

GAY ASIAN COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – working copy

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Descriptive Summary

Title

Gay Asian Community Oral History Project

Date(s)

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Center for Oral and Public History
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Project Abstract

Gay Asian Community Oral History Project Abstracts

OH 2880

Narrator: Anonymous
Interviewer: Eric Wat
Title: An Oral History with Anonymous
Date: 12/4/1997
Language: English
Location:
Project: Gay Asian Community Oral History Project

Status: transcribed? Final transcript? Images? Ephemera?

This oral history spans 1932-1997. Bulk dates: 1950s-1960s.

Abstract

An oral history with Anonymous of Los Angeles, California, a self-identifying gay Japanese -American. This interview was conducted for the Gay Asian Community Oral History Project by Eric Wat. The purpose of this interview was to gather information about the personal experiences regarding gay Asian Americans. Specifically gives an account of Anonymous' experiences as a gay second generation Japanese American growing up in the later end of World War II and handling racism/prejudice in social settings within the gay Los Angeles community; dealing with feelings of inadequacy due to being "othered" in majority white spaces after formally being in majority Japanese-American/East Asian-American environments [Terminal Island, Los Angeles, CA, Manzanar War Relocation Center (CA), the Tuesday Bowling League, and the Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays (APLG)]; his early childhood with an absent fisherman father , four sisters, as a "latchkey kid," and a sexual object for his peers but not his pseudo-girlfriends born of feelings of inadequacy. The interview covers his lack of self-identification as an Asian until it was pointed out and how he tried to absorb white culture; what it was like to be gay and closeted in the army (which he volunteered for at 19) in the mid-1950s and the need/desire to be overtly masculine and shroud femininity. Also covers the late 1950s-early1960s Los Angeles gay bar culture, specifically Red Raven bar on Melrose, Los Angeles bath house/gay hook-up culture, and an aversion to the more popular West Hollywood gay bar/club culture. Describes his unease with white men being uninterested in him and other Asian-Americans, and his suspicions towards white men who did take specific interest in Asian men comparing gay Asian men fetishized as subservient Geishas. Explains his conflicting views of being Asian-American but not particularly liking immigrant Asians (specifically Thai men). This interview includes the struggle to find friendships in the gay community as a minority within an already marginalized community which led to his unintentional political activism for gay rights.

OH 2881.1

Narrator: Terry Gock
Interviewer: Eric Wat
Title: An Oral History with Terry Gock
Date: December 8, 1997
Language: English
Location:
Project: Gay Asian Community Oral History Project

This oral history spans 1951-1997. Bulk dates: 1970s-1990s.

Abstract

An oral history with Dr. Terry Gock PhD., a self-identifying gay Chinese-American. The interview was conducted for the Center for Public and Oral History, California State University, Fullerton by Eric Wat, a Master's candidate at CSUF. The purpose of this interview was to gather personal experiences regarding gay Asian-Americans. Specifically gives an account of Gock's experiences as a gay first generation Chinese-American—growing up in Hong Kong, China attending an all-male high school being extremely socially involved (recalling passively identifying as homosexual but not identifying/understanding gay culturally as it was acceptable for heterosexual males to hold hands/hug/be physically close) and moving to California, ; attending California State University, Chico and still working through sexuality regardless of the openness of the time in Northern California. Having to first process the cultural shift present in first generation immigrants and later understanding sexual orientation and gay culture; facing micro-aggressions from white-Americans. Having an Afro-American roommate consciously involved with Black Nationalism taught him about oppression; Gock never consciously felt oppressed but rather isolated as an intersectional minority but currently identifying with a Pan-Asian movement. Involved in helping to organize a gay-lesbian center at Cal State Chico, joining the Metropolitan Community Church and later joining and becoming actively involved the Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays [APLG]. Describes white attitudes towards Asian-Americans as either undesiring or desiring them for “Geisha-like” subservience; describes the lack of gay Asian friendships as they viewed each other as competition for white attention and the Asian-American versus Asian tension present in Asian organizations; noticed that non-Asian leadership in Asian organizations becoming more prevalent breaking an unwritten rule. Explains why he eventually left these organizations to focus on the broader community.

OH 2882

Narrator: Andy Chaen, Roy Kawasaki, Tak Yamamoto, Doug Chen
Interviewer: Eric Wat
Title: An Oral History with Andy Chaen, Roy Kawasaki, Tak Yamamoto, and Doug Chen
Date: May 2, 1997
Language: English
Location: Panorama City, CA
Project: Gay Asian Community Oral History Project

This oral history spans 1969-1997. Bulk dates: 1970s-1980s.

Abstract

An oral history with Andy Chaen, Roy Kawasaki, Tak Yamamoto, and Doug Chin; who all share connections with the Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays, APLG. The interview was conducted by the Center for Public and Oral History, California State University, Fullerton by Eric Wat, a Master's candidate at CSUF. The purpose of this interview was to gather personal experiences regarding gay Asian-Americans. Specifically gives an account of the four men's experiences in Los Angeles' gay social scene as Asian-Americans facing numerous micro-aggressions. Interprets the dominant demographics of popular gay bars, specifically River Club in 1970s Los Angeles, California: popular places gay Asians in Los Angeles attended; places where APLG fundraisers would be held. Describes social pressure to be "Model Minority" when in predominantly white gay bars. Describes gendered clothing regulations for Drag Queens and heavily enforced for "passing" Drag Queens (particularly South Pacific/East Asian). Explains the need for predominant gay Asian social environments in predominantly white environments. Recalls the beginning stages of APLG in 1980, Terry Gock's involvement in bi-law creation and church involvement with the organization. Overviews the purpose of APLG and "rap groups" held early in organization's history; disbanded due to negative feedback from white members. Justifies Asian and white romantic involvement in gay community.

OH 5533

Narrator: Roy Kawasaki
Interviewer: Eric Wat
Title: An Oral History with Roy Kawasaki
Date: Jan. 7, 1998
Language: English
Location: Los Angeles, CA
Project: Gay Asian Community Oral History Project

Status: transcribed? Final transcript? Images? Ephemera?

This oral history spans 1941-1997. Bulk dates: 1960s-1980s.

Abstract

An oral history with Roy Kawasaki, a self-identifying gay Japanese American. The interview was conducted by the Center for Public and Oral History, California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) by Eric Wat, a Master's candidate at CSUF. The purpose of this interview was to gather personal experiences regarding gay Asian-Americans. Specifically gives an account of Roy Kawasaki's experiences as a third generation gay Japanese-American growing up in a small Hawaiian town as the youngest of six siblings with a seamstress mother a sugar cane planter father. High school friends were "odd-balls" as he felt was his title. Attended Los Angeles City College as Art Major and lived with two older siblings. Romantic interest with Asian-American man in college who later joined military; led to unintentional "coming-out" to a professor. Sought recommended psychologist for guidance. Describes feelings of first homosexual intercourse with little understanding of self. States loneliness due to lack of Asian inclusion and a desire for "whiteness" due to lack of Asian representation. Pertains to internal discourse born of multiple identity crisis and constant micro-aggressions. Explains fear of "coming-out" in professional settings leading to joining gay teacher's organization. Tells of Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays [APLG] internal structure; leadership and membership from original meeting onward.