have—I mean, we might have had disagreements here and there, but we all seemed to really support one another. Whether we worked in video, whether we worked in performance, painting, sculpture, spoken word, whatever it was, we supported one another. And we were mixed. So it was women lesbians, or bisexual [. . . –JT], and gay men. Every year, we had determined to—once it became all artists, you know, the women said, "Well, we want to do something for the women," and then we were like, "Hey, what do you want to do? Let's do it."

So every year, we would do *Chicks & Salsa*, and it was all the women. So, Monica Palacios, you know, Diane, and Betsy, and some of the other women would either have performers and women musicians. They would come out, it would be a dance, and then, we as the men, we were the supportive roles. So we were the ones who—and we loved it. We wore the *Chicks & Salsa* T-shirts, and we would be there to serve the food at the buffet table for the women who were all there. And we loved that, that role reversal, and it was just really fun, really supportive. And when we had these events that were multiple disciplines, we would have guest artists. We would invite guest artists to come in. [00:10:00] So we had Margo Gomez from San Francisco come in and do her stand-up, you know? She was Puerto Rican, and she would do stand-up. And then we might have Cherríe Moraga come in and do a reading from one of her latest tomes. Beto Araiza would do one of his performances, and then in the lobby, we may have paintings hanging by various artists. And then at different times, we were able to focus on, "Okay, who wants to do a solo show?"

And it was Miguel Angel Reyes. It's like, okay, we all provided the support behind setting up the show exhibit. And we also did these things in locations that were outside of the usual art gallery institutions. Like we did one show, *Jotería,* and it was actually the first time I even heard the word *Jotería*, which is a play on the word *joto*, like queer, and *lotería,* the game, the card game from Mexico. And we held it in—it was at the Da Vinci Gallery at LACC. But we also did one at Barnsdall Park, where there is the Municipal Art Gallery. But instead of holding it in the gallery, we held it in all the bushes and the trees. So, you know, in order to see the work, you actually had to go around and through the bushes and trees, the way that one would for cruising, right? And we got criticism for that because it was like, "Oh, you know, you're promoting promiscuity, which is part of HIV and AIDS." And we were more like, "No, we're just trying to have fun."

One of the other things was that there was a quite famous curator-writer, Shifra Goldman, who first started writing about Chicano art [00:12:00] back in the '60s. She lived in Silver Lake, and she was, I would say, older by that time. And in our promotional materials and where we make these requests for donations, we would say, "You could be an angel and donate this much," blah, blah, blah. Or, you know, the top one was "Be a love slave. You love VIVA, so you'll give $100," whatever it was. Well, she criticized us for using the word "slave," that it was making fun or making light of the history of slavery across the world, the globe. I actually went and met with her, and it was amazing to me. I thought, "Here we are in the '90s, and we're still facing the same kind of homophobic bullshit within the Chicano diaspora." And she, herself, wasn't Chicana. She was just writing about it. She was Jewish. But she said, "I don't understand why you need to even promote your homosexuality." And I said, "The fact that you even have to ask that question is the reason that we have to promote homosexuality. Because you haven't written about it. You ignore it. You are indifferent to it." You know, we—it was a good conversation. It wasn't bad, but—so we were very, very interested in wanting to be out front.

So, it came my turn to do a show, and I was—I forget who it was, someone else suggested that we call it *Chicos Modernos*. I said, "Fine." And, you know, *Chicos Modernos,* it was also a euphemism, a phrase that meant like "a modern boy," which meant that you were gay or queer, right? And Norris Fine Arts Gallery, it was this woman that had sort of—I mean, I think of it as almost like a pop-up gallery. She had the gallery for like a year or two, and she was totally willing to—and in fact, she looked to have artists that were sort of not part of the art scene, to come in and do things. So she had [00:14:00] women artists, Latino artists. Yeah, and it was great. It was fun. So it was my first, you know, one-man show here in LA, and I had everything from my collage—I mean, I had collages, I had paintings. I had, you know, *Chicos Modernos.*

I had also been doing a lot of collages, and so one, a big collage that was there and prominent I did, was *Bouquet for Mapplethorpe.* I don't think you've ever seen that image. But what I did is I took Xerox. I was totally into Xerox for my collages. I would Xerox images in black and white and then paint them over. I took all of his flowers and leaves. I definitely wanted to do the flowers and leaves, not any of the sexual stuff that he was most notorious for. And I did this big mandala, and a round thing with all his lilies and flowers and [leaves. –JT] That was great. I love that piece. Yeah, so that was my first one-man show, and that was sponsored by VIVA, through VIVA, with this woman, and it was great. It was fun. It's now a restaurant.

ALEX FIALHO: I think, too, one thing that feels really important about your histories is—and I think *Axis Mundo* shows that a lot, is that you are at the center of a lot of this community, or deeply involved with a lot of this community. And I think maybe let's take a minute, or a few, to talk about some of the artists who you worked closely with. Or even maybe not worked closely with, but who we lost to AIDS or had an important impact in *Axis Mundo* or otherwise. So, I thought let's start, I guess, with Mundo Meza and just your relationship, or anecdotes, or thoughts about the work. What immediate associations do you have with Mundo? And that's going to take us back to the '80s and earlier.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: But I'm curious about your relationship. [00:16:00]

JOEY TERRILL: It will take me back to the '70s because —

ALEX FIALHO: Exactly.

JOEY TERRILL: Right. So Mundo, I—

ALEX FIALHO: He passed away in '85, I believe, from AIDS-related complications.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, he was one of my first friends that died from AIDS. When I first met Mundo in the early '70s at Trouper's Hall, where the gay funky dances used to be held—the gay funky dances were sponsored by the Gay Community Center, which is what it was called back then. And they were a dollar to get in. And there was no age limit, so, you know, all for us queer youth and teenagers, we had a place where we could go and just—and it was just a hall, a dingy kind of hall and then there were records.

But when I went there, I met Gronk, and Mundo Meza, and Jim Aguilar, and Cyclona, and then, you know, other friends that—people that became friends, who weren't artists. But it was Mundo and Gronk who were the artists. And certainly, by their attire, they were in costumes, and it was all kind of a variation of glitter rock, fantasy, but

Latin style. And I had a big crush on Mundo. I just thought he was so cute, and he seemed very shy at the time. He was kind of soft-spoken, and then—so outside of the dances, we would then get together in other venues to socialize, and go to people's houses for parties and things like that. And then Gronk was involved with Asco, and we all were sort of involved with LACE, the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions. That was the first—I guess he was director or manager, was Robert Gil de Montes.

And Robert Gil de Montes and his partner, Eddie Dominguez, are also [00:18:00] good friends of mine. And they have been together since the '70s. So what is that? Forty years, I guess? They've been together for 40 years now, and they all have white hair, gray hair. But they were fun, they were very—I think we all were sort of, for lack of a better word, *traviesos,* we were like instigators. We were a little bit devilish in trying to, as we would say, we wanted to "wreck." Whether it was in our dress, our style, we wanted to wreck the straight society, the culture around us, whatever. And Mundo, I know, was really into fashion, and I think his partner at the time was Charles, who was also good looking. They were part of the East LA crowd. I just knew that this group was extra special to me because they weren't your typical East LA homeboy, jeans, khakis, white shirts. Yeah, so we would socialize and then, you know, Mundo actually ended up kind of veering off from Asco and was doing his own things.

One of the things that I love that he used to do was—there was a shoe store in West Hollywood called Fred Slatten's, which was the place where celebrities, Hollywood, would go to buy their custom-made platform shoes. Mundo [. . . would –JT] paint some of the shoes. So, when you had nine-inch heels or nine-inch platforms, I mean, that became like a little canvas. And he would have like these different scenes, and if you see some of his work that—and it's sort of Surrealist, and sort of Mesoamerican, and then sort of [00:20:00] deconstructing gender where you're not sure if it's a man or woman, and whatever. I mean, he had these great shoes. And whenever we would go out to West Hollywood to go to the clubs or bars, we always made sure we stopped at Fred Slatten's. And even if it was closed, usually they had their big display window, and there was a turning display that was usually mirrored, like a mirror ball. And there would be [his –JT] shoes turning. So you got to see Mundo's paintings [spin around in the window. –JT]

ALEX FIALHO: Amazing. How about Jack Vargas?

JOEY TERRILL: So, Jack Vargas—that's an interesting one. So Jack Vargas, I met through—when we did our *Escandalosas* show. He had been going to Cal State Long Beach. So there was a group of folks from Cal State Long Beach, artists, and that included Teddy Sandoval, Jack Vargas, and a couple of other people I'm not remembering right now. We did a show—they invited me to be in a show at Cal State Long Beach called *No Más Nos Dieron Tres Días!*, or something like that. It was very cool because I was meeting all these different people. But I didn't really know Jack very well.

I was living at Sycamore Park Drive, and we—my friend Eddie became my roommate as well. And then we had this roommate from hell, a horrible, horrible guy. He was a little bit older than us, and he was totally ripping us off, taking this. And I was so naïve. I couldn't believe people would be so horrible. But Ray was his name. And he came home one night, and he's like, "Oh, Joey." He goes, "I met this really great guy. His name is Jack, and he—I want to bring him over for dinner," or whatever. I said, "Well, sure" and he goes then, "You'll like him because he's an artist," and I said, "Oh, really?" I said, "Okay." And I thought, you know, yeah, let's see what kind of artist he is.

Anyway, [00:22:00] Jack shows up for dinner, and I love the way he was dressed. He kind of had like the big baggy pants and a sweater vest, and he had a great shag haircut. But he showed up holding colored pencils and chalk, and I thought, "Oh, God, how pretentious, like, you know, 'I'm an artist.' Like, he might as well have shown up with a palette on his head, like a hat." And he also had a little bit of an attitude. He seemed snooty, and he talks—he's a little bit affected. And we sat there at dinner, and I just thought, "Oh, I can't stand this guy." We just did not get along at all. And Ray was like, "But don't you like—?" I said, "No." I said, "You go ahead, you date him, whatever."

And then, it was about two weeks later, it was on a Saturday, I was at home, and there was a knock at the door. I go to answer it, and it's Jack. And he said, "Oh, hello. I'm here to see Ray." And I said, "Well, I'm sorry, Ray's not here." And he said, "Well, I was just going to go see the Jules Olitski Show over at the Pasadena Museum of Art. And I just thought I would drop by to see if Ray wanted to go with me." I said, "Well, he's not here." And he goes, "You wouldn't be interested in going, would you?" And I took it like a challenge. I was like, "You know what, I'll go with you." I was like [laughs]—and I thought, "Oh, we're going to end up like getting into [. . . it –JT]." I don't know why, I just took it as a challenge, and we had the best time. [Laughs.]

We went, and we were talking about the Jules Olitski work, and I just thought, "Wow, I totally misjudged him entirely." And part of what it was, was that he was from Cypress in Orange County. He was upper-middle-class suburban, and so he had this [idea –JT] of like, "Yeah, all you Chicano artists, you're all from East LA, your barrio," which we were. But so what, right? We were all artists. And we ended up really connecting. And I thought, "Oh, my God, I love his ideas, [00:24:00] and his concepts." And he was already talking to me about Le Club for Boys, and his ideas of wanting to show the suburbia as this sort of subtext of homosexuality that goes on. So, there were—he was wanting to do things that were—what do the suburban husbands really do at night, and where the—you know, all this stuff. So we were exchanging ideas and information, and we ended up being really good friends. He also was a librarian.

ALEX FIALHO: I love that piece at ONE, *What Do the Suburban Husbands Do at Night?*

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that one. Well, that was one of the Mail art pieces that he sent to me. And again, he, Teddy Sandoval, myself—we were all big fans of color Xerox because that was brand new. And so, his thrust of what he would send out was usually related to suburbia on some level, some way. Ours was more like street, you know, barrio, homeboy. And so that's why his fake institution is Le Club for Boys. Kind of a little bit snooty. And then I did homage to that. One of the drawings that I did, which is in the show, and it shows two guys wearing T-shirts that say Le Club for Boys.

And, to be honest with you, Jack is one of the only—one of the artists in our group—that we actually had sex. And I don't even think of it as—it was really like we made love. I say that, I don't know if there's a distinction or not. But it was when I was already on Mariposa, and so we were—we had already been friends for a while. It hadn't occurred to me, but I always thought he was attractive, really attractive. And, he just said, "You know I"—he goes, "I really—you know, I love you. I love you as a friend, but," he goes, "I would like to spend the night." I said, "Hey, okay." And it was great. It was nice. [00:26:00] But we both—neither of us thought that, "Oh, this is going to turn into a relationship," so to speak.

ALEX FIALHO: How about—from Mundo, I moved to Jack quickly, but I wanted to ask about—I mean, in my New York perspective, I hear a lot about Klaus Nomi and Nicolas Moufarrege, many others, as people who had passed in the early and mid-'80s as the firsts in the arts community to be known widely that passed away. How did Mundo's passing impact you or affect you—

JOEY TERRILL: Horribly.

ALEX FIALHO: —as you said, one of the earliest?

JOEY TERRILL: I mean, when Mundo died, he—so the year before, Craig Brown had died, who I told you had left feeling that God was punishing him. And Craig Brown wasn't an artist, but he was someone that I had dated and that I really liked. He was friends in the arts circle because he would attend all the different things that we were doing, and so that was personal. When Mundo died, that was—that was cutting really close. It was like my inner circle, one of my first queer, gay, teenage friends—and the thing about it was that for the last year, he didn't want people to see him because of his being disfigured with KS. So, I wasn't allowed to see him, and that really angered me and frustrated me. And I understand it, and there were other folks, too, that didn't want people to see them towards the end. And when he died, he was living with Jef Huereque there at the Brewery [Arts Complex]. And, you know, I—

ALEX FIALHO: Were they partners or roommates?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, they were partners. We would rendezvous with them as a couple. As partners, we would rendezvous at LA Plaza for the Latino drag queens [00:28:00] on La Brea. And we were—they were also part of this entourage of British ex-pats that were here that includes Simon Doonan and Therese, otherwise known as Pinky. They were part of that neo-romance movement out of London.

ALEX FIALHO: Steven Arnold? Or maybe not?

JOEY TERRILL: Well, Steven Arnold was the photographer, and he photographed a lot of people. But here in LA, it was Simon mostly, and Therese, and then Luciana who I—when I saw her, I recognized her. It's like, "Oh, my God, you're in the Derek Jarman videos, right?" And she was like, "Yes, I am." So they used to like to go to LA Plaza, which I had already had a history of going there, and it was all these Mexican drag queens. And for them, they would say, "You know, for us, this is like Berlin, it's decadent." I was like, "Wow," you know? So, I was seeing it through their perspective, you know? And, of course, there was partying, and drugs, and fun, and all this stuff. But when Mundo died, it hit everybody really hard.

And I remember—I don't even remember the details of the funeral service. I just remember going back to the studio, Mundo and Jef's studio, to be there with Jef. And I actually spent the night. And again, and I don't know how this comes off, but I think I was sleeping on the floor or something, or there was a mattress or something, because there just wasn't enough beds for everyone. Simon was there with me, and Simon and I—and again, I say this as—we were sexual with each other. But it wasn't sex like, "Yeah, baby, let's have sex." It was really like, "Let me hug you, let me hold you." Because he had been partners with [00:30:00] Mundo prior to Jef and, I know he was a collaborator with them. They did all those windows and fashion, and he loved him, and he was devastated.

And I just remember us holding each other that evening, and I felt like we were doing that for Mundo. We were doing it for each other. It was just our way of dealing with what we were going through. And then, I think, it was the next day or two days later that I had heard that—I mean, Jef said, "Oh my God, Mundo's family came in, and they just took everything." You know? And they treated Jef horribly. And I think that was the first incident of a homophobic family coming in and treating a partner with such disrespect. I then knew of other situations like that, after that occurring. But that was devastating to us.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, completely. Let's take a quick pause, I think.

JOEY TERRILL: Sure.

[Audio break.]

ALEX FIALHO: I just wanted to follow up on that thought around the connection and loss. And it reminds me of a movie, [*BPM, –AF*] *Beats Per Minute,,*about ACT UP Paris. It just came out this year, in 2017. And there's a moment where one of the lead characters passes away and the other lead character who was his partner has sex either like the night of or shortly thereafter. And it really is a powerful moment of both connection and loss through sex. And I'm just wanting to follow up around your thought there, but also off-record, you just connected it to your work in and around HIV and loss of sight, so, I wanted to prompt you there.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. So, one of the things that I look at in terms of HIV and the amount of grieving that we were all going through, the anger, the frustration, the—you know. And again, at a time when [00:32:00] there was all this homophobic pushback and discrimination against us. That sex sometimes was—we went from the 1970s where sex was free and open, and sort of no commitment, and just a good fuck or a good lay. Where there were situations like when Mundo died, where in lying there talking with Simon, that it just naturally seems that I needed to and felt compelled to touch him, embrace him, that led to sex. But we both knew that we were doing that, and it about the emotion and love that we had for Mundo.

And it was somehow—I don't know. I don't know if this would be the right word. It was life-affirming. Life-affirming at a time when death was all around us. In the same way, as we've been talking about this, I was thinking back about—in my role managing the HIV and Vision Loss Program, that there was much more of a personal connection to the folks that were experiencing HIV-related sight loss because I myself was HIV-positive. And in my personal life, I had friends who were dying and going blind as well. So, many of the professional parameters that we would have, like I would never think about touching a client—we threw those out the window. And I sort of just intuitively allowed myself to do. Like I mentioned where the one client who was the barber, and when I asked if there was anything more that I could do, he said, "Would you let me touch your hair?" And I did. [00:34:00]

And I mean, that was a very intimate moment, and it was very moving to me, and I also knew that it—you know, there was no other context that I could think of where that would even have come up. So touching and hugging for a lot of those clients was part of what I was providing to them. And again, you have to realize, in many of those cases, people that they cared about, family members wouldn't touch them. They didn't. There were folks that would say like one of the things they miss was just being touched, being hugged. Not even having sex, just being hugged. They said people wouldn't have them. And if their partner died and then they were left to the homophobic family to take care of them, I mean, it was really ugly.

And certainly with gay men specifically in the '70s, going out and having sex when I would go to the sex clubs, it was almost like a political act. It was almost defiant. It was life-affirming, and it was saying, "Yes, we are here. And every time we have sex, it's a challenge to the homophobic culture in which we exist." I almost thought of it as a political act. And not all the sex was good. It was sort of like, "Okay, well, there will be another one coming along." But with HIV and AIDS, it took on a much deeper emotional connection to us as individuals that was affirming who we were and what we were going through. And I don't know if other people experienced it that way. I'm sure they did. I know probably—I know certain friends of mine would also agree with me on that.

ALEX FIALHO: It's powerful to be here in your home studio, too, that you've been in, you said, for 22 years. And we're surrounded [00:36:00] by your art, and it has high ceilings, and there's paintings everywhere. But I was really struck just taking our break just now, I hadn't seen this painting *LOSS*, right by the door. And it feels like it's a big part of the conversation we're in, in this particular moment of the oral history. And I'm curious just to hear about that work: when it was made, what your thoughts were about it. You said you made multiple—

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. So that's when I was with VIVA. And I think I first exhibited them at the *Chicos Modernos* exhibit, my one-man show where—I had seen the work of General Idea, and the re-appropriation of—or the refiguring of the Robert Indiana *LOVE* paintings, which I loved from the '60s. And how they had turned them into *AIDS*. And then I also saw one, I think it was maybe Gran Fury or through ACT UP, that said*RIOT*.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah.

JOEY TERRILL: Right?

ALEX FIALHO: Gran Fury.

JOEY TERRILL: And I kept thinking on love, that the more you love, the more loss you experience. And that's one of the things that I became aware of. I had a lot of friends. I loved a lot of people, and because I did, I experienced a tremendous amount of loss. And it's the other side of that coin, for people that don't like people, that don't have very many friends, they don't experience much loss. But I know I did and so I did a couple of the *LOSS* based on the Robert Indiana *LOVE* paintings. And then I realized that it's continuing, that it's ongoing. So from the early '90s up until sometime in the 2000s, I must have done maybe 10 to 12 of these, and sometimes given them to people as gifts. And I still have a couple here. And to me, that loss is still there. I mean, when you love somebody, [00:38:00] that doesn't disappear. And just like the loss doesn't disappear—

ALEX FIALHO: Are they always in the gray—on a darker gray palette? Or how does it—

JOEY TERRILL: I started out originally with black on gray, because—sort of the colors of death, and grieving, or funereal colors. And the last couple of ones that I did, I said, "You know what, I'm going to put in some other colors." I did chartreuse and gray and just started playing with the colors a little bit. So I did orange and chartreuse. I just chose two really bright colors that would be the opposite of what we think of loss. And maybe that would cause some people to think, "Wow, where is he going with this?" I mean, when you think of loss, you tend to think of somber, dark—or I do anyway, funerals, people dressed in black. And I remember at various times when we would go to someone's funeral, there are sometimes people would request, "No one is to wear black," or it was requested by the deceased that, "Please wear bright colors." Or their favorite color was purple and so people would—to honor them, they would wear the bright colors. And it was sort of the countering the narrative of, "You're all sick and dying and it's all bad."

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. There's a few other artists I want to be sure to ask you about on the record, around both their work, and also anecdotes, and knowing them. One is Ray Navarro.

JOEY TERRILL: Uh-huh [affirmative]. So, Ray Navarro wasn't someone that I knew for an extremely long time. He was someone that I knew hung out with Diane Gamboa, and I knew Diane, and so he was on the periphery. But it was through her that I met him, and we started dating. And I mean, to be frank, at that point in the '80s, [00:40:00] Ray—there was always something, it seemed like there was something that he was holding back, or there was something, a mystery about him that I couldn't seem to break through. So, I kept trying to get closer to him, and I didn't seem to be able to. We took a trip to New York, and we went to stay with Victor and Steven, my friends Victor and Steven in New York. And, you know, from my perspective, Ray just seemed to be in a not very good mood, and it ended up being not a very good trip. I mean, we had some fun moments, but overall, I was surprised at how—instead of us getting closer, we seemed to drift. I don't think at that point he had been tested. I don't think he knew his status, and it wasn't until a few years later that he moved to New York—he loved New York, totally did—and that he became active and embraced his activism, which I applauded and observed from afar. When he was involved with ACT UP in New York, I really wasn't in touch with him after that. It was in the '80s, here in LA, and I think we must have dated for—it couldn't have been more than six months.

ALEX FIALHO: Being New York-based, he's somebody who comes on my radar a lot in the Visual AIDS capacity, and through DIVA TV and ACT UP. I really loved the essay in the *Axis Mundo* catalogue "*No me está pasando.*" I hadn't heard from this specific Chicano, queer perspective around some of the stakes of his work and his video practice. I point people to that too, to learn more about the range of work that Ray did.

JOEY TERRILL: So, you know, his mother Pat is one of his best supporters.

ALEX FIALHO: Exactly.

JOEY TERRILL: And it was at my show at the ONE Gallery, in 2013 [00:42:00] or something, where I met her. I hadn't met her before, and when we were chatting, she said, "Oh, yeah, you're Joey." She goes, "Yeah, I remember that." She goes, "Yeah, he didn't have a good time with you in New York," [laughs] and I said, "I know he didn't." And, you know, we were—we talked about that, and it was good. I mean, I was learning more about Ray and what he had gone through when he approached his activism in ACT UP. And I thought, "What a great mom to have, as a support, and strength." So when I do run into her, I am engaging with her in a way that I didn't when I knew Ray [while –JT] he was alive.

ALEX FIALHO: How about Gerardo Velazquez?

JOEY TERRILL: Gerardo, I really didn't know very well outside of just saying hello or nodding to. He was in —

ALEX FIALHO: I love those works in *Axis Mundo*, *The Neglected Martyr* in *Axis Mundo*, the flag?

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, so he was very intense. He was in Nervous Gender, and I used to hang out in those—either it was the Brave Dog, or the theoreticals at the AntiClub, and they were venues for punk or alternative music that also included performance at times. So Johanna Went would perform, Ron Athey would perform, and then Nervous Gender. And Gerardo—his friends were my friends. You know how that sometimes works where there's one person who's the pivot, but then they know one person and another—but you don't know each other? He always struck me as intense, even at the club. I rarely saw him—from my viewpoint, I rarely saw him smiling.

There were a couple of people like that, that I—like even Alice Armendariz—Alice Bag, who was close to him—I knew who she was but she [00:44:00] frightened me, [laughs] to be honest. Because she seemed so intense, and she would be up there on the stage, and she was fierce. She was really fierce in her presentation, and her butting up against some of these white punks and stuff, who I knew were racists. And as it turns out—and so I knew Teresa Covarrubias who also knew her, and Teresa Covarrubias sang with The Brat.

So, these circles intersected, and so some of the folks I intersected with I knew well, and then everyone else is on the periphery. And Gerardo was one of those that I wasn't real close to, but I knew other people that were. As it turns out—I didn't even know when Gerardo got sick. I really wasn't in touch with him, but I heard from my other friends about, "Oh, he's sick," or "He died," you know? And that was—so that was one person that I thought, I really never got a chance to get close to him.

With Alice, it's been all these years later that she and I have now been engaging with each other, and that's been through the Maricón Collective. And the thing is, is that she's a sweetheart. I love her. She's so strong. She's a powerful woman, and, you know, she's a school teacher. She taught [laughs] children. And so, you know, her persona on stage was angry, and intense, and yet, she's a gentle soul and she's strong. I admire her tremendously. She has this great husband. So I actually engage with them now more on a social level than I did back in the '80s or '90s, when I would be in the audience watching them perform.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah.

JOEY TERRILL: Does that make sense?

ALEX FIALHO: Completely. How about—we talked a lot about Teddy yesterday in terms of Maricón, but in terms of his work, his artwork, and the dialogue you two had, or maybe your thoughts on [00:46:00] his work now, or—?

JOEY TERRILL: So, you know, with—

ALEX FIALHO: Teddy Sandoval.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, with Teddy Sandoval. Teddy Sandoval was—I consider one of my best friends, closest friends. And then he became partners with Paul Polubinskas. So for me, for years, it was Teddy and Paul, Teddy and Paul, Teddy and Paul. Teddy and I would collaborate. We would visit each other's studio. We would come up with ideas, and that's how we came up with the idea of the maricón T-shirts, and doing the photoshoot. We also were thinking of doing novelas. We had more ideas than we actually completed and saw to fruition, but we were always experimenting.

At the same time, when he was with Paul, Teddy got involved in ceramics, and he had his own little—him and Paul had their own little company called Artquake. And so, they did a number of ceramic pieces that incorporated, you know, homo-homeboy and Aztec imagery, in the ceramics that would sell as well as—and I have examples here that I could show you. And I always admired that. And so, there were a couple of times when I would go to their house and, "Hey, we need someone to help just put on the glaze on a couple of these," and I would go and assist. And then Teddy was also on the board of directors of VIVA, and he was getting sick. Teddy and Paul were very private about it, at least with some of us friends. They really didn't—you know, because I was constantly saying, "Hey, I'm here. You need me for something, let me know."

I didn't want to be intrusive, but at the same—I wanted to help. I wanted to do something. I remember one time—Teddy and Paul had this great garden, and we would always go over there for different events, and potlucks, and food, and [00:48:00] parties, and I loved their garden. One time I was there working in the garden with Paul, and Teddy was I think in bed, or he might have even been at another friend's house. I just remember this—[what I thought –JT] was a weird scenario as Paul was digging in the garden, and I just brought up one more time. I said, "Paul, I really would like to be able to help out or do what I can." And Paul, without even looking at me, said, "You know, sometimes friends really don't need to have their friends be that close. But knowing that you're there is what [is important." –JT] And he didn't even look at me. To be honest with you, I thought it was weird. I wanted to talk frankly and directly about it.

And there was one time where Paul called me up and said, "Joey, could you help me out tonight?" I was like, "Yes, please." I wanted to do something. And he had to go and run an errand or something, and he said, "Could you just come and watch Teddy for this one night?" And Teddy was already having dementia, and I remember Teddy sitting on the couch, in his [pajamas, and –JT] every now and then there would be like little things that he would say that I thought, "Oh, there's the Teddy that I know." But otherwise, he was sort of in a daze, in his own world. I helped him eat, and I just—I was always feeling frustrated that I couldn't do more.

And at the VIVA board meetings, it was becoming more and more apparent that as we were sitting there talking and Teddy was already gaunt—that his thinking processes were being affected. I mean, he was not remembering things and we couldn't—and it reached a point where [00:50:00] he had to resign. He resigned from VIVA. But I also knew, and Paul had said, and I think family members had expressed, that his being in VIVA at our—I don't know if the right word would be "allow." But allowing him to remain a member of VIVA, even as he was experiencing dementia, meant the world to him. It really did.

Teddy's loss was a major one for me. I consider him—you know, and I don't know if this—I'm trying to come up with words that aren't corny, but an artistic collaborator-soulmate. I felt like we saw eye to eye. He had these great ideas that I relished, and I just—I was very close, very, very close to him. And we had lots of experiences, you know, artistically collaborating, as well as just having fun, going out, dancing. And sometimes he would dress up as Rosa de la Montaña, you know, at the club. That was part of his persona. And other times, it was just getting together with friends, and eating and drinking, smoking pot, sitting in the garden. He was family, definitely family. And I still consider Paul family. And, you know, he lives in Palm Springs, and I see him at least once or twice a year, if not more frequently.

ALEX FIALHO: What was the experience of seeing a lot of this work again at MOCA and ONE—in the context of *Axis Mundo*, bringing all of your work together again in a major exhibition space?

JOEY TERRILL: This [00:52:00]—so, I'll tell you, I sent an email to Ondine Chavoya, David Frantz, and Ricky Rodriguez, Professor Ricky Rodriguez. Those were the three individuals that I worked most closely with for these past few years leading up to the *Axis Mundo* show. And I wanted to express to them that I—and I know I've said, "Oh, thank you, and I love this show, and it's great," and this, that, and the other. But I really needed to let them know that this specific show means so much to me in a way that I hadn't even realized until I actually saw it all together.

On the one hand, it seems like it's documenting our artistic collaborations, and artwork, and engagement with one another, that I thought was going to be lost forever because of AIDS. On the other hand, it also—I've been very aware that it also has exposed all of this work and all of these artists to this whole new generation of academics, of students, artists. And I'm thrilled that I'm alive to see it. That I'm alive to tell the stories, not just my own but also the stories, as much as I can, about those artists who are no longer here. And the impact of HIV on the artistic community. I mean, from Carlos Almaraz to Teddy, Jack, Gerardo, I mean—you know? And then, any number of friends who weren't themselves artists but who were parts of these collaborations. A lot of the folks in the *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, you know, are gone as well.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. [00:54:00] It also feels centrally important in terms of a larger conversation that's happened in the last few years definitely, especially around this exhibition *Art AIDS America,* which was an important show in terms of its scale and museum resources, but also was widely critiqued as being a whitewashed context. And I think that the work that's done in a show like *Axis Mundo* points to a lot of possibilities for broader narratives, that bring in, primarily the centering perspectives of folks of color in the context of the show. [. . . For instance, from a Visual AIDS perspective—which is, you know, New York-centric in that we've been based in New York for 30 years—the fact that many of those artists weren't in our online Artist+ Registry is really important to now add their perspectives to the work that we do there. –AF]

So it feels like just the beginning of—not the beginning because they've been making work. They had been making work in that moment for so long, but a reopening of the dialogue around these artists in such an important moment. Especially while a lot of their partners are still here. Folks like Paul, who can steward estates and probably have a lot of the work. And there's a way that, you know, if it doesn't happen sooner rather than later, then a lot of that work will be passed from partners to other places, and there just starts to have the possibility to really be lost to history, and that's a problem.

JOEY TERRILL: So, you know, regarding *Art AIDS America,* when Jonathan Katz first talked to me about his doing the groundwork for developing what became *Art AIDS America*, I said to him, I said, "Well, if I can make a suggestion." I said, "I just hope that it really is broader than just focusing on the New York artists, and being so New York-centric." I said, "Because, I mean, I was definitely familiar with everything from the ACT UP [00:56:00] Agitprop, and the Mapplethorpe, and, all the New York art scene, David Wojnarowicz and all of that. But I said, "There were a lot of other artists who weren't as recognized, but who were doing things on the West Coast or in San Francisco and LA and even in Texas, in Austin. And there's a lot of Latino artists." I said, "I want to make sure that they're [included. –JT]"—and he said to me, "Okay, why don't you—would you want to contribute an essay to the catalogue?" And prior to that, the idea of me contributing an essay to a catalogue, I would have [thought –JT], "Oh, my gosh, I don't know. Should I, could I, would I?" And I just said, "Yes, I will." [Laughs.] I said, "I'm going to take this opportunity."

And what I did, and I am grateful that I did, I reached out to Rob Hernandez, Professor Rob Hernandez, who was written about my work. Because I knew that I could bring my personal experiences with a lot of the artists, but that would be mostly Los Angeles-based. And I knew that there was much broader engagement with artists from Texas, Washington State, Colorado. I mean, the Southwest. And I knew that Professor Rob Hernandez would bring [an academic eye –JT], and his scholarly work to it. So we co-authored this essay, and it essentially was where, you know, he laid the groundwork for looking at the Latino diaspora in terms of art production related to HIV and AIDS, and then he interviewed me and we did this. And I think it worked in that [. . . –JT], from my perspective, I felt like *Art AIDS America* at least made this attempt, certainly for Latino artists.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah, in the catalogue. Two people I want to talk about definitely before we move on, one is Carlos Almaraz. [. . . –AF]

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. So, [00:58:00] Carlos Almaraz was—when I was a young Chicano artist in the '70s, I already knew of Carlos Almaraz and his work. He was one of Los Four, which were four Chicano artists who were recognized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was Magu, Gilbert Luján, I think Edward Rocha maybe, and Carlos Almaraz. Carlos's work was the work that I responded to the most. His sort of expressionistic style with these sort of Surrealist, like, bodies and figuration. And he would do these paintings of *Echo Park,* and they were beautiful. I knew of him, but I didn't really know him. I also knew that he had married Elsa Flores, who was a photographer. And she was part of, again, these art circles where I knew all these people that knew her. And then I would run into—I think I would run into her a couple of times here in LA.

Then when I moved to New York in 1980, my sister and I, our first night there, we just arrived at Victor's apartment. And Victor said, "Okay, you know, wash up, brush your hair." He goes, "Carlos and Elsa are in town, and we're going to go over to Dan Guerrero's house." And I'm like, "Who's Dan Guerrero?" I didn't know who Dan was. He's now a friend of mine. He and Richard were living in Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, and we went and we all met and ate at a Greek restaurant. And Carlos and Elsa and I were joking that, well, I had to come to New York in order to meet Carlos and Elsa. Because we had been to the same art exhibits, they were familiar with me, they were—you know, we knew all the same people.

To be honest with you, Carlos struck me as somebody that—I guess he had heard, as we were talking, he heard that my sister and I—we had said we had gone to Catholic school. And he made these assumptions that we were probably [01:00:00] uptight or something, or Catholic. And so, he kept trying to shock us or shock me. And he would look at these buildings and he would say, "Wow, don't those—?" And it seemed like he was trying really hard to show that he was heterosexual. "Wow, look at that building," he goes, "Doesn't that look like breasts, like women's breasts?" I go, "Really, breasts?" I go, "No." I said, "It looks phallic to me, like what's the"—you know? And he was like, "Oh, okay." And then he said, "Do you know that in New York, there is a bookstore where you can go and get a blow job?" And I said, "Uh, yes," and I said, "You know what? They have those same places in LA, and I've been to them." You know? And he was like, "Whoa."

So he was—it was this little, like, back-and-forth challenge. And I knew that when he moved back to LA, I mean, I had already known Victor had mentioned that Carlos was sort of either bisexual or whatever. But he always had these ideas in his head. He was very lively. He was nice to me. And they were fun to be around, him and Elsa. Because then when Victor would come and visit back to LA, we would all get together, either at a dinner, or at a bar, or something like that. And then when Carlos started getting sick, I realized that, "Oh, he has AIDS." And then, his last couple of years, once again, when—he was one of these people that once he got sick, I didn't really engage with him that much towards the end, because the focus was on either getting well, staying well. But Dr. Rolgolsky—I knew that he had a relationship with Dr. Rolgolsky, and that's why when I got tested, I went to Dr. Rolgolsky, because of his relationship with Carlos. But I think the retrospective at LACMA [01:02:00] that he had done is amazing, really great, and you—it also shows how in some of his work—

[END OF TERRIL17_2OF2_TRACK 2.]

JOEY TERRILL: —there [are –JT] his struggles with his own homosexuality. The thing is that he and Dan Guerrero went to grammar school together, and they loved each other, and they moved to New York in 1960. They were partners in New York, but Carlos moved back. Dan Guerrero stayed there and became entrenched in Broadway, theater, and he's still a manager and producer. He's the son of Lalo Guerrero who is the iconic Chicano musician, and singer and songwriter, that has influenced everyone from Carlos Santana to Linda Ronstadt. Dan Guerrero rejected his father's cultural musical output, because he was interested in Broadway and theater. He was gay. Anyway, he ended up moving back to LA, reconnecting with Lalo, and became his manager towards the end. He also reconnected with, and was very close to, both Carlos and his wife Elsa. And so I know that Elsa and Dan are working on a documentary on Carlos, and I'm going to—I'm really looking forward to seeing that.

ALEX FIALHO: Amazing. And then the last *Axis Mundo* thrust that I would be interested in is—I was reading a really powerful essay by—or a dedication—by Harry Gamboa, Jr. to a lot of the artists who passed from [AIDS-related complications. –AF] And I think that the *Chicano Male Unbonded* series is so powerful in terms of the sort of documentation, but also as indexes of those artists who are no longer with us. But also, I know that you were photographed by him for that project. And I'm also curious about the *Imperfecto* video that you are involved in too. Just curious about your collaboration with Harry, which is independent of an AIDS context specifically, [00:02:00] but I'm thinking about it in terms of this dedication or the way that *Chicano Male Unbonded* is included in *Axis Mundo*.

JOEY TERRILL: So, a couple of things. One is that Asco was involved in doing these theatrical performances, out in downtown, out in the streets. They would do their *No Movies* and photoshoots. And like a lot of us who were doing collaborative things, I would get wind of or they—somebody would tell me, "Hey, were going to do a video or something and at someone's house, and do you want to come and be a part of it?" And I would say, "Sure." So, I was never a star in any of his works, which was fine, but I was either in the background, or I was like an extra, so to speak. And to me, that was what the art scene was for me. It was Asco and all of the surrounding participants. And that included Gronk, it included Patssi, and it included Harry Gamboa. And we knew that we were doing this despite, and instead of, the art world infrastructure that was indifferent to Chicano art. When he started doing the *Chicano Male Unbonded Series,* I thought it was a brilliant concept, and he asked me to pose for it. I think it was the early '90s. And I said, "Absolutely." I said, "I felt honored to be selected."

The [. . . pose –JT] that every individual, every male that was photographed, usually was at night, and we were kind of to stand in a sort of a defiant gesture. And the idea or the concept was to push back against the fear of the Latino male, especially at night. And how people might assume that we're either going to be gangbangers, or [00:04:00] somehow be bad people. And I love that here were these real *chingon*-looking Chicanos standing there, and then their title would indicate that they were musicians, or artists, or academics, or a scientist, or a scholar, or whatever it was.

Yeah, and so when we did that, he sort of just set the parameters of what he wanted to do and then he asked me to kind of choose where we might like to do this. And I chose over next to Philippe's Restaurant. Philippe's is the iconic restaurant for French-dip sandwiches in downtown LA, that over the years, Asco, Gronk, Marisela Norte, a whole bunch of us used to go and sit, and talk, and discuss, and have coffee. It was a meeting place. Harry's sister, Diane Gamboa, was someone that I would interact with and engage with off and on over the years. She had her own issues, which—sometimes she would then break away and not talk to people. I know she had problems with Harry. And then I was also close to Marisela Norte, who was Harry's girlfriend at the time in the '80s. Marisela and I were very, very close, and we've known each other all these years. She works at CAFAM, the Craft & Folk Art Museum. She also used to work at MOCA, but she's a writer and a poet, and I would always go to her readings as well. So at various times, you know, Harry would be in those locations.

One thing I did when my sister got married in 1985, since I was involved with the wedding itself, I asked Harry, "Could you do me a favor?" I said, "I would [laughs] love for you to—I want to invite you to my sister's wedding, [00:06:00] but could you take some pictures?" And I realized shortly afterwards that, on some level, I think Harry felt like—especially with the way he would deal with the art world—that I'm asking him to do photographs to make art, and I'm not going to pay him. I was just asking as a friend. And he did. He did it, but I got this sense afterwards that he had kind of felt like—you know, maybe he wouldn't just do that for anyone. [Laughs.]

And I totally appreciate it, and I said, "Hey"—and there's a couple of great photos of my sister—you know, who's now dead—with a very happy moment on the dance floor, with the mariachis in the background, a photo by Harry Gamboa. And I would never think of selling it or make profit off of it. It's a personal image, and I've always appreciated that Harry did it, even though I think he probably like—you know? You know what I mean? And how I look at it is I've been approached at times, over the years, where somebody has said, "Oh, could you do a painting of my mother?" And I'm like, "You know, I really think that what you want is—you probably you should get a photo of your mom and have it blown up really nice and frame it. That's what you really want. I don't think you want my interpretation of"—right? So.

ALEX FIALHO: Yeah. I think let's zoom ahead to more recent work, so we can make sure that we have some time on that. We're sitting in your, as I've said before, amazing home and studio, and we're surrounded by your still lifes. And I want to talk definitely about some of the more recent still life practice. And also just maybe situate us, you know, where we are. [. . . –AF]

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. So, that's actually the first still life I did. I think it's—Okay. So in terms of making work, this is my studio, [00:08:00] and I make work right here where I'm sitting. Sometimes that table there. Rather than work on a canvas sitting on an easel, which I do as well, most of the time, I lay the canvas flat and will work on it the way that—you know, painting or collaging and stuff.

ALEX FIALHO: And you said you've been in this space for quite some time, and where are we in Los Angeles and —

JOEY TERRILL: So this is the Santa Fe Art Colony. It's originally a Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA-funded project, that was one of the first projects to look at industrial spaces that have been underused or undeveloped, and turning it into locations where there was [artist lofts where –JT] artists could come and live. And it's an artist-only complex. You have to be an artist to live here. So you show a curriculum vitae, whatever, as opposed to some of the other loft spaces that had been in the industrial district, where you could just be anyone and go and live there.

I've been here now for 22 years, which still surprises me because I had thought when I first moved here, it would be temporary. And it's actually now the longest place I've ever lived. So lots of history here. Certainly lots of activities with artists coming in and out. We've had parties here, but also every year, we do an open studio. I tended to look at it as a party more than, "Oh, people are going to come and purchase work." I would also invite some of my other artist friends like Ana [Landeros] and Victor Durazo to bring their work, so we would have three times as much work here.

The Still Life series that I've done came out of—by the time of the advent [00:10:00] of the HIV cocktail, I became aware that—I realized that I guess I'm not going to die, Like, I [. . . had been –JT] thinking that I was. And I had this ambivalence about living in the age of the HIV cocktail. I was also involved with advocacy work through AIDS Healthcare Foundation, going up against the—taking the pharmaceutical industry to task for their price-gouging on HIV meds, and advocating for more accessibility to them.

But, one day, I was sitting at my breakfast table, and there was my cereal and—but there was my HIV meds. And I thought, "Gee, this is so surreal." You know? And I kept trying to think of: How can I make art that is looking at my ambivalence and viewing these drugs as a product? You know, just like Coca-Cola or anything else that are making billions of dollars in profit for the pharmaceutical industry. And I remembered and looked up again Still Lifes by Tom Wesselmann from the 1960s, which I had always liked. And I thought, "Ah, I think that's the trope that I will use or draw from." So I just borrowed from his using advertisements from American magazines, that he would collage into these surreal still lifes that were critiquing American consumerism on one level, and perhaps even celebrating it.

But what I intended to do was I wanted to both queer-ize and Mexican-ize my still lifes. So, I set out that my still lifes were always going to be on a table with a Mexican blanket. And I originally started out [00:12:00] by putting the actual HIV meds right on the canvas, the capsules. And I had acquired a number of drugs in capsules because I had been in a couple of different clinical trials. So I had Crixivan, all these bottles of Crixivan left over, and that was one of the first ones that I did. And it's hanging here on this wall, and I decided—

ALEX FIALHO: What's this one called? And what year, do you remember?

JOEY TERRILL: This is *Still Life with Crixivan*. It's on the back there. I think it was '96, '95? There were a couple of things about it. One was that I used to—I really made these personal. When you looked at the Tom Wesselmann Still Lifes, there is no personal narrative really. They're sort of all collage from advertisements from the magazines. What I tried to do was I wanted to personalize them, so I have included Mexican products, like the Mexican chocolate, along with the Crixivan pills. Rick and I—my partner Rick, my one, big, true love in life—we used to hang wall-covering off and on for about 20 years, where we would do these big jobs, and there was inevitably a roll or two of wallpaper left over. There were always high-end wallpapers that the designer or the clients would say, "Oh, just go ahead and trash it." And I said, "Oh, no, I can't trash these. These are too beautiful," and I would carry them. I said, "One day, I'm going to figure out a way to use them, *rasquache*, in my art."

I carried them for years wherever I would move to, and once I determined to do the Still Lifes, I used the wallpaper in the back. So, on a personal level, they're a reminder of [00:14:00] me and Rick, and the work that we used to do. And then I also decided to be a little bit playful with the imagery in the Still Lifes. So there are some overt sexual symbols that one could read into it or not. There are some phallic symbols. But I was feeling that, you know, I'm glad that these products are available, and they keep me alive. But on the other hand, I really am bothered by the way the pharmaceutical industry controls the conversation on healthcare in this country. And then at one point, I realized that using the pills themselves was not necessary because it's art. I can make up. So, I started to make up the pills or drugs, making them larger, bigger. And everything in these Still Lifes is—the perspective is off. They're skewed.

I wanted them to, at the same time, be familiar—because they're products—but also strange. So, in fact, when people would come in to my studio and look at the Still Lifes, there were people that would say, "Oh, I really like these. I like—oh, Coca-Cola, Peter Pan Peanut Butter, but what are these pills? [. . . –JT] What's Crixivan? What does that mean?" There were other people that would walk in, and they would immediately say, "Oh, my God, I know that drug, I know those pills. Those are—that's what I take." Because what was happening was that there were people who just—and the same with HIV—people who knew and were involved with HIV, either because they themselves or someone they knew, and people who were clueless and indifferent.

One time, during an open studio here, this man came in. He was in his 30s, Latino, very good looking, [00:16:00] and he kept looking at me. And I was thinking, "Oh, okay. What's going to happen here?" And he came over and he said, "Hey, are you the artist?" And I said, "Yeah, I am." And he goes, "Can I talk to you, like privately over here?" I said, "Sure." And we went around the corner there, and he referenced the Still Lifes, and he said, "I'm HIV-positive." He was Cuban. He was heterosexual. He says, "Nobody in my family knows. My girlfriend doesn't know." He said, "To see your pills, the HIV meds, is just so"—he started crying. He said, "Oh, it just—it means so much to me. I was"—I never expected that that would trigger that kind of emotion with someone, but it did in that particular case for him.

Anyway, I've—I'm going to—I've decided I'm going to continue doing the Still Lifes until I never have to take the HIV meds again, or until I die. To me, this fits a category of HIV art that isn't about a *memento mori*. It's not about the anger, it's not about the politics necessarily, outside of the subtext of the drug industry. And then I've also started to have more fun with them and started to incorporate figures, gay figures. So, there is—some of the Still Lifes now have these—you see these torsos of men in them. And the images that I've chosen are actually images from the hookup and dating apps, Adam 4 Adam, or Grindr, or whatever. And the images are ones that the individuals have chosen for their profiles. So, in some, you see they're—you don't see their faces. You just see their torso because that's what they have put because they're on the down low or they're secretive. And I know that many times being on the down low or secretive about your homosexuality actually plays into the high incidence rates, in some communities, [00:18:00] for HIV.

And they're also men of color, which are ones that I have either hooked up with or at least have made the attempts to, on these hookup sites. And in some ways, one could look at the Still Lifes, and recognize that it's these meds that keep us homosexuals alive to keep on having sex with each other and be homos. So, I hope, or I would like to think, that some of that comes in. There's also references to being Chicano or Latino, particularly in this one here. This is called *Just What Is It About Today's Homos That Makes Them So Different, So Appealing?* Which itself is taken from a Richard Hamilton collage, I think from 1959, which became a seminal work for what was known as Pop art. In which he had two figures that were—one was female, one was male—a body builder, and it looked like a burlesque woman sitting in the back. And in this one, I have two male figures, but they're not looking out at the viewer. They're instead embraced in a 69, oral sexual engagement in the back.

So it's, I think, very direct and very overt that the medications keep us alive to keep on having sex with one another. But in this, I also have—if you noticed, there's about a dozen monarch butterflies, which I'm not—and I'm not the first one to use them as a symbol. But the monarch butterfly within Chicano culture, certainly within Mexican culture, is indicative of immigration advocacy. Because the trajectory of the monarch is that they start out in Canada. They do this ritual where they fly in through the United States all the way to Mexico. So they cross [00:20:00] these borders without any kind of obstacles, or regardless of jurisdictions. And so, I look at that as paying homage to immigration and also queer. Also, the butterfly in Spanish is mariposa, which is also a term that's used for gay men.

ALEX FIALHO: Wow. Lots of layers.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. And then I also—like particularly in this one, I have chosen certain specific things. I have a bottle of Cholula hot sauce, but, Cholula is a city or a region in Mexico that is famous for a huge massacre of the Spanish against the indigenous. And next to it, I have Quaker Oats. And to me, there's the Quaker Oats man, which represents a form of Christianity and the Quakers in the United States. So, I'm always playing with and questioning like, "Why is it that the Quaker is used as an image that advertises oatmeal?" I mean, I'm always interested in the—and some of these images that I take, I've taken from—they're all from the mid-'50s, 1960s. You know, mid-'50s when I was born. So they're as old as I am. And there was a couple in here too, like there was one for Peter Pan Peanut Butter from the 1950s. And the image on it is a woman, which—traditionally, Peter Pan is played by a woman in theater. And she's a big woman on this one. She's tall, and she has her hands on her hips, and she's standing up very strong. So I intentionally will play with some of the images that one can choose to read the subtext or not. It's there for you if you like. [00:22:00]

ALEX FIALHO: And I know that you had a retrospective at ONE Archives, and a lot of this work was shown. Or I don't know if you would call it retrospective, or a career survey, or a show of the range of your work.

JOEY TERRILL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALEX FIALHO: Can you just talk about what bringing together—what was included there, but also what bringing together your body of work in that moment—how you responded as the artist yourself?

JOEY TERRILL: Well first, of all, I mean, I welcomed it. I loved it. It had been 20 years since I had had a one-man show in Los Angeles. And what I liked about it from the ONE Archives is that it had work that represented what I was doing from the 1970s all the way up until the 2000s. It had examples of different sorts of imagery. So from the 1970s, I had done these collages that were named after Mexican songs, romantic songs, "Cha Cha Cha" and "*Que Bonita Es Mi Tierra*." But the imagery [is] all homo-erotic, taken from either gay magazines or like the magazine *After Dark*, which I used to love, which was the most closeted gay magazine around. If you've never seen the issues, it's really cool, especially in that it was based out of New York. All the way to the—I had done a series in the 1990s called *Breaking Up/Breaking Down*, early '90s, when I had broken up with Rick.

And I, again, was following like a photo-novela, but these were in paintings of what I was going through. So there's one called *Crying*, and it's me, and I'm crying over Rick, but I'm eating Häagen-Dazs ice cream. There was another one called *Trying to Sleep*, [00:24:00] because I couldn't sleep, and I'm there, and my clock is there, a Mickey Mouse clock, and it's three in the morning. I rarely do very sexually explicit work, but I do occasionally when I think it fits what I'm trying to do. So, there was one called *God, I Miss Him So Much,* and it's a front shot of me leaning back, jacking off. And I've got a little *Straight to Hell* magazine there, and I'm referencing Rick.

And, you know, that's—I've tended to actually shy away from doing erotic or sexually explicit work. On the one hand, because I think there's a lot of artists out there who really do it well—and I mean, I've done drawings of male nudes [. . . –JT], but that's not the main thrust of what I intend to do. So it—what I liked about the show was that it showed my development in how I either dealt with sexuality and then bringing in *Chicos Modernos* about then HIV and AIDS. So it was a compact, comprehensive overview of my work. And it exposed my work to a lot of folks that has continued to this day. And I think it also led to things like *Art AIDS America*. So I really see that as a seminal, jumping-off point for [the –JT] appreciation of my art.

ALEX FIALHO: How about what's next for your art? One thing we were talking about last night—because I had sort of joked, or not joked, on the record that it was—you know, issue three of *Homeboy Beautiful* could happen. And something—just even thinking about it last night between this interview—something about "homeboy" and "beautiful" is just such a powerful pairing. I just—it really strikes me. [00:26:00] But you had another idea for that that I want to—

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah. So one of the things, you know, I was thinking of—you know the way that magazines will do, like, "*Rolling Stone* magazine, the 50-year anniversary issue," you know? I was thinking of perhaps doing a whatever-year anniversary issue. But, of course, I would have to think about it a lot to see what would it entail, what would I bring? One thing that I had thought of, and had thought of even before I mentioned it to you, was recreating the cover. But instead of me at 22 or whatever, it would be me at 62 [laughs] with my gray hair with the same, "Oh, my man, I love him so," in Spanish. You know, that would obviously be a parody of that.

ALEX FIALHO: And next year would be 40 years, I guess—

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah, that's right.

ALEX FIALHO: —since the first issue?

JOEY TERRILL: Yes, it would.

ALEX FIALHO: Next year. I.e., tomorrow. [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: Yes, exactly, tomorrow. So, I had been thinking of that, and I—and I've been thinking about that because now, I have a whole new audience for *Homeboy Beautiful* that I hadn't for years. But it's through the reissuing of the magazine through Maricón Collective. It's this whole new, younger generation that's investigating queer culture, queer art, Latinx queer art production. And I think it might resonate well. But I also would really need to think about [it –JT] and I would love to bring in—I mean, just as I did with *Homeboy Beautiful.* It was always about, "Hey, who's available to do a photoshoot?" And I could reach out to everyone from Alice Bag to Rudy Garcia from Maricón Collective. I would love to do something with some of young queer Latinx, you know? There's all kinds of potential for it.

ALEX FIALHO: Cool. I also loved your screenplay, movie, LA idea.

JOEY TERRILL: So, you know, [00:28:00] so one of the things that we were talking about last night is that with—

ALEX FIALHO: Off-record at dinner. [Laughs.]

JOEY TERRILL: —*Axis Mundo*—yes. At *Axis Mundo*—is that I look at it as, "Wow, there is so much material here that just calls out for a great movie." You know? I mean, and it could be from Nervous Gender, and the groups, and all the punk scene all the way to Teddy Sandoval, the Escandalosas, Alice Bag, and LACE. There's all these different things. And anyway, if anyone wants to do that, I would be more than happy to be a consultant, or do the art direction.

ALEX FIALHO: Cool.

JOEY TERRILL: Yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: And then how about your ongoing work in and around HIV/AIDS activism? I mean now, you've worked for over a decade at AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Can you just tell me a little bit about how that's developed in time?

JOEY TERRILL: So, one of the things that I have done in my role as director of community of partnerships at AIDS Healthcare Foundation is that I have been able to—and I'm thankful for this—the last few years, I've been able to provide grants to artists and organizations that are utilizing the arts for addressing HIV and AIDS and/or advocacy around LGBT concerns and issues. And I'm going to be actually starting my new position the second week of January, moving into global advocacy. Which means that I'm going to be starting to work with grassroots advocates in Asia, in Latin America, and Africa. And I'm anticipating—and I'm going to certainly be searching out and looking for—how can I utilize those engagements with the LGBT HIV advocates in these other nations as a strategy [00:30:00] for making art? I'm not sure what that would [look –JT] like.

Could it be *Homeboy in the Ukraine*, *Homeboy in Uganda*? And/or, doing paintings of some of the advocates just as portraiture. I mean, there's so many different ideas that could come from that, and I'm not sure. One thing that I am definitely going to be doing, as a series, is I am going to be doing my versions of the castas paintings. The castas paintings were painted in the New World for the Old World, for the European market, and they were [paintings –FT] that designated and created racial [. . . categories –JT]: Creole, mulatto, indio. They usually have [. . . a pairing,–JT] a female and a male. And right on the painting, it'll say, *una española con un mulato igualmente*—and then they have the child, *un negrito*, or whatever it is.

I hadn't quite realized, [which I find fascinating –JT], that there was actual art and paintings that created all of these racial designations. What I would like to do is I want to do some that look at all of the queer, Latinx labeling that we use, along with potentially racial and gender labels. I'm not sure what they would look like, but I know that I would try to follow, as much as possible, the actual painting styles of the castas paintings, the historical castas paintings.

ALEX FIALHO: Wow. Can you speak to the ongoing contemporary crisis around HIV/AIDS that is very much present still, and how that feels from your perspective as a [00:32:00] long-term survivor, from your perspective as someone who's done activism for HIV for many decades now?

JOEY TERRILL: So, one thing about this is that in some communities, certainly in the gay male community, gay white male community, HIV has been something that has been controlled, that has been recognized, that people deal with. I mean, the response to HIV and AIDS has built all these great organizations and community responses. Currently, we have PrEP, which allows for gay men who are HIV-negative to stay negative, right, if they are at high risk. But that hasn't transferred over to a lot of the communities of color and the poor communities, for a number of reasons, [. . . –JT] aren't on PrEP, and they are disproportionately represented in new HIV incidence cases.

We have this current administration. I've been trying to not talk about number 45, but you realize that the President's Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS, PACHA, there [were –JT] resignations by about 10 or 12 individuals, I think a month ago or so. And just as of the 29th, or maybe yesterday, the administration let go of PACHA, the people who are on it. One of the people who was on it is Gabriel Maldonado, who is the director of TruEvolution, out in Riverside. He's an HIV-positive, black and Latino advocate that I admire and respect. He's fairly young and very articulate, and, you know, we're [00:34:00] all looking to see: What direction is this country going to go in?

Because I think we—it could very well happen that we will continue to have high rates of HIV in particularly the southern states. I mean, people in California and here in LA, we're in a bubble. We're in a bubble in terms of the number of resources, access to medication and support. When I travel in the South, in some locations there, we're looking—it's like the 1980s, 1990s again.

ALEX FIALHO: In terms of?

JOEY TERRILL: In terms of either access to information, testing, the stigma, both cultural as well as homophobic stigma. And within the black community—I mean, I've been dealing with black activists in the South, working with faith-based groups and churches. But I think the black church still has a long way to go for stepping up to address HIV and AIDS. I think the Catholic Church could do a whole lot more as well, because of the reach across the world.

I'm going to be very interested to see when I start to work in these other countries, what are the issues and concerns. I know that in the Ukraine, for instance, there's a high rate of incidence among IDUs, intravenous drug users. The Ukrainian government, along with Russia, is extremely negative towards drug addicts. And they don't really want to do anything to help them, and they're also extremely homophobic. So, if you're a gay man who shoots up drugs, there is very little access to testing, information, education, and medicine. In Uganda, you've got the Kill the Gays Bill. So there's an extreme amount of homophobia and governmental indifference [00:36:00] in some of these locations, in Africa and Latin America, that still need to addressed.

ALEX FIALHO: Where did you visit in the American South, and what [were] some of the perspectives there?

JOEY TERRILL: North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida. I haven't been to Mississippi. So when—a couple of things, and I'll tell you, this brings up something. I remember going to a panel. I was doing this advocacy training in South Carolina, and I met this woman who was in her 50s, African American. And she came up to me afterwards, and she revealed to me that she's been positive for five or six years. The small town that she lives in, very rural. Nobody in her family knows she's HIV-positive. Nobody in her congregation knows she's HIV-positive. And she only gets support and encouragement online. And I realized, "Wow, what a different reality from my reality living in LA." And then also in talking to, again, heterosexual women who are infected with HIV—as they would tell you, particularly in small towns, the stigma is so heavy.

If they were to try to date—she says, "If I'm trying to date someone, date a man, and I reveal that I'm positive because I want to be upfront with him and that we take precautions, they could turn around and say, 'Oh, you know what, I don't want anything to do with you and you're a slut.'" And guess what? They work at the barbershop that their cousin goes to, who also knows their sister who works at the supermarket, because everyone knows everybody in the town. So there's still these regions and situations where HIV is considered something you don't talk about. It's still very [00:38:00] stigmatized.

And then you've got folks in—and I've talked to—there was one time we went and met in Atlanta with some pastors that some of the local black activists had brought to the table. They were from black churches. I posed the question to them, because some of them were obviously reluctant to be there. But they were looking at—trying to see what they, as faith-based community, could do to address HIV. And I said, "Why is it that in your congregation, you can have a woman that gets up and proclaims that she has breast cancer, and she will get love, support, prayer. The community, the congregation will embrace her and be there for her and [her –JT] family. But the very same woman gets up and says she has HIV, and she will be ostracized, judged, moralized, kicked out of the church." I mean, these things happen.

There were two advocates that I met in Alabama that—I mean, they were self-described white trash. They lived in a trailer. It was a man and wife. They were trying to educate the community and be out and open, and in some of their advocacy, I know that their trailer was defaced, spray-painted [with –JT], "You're sick; you're going to die." And then I think within a year, I had heard from advocates that their trailer was burned down. Somebody started it on fire. I mean, to me that's like, wow, that is really frightening, right?

I know that those states—a lot of those states are red states, where, when we've met with legislators, a legislator has come out and said that, "These aren't my constituents, so [00:40:00] it doesn't apply to me." And I know what he meant by that. He meant that these are homosexuals, these are black folks, you know, or intravenous drug users. And my response to him was, "You know, they may not be your constituents, but they are residents of your state. And if they don't have access to care and treatment, they will get sick and then they will go into hospitals and create a larger medical expense, which comes out of taxpayer dollars." So, it's trying to convince these Christian conservative politicians that it's better and more cost-effective to provide people with medication and good health initiatives than it is to let them get sick and die.

Another thing, this is just another—and I had gone to the Positive Living Conference, and I totally appreciate—the Positive Living Conference has been around for 20-something years. Butch McKay is the man that facilitates that in Florida. I had never gone to it. And truthfully there was a part of me that had felt like—I didn't feel like I needed to go to it, per se, right? It's all HIV-positive individuals coming together down there for a conference on a weekend for three or four days. But I went—

ALEX FIALHO: Where?

JOEY TERRILL: Fort Walton Beach, FL. I went about three years ago, and I recognized, "Oh, I get it now, duh." You know, I'm from LA. I am engaged with advocates from New York to San Francisco. But here, there were all these people, who, on scholarships, were getting transportation to come to this conference. And many of them come from small communities, rural counties. They don't engage with a lot of other people and advocates, so it's coming together, getting support for one another. And I saw the value in that, [00:42:00] and I totally support that. But at this conference, there was a—and we were sitting at a luncheon, and I met these two women who were from—I think they were both from South Carolina, African American. And the person who was up at the podium speaking to us was a Latina transgender individual who had a very heavy accent. So here I am, feeling good about all of us being together here and kumbaya, and the one woman whispered loudly to the other so that everyone heard. She goes, "I wish she would learn to speak English." And I thought, "Oh, God," like [laughs]—you know? So there goes my concept of [solidarity –JT]—right?

And then for the dinner that evening, there was going to be a presentation by this man who is HIV-positive, who is a magician. He had a burgeoning career in Las Vegas and then he got HIV and, you know, then he got involved in drugs. So he does this presentation on what his journey has been, and he incorporates his magic and engaging with the audience. And it was really interesting and very moving, and that's what he's dedicated his life to.

So the following morning, I see the transgender Latina who, the day before, had been dissed by these two women. And I go up to her—and I know what her name is but I won't say. And I said, "Oh, hi, how are you doing?" I said, "Hey, so were you—last night, did you see the presentation by the magician?" "Oh, no," she says, "You know, I saw it was a white guy, so I didn't want to stay for it." Again, I just thought, "Okay, so here we are [laughs] at this conference where we're all supposed to come together in support of one another as being HIV-positive. But these women didn't like the transgender, not because she was transgender but because she didn't speak English very well. [00:44:00] Then the transgender that didn't speak English very well didn't want to hear or see the presentation by the gentleman who was scheduled to present, because he was white. There's something wrong with that in my view. Right?

I tend to look at every person that's HIV-positive—I have a connection to them, whether we like it or not, whether we relate to it or not. [. . . –JT] And I've worked with folks who are very religious, very spiritual. I've gone and spoken in churches and silently held their hands while people pray, even though I consider myself an atheist. I don't believe in God like that, but I'll respect other people's beliefs. Then there's been people that, believe it or not, are HIV-positive that consider themselves Republican or conservative. I'll work with them if it means that somehow, it's going to advance getting people tested and treated.

I think our overall goal, certainly from the perspective of AIDS Healthcare Foundation, is to get as many people tested as possible, and get them on treatment. There's a number of folks who know their HIV status but are not in treatment. And the curve, in terms of those that fall out of care, is still large, and we're constantly working to see about bringing all those people in.

ALEX FIALHO: How about your perspective, at this point, as somebody who's lived with HIV for 37 years? Where does that statement land you?

JOEY TERRILL: So where it lands me—and I'm very aware. I have other people—I've known other people who have been positive for 20 years, 25 years, maybe even 30 years. Or perhaps even—I don't know if there's anyone that I've met that has said 37 years, [00:46:00] like me. But for many of those, either because of their trials with AZT back in the day, [or –JT] they have had symptomatology. They have had symptoms of HIV—and they have had an AIDS diagnosis and are now undetectable. And so, they have physical manifestations of some of those things. They're either gaunt or they've had the buffalo hump. They've had things that have altered their physical appearance. I'm asymptomatic. I've never had anything related to HIV, and that's why I've continued to work all my life. There were many friends, once they were diagnosed HIV-positive back in the day—could get onto disability because the expectation was that they were only going to continue to get sick and die. I had that mindset for years, and I realized now that I'm not going to—I'm going to die obviously, but I don't think it's going to be from HIV.

I have no idea why. I don't know why is it that my colleagues, Javier Gomez and Roberto Herrera, who were very—following up on all the clinical trials and all the information, and were really good, and didn't do high-risk behavior—and the same medications that work for me don't work for them, and they're dead. I don't know if it's genetic. I don't know if maybe the strain of HIV that I got in 1980 in New York is an extremely mild strain. I really don't know what that is. It's a little bit of an unanswered question, but I'm committed to trying to continue to work in this arena.

ALEX FIALHO: And how about—this is maybe even a last question or a winding-down question, but how would you like your art and activisms to be viewed into the future? How do you feel about your place in this history that we're telling with the project around this Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic Oral History?

JOEY TERRILL: Oh, [00:48:00] wow.

ALEX FIALHO: I mean, we just talked about that for six hours, in a way that answers that question, but maybe, you know, if you have any responses.

JOEY TERRILL: I mean, I would like to think that, on the one hand I want to be recognized as an artist, period. Okay? Now, having said that, I obviously have chosen a personal narrative in most of my work, as opposed to abstraction, and certainly, I have conceptualized strategies for making art. So in some ways, I can be considered maybe a conceptual artist, right? And I would hope that the art indicates and communicates to people my interest in social activism and speaking on behalf of, certainly [a Chicano, if not a Latino perspective –JT], and definitely gay or queer. And that's okay with me. I don't mind that, if people say, "Oh, you're a gay artist." "Yeah, so what? Okay."

Because some folks, over the years, have indicated to me in a sort of slightly judgmental or condescending way, "Oh, you're really a gay artist or a queer artist." And I'm like, "Yes, and I'm proud of it. I don't see anything to not be proud of." I've certainly been rejected by galleries because of that. And that's why I'm really relishing all of this newfound recognition that I'm receiving, and the value that's been placed upon the strategies that I have used.

I also, though—to be quite honest, I love it when people look at my paintings particularly, and just want to focus on the painting itself, [00:50:00] the formal qualities of the work. You know, letting go of the political, even letting go of the personal narrative, and saying, "Oh, my God, I love the way you've made the paint here reflect that light against that." It's like, to me, that's just as valid in critiquing my work, at that level, than the subtext and the politics. I don't know if that makes sense.

ALEX FIALHO: Completely.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay. Oh, yeah.

ALEX FIALHO: I like both ends.

JOEY TERRILL: Okay.

ALEX FIALHO: Anything else you would like to make sure we have on the record?

JOEY TERRILL: Just that I think I have—[Cries.] I've tried my best, and I think [laughs] that puts it in a nutshell. I don't know how else to put it, but I've tried my best.

ALEX FIALHO: Thank you so much.

JOEY TERRILL: Thanks.

[END OF TERRIL17_2OF2_TRACK 3.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]