

TransFigures

Poster Project



SYRACUSE, NY - Transgender writer, performer, and educator, professor of English at Santa Monica College, **Ryka Aoki** gives a speech at Watson Theater of Syracuse University on Apr. 9, 2012. She dedicates it to transgender, genderqueer, and intersex groups. (Zixi Wu/A-Line Magazine)

Ryka Aoki Poet, Musician, Teacher, Human

Dear You,
This space is for my bio. But since they say this is my space, I would like to use it to talk to you, especially if you are trans. I don't know what sort of world you will live in. Or that I've done enough to make it better. Being a trans woman may still be difficult, and you may be wondering what the hell were women like me thinking? I don't know—but as you are reading this, I hope these words let you know that you were thought of, considered, and loved. You are beautiful, not because everyone is beautiful, but because being trans, in some ways, makes you even more beautiful—why not play favorites? I know I've said things that should not have been said, and made more mistakes than I should. I have so often sold myself short, remained silent when I should have spoken, and given up when I should have continued. But here you are, and this is your world. And

in all my mistakes, I think I did a few things right. I want you to know that you can find someone who loves you, even if you mess up. That no one can tell you who you are—not even you. Life is meant to be lived, not explained. And being trans, with all its problems, gives you a better grip on a reality that ultimately holds nothing sacred. Oh, I wish I could give you trust in allies, in family, in the kindness and goodness of others. But I don't have that kind of trust. I've been let down too many times, and God knows I've returned the favor. What I can give you, though, is this: even if you cannot trust people, you can believe in them. And your belief—the belief of a trans woman—is such a wonderful, special thing. It's something we trans women can do like no one else. With everything, everyone out there doubting us, we are given a belief that can create worlds, make what is impossible real. Remember, in everything you do, to believe in yourself. Your belief is your greatest gift and power, and magic. Like nobody else, when you, my future, believe—you love. And I believe in you.
Love, **Ryka**

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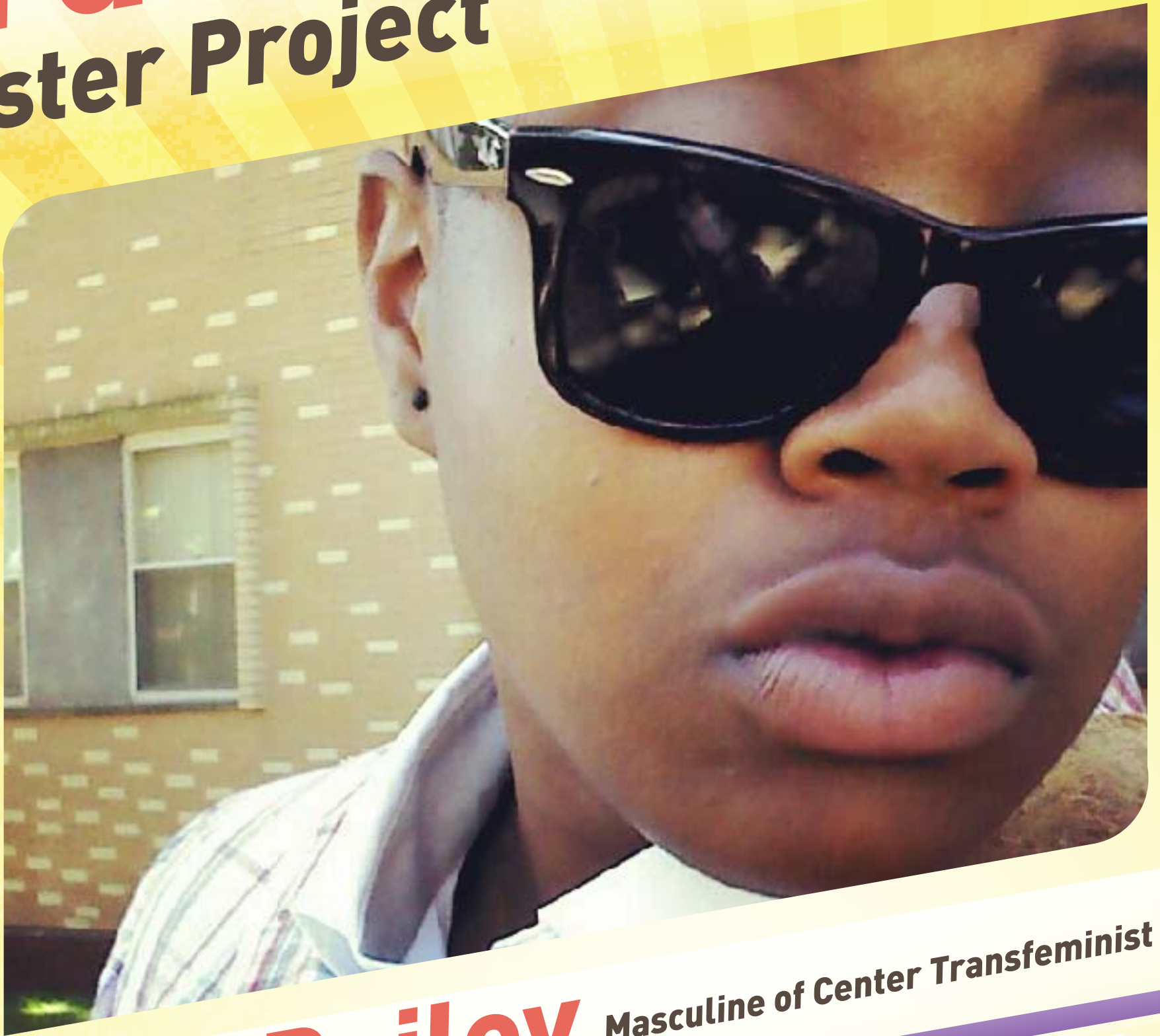
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Dr. Van Bailey

Masculine of Center Transfeminist

Dr. Van Bailey is currently the founding *Director of BGLTQ Student Life* at Harvard University's Harvard College. While much of his time is dedicated to professional life and academics, Dr. Bailey is a lover of dogs, hip hop, reggae, and fashion. In fact, Dr. Bailey's interests are on the politics of queer fashion in people of color communities and professionalism. In addition, he enjoys engaging in discussions around unpacking traditional notions of Black masculinity. Dr. Bailey was the assistant director for education at the University of California, San Diego from 2010-2012, where he implemented educational outreach programs, advised several student organizations, acted as a liaison to

LGBT housing, oversaw monthly cultural and identity celebrations, and managed other LGBT-related activities, including incoming student orientation, family day, and a community leaders retreat. Additionally, Dr. Bailey worked at California State University, Northridge for three years, first as community director and then as senior community director. Outside of his professional work, Dr. Bailey is a part of the **Brown Boi Project**, a non-profit organization focused on gender and racial justice. In 2012, he was awarded a doctor of education in educational leadership from CSU Northridge. Dr. Bailey earned a master of arts from Ohio State University, and a bachelor of arts in black studies and English from Denison University. Dr. Bailey is a swagged out queer leader who wants trans* people of color to be fierce and courageous by simply being themselves.

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Genny Beemyn Queer and Genderqueer
College Administrator & Writer

Genny Beemyn, the director of the Stonewall Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is a leading expert on the experiences of trans people in the United States, particularly the lives of gender-nonconforming students, and on the development of trans-inclusive college policies and practices. Ze (Genny prefers to have gender-inclusive pronouns used for hirself) is the author, with Sue Rankin, of *The Lives of Transgender People* (Columbia University Press, 2011). Genny is currently finishing a book on the history of LGBT life in Washington, D.C. Because of the invisibility of trans people who identify outside of a gender binary until recently, Genny did not identify as trans

until hir mid 30s. Ze had thought that ze could not be trans because ze was not interested in completely transitioning to a different gender. While many college students today embrace or at least recognize gender nonconformity, older people often still do not get it, which continues to frustrate Genny and make hir gender path more difficult than it should be. They keep putting hir into a gender box/prison and are slow to use gender-inclusive pronouns. Thankfully, a few people in hir life are very supportive, which gives hir strength and hope. Before being an administrator in LGBTQ student services, Genny was an instructor in African American Studies, and has a Master's degree and Ph.D. in African American Studies, as well as Master's degrees in American Studies and Higher Education Administration. When ze is not doing something queer, Genny is an avid cross-country runner and bike curious.

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D'LO Queer Transgender Tamil-Sri Lankan American Artist

Framing D'Lo's political consciousness is that his earliest memories are of himself as a boy. D'Lo says, "The truth of living in a woman's body only became painfully evident when I started puberty. I already felt the injustice in the silence I had to keep, even if I didn't know how to put it into words."

But he grew up, learned language and how to speak up and out. "And today," says D'Lo, "as a trans person of color, I am understanding my privilege. I am educated, yes. But that's not the real privilege. I have something that my immigrant parents never had, or that many of your parents never had regardless of color or immigrant status. I have something called processing power."

"My parents' coping mechanism to get them through the day to day in Sri Lanka and in America was to never talk about #!%* that was bothering them. To never share their inner most fears, insecurities, etc. Generation after generation, they generated a factory of silence, not realizing the silence became powerful in all the wrong ways. Loved ones walked into the doors of this factory after being sexually violated and never came back out. Other family members came in carrying their load of queerness and also never came back."

"I stopped walking past that factory. I became loud, by accident. And my truth has been to reveal, not to conceal. Asking people to see me, really see me, cuz I failed to believe I was the only one feeling this way, thinking this way, QT and all."

Learn more about D'Lo's performances, writings, and collaborations at www.dlocokid.com.

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Vicki Estrada

Post-op Transwoman/Landscape Architect/Urban Planner/Musician

Vicki Estrada is a landscape architect and urban designer and President of Estrada Land Planning in San Diego. Her 27-year-old, 9-person firm provides land planning, landscape architecture, GIS, re-vegetation, visual analysis, and urban design services. Vicki is a graduate of Cal Poly SLO and has over 35 years of private practice experience, working for both public and private clients. Her projects have included the Balboa Park Master Plan, the Otay Ranch New Town Plan, Las Palmas Ranch in Salinas, the San Ysidro Mobility Study, the Rancho San Diego Specific Plan, the Ocean Beach Skatepark, the San Diego State Trolley Station, and the Downtown San Diego Streetscape Manual. At 53 years

old, after a 25-year marriage, she made the decision to transition to becoming a woman. She is now a 60-year-old post-op transsexual (GRS 2006) who has been full time since 2005. She made the announcement that she was transitioning on a 1-hour live PBS interview that became one of the most listened to episodes on San Diego public radio. She has been fortunate that her transition was very public and as a result, the local San Diego community father went with her to her GRS surgery. After a rough 4 years, Vicki's mother and sisters have finally come around to accepting her as a woman. Vicki's children (33 and 35) and grandchildren (4 and 7) have been very supportive and completely include Vicki and her new wife Lynda in family events.

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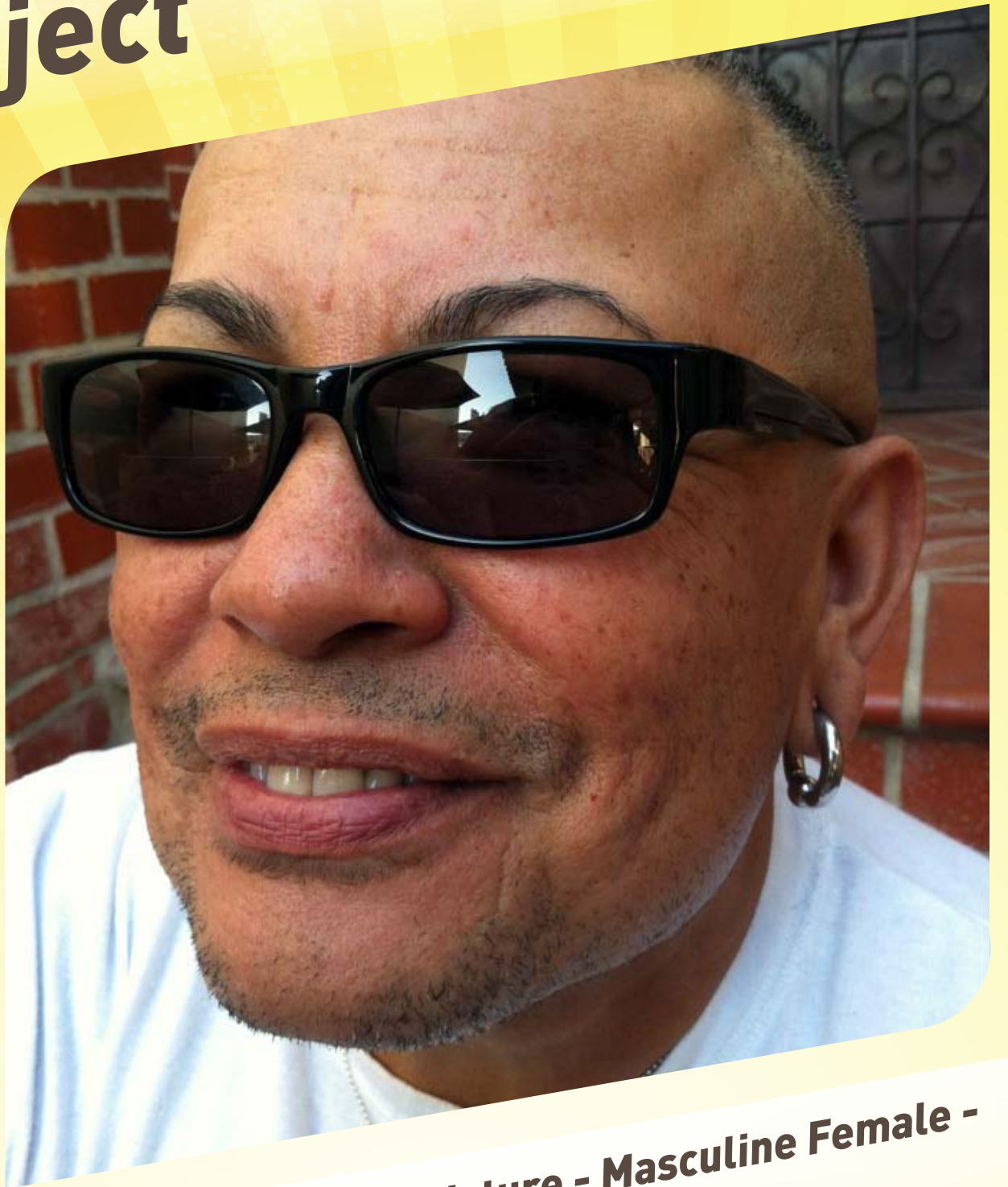
Phyllis Randolph Frye Transwoman, Lesbian, Eagle Scout, Texas Aggie, Army Veteran, Engineer, Out LGBT Lawyer, Judge

Phyllis Randolph Frye is an Eagle Scout, a former member of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, a US Army veteran (1LT-RA, 1970-72), a licensed engineer, a licensed attorney, a father, a grandmother and a lesbian wife. She is the first out transgender judge in the nation. Now having lived over sixty percent of her life as the woman she always felt herself to be, Phyllis remains on the cutting edge of LGBTIQ and especially transgender legal and political issues. When the "gay" community was still ignoring or marginalizing the transgender

community, Phyllis began the national transgender legal and political movement (thus she is known as being its "Grandmother") with six annual transgender law conferences and their grassroots training in the early 1990's. Judge Frye is a winner of Lavender Law's highest honor, the Dan Bradley Award of 2001. She was honored by Texas A&M University, beginning in 2009, with an annual Diversity Award given in her name. In 2010, Phyllis was sworn-in as the first out transgender judge in the nation, as a City of Houston Associate Municipal Judge. She retains her senior partnership of Frye, Steidley, Oaks and Benavidez, PLLC, which is an out LGBTIQ-and-straight-allies law firm.

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Ricky Garcia

Daddy By Nature - Masculine Female -
Third Gender - Bisexual

Ricky has always identified as a third gender, never completely owning a female or male identity. His gender identity started with child's play, when she was given the title "Daddy" during those innocent years of playing house with dolls and tea sets. He first visited the LA Gay and Lesbian Center in its formative years, where he was told she could not be bisexual but was in fact a lesbian. Ricky was a lesbian for that day, but when the bus dropped her off back in East LA, he found that he was now straight. Growing into adulthood, Ricky found his passion for advocacy during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as he supported friends before services were in place. This experience led to a lifetime of working for

marginalized persons across communities, sexualities, and cultures. Never traditional in his relationships, Ricky worked through the paradoxical identity of being a bisexual butch female married to a man who loved and supported her through these struggles. Together they raised five children and four grandchildren during a twenty-year marriage, before he died of cancer in Ricky's arms. Today Ricky celebrates a life with a beautiful family including her daughters, a woman who adores his complexities, and now six grandchildren. She continues to work in advocacy. He also specializes in trainings on kink and BDSM lifestyles. He deeply appreciates spending time at the ocean on a foggy, rainy day. He goes to sleep every night listening to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

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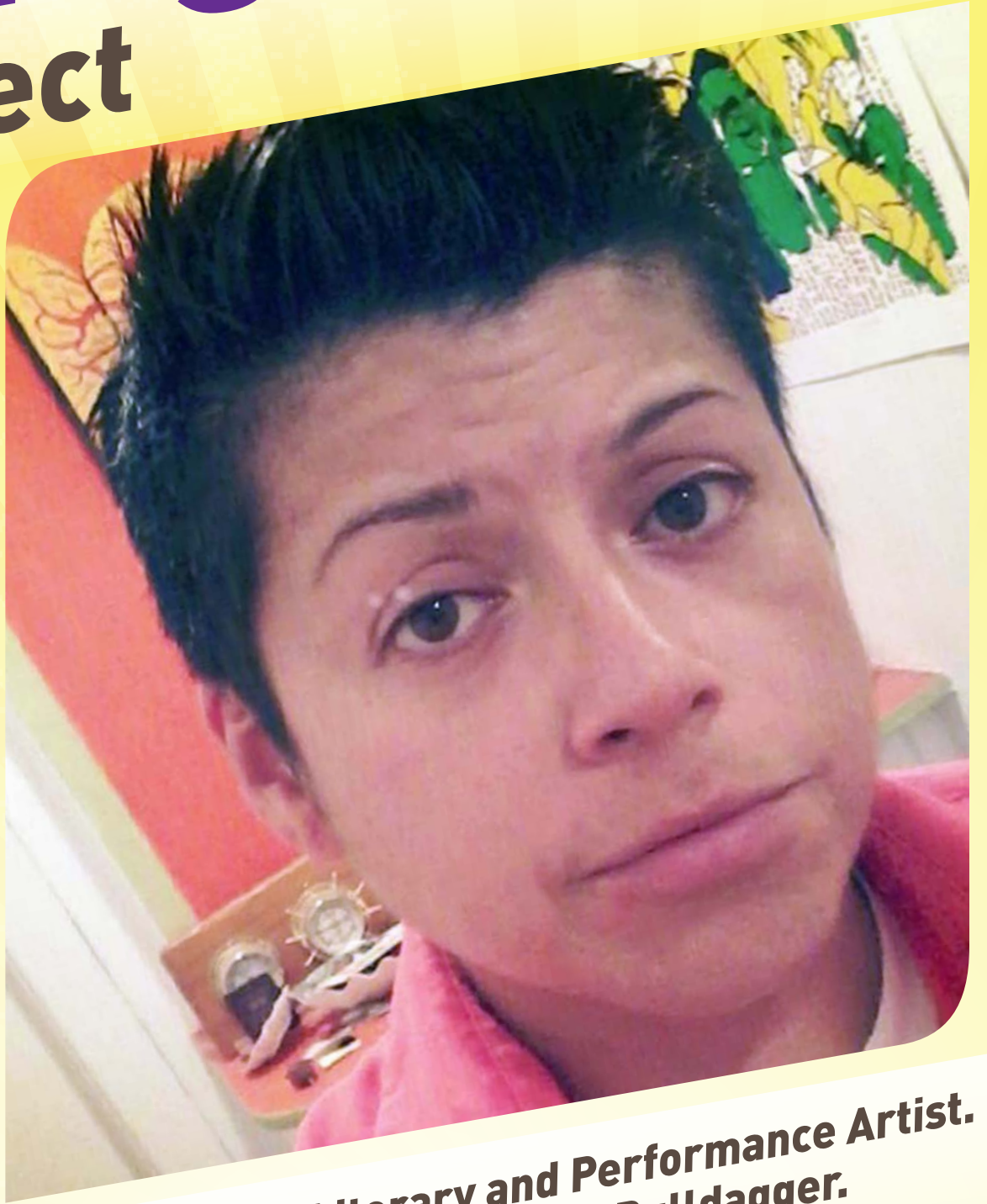
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Raquel Gutiérrez

Literary and Performance Artist.
Queer. Brown. Bulldagger.

"I'm a writer. I'm a performer. I work in the arts. I write poems. I love art. I love my family. I love my girlfriend. I love my friends. And I really love all the communities I am a part of," says **Raquel Gutiérrez**.

She cut her teeth on Los Angeles performance art when she interned and house managed at Highways Performance Space in 2000. Raquel is a performance writer, playwright, and cultural organizer, studied in university settings and performed in a variety of locations, like the Salvadoran countryside, cabarets, galleries, San Antonio, more universities, Pico-Union and Macarthur Park. In 2001, Gutiérrez was one of the co-founding members of the performance ensemble *Butchlalis de Panochtitlan (BdP)*, a community-based and activist-minded group aimed at creating a visual vernacular around queer Latinidad in Los Angeles.

"I started out doing performances with friends," says Raquel. "It was fun, but mostly it felt necessary to tell the stories of our existence—brown-bodied butches and the gendered anarchy and the desires that pushed us to the edge. I want to create more language and vernaculars that help us heal, help us create a more pronounced sense of belonging, and build community."

"Sometimes I present about growing up a child of immigrants in Southeast Los Angeles and the stories I tell are always true. If you fall, you get up. People are going to look at you funny, but they are just robbing themselves of an opportunity to live outside the box a boring society might prescribe them. If you get to a point, though, where you realize the journey was an arduous one, you kill a few demons, live with a few at a distance and you would not change a thing... then that is what matters and the trouble I went to so I could be the truest version of myself was all worth it."

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Tania Hammidi is an educator, performer, and queer fashion runway show curator who earned a Ph.D. from UC Riverside in Critical Dance Studies in 2010. Also known as "T," s/he identifies masculine-of-center, gender-non-conforming butch, boi, and feminist; s/he prefers both "male" or "female" and uses the women's bathroom – or gender-neutral bathrooms when available. T is most at ease doing drag kinging, performance art, and site-specific installation – within these artistic spheres s/he has been able to physically and aesthetically create live personas (be they kings, or stage characters) who are in most proper alignment with T's internal sense of a gendered, queer sexed, and mixed race self/selves. Currently, T is exploring 'butch voice' as a physiological question – what are the stakes of "sounding" masculine (while looking female), or sounding "female" (while looking masculine).

As an adjunct lecturer, Tania teaches gender/design/writing composition at the California College of the Arts, the San Francisco Art Institute, and the University of California, Davis. As a regular freelance contributor to Curve Magazine, Velvet Park: Dyke Culture in Bloom, Bitch, Make/Shift, and ITCH zine, Tania has had the opportunity to interview out leaders in the queer/LGBT art, music, performance, and film worlds such as: Ani Difranco, Christy Gephardt, Pratibha Parmar, Cheryl Dunye, Julie Tolentino, Juliana Snapper, Ron Athey, Leon Mostovoy, and, most recently, Campbell X.

Tania founded **QUEERTURE: Queer + Couture**, an organization for queer/LGBT fashion and costume designers, models, photographers, fashion journalists, writers, and archivists. T's goals are to foster safe spaces and create sustainable, thoughtful economic opportunities for alternatively masculine and gender-non-conforming individuals and communities within the realm of costume/fashion design, discussion, production and display.



Photo by Love Adlan

Tania "T" Hammidi

Lebanese-American, Masculine of Center Educator, Performer, Writer

Erotically/romantically, Tania has enjoyed a range of attractions and connections: with queer femmes, butch women, trans guys, drag queens, drag kings and gay men. T's comment: "It is what is between the ears that really matters to me."

There are moments when one finds oneself deeply lost. In the early 2000's, T lost both her parents at a time when most of her/his peers were busy starting their academic careers. Dealing with grief and mourning in combination with being the legal administrator for her family's affairs threw T's stability out the door! Legal documents enforced extreme normativity: daughter, sister, female, she, her, Ms. over and over. During this time there was an upsurge in transmale

visibility and a decline of "butch" as an abundant category of identity and masculine practice. This was not a pretty time. Or, to quote Donna Summer, a time when T's cake was definitely "left out in the rain."

It was the text **Freeing Ourselves – A Health Guide for Brown Bois & Masculine of Center Folks** (Brown Boi Project) that brought T's complex butch/masculine core back to life. Given to her by an ex-lover, the book was catalyst for new language and a deeper level of community connection – one where bodies, biology, aesthetics, voice, gender performance, ethnicity, class... all were threaded together under the umbrella of self/health care and community-generated queer masculine knowledge. "Masculine of Center" made sense to T – it pointed to the meat of one's body and to the center of one's spiritual core: ephemeral and as vital as a pulse. Masculine of center invigorated the solid feelings and intellectual sense of belonging, complexly, somewhere.

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Photo by Maria Brunner Ventura

Jennifer Leitham Musician

Jennifer Leitham's story is compelling. Her journey has been most unconventional. Her career is groundbreaking as she attempts to bring a sense of normalcy to a subject that many people don't understand, all the while proudly displaying her exceptional skills. She is considered by many to be one of the finest Jazz bassists in the world.

She began life as John Leitham.

In her professional life, she had played with numerous big names, including Woody Herman, George Shearing, Bob Cooper, Bill Watrous, and Peggy Lee. She was Mel Torme's bassist for ten years. For most of that time, she was also a bandleader and studio musician, playing on over one hundred recordings, including five discs under her own name. She married, settled in L.A., but all that while, was struggling to deal with and keep secret her gender identity.

Finally, in a process that was lengthy and painful, physically and emotionally, she transitioned in 2001 while touring with Doc Severinsen. She has maintained a vigorous career throughout and has achieved much acclaim and acceptance. The *Los Angeles Times*' Leonard Feather called her the "left handed virtuoso of the upright bass."

Jennifer's 2008 CD, the critically acclaimed "Left Coast Story," is a collection of requests from her loyal fans. The 2011 DVD "The Real Me Live" is a live in concert rendering of the groundbreaking music from her best selling 2006 CD "The Real Me." She is also the subject of the 2012 documentary by filmmaker Andrea Meyerson, "I Stand Corrected," winner of many film festival Audience Choice and Jury Awards for best film. She has been a featured artist at many of the world's most prestigious jazz festivals and clubs. An active live performer, composer, vocalist, and leader of her sterling trio, Jennifer has been an admired bandleader and a unique, creative musical force.

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Deirdre N. McCloskey Female College Professor

Deirdre McCloskey teaches economics, history, English, and communications at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A well-known economist, historian and rhetorician, she has written sixteen books and around 400 scholarly pieces on topics ranging from technical economics and statistics to transgender advocacy and the ethics of the bourgeois virtues. She is known as a “conservative” economist, University-of-Chicago-style (she taught for 12 years there), but protests that “I’m a literary, quantitative, postmodern, free-market, progressive Episcopalian, Midwestern woman from Boston who was once a man. Not ‘conservative!’ I’m a Christian libertarian.”

She told of her transition starting at age 53, 1995-1997, in her book **Crossing: A Memoir** (which was in 1999 a New York Times Notable Book). She says, “My very wise 90-year old mother, who took about five minutes to adjust to her new daughter, advises me nonetheless not to do anything more interesting! Don’t transition to another species, say!” The only bad news is that Deirdre’s two grown children from her 30-year, and very successful, marriage have not spoken to her since her transition, nor has her former wife. She has two grandchildren she has never been allowed to see. “The three people I care most about, my mother excepted, have turned away from me. But into each life some rain must fall.”

McCloskey lives in downtown Chicago in a big loft apartment converted from a factory with her Norwich terrier, Will Shakespeare. (“As soon as he really knows English, maybe we can get some more plays. . . from the canine point of view!”)

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Bamby Salcedo

Strong Leader and Innovative Activist Trans Latina Woman

Bamby Salcedo is a proud trans Latin@ woman. She is the HIV Prevention Services Project Coordinator with Children's Hospital Los Angeles, and is the founder and president of the Trans-Latin@ Coalition. Bamby produced the very first trans youth calendar called **Angels of Change**, in which she helps trans youth discover a positive image. She is also the publisher for **XQsi Magazine**, an online LGBTQ Latin@ publication.

She is a board member for the National Latino LGBT Civil Rights Organization **Unid@s**, and she is working with the Pan American Health Organization to develop a blue print on how to provide health care services for trans people in

Latin America and the Caribbean. Bamby has also served with the California HIV Planning Group, the Center of Excellence for Transgender HIV Prevention with UCSF, and the National Latino AIDS Action Network.

Bamby has been recognized many times for her advocacy work related to trans issues. In 2012, she was awarded *The City of West Hollywood Women in Leadership Award*, the *Silvia Rivera Leadership Award* from the Latino History Project in DC, and the *Good Neighbor Award* from State Farm and the LA Gay and Lesbian Center. She's also been recognized with the *Sheila J Kuehl Trailblazer Award* from the Stonewall Democratic Club (2011); the *Connie Norman Leadership Award* from the Christopher Street West, producers of LA Pride (2010); and the *Icon* award from The TransUnity Pride of Los Angeles (2009).

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Mia Yamamoto

Transwoman,
Asian American, Lawyer

Mia Frances Yamamoto was born in Poston, Arizona, which was an internment camp for Japanese Americans during WWII. Her family returned to Southern California after their release, where they eventually re-settled in East Los Angeles. Like most transgender children, her first stirrings of gender discomfort arose around Kindergarten or First Grade when she realized that she was not developing like her sister and was instead turning into a boy. From then on, she experienced what many transgender children discover - that this was not acceptable anywhere in her family, community or school - and she spent her adolescent and teenage years in a constant battle against this feeling. She graduated Catholic High School, went on to Junior College, from which she promptly flunked out, spent a year working in a grocery store, then re-applied to school, eventually going on to college and graduating in 1966. She thereafter

volunteered for the draft, and after a year in the States, was sent to Vietnam, served from 1967-68 in the 4th Infantry Division, rose to the rank of Specialist 5, was awarded an NDSM, VCM, VSM, and ArCom, and went on to UCLA Law School, founded the Asian American Law Student group and graduated in 1971. She worked for LAFLA for a few years before becoming a public defender, serving there for 10 years, then going into private practice where she continues to the present. She was active as a criminal defense trial lawyer for many years, as well as a community and professional activist, before making the decision to transition. "It's been said that being transgender is something that you are born with, that you fight against your whole life, but which wins in the end," says Mia. She started her transition in 2003, had her surgery in 2005, and has continued in her community and profession ever since. In doing so, she has liberated, educated and integrated the courts, law offices, bar associations, jails and police stations, which she has encountered while finally living the life she was born to live.

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