

Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley

Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Joey Terrill

Joey Terrill: At the Forefront of Queer Chicano Art

Interviews conducted by
Todd Holmes
in 2017

Interviews sponsored by the J. Paul Getty Trust

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Joey Terrill, 2017
Photo Courtesy of Joey Terrill

In 2017, The Getty Center initiated the exhibition *Pacific Standard Time: LA/ LA*, an ambitious and far-reaching series of exhibitions across Southern California that explored Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles. In connection with this exhibition, The Getty Center sponsored life history interviews with selected Chicana/o and Latina/o artists, many of whom were featured in the *LA/ LA* programs. These interviews, conducted by the Oral History Center at the University of California, Berkeley, aimed to document the lives and experiences of these artists amid the dynamic and changing art world of the West. Joey Terrill was one of the selected artists.

Joey Terrill is a Chicano artist and second-generation native of East Los Angeles. For nearly four decades, his paintings and prints have stood at the forefront of Queer Chicano art, pushing the boundaries of form and cultural representation by exploring the confluences of race and sexuality. In the 1980s, his work expanded further to address the epidemic that was ravaging the arts community: AIDs. From silkscreens and collages to various styles of painting, his artwork has long given voice to the experience of gay Chicanos while simultaneously advocating for racial justice, gay liberation, and HIV awareness.

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Introduction by Richard T. Rodríguez

Joseph “Joey” Terrill was born October 8, 1955 in Los Angeles, California. The son of Inez Mendoza and Salvador Terrill, he grew up in the Southern California neighborhoods of Echo Park, Highland Park, Lincoln Heights, and Santa Fe Springs. Terrill graduated from Cathedral High School, a private, all-boys Catholic college preparatory school. Although admitted to the University of California at Berkeley, he chose to attend Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, in large part due to the art department’s reputation and the personal impact of its faculty’s work on him. Introduced to art by his father (a marine who served in World War II and also an artist who worked in a range of mediums), Terrill’s early artistic influences included cartoons, comics, film, magazines, television, and an assortment of artistic trends evolving from the 1950s and 1960s.

In his teens, Terrill’s creative productivity overlapped with his participation in Los Angeles’s 1970s gay and lesbian movement. While attending Gay Liberation Front-sponsored “Funky Dances” at Troupers Hall and Larchmont Hall, Terrill met fellow Chicano gay artists like Gronk, Robert “Cyclona” Legoretta, and Mundo Meza. Terrill first exhibited his work—two figurative silk screen prints titled “Dormido” and “Roberto and Joey,” and a Kahlil Gibran diary transformed into a cookbook to which fellow artists contributed recipes—in the now-historic show entitled “Escandalosas!” held at the home of artist and curator Richard Nieblas. At the planning meeting for the exhibition, Terrill encountered artist Teddy Sandoval with whom he subsequently collaborated on the production of t-shirts silkscreened with “maricón” and “malflora” (Spanish slang words for, respectively, “faggot” and “dyke”) and adorned by friends and family members when marching in gay pride parades on Hollywood Boulevard. Terrill and Sandoval also collectively worked on *Homeboy Beautiful*, a two-issue run magazine published in 1978 that simultaneously critiqued racist representations of Mexican Americans and a pervasively unchecked homophobia within the Chicano community. The political impulse behind *Homeboy Beautiful* (named after the women’s magazines *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *House Beautiful*, but spotlighting the Chicano streetwise cholo or homeboy) was motivated by the group of feminist activists who, in 1970, staged a sit-in at the New York offices of *Ladies’ Home Journal* to protest the lack of women’s participation in the magazine’s production.

Briefly locating to New York in 1981 (during which time he exhibited paintings in a show titled “Chicanos Invade New York”), Terrill returned to California where he witnessed many friends and acquaintances from the L.A. gay scene of which he was a part succumbing to HIV/AIDS-related illness and death. Terrill tested HIV-positive in 1989. Like his earlier work that was informed by his awareness as a Chicano and a gay man, Terrill’s recent artistic production reflects his personal experiences and struggles of living with the human immunodeficiency virus. This is evident in his illustrations for the Spanish-language, AIDS-awareness comic book *Chicos Modernos* and his large-scale paintings commemorating individuals lost to the epidemic. As made clear in the recent exhibition *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.* in which his work takes center stage, Terrill’s activist and creative contributions have made an indelible impact on Chicano and queer American art, history, and cultural politics.

Interview 1: May 22, 2017

01-00:00:05

Holmes:

This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is May 22, 2017, and I have the pleasure of sitting down with Joey Terrill, for the first session of his oral history. We're here at his studio in the Santa Fe Art Colony in East Los Angeles. Joey, thanks again for agreeing to this and sitting down.

01-00:00:36

Terrill:

Sure, sure.

01-00:00:38

Holmes:

This is our first of four sessions, and this oral history was sponsored by the Getty Center, in relation to the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA exhibit, an event that will open here in Los Angeles this fall. This oral history is going to seek to document both your life and your art, and the experience and intertwining of both. I guess we should start at the beginning, talking a little bit about your family and early childhood. Why don't you tell me a little bit about your parents, Salvador and Inez.

01-00:01:15

Terrill:

Okay, well, my dad was a Marine from World War II, and I guess he met my mom in the late 1940s, early 1950s. They got together here in Los Angeles. My dad was originally from Arizona and my mom was beautiful. I think both my parents were, I mean they looked like movie stars, like Mexican movie stars. They were very passionate, they loved each other, but they had issues which I can go into.

I was the firstborn, born here in Los Angeles, but our first house was in Santa Fe Springs, a suburb of L.A., and for four years before my sister was born, you know, I was the only child, and so I had a lot of attention. Looking back, I must have been a very precocious child. I like to say that my dad gave me art and my mom gave me music, because my dad was an artist, perhaps a frustrated artist, but his work, as far back as I can remember, was hanging in our house and he was always working on projects. He made furniture, as well as sculpture, as well as paintings, and so it was all sort of, I mean whatever the medium, my dad found some sort of creative outlet, and I just followed along. I thought, "Well that's what people do," and it wasn't until a few years later I realized "Oh, not all parents are artists."

My mom used to sing to me all the time. Looking back, I always remember her singing when she was in the kitchen. She was a housewife. She was a success in all the ways that she had been raised to be a success. She was a wife, a good Catholic marriage, she had a son. There were issues though, that came up. Apparently my dad, unbeknownst to me at the time, suffered from post-traumatic stress from World War II, and my mom was predisposed to

mental illness. So at the age of seven, my parents divorced and so everything that I knew in terms of home, family was sort of thrown into a jumble.

Growing up in Santa Fe Springs, in the house, while my parents were still together, the house itself, everything was very modernist. We were very modern and I remember my mom always talking about design and color and stuff. So we became very aware, at a very early age, of things like color and furniture design, because my dad would make these kind of like 1950s boomerang shaped tables and things. I loved it and I would notice when I'd go to other people's homes, like my cousins or something, that their furnishings were more traditional or early American or whatever, just very different from ours.

I was always drawing and coloring, and in fact what I used to do when I was three years old, I would take books—we had all these books, because my parents would always read to me too, I mean I knew all these nursery rhymes, you know, "*Old King Cole was a merry old soul...*" blah-blah-blah—

01-00:05:15

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah, of course.

01-00:05:17

Terrill:

I also knew all the different stories, *The Three Little Pigs*, you know, *Sleeping Beauty*. I used to draw in the books and one of the first drawings that I remember was, there used to be a TV show, I'm thinking like 1960, 1959, on TV, called, "The Roaring 20's." It starred Dorothy Provine, the actress, and the opening sequence for it was a mirror ball. So a big mirror ball that said, "The Roaring 20's." Well, I was immediately attracted to the mirror ball, I was like oh my God, that's—and she was a flapper, and so she was always dancing and had these little fringy flapper dresses. I remember drawing it and I remember my dad and mom saying "Oh, what's that drawing?" I go, "Oh, that's Dorothy Provine." "Oh that's your girlfriend?" And I was like, "girlfriend?" No it never occurred to me, girlfriend, I just liked her dress. So at a very early age, I was already starting to think, "hmm—you know my perception of things and what I like is different or I'm different than expectations."

The things that my dad did at the house; I remember he laid in a concrete pathway up to our front door that had all these big, huge round pebbles, or like stones, that he had gotten, I guess from trips to the beach or whatever. And I loved that was there. He also had furniture, we had a magazine rack, all wood. He was always doing things around the house and doing things in the house. When my sister was born, I took that responsibility, you know, that I had a little baby sister and wanted to be a big brother to her, take care of her.

My parents had problems. I remember they were arguing a couple times. That was, you know, traumatic for me, because I was used to seeing them laugh

and smile and be affectionate, and so I knew something was wrong. At certain moments, my dad's temper would explode and you know, unfortunate to say, but I actually saw him hit my mom one time. The police were called and it was a scary, scary moment, a scary time.

When my parents divorced at the age of seven, my mom had a nervous breakdown and she was institutionalized. She was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic. Then, for the next five, six years, my mom went into the hospital twice. During those times, my dad would fight for custody, so my sister and I would go and live with him or our aunts or uncles or cousins. When my mom came out of the hospital for the last time, in 1966, we went back to my mom and then that was our family unit. My dad would come around for weekend visits but at the age of twelve, he just didn't show up one Saturday. What had happened was that apparently, he had actually gone back to his first wife, Helen, which who knew? I had no idea that he had a first wife. I knew that they were probably in Arizona, that's where they were living. But during those times, my sister would go and live with my aunt Josie, I would go live with my aunt Sarah and my uncle Rudy, who actually were more like parental figures to me growing up, and I got to live with my cousins, Pat, Corrine, and Mike, and you know, there was some adjusting to do. I was used to being the only child, and I guess I was a little bit, I don't know if spoiled is the right word, but my cousins, I thought were kind of ruffians. My cousin Mike was certainly into football and sports and all that stuff, and I wasn't. I was interested in art and drawing.

I remember my uncle Rudy, who was working class, he worked in the bakery, Ralph's Bakeries, for years and years, and to me he was a very wise man; originally from El Paso, he used to be a pachuco. He used to say, "If Joey wants to color let him color," like you know, what's the big deal, let him just be who he is. I was like, "Oh thank you uncle, thank you." That really started to instill in me a sense of self-esteem and self-worth. But I loved my cousins. We lived in Highland Park and when my mom—when we were still in Santa Fe Springs, you know, when my dad had already left, my mom and I and my sister, we would take trips into L.A., you know take the bus, and visit with my aunts and cousins. And she had a friend named Nora. I realize now in retrospect that Nora, like my mother, was young and a new divorcee, and she also had a son. So we would go visit them at this apartment building and I thought the son was sort of dumb, kind of funny, but Nora was really sweet. But I remember telling my mom as we were leaving to go back home, I thought "Mom, how come Nora and Frankie, her son, how come they live there?" She goes, "Well, mijo, that's all they can afford." It was a very simple, small, poor looking apartment, because I was used to a house.

01-00:12:21
Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

01-00:12:22

Terrill: Right? We have a yard.

01-00:12:26

Holmes: You're living in the suburbs?

01-00:12:27

Terrill: Yeah, and we had all these rooms and things. Anyway, the last time, when all that finally changed was my mom would go through her spells. I could tell right away, just by looking at her, her demeanor, her expression, when she would go through her spells. She was a very vain person. She was very beautiful, she was always conscious of wanting to look her best, and when she would go through one of her spells, she wouldn't even comb her hair, and I could tell. So I would like try to, you know, kind of take care of her. This one day, my mom was going through one her spells and I had this idea in my head that you know, if they take her away to the hospital again this time, I thought they were going to put me and my sister in an orphanage. I just had this fear, so I thought "Okay, I can't let anybody know that she's, you know, she's going through this, we have to wait until she gets better." And so for about a week, my mom was dysfunctional. There was a woman that would come and pick us up to take us to school and she'd say, "Where's your mom, how come your mom..." I'd say, "Oh, she's asleep." And I would make our lunches and I was trying to take care of everything.

One day I came home from school and my mom was standing, talking to herself, I mean a mile a minute. And I knew oh, wow, she's really, you know, she's going kind of crazy. And when she turned around, apparently she had started her menstrual cycle and she was just covered in blood. I just didn't know, I just thought, "Oh my God she's hurt herself." So I went to our—we lived in a cul-de-sac and we had these neighbors that were really close to my mom and dad, Luis and Chela, they were from Mexico. I loved them, they were great, and they had four boys, four kids, so they were really rowdy, and I used to go over there all the time. But I went over to Chela, who I don't know if you know Rocky and Bullwinkle, but Boris and Natasha?

01-00:14:57

Holmes: Yeah, yeah.

01-00:14:58

Terrill: Chela looked to me, like a Mexican Natasha, you know? I went over and she goes, "Oh, Joey, what's going on?" I said, "I think my mom hurt herself," and she goes, "mijo, you stay right here." And she went over to go see what was going on, and I guess they called my aunt and uncle, and then everything just changed, I knew things were different. We moved, my mom was in the hospital. When my mom came out in 1966, and my aunt Josie—my mom had five sisters and they were all fairly close, but my aunt Josie was the matriarch. She was the one that had the lawyer that would battle my dad in the courts for custody, et cetera, et cetera. And I remember my aunt telling me "Okay, mijo,

now you know, your mom is coming home and you and Linda, your sister, you're all going to be a family now, and now you're the man of the house, so you need to just remember that and take care of them." I took that very seriously.

When my mom came out of the hospital and met with me and Linda there at my aunt's house, she says, "Come on," she goes, "we're going to walk over to our new apartment. I got us a new apartment and everything is going to be good and I'm not going to go to the hospital anymore," and I was like okay. And we got to... [chokes up] Gee, I don't know why I'm so emotional. We got to the apartment building and she said, "Oh, and one of the best things is that Nora and Frankie are our neighbors." So, we were moving into those apartments that I used to feel sorry for them living there and, yeah I guess that was a little traumatic. So I ended up going in my room, I had my own room, and I ended up crying. I just knew the whole world has changed now, you know this is the new reality—our life is very different now.

My mom would periodically continue to get sick, off and on, and I would try to manage that. So in many ways our roles were reversed. I was caregiver and my sister as well, to my mom, who would get sick. Now, my mom put herself through night school and ended up working for L.A. Unified School District, she was a clerk typist. Her coworkers loved her, her boss loved her, but periodically, they would call me up and you know, just let me know, "Joey, we wanted to let you know that we're sending your mom home today because she's not herself, so I don't know, maybe you need to make sure she has her medication or whatever," and I would do that. So instead of the school calling the parents—

01-00:18:11

Holmes:

Calling her about you, right.

01-00:18:12

Terrill:

Yeah, about the kid, right. So that's, I mean that's where we were, and we were living in Highland Park, and that's sort of where we ended up.

01-00:18:26

Holmes:

That's a lot of responsibility to start taking on.

01-00:18:28

Terrill:

Yes it is.

01-00:18:30

Holmes:

Particularly even by the age of eleven.

01-00:18:32

Terrill:

Yes.

- 01-00:18:33
Holmes: Which you would have been eleven probably right, when she came out in '66? That's a lot.
- 01-00:00:15
Terrill: Yeah, yeah, right around that time, yeah.
- 01-00:18:40
Holmes: You were saying that both your parents were artists. I also heard that some of your aunts also did some artwork as well, silverwork.
- 01-00:18:54
Terrill: On my dad's side of the family, the Terrills from Arizona. Well, first of all there were nine in the family there. He had a brother and seven sisters, and all of them had some kind of creative hobby or activity; silverwork, jewelry making, ceramics. That was sort of the tradition on my dad's side. On my mother's side, you know, not so much. My aunts didn't have that, so that was on my dad's side.
- 01-00:19:40
Holmes: So you're taking on these larger responsibilities, even by the age of eleven. You're also experiencing this trauma within your family life, which is changing dramatically, right?
- 01-00:19:54
Terrill: Sure, yeah.
- 01-00:19:57
Holmes: Was art an outlet for you during all of this?
- 01-00:20:01
Terrill: Oh, absolutely, yeah.
- 01-00:20:02
Holmes: Can you discuss that a little bit?
- 01-00:20:04
Terrill: Well, I mean I would find myself going into my room and just drawing and coloring, usually with crayons. In 1968, there were art classes that were offered. I went to Our Divine Savior School, a Catholic school, and there was Mr. and Mrs. Pavini. Mrs. Pavini taught music, her husband, Mr. Pavini, taught art, and they would offer these extracurricular activities or classes for some of the Catholic schools. So either after school or on weekends, on Saturdays, we'd go down to either the Knights of Columbus Hall or one of the high schools, like Pater Noster High School, and that was my introduction to acrylic painting and I loved it. We would be in one room painting and in the next room would be Mrs. Pavini with the other kids, doing music. They'd be doing their band practice and Broadway show tunes, while we'd be painting. Mr. Pavini was Italian with dark curly hair. I know that he and Mrs. Pavini used to live in Greenwich Village, so he would have stories about living in the

village in New York. Mrs. Pavini was tall and had red hair, she was Irish, had some freckles, and she was very high strung maybe, whereas Mr. Pavini was kind of cool and easygoing, laidback.

One of the most interesting things about the classes that I took with them was that during the summer of 1968, we were told that we were going to go on a field trip, so I was very excited. The field trip we were going on was to the Spahn Ranch, which was an old movie set where they had done all these westerns. There was a corral with horses and Mr. Spahn ran it but he was getting old, so Mr. Pavini said that a group of hippies now lived there and they're the caretakers. And I was thrilled, I thought, "Wow, you know, we're going to actually see some real hippies." I was so excited and we got there and some of the hippie girls came out and met with us, and there was Sadie and Patricia and Squeaky, and they actually sat and drew with us. At a certain point, I needed to wash out my brushes from the painting session and I said, "Oh, where can I rinse out my brushes?" They said, "Go over there to that building, there's a sink in there." Apparently, that was where the bathroom was, it was a ramshackle, like shack. So I walked in, into this kind of ramshackle bathroom, and there was the sink, but immediately to my right was the toilet and there was a man sitting on it, and he was naked, and he had long hair and his eyes were real big, and he says, "Howdy, I'm Tex." I was so taken aback, "Oh my God, there's a naked man right here," I was so turned on, I was so excited, and I'm sure I must have blushed, but I said, "I'm Joey, I'm just going to rinse out my brushes," and he said, "That's fine, go ahead," and I did. But I just kept thinking, "Oh my God, I was so excited I actually saw a naked man," and I knew that my so-called girlfriend, who I had only held her hand, Valerie, I just knew. I really liked Valerie, she's intelligence, she's creative, she's fun, she's very pretty, but she's pretty like a vase of flowers is pretty, right?

01-00:24:19

Holmes: Yeah.

01-00:24:21

Terrill: Boys, other students, they were cute like puppy dogs are cute or like teddy bears, and I wanted to hold them and hug them, that was in my head. Seeing the naked man, I was like okay, I'm convinced, I know I'm into men definitely. It was the following summer, when the Sharon Tate and Rosemary and Leno LaBianca murders occurred in Los Angeles, and L.A. was paranoid and frightened and it was so scary. Then, in November, they arrested the Manson family, including Charles "Tex" Watson. I remember seeing it on TV and going "Oh my God, that's the naked man that I saw."

01-00:25:07

Holmes: Oh, wow.

01-00:25:08

Terrill: So the first naked man that I saw was a murderer.

01-00:25:10

Holmes: Was a member of the Manson family.

01-00:25:13

Terrill: Yeah, yeah. But you know, also in my head was this, "Huh, well I guess not all hippies are about peace and love." It made me start to really question and think about all the things that I took for granted, whether it was what I was being taught in Catholic school, certainly about my own sexuality. I then ended up painting with acrylics for 30 years and it wasn't until I was 50 that I actually took myself back to school, went to Cal State L.A. and took oil painting, and so I've been doing oil painting and acrylics for the last twelve years now. Anyway, that's sort of the gist of, you know, where things are at there.

01-00:26:19

Holmes: I want to get into your high school years, which this falls in right there chronologically.

01-00:26:24

Terrill: Okay, sure.

01-00:26:27

Holmes: Around the late 1960s is when you would be starting high school. So you have this added responsibility of really not being a kid at home, right?

01-00:26:36

Terrill: Right.

01-00:26:37

Holmes: And really having to be the man of the house.

01-00:26:38

Terrill: I was the man of the house.

01-00:26:40

Holmes: But at the same time, you're also beginning to grapple with your own sexual identity as well.

01-00:26:48

Terrill: True, yeah.

01-00:26:49

Holmes: Which is not the easiest thing to do, particularly with all these added responsibilities? Now you went to Cathedral High School?

01-00:26:56

Terrill: Correct, yes.

01-00:26:58

Holmes: And that was an all-boys Catholic school.

01-00:27:00

Terrill: All boys Catholic school, run by the Christian Brothers.

01-00:27:03

Holmes: Discuss that environment a little bit more. So when we think about high school during the late 1960s, of course, stereotypes start popping up—we have the counterculture, we have civil rights activism. But you're also at a Catholic school where there's probably a tinge of this type of Catholic conservatism as well.

01-00:27:26

Terrill: Right. All of the things that were percolating within the dominant culture, played themselves out in high school as well. First of all, I might also say though, that it was in 1969, in the summer after going to Spahn Ranch, and you know, the murders are happening.

01-00:27:50

Holmes: Yeah.

01-00:27:52

Terrill: I was to enter my freshman year at Cathedral in September and in August, the month before, I actually had sex for the first time. I was walking from my aunt's house, to my other aunt's house in Highland Park, and as I was walking on Griffin Avenue, a VW pulled over and it was a good looking man, he must have been in his twenties, and he asked me did I know where the library was. I was like, "Well sure it's over there and you go this way" And he goes, "Would you want to take me over there, can you get in the car?" I was like hmm? I said, "Well, no I need to walk to my aunt's" and he said okay. He then asks, "By any chance would you know anyone that could use a blow job?" And I remember thinking blow job? Like blow dryer? Then I realized, oh my God, he's talking about cock-sucking, and I said, "No, I don't know, I don't know of anyone," and he says, "Well what about you?" Me? I'm like wow, and real quickly in my head I'm thinking, this is what I've been looking for, is this the chance, do I do this? I said, "Well I don't know," and he says, "Oh, come on." He seemed really sweet and so I went for it. The minute I got into the car, I thought, "Oh my God he's going to kidnap me and kill me," and remember, the Sharon Tate murders had occurred and so that was already in my head. It turned out that Mario, he was a sweetheart. He was a student at Cal State L.A., he was involved in Chicano politics, and so I felt very comfortable with him and the minute he and I went to the apartment and laid down with each other I was like oh my God. There were fireworks, I could hear music, I knew this is it! Now I got it, I had clarity. I was like okay, this is who I am.

It turns out that Mario and I actually saw each other back and forth for about two years, and he was really good about instilling in me a sense of pride in who I was as a Chicano, but also as a gay man. I also realized that he was a chicken hawk, and technically, it was statutory rape, right? Yeah. I'm not here trying to advocate for statutory rape, but I do think that sometimes teenagers

can know who they are, what they want, and then that sometimes there are people who are over the age of twenty-one, that are still not very savvy about their own identities.

The one thing I did feel bad about was lying to my mom, because Mario would come over and she liked him. He was polite, sweet, smart. She felt like he was a mentor for me. We would go to cultural things, go see a rally at Cal State L.A. or something like that, and we'd also go to the movies. But my mom didn't know that we were lovers. I lied and said that I had met Mario through my activism in some of the Chicano politics and things that were going on. But that was a lie, that's not how we met.

01-00:31:48

Holmes:

But in some respects, Mario did seem to be a mentor for you.

01-00:31:52

Terrill:

Yes. Yes.

01-00:31:54

Holmes:

Not just instilling pride as both a Chicano and a gay man, but also, what we would later see in your art, of actually bringing both of those together.

01-00:32:06

Terrill:

True. The other thing too is that you've got to remember that back then, in 1969, prior to my having sex, I would search newspapers, magazines, for any mention of homosexuality or gayness, and when you did find something it was usually the dark side of the gay world, or something weird like that. I was thinking to myself, I know there's probably some more people like me, but I think they all live in Greenwich Village and maybe San Francisco, but I don't know that there's many homosexuals in L.A. And there's certainly not any Mexican homosexuals; I didn't know of any. The only person that we knew from the neighborhood in Highland Park that was "gay," was Marylou, who was what we would call a transvestite, but now we probably refer to them as transgender. She would dress like a chola, but everyone knew her. She'd be walking down the street and people would wave, "Hey Marylou, how are you doing, how is it going?"

I remember one time getting my haircut at Charlie's Barbershop, where my mom used to send me and always get the regular boy's haircut, that's what we'd do. Charlie the barber was talking to one of the other barbers and I realize now in retrospect that they were gay. I was so naïve back then. But as he was cutting my hair, he was talking and he said, "Oh, did you hear about Marylou?" That she went to Footsies, the bar, which back then was just a dive bar in Highland Park; today I think it's a little trendy place. He said that some sailors were in there and started harassing her, and she said, "Do you want to take it outside," and she took it outside and she beat up the two sailors. I just remember thinking to myself wow, that is so cool, that Marylou, the transvestite—like all right!

[Both laugh]

Going into high school—Cathedral High School was one of two college prep high schools on the East Side that I was aware of, and they were both Catholic, and that was Salesian and Cathedral, and we were archrivals, we were archenemies, the schools. We were taught by the Christian Brothers, who had the wineries up in Northern California. But there was a group of the Christian Brothers who were Chicanos, who embraced liberation theology and social activism, and advocated that part of being a Catholic was, to look at doing social justice and making a difference in community and your neighborhood. They actually introduced me to the Chicano power movement, and I became a volunteer for *La Huelga*, the grape and lettuce boycott. So, we'd go to meetings and then we'd have our signup sheets and we would volunteer to go for several hours at a time, and we'd go to the Ralph's Markets and stand out in front and ask people if they would sign the petition for people not to buy nonunion lettuce or grapes. I would do that with the Christian Brothers, with Brother Gerard Perez, and Brother Richard Orona, and also Brother Richard Figueroa, those were the three Brothers that I was most involved with. I also realize, in retrospect, that what they were doing was mentoring me. They knew that here was this fatherless student that had a brain, maybe I was a little kooky, crazy, but they wanted to give me guidance and they acted as mentors. In fact, they would take me for weekends and we would tour St. Mary's College, we'd tour UCLA, and they would talk to me about the world of academia, the expectation that I would be the first in my family to go to college, you know, doing all the things that maybe my dad wasn't around to do and that my mom didn't have the capability of doing. They were also aware of her mental state.

I should say, by the way, that I was on an academic scholarship, so I had all my four years at Cathedral paid for, because I had scored above 3.8 grade point average. In fact, it was Brother Gerard Perez who, in 1970, had taken me to San Francisco. He took me and my best friend, Terry, Terry Saunders. We went to San Francisco, just for a weekend, and we were actually going to stay with Mrs. Lara. Mrs. Lara was the mother of Brother Sean Lara at Cathedral. Brother Sean, he was one of the best looking men I had ever seen, I had such a big crush on him. So, the offer of going to stay at his childhood home with his mom was exciting. When we got up there she was so sweet and said, "Oh yeah, you boys, you can sleep in Sean's room." So it was such a thrill on so many levels, and not the least of which was that Brother Gerard took us to the Fillmore, which was—Bill Graham's Fillmore where all the hippie, rock and roll, best acts and bands played. We saw Quicksilver Messenger Service, as well as Mott the Hoople, who had the hit, "All the Young Dudes," right?

01-00:38:42
Holmes:

Oh yeah.

01-00:38:43

Terrill:

Anyway, it was my introduction to San Francisco, and I loved it. I loved the architecture, I loved the bohemian aspect to it, I loved all the art, I loved all the hippies, I loved everything that was going on. And Mrs. Lara, as she was talking about the different districts in San Francisco, she'd say, "Well, you know then there's Market and then there's Russian Hill and Nob Hill, and this is the Richmond District, and then there's Polk Street, that's where the homosexuals live." And I was thinking, she's actually acknowledging that there are homosexuals here in San Francisco. It was a very matter-of-fact statement. So I had this real kind of fantasy idea about San Francisco.

My best friend Terry and I, at that time, we hadn't come out to each other. He had talked about some girlfriend that he had, and I know he lived over in South Central L.A., at 54th and Compton, and when he would talk about this so-called girlfriend I used to think something's not right, it just doesn't—it didn't sound right to me, whatever. We used to always meet in the morning and it was sort of us two, we were the two friends, the two buddies, the two pals that hung out and we were each other's support among the jocks at Cathedral that were into football and sports, and there was also a lot of cholos and sort of like peripheral gang guys. So as it turns out, even though you score high academically or whatever, there were a lot of smart cholos.

01-00:40:41

Holmes:

Indeed. Yeah.

01-00:40:41

Terrill:

Right? And so at Cathedral, there wasn't any kind of official uniform and in fact, most of the guys wore jeans or khakis, white t-shirts, it was very, very barrio; unlike some Catholic schools that are much more strict. And in fact, during our freshman year, there was a new principal, Brother David, who wanted to implement some changes, because he thought things were getting a little too radical. The student walkouts had happened the year before, with Sal Castro, in 1968, and in '69, as a freshman, there was a group of students at Cathedral that did a walkout, and so they wanted to put the kibosh on that. There was an assembly in the hall and all the freshmen were up in the bleachers, and there I was, and then the sophomores, and then down on the floor were the seniors and the juniors. And you know to me the seniors were men. When you're a freshman, and you're looking at these seventeen, eighteen year-olds, to me they were like men.

01-00:41:55

Holmes:

Absolutely. My son is a freshman, and it's funny, you see the varsity team come out, they have beards.

01-00:42:02

Terrill:

Right, you know?

01-00:42:03

Holmes:

It's a big difference.

01-00:42:05

Terrill:

Yeah. It is a big difference when you're just barely coming into puberty and all that. But the thing was, Brother David, he kind of had a *lisssp*, and he just was—he didn't come off as very masculine, and I knew that a lot of the students would make fun of him. But when he got up and he announced that he was changing dress codes, and so t-shirts were no longer allowed, and you heard groans from the students, and then some of the seniors, stood up, wearing their t-shirts, and took off their t-shirts, so they stood there with their naked torsos, which I was thrilled about. Everyone started laughing, but I mean it was such a disrespectful response to, and defiant response to the idea that you are not going to put any dress code changes on us students here, we are in control. That's the kind of environment. It wasn't like a Catholic school where everybody was on their Ps and Qs. So, very rebellious, thinking outside the box. And there was also, you know, a couple guys who perceived me as I guess not very masculine or I wasn't a big cholo, so they would grab me by the shirt and throw me up against the locker and stuff, I had some of that experience. Bullying, mostly verbal, but awful.

One day Terry hadn't shown up in the morning and the bell was already ringing and I'm wondering, "Where's Terry?" Normally, we sit and talk for about a half hour before class starts. I went out to the front of the school to see if maybe he was walking up from the bus stop and there he was, sitting against the library building right there in the front, and he was sitting there with his head hung over, his eyes were closed. And I said, "Terry, are you okay, are you sick?" He was drooling and he said, "I took some pills," and I'm like what? To me, at that point in time, the idea of drugs was just bad, drugs were all bad, you were going to hell if you used them. I said, "Terry, why?" He goes, "I wanted to kill myself." I was like what? Like suicide? Again, that was something so bizarre to me. So I got Terry and I was walking him into school and I saw Mr. Peltier, he was a lay teacher, but he was a counselor as well, and also very good looking; he had a beard, really cool. I said, "Mr. Peltier, Mr. Peltier!" He goes, "What's wrong with Terry?" I said, "He took some pills." He said, "Okay, come into my office, sit there in my office. I'm going to be back, I have a first class. I'm going to bring you some coffee, just keep him awake. Don't let anyone in, don't say anything to anybody," and I was like, "Okay, thank you Mr. Peltier," because I knew that he could get Terry kicked out, right?

01-00:45:25

Holmes:

Yeah.

01-00:45:26

Terrill:

So I'm there and I'm trying to talk to Terry and trying to keep him awake and I said "Terry why are you..." Oh, and Terry was African American, I don't know if I mentioned that.

01-00:45:35

Holmes:

Oh, okay.

01-00:45:37

Terrill:

I said, "Terry, what's wrong, why would you want to kill yourself?" I didn't understand. He said, "I've got three problems that are just really terrible." I'm like, "What could be so terrible," and he said, "Well, I'm flunking out, I'm getting bad grades." I said, really? No, I said, that can't be it. You're not going to kill yourself because you're flunking out, that's ridiculous. And I asked, "What other problem do you have?" He said, "I think my mom's a heroin addict." That one threw me, like okay that's different, and I said, "What makes you think that?" He said he found hypodermic needles in drawers at home. I also knew that his mom, Betty, was a nurse, so I was like maybe that's from her job or something and he's like "No, this is her." I said okay, well that's something that you can investigate but not worth suicide. What's the third one? "No, I can't tell you, I can't tell you. If I told you, you would hate me and you would just want nothing to do with me," and blah-blah-blah, and I was like what could that be? I said, "Terry, are you gay?" "Yes I am," and he was crying and I go, "So am I," and he was like, "You are?," and I said "Yeah." He said, "Really?" and I said, "Really, yeah I am." We were coming to this understanding that that was why we were probably subconsciously attracted to each other as friends. He said, "Really, you're not lying?" I go, "No, I'm not lying," and he said, "Oh my God, don't you think Mr. Peltier is so cute?" I go, "Yes, he is." So right away we connected, we bonded, and then, when Mr. Peltier came back we agreed okay, tell him about your mom and heroin but let's not say nothing about being gay, at least not at that point, but sort of in the conversations it did kind of come out. So these things lead into other things.

There was another Brother at Cathedral named Brother Gary York, who wasn't Chicano; he was, I guess, of British extraction. And unlike the other Christian Brothers, who were all kind of chummy and pals with each other, and there was this camaraderie among the Christian Brothers. When they would get together they would hug each other and stuff. I know at the Brothers' house, they would always have dinners with bottles of wine, but with Brother Gary, for lack of a better word, he had a big stick up his ass, I mean the Brothers, with Gary, they would shake his hand, "Oh, hello, Gary, how are you?" Very formal. Instead of like, "Hey, bro, what's going on?" That's how all the other Brothers would greet each other. Brother Gary, I guess thought I was special and he was mentoring me, and he would take me to his room and we'd listen to classical music, and it was a little tiny bit patronizing to me, like he thought maybe I had never heard classical music, I don't know, but he was always encouraging me, "You're very smart, you're a great writer, you can do all these good things." I accepted that and embraced it.

Apparently, it got out about Terry and I being gay, and so Brother Gary said to me, "I'd like to talk to you after class today, come to my classroom." I said okay, and I went in and he said, "I want to talk to you," he said, "because it's come to my attention that you and Terry think that you're homosexual." And I said, "No, Brother, I don't think I am, I know I am," and he said, "That's

impossible, that's ridiculous, you're much too young to understand sexuality," this, that and the other. I said, "No, I don't think so," and he goes, "I'm going to suggest you do what other young men and students do here," and I'm like "What's that?" and he said, "masturbation," and I said, "Oh I do that too." He turned so red, he was livid, he said, "Get out, go!" He dismissed me and from that point on, I went from being his pet to being the object of ridicule by him.

01-00:50:26

Holmes:

Openly ridiculed?

01-00:5:29

Terrill:

Openly. You know how he'd enter the classroom and everybody's talking, and you know you want to [claps his hands] get everyone's attention, "Okay, quiet now" He'd say, "All right let's get quiet now, like Miss Terrill will you please," you know, referring to me as a feminine pronoun, and of course all the students, all the other boys are laughing at me. We were reading *Dante's Inferno*, he said, "And today should be of extra special interest to Mr. Terrill because we're reading the ninth circle, the circle of the sodomites." Of course everyone would laugh at me, so I would just be defiant, I would close my book and I just refused to read. I thought, "What an asshole. Why is he being like this to me?" And in fact, long story short, I actually got an incomplete in his class for not participating and in all my years, I was a straight A student. B was the—I don't think I ever got a C—B was the lowest grade I ever got, ever. But here I had an incomplete and at that point, that was actually my senior year in high school when that occurred, and because of the incomplete, that meant technically I had not kept up my grade point average and so I lost my scholarship for my senior year, and so in order for me to graduate they told me, "You need to pay this whole year's tuition or you can't get your diploma." I was not about to go and tell my mom anything.

One of the things about when you're growing up and being a caregiver to a parent who is paranoid schizophrenic, and whose moods can be triggered by any slight bad news or trauma, like, "Why did that man honk at me today?" "Mom, it's okay, don't worry." I was not about to go tell her that I now owe one year's tuition because I lost my scholarship because Brother Gary failed me. So I actually was able to walk across the Greek Theater Stage, where we did our graduation, and I got the folder but no high school diploma. So even though I had scored high, I actually had a California State scholarship for being in the 5 percentile for the SATs, so I was accepted at UC Berkeley and I was accepted at Immaculate Heart College. I chose to go to Immaculate Heart here in L.A., in Hollywood, and it was Brother Michael, Brother Michael Xavier, who stepped in and had to write a letter to the college, because the college says okay, please send your information, your transcripts and your high school diploma, and I didn't have one to send so he wrote a letter, a special letter. Anyway, that's what happened there.

Sorry to get off on these things. So me and Terry bonded and me and Terry became each other's support. We were saying, "I read in the *L.A. Free Press*," (which was like kind of the underground newspaper), "I read that they have gay-ins, like the love-ins, but it's gay-ins, at Griffith Park. Do you want to go?" And we were like, "Yeah, let's go; I'll go if you go." As teenagers we went and it was good but it was also an eye-opener. The first gay-in that we went to, there must have been maybe 30-40 people, groups of friends, some of them looked like hippies, some just regular, there were a couple of queens. Me and Terry were sitting by ourselves and this older queen, and I say that lovingly, it's not a pejorative, Pat Colby, who is Polish and he had dyed jet black hair and he combed it across his forehead. But he came over and he said, "Hi, I see you girls sitting here by yourself. Why don't you come and join us, we have some food here." I was like okay. There were adult gay men and we learned from these older gay men, who were telling us about this club over here, there's the Metropolitan Community Church. They were giving us the information about the gay world, so to speak.

01-00:55:16

Holmes: And how to navigate that as gay men.

01-00:55:18

Terrill: Yeah, exactly. But, at the same time that we were there and that was going on and that was good, there was also a commotion and there were two women, really butch women, and they were fighting, like a few hundred yards away. There was a guy who was there and I guess he was a friend of theirs or one of them, and while people were shouting and saying, "Stop the fighting, don't be violent," he was saying, "Fuck that, fuck that, let them fight." I was very upset. I was very upset like no, we're all supposed to be together, right? Isn't this a gay community? Then, one of the girlfriends of one of the women who was fighting, she went in to try to help her and they just were hitting her and beating her up. I actually started crying, I was so upset, and Pat Colby said, "Don't be upset, these folks, they need to figure themselves out and love themselves."

Pat Colby used to run the door at Troopers Hall, for the gay liberation dances. It was one dollar to go in, there was no age limit, so teenagers could go, and if you didn't have the dollar they'd let you in anyway. So, me and Terry started going to those, and it was the gay liberation dances at Troopers Hall where I also first met other Chicano artists: Gronk, Mundo Meza, and a bunch of others. And that became my weekend event, as a teenager, because I couldn't get into clubs yet, that became my social network and through there, I met some of the youth that belonged to the Metropolitan Community Church, the gay church, run by Reverend Troy Perry. It was the original church down on 21st, near the freeway in downtown L.A., and so I went to that. At that time, I still thought that I believed in God as I was raised, and we would go on Sunday evenings, to their evangelical services, because they were just really fun. Everyone would be singing. I joined the gay youth group there and

essentially, we were just a bunch of gay teenagers that would get together and talk about what it was like at home, what was going on with our families, how many of us were out or not, who was being kicked out, this that and the other, and just be supportive of each other. Some of those friendships I ended up maintaining into adulthood. I also attended my first wedding there, gay wedding, two women.

01-00:58:24

Holmes: What year was that?

01-00:58:26

Terrill: 1971, I think. So you know, it was a good thing, it was definitely something that—I mean, I was getting a feeling like I belonged to a community. I was becoming aware that we are everywhere, that homosexuals were everywhere, and all throughout history. Then, I forget her name, but he would always dress in drag and she would play the organ for the music and singing. She used to play for Mahalia Jackson, I was told she was from the South.

01-00:59:05

Holmes: Oh, wow.

01-00:59:08

Terrill: I don't know what her story was, but I think she was probably kicked out of her Southern church. So I had these multiple sources of inspiration, support, creativity, mischievousness, going on from being part of *La Huelga* and volunteering with the lettuce and grape boycott, and then on Sundays I'd go to the MCC Church and I would totally shift to gay. In 1970, I participated in the Chicano Moratorium in East L.A., and that was a march against the Vietnam War and the preponderance of people of color, particularly Mexicans or Latinos, Chicanos that were dying, because a lot of folks, as everyone knows, would get college deferments or get out of having to go into the draft.

01-01:00:11

Holmes: Sure, it was a working class war, but it was also a much higher representation, disproportionate representation, particularly of Chicano servicemen in there.

01-01:00:24

Terrill: Yeah. The march was great, it felt very empowering; I mean it was like my first march that I was out in the street, publicly advocating on behalf of a cause. I remember meeting these older women who were from the West Side and they were Jewish, and they were very socially progressive, and I was starting to understand the connections between social, political movements, that go beyond just ethnicity necessarily, or religion, there was a lot of people there that I was surprised to see. Of course, the big thing was that we were all going to Belvedere Park, waiting to hear Cesar Chavez, because he was going to be the main speaker, and as I'm sure you know, the police rioted. I call it a police riot because there was a disturbance at one end of the park, supposedly somebody was trying to steal some beer or something from a liquor store, but the police response was to just clear out the park, where they just marched in

with their batons and just pushed through. And these were families and old people, and abuelas [grandmothers] and kids and students. It was my first experience of, for lack of a better word, police brutality. I thought, "Oh my God, this is so fucking real." And then they started shooting teargas and my eyes were burning tremendously. They were shoving us all through this one exit from the park because there were walls, so it was a small exit. And I remember as I was running to get out of there, you know the porta-potties, they were opening up these doors and hitting people while they're trying to go to the bathroom. It was ridiculous! I remember my cousin Ruby was there too, because she was a student activist, she was a few years older than me, but we ended up finding each other, once we were out on the sidewalk, and then people were in cars and just saying, "Come on, come, get in!"

And so we jumped in the car, because we were going to drive away from all of this. And as we got into the car, some of the teargas came into the car, in the enclosed space, and so we were all burning our eyes and trying to open the windows to get some air, and we just went up the block, because people were opening up their houses and their lawns for people that were fleeing from the park. They had their water hoses there so that we could rinse our eyes out, and that's what we were doing. I think I had tried to call my mom to tell her what was going on, because obviously at that time we had only land-line phones.

01-01:03:45

Holmes: Someone's house phone?

01-01:03:47

Terrill: Yeah. But, I also then saw the first smoke coming up from Whittier Boulevard, where I realized that there was now a riot and looting, and of course that's when Ruben Salazar was killed.

01-01:04:02

Holmes: From the *L.A. Times*.

01-01:04:03

Terrill: Yeah, the writer from the *L.A. Times*. So that was my introduction to the reality of police brutality as I saw it. I don't know who they were after or what started it, but I do know that all of those folks that were there, like the rest of us, were there to hear Cesar Chavez, and we were peaceful and the rest is, as they say, history.

So I totally embraced being part of the gay community and at the same time that I also saw Mario Bianes, the first guy I was with, he was at Cal State LA. He was involved in the Chicano students activism but he was gay and he would tell me, "Yeah, you know so and so from the Brown Berets?" "Yeah?" "He's gay too." But they were all on the down low, they were all kind of closeted. So, in my head it was like wait, on the one hand we're here about being out and open in public, and then I go to MCC Church and we're all

proud about being gay, but I felt like there was these two worlds that weren't necessarily meshing, and so that was always in my head.

01-01:05:24

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you a little bit about that, of coming out as a gay man, and particularly doing so while still in high school, at a Catholic high school. That was extremely bold and courageous. On one hand, you had circles that were very supportive of this, and of trying to embrace and be proud of your sexuality and your identity. At the same time, you're also in a Catholic school that embraced acts of social justice, which also meant embracing the identity of being a Mexican American, a Chicano, and your ethnicity. And yet, as you were just describing, those worlds sometimes collided more than they intermeshed in some ways. Can you discuss that a little bit? And particularly in high school, when you did come out, the reaction you received?

01-01:06:22

Terrill:

Well, so Brother Richard Orona was my theology instructor, teacher, and he was cool and I really liked him. I remember one of the classes we did, it was theology, but for some reason we were also talking about identity, and I remember doing this paper where I said that the thing that I've learned about being Chicano is that there is no one definition. One could be Chicano and be working class; one could also be a college graduate, one could choose to be an artist, you know? And essentially, the subtext was that I was saying one could be gay or queer, and I was coming to that kind of conclusion.

In, I guess it was '71, so that was the start of our junior year, on this particular day, I saw Terry in the morning, my friend Terry, and he had had a rough time with his mom. And I was kind of frustrated with my mom. I used to get really angry and frustrated with my mom, because I just wanted her to be well. And one of the things that I learned years later, about folks with mental illness or certainly with paranoid schizophrenia, is when my mom would be on her medication she would be herself and she would feel great, and when she was herself, I mean she was wonderful. She had a great personality, people loved her, she was very personable, she was engaging, and she would always say, "Oh, I feel great, I don't need that medication." I'm thinking, "Mom, the reason you feel great is because you're on that medication." So I was frustrated with all that and then I was still getting some harassment because by that time, by '71, I was starting to be, since I was already involved with the gay teens, it was like hey, it's all about David Bowie and glitter rock, so I mean I was coming into my junior year with my shag haircut and then following David Bowie's lead. I was dressing a little more outrageously, and so I was getting more shit, "puto; joto," [pussy; faggot] you know thrown at me, names and stuff. But I said to Terry, I said "God, you know what..." Well, actually Terry said it first, he says "Yeah, I don't even feel like being at school," he goes, "I feel like running away," and I said, "Do you want to?" He says, "You want to, like where would we go?" I go "Hey, we went to San Francisco last year, remember, to Mrs. Lara's house? Let's go to San

Francisco, we can hitchhike." He's like, "Oh, if you want to, okay." We had told one other guy, Jerry Wise, who was one of the white boys, one of the only white boys that went to Cathedral, and he was really cool. He was into music, he was totally into music. He was straight but he was totally into music and so were we, so that was our bond, and he had long hair and stuff. He said he would go with us, but at the last minute he chickened out, he said no I can't do it, and we thought, okay. And all I knew was, if we take the bus down to Santa Monica, we can start hitchhiking on Pacific Coast Highway. Back then, in the early 1970s, hitchhiking was the method for people to get around, young people. It was part of the whole youth culture and being tribal, and in some ways it's sort of like the do it yourself Lift or Uber of today.

01-01:10:05
Holmes:

Yeah.

01-01:10:05
Terrill:

And so you always saw people hitchhiking down Sunset Boulevard or wherever, and we did that. After school, we went and started hitchhiking, and our first night, we were kind of stuck, it was late at night, we were by the freeway entrance and it was getting cold. And this van pulled up and there were these, they were actually Christian surfers that lived communally north of Santa Barbara, and what they would do is they would go up and down Pacific Coast Highway in their van with an ichthys or Christian fish painted on it, and see if there were any young people like us, and so they said, "Would you like to come in? You can get something to eat, you're free to spend the night," whatever, blah-blah-blah. So we did and you know, they said we're going to do prayer, do you accept Jesus Christ as your savior, and I knew enough to say, "Yeah I do, but we're sleepy." I remember their place was right on the ocean.

01-01:11:17
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

01-01:11:18
Terrill:

Right on the beach. I remember me and Terry sitting there with our feet dangling off the little, not porch but little, wooden plankway, and the waves were coming right up to the rocks below our dangling feet. I was looking up and the sky was just all these stars, and it just seemed like there was such a sense of possibility, of adventure, just lying ahead of us. I actually asked to use the phone—it was a payphone. Anyway, I called my aunt's house and my cousin Pat answered. My cousin Pat was the lesbian in the family, she and I, we were really close, we were as kids and we remain close to this day. I remember when I called she was like, "Oh my God, Joey," and I said, "Cousin Pat," and she said, "Your mother is here and she's very upset, she worried about you." I go "Just tell them that we're okay and that I'm hitchhiking to San Francisco." I feel bad about my mom, I feel bad of what I put her through, but you know, I couldn't help it.

01-01:12:42

Holmes: Well, and you're also a junior in high school, right?

01-01:12:44

Terrill: Yeah, right. But I also felt bad for my cousin Pat, that I left her with having to hang up the phone and then turn to my mom and my aunt and uncle and everybody there, they were all worried about us, and say. "That was Joey, he said that he's okay" and blah-blah-blah, him and Terry.

It took us two days to hitchhike to San Francisco and when we did, we showed up at Mrs. Lara's house and she opened the door, "Well, well, finally, you guys get here. I've been expecting you." I was like, "What?" Like we thought we were going to surprise her. Apparently, my mom had contacted her and just in case, to be on the lookout for us. She called right away and said they're fine. She said, "You know, I think they were just, it was just on a lark, you know, but they're okay, they're no worse for the wear." Yeah, and so she paid for us to take a Greyhound bus back the next day, and when I came back to our apartment, my room—my room used to be almost collaged, from wall to wall. I had images of rock and roll stars and David Bowie and art, you know, and David Hockney and psychedelia, just everywhere in my room, it was like my own little cave.

01-01:14:27

Holmes: Sanctuary.

01-01:14:28

Terrill: Sanctuary, yeah, there you go, thank you, sanctuary. When I got in there, my mom had just torn everything off the walls. There were pieces of scotch tape left, everything was just strewn on the floor. She had destroyed everything, including my collection of antique bottles. I was so hurt and I was livid, I was like, "Mom, how could you do that?" I was crying and she said, "Mijo, I'm sorry, I was so angry, I didn't know what to do." Again, how could I—I can't blame her, but that was like a thing, it was very upsetting to me and sort of a realization that you know, I'm going to have this life that's going to be separate from family, from everything else that I knew. I need to figure this out and I know that being an artist and doing art was all connected and part of it too.

So, I actually hitchhiked to San Francisco four times. The second time was during the summer so I wasn't missing school. One of my best friends, Alice, from sixth grade, from Divine Savior, she and her boyfriend Jimmy joined us, and so we hitchhiked. We were supposed to rendezvous with Terry but somehow we missed each other, we lost him, and you know back then we didn't have cell phones. I didn't know where he was, and it was a case of, we were at this point and we were thinking was he here first or not? Did we just miss each other? When we got to San Luis Obispo, it was me, Jimmy and Alice, three of us, and it was harder to get picked up if there's three of you and it was already getting late. These two hippies, these two guys came over, Tom

and Jerry, like the cartoons, and I realize now in retrospect that they were lovers, they were partners, but I was so naïve back then, even though I already was out and I knew I was gay. They said, "It's really cold, it's getting close to midnight, so we're going to take the train," and we're like "the train?" They go yeah, we're going to jump the train and it will take you into Oakland. So we said, "Oh, like the hobos." Talk about an adventure. We got into this train car, we opened up the thing and we got inside, and the inside of the train, the car, reminded me of the wooden train tracks or like a telephone pole that was all, you know it wasn't smooth, it was all rough wood and had oiliness on it.

01-01:17:34
Holmes:

Yeah.

01-01:17:36
Terrill:

But I was so exhausted, I was so tired, and I just laid down and thought well at least it's warm, and I started to kind of fall asleep. And then the train actually started to move and then it was just like back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, you know. And then I also made the mistake of, I had to pee, and I opened the train door and I peed upwind, and it came and splashed back in my face. Yeah, so we rode the train like hobos into Oakland.

When we got into San Francisco, that's when—Jimmy had a cousin there and she lived in the Mission District, South of Market, and we went and visited with her. She was pretty cool and relatively young, but she said, you guys have to figure out where you're going to stay because you can't all stay here, and that's when there was somebody in the neighborhood, his name was Rick or Randy Soo-Hoo. He was Chinese American, I don't know what, but he was staying in this apartment that was right there off of Alabama and 19th Street, and he said that we could stay there with him, but it was empty. And apparently, he said that he was screwing the landlady and so she would look the other way when he would stay in this empty apartment. So we were staying there with him, we did this for about two days, three days. We would talk as we were lying there at night on the bare floor. He considered himself to be a Maoist and he said his goal was to get to China and he was going to study under the People's Republic, blah-blah-blah, and he was going to come back and subversively run for office, wear a suit, and then become a radical revolutionary. He was totally anti-capitalism. He was working for a catering company and the apartment was totally empty. It was hardwood floors, it was empty. We were lying there on the hardwood floors. But he had one little hanger and he had a bowtie and a white shirt and his black slacks; that was his uniform to go to work. And so he would come back from doing these big events or parties or receptions, on Nob Hill, and he'd come in and he'd have a bottle of champagne, you know he would take from—

01-01:20:42
Holmes:

Yeah, from the events.

01-01:20:43

Terrill: Right. And so there was all this really fancy wedding cake and hors d'oeuvres. So there we were, and we had to keep the lights off because no one could know that there was someone in the apartment. So there in the dark, we were dining on champagne and cake while he was talking about his plan to overthrow the United States.

01-01:21:06

Holmes: To lead a revolution in America.

01-01:21:07

Terrill: Yeah. So anyway, one of these nights, Alice and Jimmy had left, Randy was doing his thing, I guess going out to another catering job. Oh, and in fact, one night when we were lying there, he was saying to me, "You know man, I've lived off the streets, I'm a survivor, I do this, I do that," and he says, "One night I even sold myself to a man." I was like, "Oh really?" like I don't know if he thought he could perceive that I was gay and maybe he thought—I don't know if he was going to come on to me or whatever, but I was just not into it. I just said, "Oh, that's interesting."

The thing is, two doors down was Jimmy's cousin, and she allowed us to use the washing machine. I was there and I was folding the laundry in the apartment, the empty apartment, and it started to get really dark, and I don't know, I just got spooked, I got scared. So I lit a little candle that we had there, just you know the light flickering, and within 20, 30 minutes, I hear the front door opening and this woman walks in and she asks angrily, "Who the hell are you, what are you doing here?" It was the landlady. I was frightened and said, "Randy said that we could stay here." "Get out, get out of here!," she was yelling. I was horrified, and I just grabbed my clothes and I walked over to Jimmy's cousin's house. I was all upset and she's like, well that's Betty Lou, blah-blah-blah, and she lets Ricky stay there but you guys, you're going to have to go find some other place, go look for a place; you can stay here tonight. So this was all new to me, but the next day, I just started walking around the streets and I saw this hippie girl walking by and I just said, "Excuse me, do you know of any places where somebody could crash?" I was like this street person. She goes, "Well you know, me and my husband live at the Project Artaud," which is an arts complex, and she said "they're having a big huge party this weekend, so I know they're fixing things up and there's lots of volunteers." She goes, "I'm sure if you go and help out to volunteer, I'm sure you can crash there for the weekend." I was like okay, cool.

Project Artaud—I think it's still there. I think it was a three-story, brick building, and I knew that on the ground floor the agent of Santana, that represented the band Santana, was located there. It had a big huge atrium. There was an alternative architecture school, and they were building a house in the middle of the atrium.

01-01:24:11

Holmes: Oh, wow. Yeah.

01-01:24:12

Terrill: Yeah, I mean that was pretty cool, right? You walk into this atrium and there's this house and you know that once it's built, no one can get it through the door. I met her husband and they had this cool little loft space there in the Project Artaud, and they were total hippies and there was all the things that you would expect, like Indian madras stuff and all these herbs and things. He had long hair, and he was talking to me and was like, "Yeah, so you know this guy, this millionaire from New York, decided he wanted to have a party in San Francisco, and so they're renting out the whole place, the Project Artaud, and that's why everyone is participating and stuff. There's going to be bands and music, and then I think at midnight, the Cockettes are going to perform." I was like what? He said, "You haven't seen the Cockettes?" I said, "No, I haven't." "Oh, I think you'll really like them." So apparently he could tell I was gay.

So, I assisted, there was the Dance Deo Company, a dance company, and they were moving pillows and things out of the way. We put up a big, huge white sheet, where they were going to be projecting movies. There were built environments, art installations that were big, plastic kind of inflatable tubing, where they had air being pumped into them, so that the idea was that you could crawl through these plastic tunnels, and then it would get dark, and then there were pillows. During the course of the evening, you could tell that some of these rooms, all these built environments, there were people having sex, people were on drugs, it was just this wild, wild thing. Then, I also assisted with giving out food, so we had all these big boxes of apples and oranges, and then different nuts. It was all kind of organic and hippie food.

The evening started on stage with a gospel choir from Berkeley. They were fantastic, they were African American. But the group of people that were attending were young, they were old, there were people dressed like Shakespearean actors and actresses. There were people dressed in little loincloths and it was all like—it's everything goes and anything goes. Then, I was looking across through all the crowds and I thought wow, that's some really tall women over there and I love their hair. They looked like 1940s style, like Joan Crawford hairstyles, and then they turned around and I realized oh my God, they're men. That's the Cockettes. They had their whiteface and glitter and big moustaches, and so I was totally intrigued. They got up and they did the Miss San Francisco Beauty Pageant, and it was totally funny, the crowd loved it, they were roaring. One of the contestants was Miss Constance Alioto, which I think was either the daughter or the wife's name of San Francisco Mayor Alioto.

01-01:27:36

Holmes: Yeah, yeah. The mayor, Joseph Alioto.

01-01:27:37

Terrill:

I guess it was around the time, *Love Story* was the big movie, and that theme song, [sings] *Where do I begin...* And so, you know, it was just total drag and sequins and just wild, outrageous, and as the “talent” portion of the beauty pageant she says, “I’m going to do now, the theme from *Love Story*,” and she got to the piano. She could never get beyond the first few notes, because she’d start bawling, she’d start crying, sneezing into her hanky. Then, when I was giving out the food, they were passing by and I met Goldie Glitters and Sylvester, who stood out because Sylvester was black, but he was wearing like a big white bridal gown, like an old style bridal gown. And then I met Johnny, who was very pretty, just real handsome, one of the Cockettes there. We chatted and I guess they thought I was cute. All we did was just chat and say hello to each other and stuff.

Yeah, so I ended up staying there, at the Project Artaud. Then a day or two later, when I went to Jimmy’s cousin’s, she said, “Joey, there was somebody here looking for you.” “Looking for me, what? Who?” She goes, “A lady with red hair and a man with dark, curly hair.” She goes they had some Italian names, I forget their name but they were like Italian or something, and I’m like, “Italian? Who are you talking about?” I was perplexed. She said, “I think they’re going to come back, because I told them that you might show up here.” Well, it was Mr. and Mrs. Pavini, the music teacher and the art teacher, and apparently, they had heard that I had run away from home. Somehow, they got in touch with Terry, my best friend, and Terry took them up there. They drove all the way to San Francisco to rescue me, to bring me back to L.A. I realize now in retrospect, that they knew, and were concerned. Okay, this is a kid, he’s troubled, he needs a little guidance, he could get in trouble with drugs or something. But of course at that time, I had access to drugs; I could have taken acid, there were all these drugs and pot and everything there and I didn’t do anything. I was such a good little Catholic boy still.

They were going to drive me all the way back to L.A. And on the way back to L.A., they offered and talked about, wanting to adopt me, or that I could go through, what do they call it, emancipation?

01-01:30:30

Holmes:

Self-emancipation.

01-01:30:32

Terrill:

Self-emancipation. And that I could live with them, and they have a really nice house in the San Fernando Valley, they’ve got a big yard and a pool. Mrs. Pavini had just had their infant daughter, and I could babysit for them, this, that and the other, and the new school in Valencia was opening up, the Disney funded school, Cal Arts, you know in Valencia. Then, Mr. Pavini said, “I’m sure I could get you in there and Joey, that would just be so good.” It sounded fantastic to me, and so I’m thinking about it all the way down. “Joey it’s your decision,” Mrs. Pavini was very clear. “It’s your decision, whatever you decide, it’s up to you, but we wanted to come and rescue you before you got into

trouble." I said thank you. As we were getting closer and closer to L.A., they then said yeah, you know one of the things that we've noticed, they said I don't know if you're aware but, probably because you haven't had a masculine figure or father, you seem a little bit feminine in your ways. I knew what they were saying, they thought that I could potentially be a faggot and they wanted to try to—

01-01:32:01

Holmes: Quote "correct it."

01-01:32:02

Terrill: Correct it. Yes. But what they didn't realize was that I was already full-fledged gay, and I just thought, "Oh my God, do I want to live with these two people who are going to rescue me, and then I've got to pretend? What if I come out to them, what then?"

01-01:32:23

Holmes: Well, and it also seems they weren't just rescuing you from San Francisco. They kind of wanted to rescue you from yourself.

01-01:32:32

Terrill: Yes. You know, and I couldn't say to them, I'm already my fully formed self. And, I also just kept thinking wait a minute, but that means that I would leave my mom and my sister, and that meant that I would leave my sister, who I loved tremendously, to then have to now fend for herself with taking care of my mom, and I just couldn't do that, I really couldn't.

01-01:33:06

Holmes: And your sister, at this point, was only maybe what, junior high age, right?

01-01:33:11

Terrill: Yeah, and she and I both, we had both sort of learned how to negotiate around my mom's mental illness and stuff. So I came to the decision and I told them I said, "I've decided I'm going to say no, thank you very much." We had stopped at their house in the valley and then it was like another 30, 40 minutes to get back to my mom's, and when I told them, Mrs. Pavini bellowed, "How ungrateful, we drove all the way to San Francisco!" Blah-blah-blah. She bawled me out and me and Terry were just sitting there like this, like Buckwheat eyes. I knew then that I made the right decision, I just knew, and said there's no way.

When I got to my mom, she was already aware that they had talked to me, and I know that my mom probably felt like gee, I don't know what to do, my son, he's out hitchhiking to San Francisco, he might be involved in drugs and who knows what, and so she was prepared to give me up if that's what I decided. And I just said, "Mom, no, I can't do that," and I realized that as troubled as I was, as angry as I was with the situation, I also knew that no, this is my family, my mother and my sister, this is us, it's the three of us. I also realized what being the man of the house means that I didn't have parental figures over me,

telling me what to do and what not to do. When I would go out to the gay liberation dances, or I'd go to MCC Church, or wherever it was, I would just tell my mom, "Mom, I'm going to go." "Mijo, are you okay, are you safe," and I'm like, "Yeah, mom, I'm fine. Mom, I don't do drugs, I'm fine." I could just do what I wanted to do essentially and I realized the freedom in that.

01-01:35:31
Holmes:

In thinking about the reaction as you came out, particularly in say, Catholic school, there was harassment, and there was even harassment by some of the Brothers, right?

01-01:35:44
Terrill:

Yes, yeah.

01-01:35:46
Holmes:

But at the same time you were struggling with that, you were also struggling with having much more responsibility than the usual teenager does at home, right?

01-01:35:58
Terrill:

Yeah, yeah.

01-01:35:59
Holmes:

Yet as you were pointing out, it also seems that that extra responsibility, also came with an extra freedom that allowed you, in a sense to find yourself, without much interference.

01-01:36:12
Terrill:

Especially when I'd be talking in the youth group at MCC Church, or the youth group at the Gay Community Center, which was at that point in time a three-story Victorian on Wilshire Boulevard and Union, and it was a little more than a hippie crash pad, so to speak, I mean with all due respect to the founders of it. I mean, they were professional, but I was just part of the youth group and we'd do our youth raps, and it wasn't rapping like rap music, it was rapping, like talking.

01-01:36:45
Holmes:

Talking, yes.

01-01:36:46
Terrill:

One of our conversations, I remember distinctly, the topic was were we mentally ill, and I was like, "No we're not, what are you talking about? I know what mental illness is," right?

01-01:37:03
Holmes:

True, true.

01-01:37:04
Terrill:

So I proclaimed, "No, we are not mentally ill," that was one thing I was sure of. So, what that did is I knew that there was a future for me, a whole other

world out there, and that no one is going to tell me what to do. I've been taking care of my family, you know what I mean?

01-01:37:24

Holmes: Yes.

01-01:37:25

Terrill: And then, so when I did come out to my mom—

01-01:37:30

Holmes: So you came out your junior year in high school. So was that just to your friend Terry, or was that to the school, to everyone? Because it seemed like that one Brother knew.

01-01:37:44

Terrill: There were a group of friends that I confided in first, because I knew, or suspected, that they were gay as well, and it turns out that there were about ten of us that all went to Cathedral, that all came out to each other around the same time, or shortly after high school, and we remained friends for years after, to this day. We called ourselves *Las Escandalosas*, and we shortened it to *Scan*, and that was our greeting to each other. And I realized that in some ways, you know what, we were creating our own gang, our own tribe within Cathedral, and to this day when we see each other we're like, "Oh you big *Scan*, how are you doing?" But the thing is, I remember during the summer before my junior year, I wrote a letter to Brother Richard Orona, who was working in Mexico. He was working with students there during the summer, before he came back in the fall, back to Cathedral. I wrote him a letter where I came out to him and he called and said Joseph, I'm going to be coming to visit, because I'm going to visit my mom in East LA and he goes, "I want to meet with you, I want to talk to you because I'm concerned." I said okay, and so I met with Brother Richard and he said, "I am concerned, do you 'know' you're gay?" I said yes, I do and he goes what do you do, where do you go? He was concerned about whether I was out in the streets or being a hustler, he didn't have any concept. I said no, no, I go to MCC Church, I'm with the youth group at the community center, and he's like, "Oh okay, well I was just concerned," and I thought oh my God, Brother Richard really cares about me, really loves me and stuff. So that was good. No judgement from him.

Then, I was at home and I guess it was in the summer again, just before I would go back to school, and my mom was sort of upset with me, because I guess I hadn't cleaned my room. I remember she was sweeping, and I was sitting there kind of bored, twirling my hair and she says, "Oh my God, you don't help around here," and blah-blah-blah, and this and that, and she was kind of nagging at me. Because I already had it planned, I was going to sit her down and talk to her, and explain, you know, we had talked about that in the youth group. But instead she says, "And the way you dress, with those raggedy jeans with holes in them, like a hippie," and she goes, "With your hair, you look like a queer. Is that what you want me to tell people, that you're

queer?" And I just shouted back, I said, "Yes!" I said, "Because I am!" Oh my God, the minute... [chokes up] I wish I could have pulled the words back, because I just saw her face, I could see that it hit her hard and she just got quiet and tears started. and she sat down and she looked over at me and she said, "I'd rather you be a heroin addict, I'd rather you be a bank robber, in prison, than to be a queer." I was like, "Oh mom, come on?" She goes, "If it weren't for your sister, I would kill myself." That hurt me, a lot. I was like oh, mom, I said come on, and she was crying and weeping. I was comforting her and I said, "Mom, you don't know what you're saying right now, you're upset." She was just weeping and weeping, and of course I realized oh, this is now going to trigger one of her spells, she's going to get depressed. I held her and said it'll be okay.

The other thing was that my sister's birthday was August 21st, and I was making her a birthday cake and frosting it and I thought okay, I'm going to tell my sister, I'm going to come out to my sister, and so I thought what better time, then making a birthday cake for her. I said, "Linda, come here, I want to talk to you, I have something to tell you," and she said, "I already know." I said, "What do you mean you already know, you don't know what I'm going to tell you." She said, "Yeah I do," she goes, "You're gay." I was like, "How did you know?" And she said, "You wrote a letter to Brother Richard." Before I had finished it, I had put it in our desk that she and I both shared, and she happened to come across it. I said, "You read the letter but you didn't tell me?" She said, "Well, I didn't want you to think I was intentionally spying." I had someone that I was seeing at the time, Bruce, Bruce Rosenthal, who I met at the gay liberation dances, and he was my boyfriend. So my sister was really just okay with it, she was cool, and she just said, "You're my brother," and I thought, "Oh, that was the right answer," as I finished frosting her cake.

So on the one hand, my sister and I were good. My mom now had to deal with all of that, but pretty fairly quickly, certainly within a year, my mom came around. She realized that all the friends of mine that she loved, all the *Scans*, *Escandalosas*, were gay. I go mom, "He's gay too," "Oh my God, and he's gay too? Mario was gay?" You know it was just like everybody, because my mom and I, we were like best friends when she was herself, and so we started on this kind of journey for her to get to know me and my world and what was going on. She was like, "Well, Mijo, let me ask, how do you know when somebody is gay, how can you tell?" I said, "Gaydar," and she's like, "What? What are you talking about?" I go, "Mom, you can just tell." She said, "I don't understand it, I just don't..." you know. She goes, "I could never tell that Arty was gay or this one was gay," and I said, "Well, but we know." So we would go out to eat, we'd be at a restaurant and the waiter would come by, and I'd poke my mom with my elbow and go, "Mom, the waiter." "No! How can you tell?" I go, "Mom, look, he came by, he looked at me just a little too long." She's like, "Oh my God." It was an awakening for her as well. She said she didn't think about it and I said well, think about "Mr. Ted" who does your hair. She said, "Joey, just because he dyes hair and plucks eyebrows doesn't mean

he's gay." I said, "Mom, think about what you just said," and we both started laughing.

01-01:44:27

Holmes: So it took her about a year to adjust and come to terms?

01-01:44:29

Terrill: Yeah, but you know like in increments, incrementally. Then she came to understand that cousin Pat, who she adored, she adored her niece, right, was lesbian. And then she also knew that my uncle Rudy, Pat's father, who married her sister, Sarah, right, my uncle Rudy, that his brother was gay. My uncle Rudy grew up with his brother Angel being gay, and so that's why I think he already had this built-in sense of letting people be who they want to be, let people be who they are.

01-01:45:10

Holmes: Oh, that's interesting. And that's why, like from what you were describing, as masculine as he was within the community, he also looked at people as that's okay.

01-01:45:24

Terrill: Let them be, as long as they're happy. If Joey wants to color, let him color, let him make art, you know? To me that was a very wise approach, to just let people be who they want to be. I mean it was such a contrast to everything else I was getting.

I should just say, when I graduated from high school in 1973—and there are some other stories I want to tell you too. It was New Year's Eve, '73, turning '74, and I was coming home from work on the bus, when I worked at Sears in Hollywood. I was coming home on the bus and the bus goes down Broadway and it passes by Cathedral High School, and I just thought you know what? I just had this inkling in my head I thought, I want to go in and see if Brother Richard is there, just to say Happy New Year, because I had already graduated and it would just be nice to say hi to him. I really had come to love him. So, I got off the bus, I go to the Brothers house and knock on his door, and he's there ironing a shirt and he said, "Oh, your mom gave you the message?" I said no, I said, "I haven't even gone home." I said, "I was just on the bus from work and I thought I'd come by and say hi." He goes, "Oh, because I called her and told her I wanted to take you out to dinner tonight." I said, Really?" He said, "Yeah, so oh, this was meant to be."

01-01:46:52

Holmes: Divine intervention.

01-01:46:53

Terrill: So we went to El Nayarit to eat, a restaurant which is now the Echoplex, the Echo Club in Echo Park, but back then it was a Mexican restaurant. He said, "Joseph, the reason I wanted to have dinner with you is to share with you that you have been so courageous, you're out and open," and he is proud of me,

and "so I wanted to share with you that I'm gay as well." I was like, "What? Brother Richard? Why didn't you tell me?" He goes, "I didn't want you to perhaps think that my interest in you might be other than the fact that I really was concerned for you as a student, and you and your mom, and your family and your sister." I was like, "Oh, yeah, okay," and he said, "You've inspired me." He said, "You know, I had never told anyone," but he said, "I went up to the Christian Bros headquarters in St. Helena, to the head bishop and came out and said, 'I'm a homosexual.'" He said, "You know, they responded well." The bishop told him, "You've been an excellent teacher, you do great work, you're great with students, so we don't care and guess what, you're not the first one." I said, "Oh, that is very cool."

01-01:48:17
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

01-01:48:18
Terrill:

Yeah, so that made us even closer. But the thing is, getting back to my junior year at Cathedral, before summer vacation, I had already told certain friends, and so it was sort of around the school.

01-01:48:42
Holmes:

It was percolating.

01-01:48:43
Terrill:

Yeah, percolating, and there were only four hundred students.

01-01:48:44
Holmes:

Oh yeah, okay.

01-01:48:45
Terrill:

So you know, everybody knows everybody's business. So, senior year, I'm there, I'm kind of miserable, I want to just hurry up and get out of school. Brother Gary was being the homophobic asshole towards me and the bishop was Timothy Manning at the time. One of the things that the bishop would do is he would always go and have a meeting with seniors in all the Catholic schools. We met in the library, and I sat right up in front and he was sitting right there, and everyone got a chance to talk. They talked about premarital sex, they talked about their girlfriends, they talked about all this stuff and what does it mean to be a Catholic, and blah-blah-blah. I hadn't said a word and then as he was kind of finishing up his conversation with us he said you know, "I'm really struck by how here at Cathedral, everyone really seems to feel like they belong, that you're all part of this great student group from Cathedral and you're all connected." I raise my hand, and I go, "Excuse me, Bishop, no. I have to say no, that's not true for me." I said, "I'm marginalized, I've been ostracized because I'm different and truthfully, I can't wait to graduate and just get out of here." And oh my God, it was just like, the flood gates opened. "No, Bishop, no he's wrong! No, no!" They were all like he's so weird, he's this and that, you know. The Bishop said, "Joseph, I want to commend you for being honest and authentic," he said, "I really appreciate

that." And he says, I hope that you are able to—he said some things about finding peace and happiness. I was like okay that was cool.

But the minute we got out of the library, there were a couple guys, straight guys that I thought were friends, they came right up to me and said, "You know why you're ostracized, because you're a fucking faggot, you're a queer, you're a..." I was like oh, okay, now I know who my friends are, right? So I thought, Lord, what did I do? Then, Brother Richard comes up to me later in the afternoon and goes, "Joey, what happened with the Bishop?" He said, "Louis and so and so said that you practically just came out and said that you were gay?" I said, "No, I didn't say I was gay, I just said I was different and marginalized and I didn't feel part of the Cathedral family—you know," I thought oh God, I've really gotten myself into trouble now.

I think it was the next Monday, I get to school and I'm going to my locker and some of the jocks are passing by and... [chokes up] You know, I've got to tell you, I get emotional at things, I don't know why.

01-01:51:48

Holmes:

You're not the only one.

01-01:51:52

Terrill:

One of the guys said, "Good morning, Joe." I said, "Good morning," like they've never talked to me before. I was going through the quad and somebody said, "Hey, good morning, Joey," and I was like, "Good morning." I thought oh man, something's up, and went to Brother Richard and I said "so and so, and the big jock, and the big cholo said good morning to me. They haven't talked to me before, ever. I think they're planning something." He goes, "Joey, don't worry, I'll find out what's going on." And then he came to me and he said—[chokes up] I don't, I don't know why I'm getting emotional... sorry.

01-01:52:37

Holmes:

There's no need to apologize.

01-01:52:38

Terrill:

He said, "Joey, I talked to them." I talked to Louis and I talked to so and so and I asked them, "What is going on, what are you guys planning?" And legitimately they said "No, you know what, we thought about it and he was right, we have marginalized him, we have treated him differently, we have ignored him, we have called him names, we have done all those things, and yet we talk about being Cathedral, we're one community, one family. Is he not part of the family?" So you know, they sincerely were just like trying to make me a part of the Cathedral family. They invited me to go to lunch with them and stuff. It was odd, it was very weird, but I mean I welcomed it. Now, not everyone in the school felt that way but some of the big names, some of the big jocks, some of the big cholos. I was like all right, that's pretty cool.

01-01:53:33

Holmes:

Do you think it was also a matter of that you were so courageous to be yourself, that among some of them you earned their respect.

01-01:53:44

Terrill:

Yes. Then, at the retreat—we had retreats sophomore year and senior year, and at the retreat, we would go up to St. Andrew's Priory up in Valyermo—and that first evening where you go around and you pass wine, and you talk about yourself. I came out to everyone there, on retreat. I just said “Well, I just want to share that I'm gay.” Some of you may have thought that, maybe you think this, that and the other, and I said, “I really do get support from my gay brothers and sisters.” I had all the little political words I said, and get support from my gay brothers and sisters. I go to Metropolitan Community Church, and some of the guys were like “whoa, we just thought you were into music, we didn't know you were gay.” Afterwards, after that first evening, we all went to the bunks, the bunkbeds. Almost everyone surrounded my bed and everyone had questions for me like really, when did you know and how did you know and what do you do, do you have a boyfriend, what's going on? You know it was like wow, it was cool, it was good, and particularly in the context of the retreat, where the idea was about being authentic and true to ourselves as Chicanos, as Catholic, as members of Cathedral, and what are we going to do with our lives, and we're going to be moving on, going to college, this, that and the other. So the guys from the retreat, maybe 20 of them, they all knew, and because they all knew, you knew that they would talk to others.

Two of my straight friends, Frank and Jessie, said, “So Joey, dude, the prom is coming up, you can go with us. We're going to all ride together, it's going to be fun, it's going to be really cool.” I said okay, but I already had in my head that I wanted to take Michael, who we knew as Kimberly, to the prom.

Michael was one of the people that I met through the gay liberation dances, but also by that point, my senior year in high school, I already had a fake ID and was going to clubs, and the Bitter End West was like the hot trendy club to go to, back then, back in the 1970s. And this was true for Studio One, back then, this was when the idea of like gay clubs was cool, trendy, and you had celebrities and people that were very wealthy, so you had like Andy Warhol and you had all these movie stars or whatever, intermixing with all the queens and hustlers and stuff, at Studio 54. In L.A., it was sort of the same thing.

Kimberly (Michael Ochoa), who was beautiful, he was what we would call transgender today, but back then we just called him a queen, not as an insult, and he's fabulous, and he was petite and really sweet. Plus, he had gone to Salesian High School. So the idea that I would be taking a guy from Salesian, our rival—

01-01:57:16

Holmes:

Archrival, yeah.

01-01:57:17
Terrill:

To our prom, was very intriguing to me. In fact, Michael was my whole introduction to transgender, like beyond just being a drag queen or dressing up for Halloween or something. Michael was really more girl than he was boy, and in fact, he had gotten a job at Robinson's Department Store, so me and Eddie, my friend Eddie, we went to go visit him. He had told us, "Don't come to visit me, don't come to visit me," but we went to go visit him and he was working in the men's department, and it's the first time that I saw him without makeup, without his hair being done up. He was wearing a white shirt and necktie and pants, and he looked so uncomfortable, I mean it looked like, what? He's a girl that's trying to dress as a boy. I really saw it and you could see in his face, he was just miserable. I remember telling Eddie, Michael is really a girl, he needs to have a sex change. That's how we would think back then.

Anyway, I asked him, I said, "Michael, would you like to go to the prom with me?" And he said, "Yes, I would love to." So he was actually having a dress made, it was going to be gold lamé, it was going to be really wild. Anyway, Frank and Jessie, my two straight friends, they said okay, I'll go with you to the prom but I've got to tell you, I want to take Michael, this guy. They were like "oh no, dude, no you can't do that, no, Joey, no please, no come on, like we're barely accepting that you're gay, much less—." I was like "look, no one will be able to tell." "No, dude, we can tell," and after debating back and forth I said look, "Come with me to the Bitter End West, you meet Michael and then you decide, and if you say no that's fine." They were like okay, great, and they went. They didn't have fake IDs, they couldn't get in, which I just thought "Oh, God, how silly these guys are, right?" And so we stood out front, on the sidewalk there, and as people were walking by they were commenting on everyone: "Wow, everyone is dressed so"—glamour was like the thing, and '40s vogue, and people really dressed up in lots of rhinestones and glitter and stuff. They were tripping out on everything and they were like oh my God, look at that guy, I go yeah, he's gay too. Oh, wow. And then oh my God, those girls are so pretty. Yeah, they're lesbian. Wow! And then Michael is walking down the street, wearing little hot pants and a little halter top and her blonde hair, and she's got her shoes, and as she's approaching they were like, "Oh my gosh, she is so fine," and I go, "Oh you know what, she likes guys." Really, oh, and they started combing their hair, "Introduce us, introduce us," and I was like oh, this was too perfect. And as Michael approached, I said, "Hi girl," and gave him a kiss and said, "Frank, Jessie, I'd like you to meet Michael," and they were stunned! They were like blown away and they were like, "Dude, this is so cool, yeah let's do this, this is going to be great!" They totally bought into it, because they thought Kimberly (Michael) was so beautiful.

But, Frank or Jessie, one of them told their girlfriend, who ended up telling whoever else, but Michael called me up and said he was getting death threats on the phone, that they were going to be there at the prom, they know who he is, they're going to kick his ass, they're going to knife him and blah-blah-blah. I was like oh my God, I go, "Oh, Michael we can't do this." He goes, "I don't

care, Joey, I'll do it." He goes, "I don't care, I'll be—I'm like ready to fight." I was like no, Michael, that's not what the idea was. This was not about all that, this was to have fun and also to be kind of subversive.

01-02:01:24

Holmes: Yeah.

01-02:01:27

Terrill: So I was already making the decision that I don't think we should do that. Then, I was at school, at lunch, and my friend Eddie, who I would sit and have lunch with—Terry had already left Cathedral, he ended up going to Hollywood High. My friend Eddie, who Eddie and Louis both went to Cathedral, they were both brothers, and they were Scans, and Eddie has been cutting my hair for 30 years, to this day. But Eddie says to me—and Eddie had a certain style and way about him, but as he was looking at his sandwich, he wouldn't look at me but he says "Joey, you'll never guess what the topic was in Father Buska's theology class today?" I said "What? Why are you saying that to me? I don't know, what was the topic?" "Whether or not Joey Terrill should be able to take a guy to the prom." I'm like, "What?" He goes yeah, that was our class today. "God, how did it get out, how did that happen?" And he said, "I can tell you who voted for you and I can tell you who voted against you." It got out all throughout the school and I suppose on one level, I mean I think maybe it's a good thing that Father Buska, sensing or knowing this gossip, decided let's talk about it, what are the ethical issues here? And you know, there were guys, some of the guys that I would never have suspected, that apparently had said, "You know what, that dude is part of Cathedral just like anybody else, he should be able to take whoever the fuck he wants," and that's just the way they would talk, right?

Anyway, the vice principal, Brother Michael, called me into his office and he said, "Joseph, I need to tell you that because you owe tuition now," because of Brother Gary's thing, "you're not going to be allowed to go to the prom, and I hope you understand." I said "Yeah, I understand. I understand why I'm not being allowed to go to the prom. It has nothing to do with tuition—that's a lie." I said, "Frank Rojas owes twice as much tuition as I do, so and so owes, and they're being allowed to go to the prom; I understand completely." And Brother Michael was one of the most limp-wristed, you know like I mean, he's totally gay, or he ought to be. Anyway, so I was simply not allowed to go to the prom, so I ended up going out and going to the clubs in my yellow peau de sole prom suit, made by Efren's mom, and had a better time. Then I found out from friends that there was a group of guys, like five or six guys, that were waiting for me to show up, and they were going to jump me and I don't know, supposedly one of them had a knife. They told me though that there were twice as many of us that were there, ready to back you up and you were going to be welcomed. I was like wow, that's cool. So I love that that whole evening, everyone kept looking at the door, to see if I was going to walk in.

01-02:04:43

Holmes: But that also shows too, an amazing level of support—even by the end of your senior year, so we're talking 1973, that in a Catholic environment, heavily Chicano—

01-02:05:00

Terrill: Yeah. Cultural homophobia.

01-02:06:04

Holmes: Yeah, and that even by this time we see a change beginning to sweep through society, even through more “conservative” communities.

01-02:05:16

Terrill: I think it was '73, that the American Psychiatric Association took homosexuality off their list of mental illness, so it was just starting to be accepted. One of the things I feel I should also tell you is that about a year after graduating, Terry, my friend Terry, I mean we used to hang out. We used to just go to Hollywood, just to walk around and talk to people, and sometimes we knew people in the street, and sometimes we'd see—you know, the Cockettes weren't a really formal group. There was like a lot of people on the periphery who would just dress that way and they'd be back and forth, and so you'd walk down Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood back in the day and it was like [snaps his fingers] “Hey girl, what's going on,” blah-blah-blah. The way that today on social media, everyone does that except, you know, you used to do it in person.

So Terry was out there with his friend Mickey who was from New York and said, “I'm walking across Hollywood Boulevard at Las Palmas, at the stoplight,” (Las Palmas Avenue between Hollywood Boulevard and Selma Avenue). Selma Avenue was where all the street hustlers used to be, you know the male prostitutes, hustlers, and on Las Palmas was the Las Palmas Theater, which showed gay porn. So that was the heart of where low life and gay life intersected, and on the corner was the Gold Cup Coffee Shop, twenty-four hours. All the hustlers, drag queens, druggies hung out there—you know it was very colorful. Terry said “Joey, I was walking by and I see this VW and I said, ‘Oh my God.’ Guess who it was?” I said who? “Brother Gary.” I was like what? And Terry said, “I went right up to the window and knocked on it and he rolled it down and I said ‘Brother Gary, girl, what are you doing down here?’” I said, “You did not talk to him that way?” “I sure did.” I was like oh, you go Terry. He said, “Oh, I was visiting a friend in the hospital.” Mm-hmm, really, and where is that hospital on Selma Avenue?” Brother Gary just said I've got to go now and he took off when the light turned green. I was like that explains it, that's why he was so horrible to me. He was filled with his own self-loathing, right?

01-02:07:42

Holmes: Yeah. Oh, wow.

01-02:07:44

Terrill:

Yeah. And then, like a few months later, I saw Brother Richard and I told him, because Brother Gary, now I think he was vice principal or something by that time. Brother Richard told me, "You know Brother Glenn?" and I said "well, Brother Glenn just came on as I was leaving high school." Brother Glenn was tall, big, blonde, and you could just tell, he was very friendly and gay, and he connected with Brother Richard. He said, "Brother Glenn could never stand Brother Gary." There were so many evenings where after the evening meal with the Brothers, they would discuss what are you going to do this evening? Oh, I'm going over here; I'm going to the football game; I'm doing this, that, and the other. And Brother Gary would always be secretive like "Oh, I've got somewhere to go." He never talked about what he was doing, where he was going. They had two or three cars that the Brothers all shared and he would take a car, and one evening Brother Glenn said let's follow him. They followed him to a bathhouse.

01-02:08:52

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

01-02:08:54

Terrill:

Brother Richard said, "Joey, me and Glenn were just laughing," and I said oh, he's a big closet. I feel like writing an anonymous letter, like, "Saw you at the bath house, I know who you are, I know what you do"—and I thought eh, it's not worth the trouble, you know?

01-02:09:15

Holmes:

Well what's sad too, to look at how many men and women who have to live that type of tortured self-existence, because they're not able to just embrace who they are.

01-02:09:28

Terrill:

You know, I was in the youth group, but I used to talk to the adults at Metropolitan Community Church or the Gay Community Center, and that's where I learned just how many of them had what, from my perspective, were convoluted, tortured lives, where they were married for 15 years and they used to sneak out on the side. They went to public parks for sex or they got arrested for vice. I mean just all this stuff and now they finally, in their 50s or 60s, are just out and open. I knew that was not going to happen to me certainly.

01-02:10:10

Holmes:

As we see through your high school years, you've embraced your identify as a Chicano, you've embraced your identity has a gay man, and courageously so in both instances. Art, of course, was a very huge part of your life through this. Going into college, discuss a little bit of how your art was beginning to be shaped by your experiences and come into fruition.

01-02:10:39

Terrill:

Sure. Immaculate Heart College was previously a four-year liberal arts college for girls, for women, and it was known for its Art Department, under the

leadership of Sister Corita Kent. Sister Corita Kent was one of my artistic heroes, and in fact, when I was still in high school, Brother Gerard took me to an event, a cultural event at Immaculate Heart College. Like I said, they would take us, or me anyway, to different colleges just to experience college life or get an idea. So, I always really admired Corita Kent—her art, the silkscreens. They incorporated socially progressive and spiritual elements with pop art, and I just thought they were fantastic, so I always admired her.

Then under Cardinal McIntyre at the time, the Immaculate Heart Order of Nuns were the first to remove their habits and just wear regular dress, as part of the Vatican II ecumenical changes under Pope John. That's when the mass went to English and women could choose not to wear habits. The Cardinal at the time was furious with them. He said that her art and their progressive ways were communist and he threatened to, I guess not excommunicate them, but disband the order, and he did. In response, the nuns said you know what, then so be it, because we know who we are, we're a religious community, and in fact we're going to rethink our religious community. So they opened up the college to both men and women, and then they said as a religious community who embraced spirit, God, social justice, why do we restrict ourselves to being Catholic? So they even allowed Jewish, Christian, or whoever, to be part of the Immaculate Heart community. So it was no longer officially related to the Catholic Church, which I just thought was revolutionary.

01-02:13:08
Holmes:

Oh yeah.

01-02:13:09
Terrill:

And so she had left Immaculate Heart, I think by 1970 or 1969. But I knew that the Immaculate Heart Art Department was still sort of a prominent entity in L.A. And when I was making the decision to go to college it was UC Berkeley, and when I went to Berkeley, I was kind of overwhelmed. The campus was like a whole city to me and I thought okay, if I were to come up here, because I had the scholarship, that meant that I needed to find a place to stay, and I wasn't sure I could get into the dorms. Whereas in L.A., I had my home, I already had a whole network of friends, a gay community, a lot of support. So I thought, I'll just go to Immaculate Heart, and I can just take the bus, and then I'll be under the spirit and influence of Sister Corita Kent.

Also, just as I was about to graduate, there were some new apartments being built about a block and a half away, in Highland Park, that my mom wanted to move to. And I told her, mom, what do you think about you and Linda go ahead and move but let me stay here, let me keep the apartment. And I remember by that time, I had moved like seven, eight different places. I lived with my dad, lived with my mom, lived with my uncle, lived with my aunt, lived with my cousin, so I was kind of like, "Let me just stay." Mr. Booth, the landlord, the auto body parts store was right—(his shop), was right next to the apartments, and so he knew me since sixth grade. Surprisingly my mom said

okay, I'll talk to Mr. Booth. So at seventeen, instead of me moving out, you know, my mom and sister moved out and I kept the apartment, and then Terry became my roommate. So at seventeen, I had my own apartment, and so for my group of friends who all still lived at home, it became the place to come to socialize and party. It was very cool, very fun, very nice.

So I had my own apartment, which I kept. I was going to Immaculate Heart, I was working, waiting on tables, and at Immaculate Heart at that time, in '73, the feminist art movement was really prominent, really at the forefront of art schools and thinking about art. Painting was considered dead, you know, and I loved painting, but I also thought, let me see what else is percolating here, and so I started to take serigraphy and I loved silk-screening, I still do, I love serigraphy. I was being taught by my instructors, who were students of Sister Corita. So it was Richard Crawford and David Mekelburg—they'd talk to us about how Corita used to do this and this is what we'd do, and so it was very, very cool. A lot of the classes that I took were part of the feminist art program that was being co-located at Cal Arts in Valencia, and Immaculate Heart College.

So I took all these courses in Feminist Art Theory, in Woman as Image and Image Maker. I was introduced to a number of female artists who I'd never heard of before. I knew of Frida Kahlo, of course, but to really examine her work and have it critiqued and talked about in the classroom setting, that was Immaculate Heart. Romaine Brooks was, is still, my favorite American painter and you know, the whole idea about the feminist art movement of taking on the personal, that the "personal is political," seemed to totally segue into where my head was at, and so that's what I wanted to do. I would have these classes with 12 people, 8 people, right?

01-02:17:42
Holmes:

Yeah. Perfect size for discussions.

01-02:17:44
Terrill:

And sometimes I'd be the only guy in the class and the only Latino, among white women, which was another little—it was odd. It was all very welcoming but it was definitely—again I was sort of sticking out. A lot of the women were doing things that explored sexuality, gender, gender identity, what it meant to be a woman, what were the roles, that they would incorporate into their work. I looked at Frida Kahlo as inspiration. I loved the confessional aspects of her work, how she put out her relationships, her relationship with Diego Rivera, her own relationship with her body and the pain that she suffered, and how she painted that. I thought to myself, when they say painting is dead, her paintings are not dead, they're very alive, and I looked to that kind of inspiration, that I'm going to be putting myself out there and people can do with it as they please. So even in our silkscreens, I did these, you know they're flat, very cartoonlike, but I did Joey and Roberto, who was my boyfriend at the time, who was Puerto Rican. That's another story, very

dysfunctional, he was an alcoholic and I was an enabler. I learned that I was an enabler.

Within Immaculate Heart, there were a number of art students that I became close to and friends with; Scott Armstrong, Eric Webber, were two of the main ones. I had also been in touch with this network of Chicano artists, like Teddy Sandoval, Jack Vargas, who had gone to Cal State Long Beach. So I had friends at Immaculate Heart College that were artists, and then I had friends that were all going to Cal State Long Beach, who were artists, and that became my network for making art and developing friendships, some of which lasted for years. I also minored in English Literature, which meant that I would write. I took a journalism class and I wrote for the Immaculate Heart newsletter that would come out, that they would publish. I would sort of do like what we now probably would consider a blog.

01-02:20:25
Holmes:

Yes.

01-02:20:26
Terrill:

But back then, I mean, it was like doing a diary, a daily journal, and talking about my exploits at such and such a club or whatever, and who I was meeting, and my friend Eddie, and we were gay. Then I remember there was an interview with the president of the college, Sister Helen Kelly, and she mentioned, in this interview, about how things were changing, the school wasn't getting the same donations, with its move towards a more open agenda and they lost a lot of the conservative Catholics.

01-02:21:10
Holmes:

Yes, traditional kind of Catholic donors.

01-02:21:12
Terrill:

And then she says, "like this writer, Joey Terrill," and I felt bad. Well, obviously, she reads my work, but I felt like she is saying that somehow I am the cause of Immaculate Heart not getting donations. So I asked to meet with her. I met with her and she was very pleasant, very nice, and I could tell, and this has happened more than a few times back then, where she's of a whole different generation, and it was really difficult for her to grasp or understand perhaps, where I'm coming from, but she was pleasant about it. She wasn't at all, irritated. She says no, you're part of this community, you're part of this college. Also, and we didn't talk about it, but most of these women in these feminist art classes were big old hunking dykes that were coming to Immaculate Heart now. So you know, it was like the societal tide was against continuing the traditions of Immaculate Heart, and I just happened to be a little part of that.

01-02:22:25
Holmes:

I was going to ask you about your art at this time, because you mentioned writing. This is also thinking of the couple who wanted to adopt you

eventually, how one would teach music, while the other taught painting, art. So, you obviously had this desire for an artistic outlet.

01-02:22:47

Terrill: Yes.

01-02:22:49

Holmes: As a talented individual, how did you decide on the medium? You didn't go into music, you didn't go into poetry or literature.

01-02:23:02

Terrill: As much as I loved music, I liked art more, or I felt like I naturally was inclined to paint and draw. Whereas when I looked at my friends that took music, I was amazed, like how do you—like you pick up that trumpet and you blow, it's like the whole process. In some ways, the way that I looked at guys that were into sports, I mean they're really into it and they know how that works. It just seemed like making art was something I just felt compelled to do.

01-02:23:47

Holmes: It just fit.

01-02:27:48

Terrill: Yeah. So, within some of these art classes, one of my favorite instructors was Carole Caroompas, who is an artist herself. And she was very—I loved the way she dressed, I thought she was very cool. I'd been taking these feminist classes and they were talking about women's equality and lesbianism and society's stigma. And so I said okay, I want to do art about women, but obviously from my perspective and like what would that be, what would that look like? So I came up with this idea about when I took the class *Woman as Image and Ima-maker*, about how women have been subjected to the “male gaze” throughout western art, and then certainly, lesbianism is much more accepted by the male heterosexual population, because they look at two women as playthings and they don't take them seriously, they are not threatening, as opposed to two men together. So one of the things that I came up with, I did a little book. Since painting was off the priority list, I was looking at things like collage and serigraphy, and then I got into this art making strategy of taking books and altering them, either collaging them or writing in them. And color Xerox was brand new—oh, I love color Xerox—and so me and Teddy and Jack, a bunch of us, we were always trying to do things with color Xerox, incorporating it into our work.

01-02:25:27

Holmes: This would be like the mid-1970s, right.

01-02:25:31

Terrill: Yeah, '73, '74, '75. But I did this little book called *Thirty Lesbian Photos*, and the cover, color Xerox, looked exploitive, dramatic letters, *THIRTY LESBIAN PHOTOS!* And then what I did was I just kind of collaged body parts, but they

were all like elbow, knee, thumb, but you know when you crop them down like that, you can't tell, "oh, is that a buttock?" It kind of teased you, right? And then inside, what I did is I asked women that I knew, and I said okay, this is my project but it's a collaborative project and if you participate, I want you to provide me with an image, a picture of yourself when you were a baby or a little girl, whatever you choose, and then one of you today. You each are going to have a page, where you can put your two images, and that was going to be the "thirty lesbian photos." And so that's what I did, and I thought it was very cool, I thought it was very clever. And in one of the classes that we were in, as we were critiquing the work, I was shocked, this student that I really didn't know very well, she says, "Well, I have to tell you that as a Christian, I'm very offended by your art, because it even mentioned lesbians." I'm like, girl wake up, you're surrounded by lesbians here in this school. I mean, it was so odd to me how people could see what they wanted to see, you know?

You know what, I might just share this with you because it popped into my head. Fast-forward, years and years later, like 30 years later, 40 years later, Professor Robb Hernandez was presenting on my work, I think it might have been at Berkeley actually, to some Latino students, and he showed *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, which I had done.

01-02:27:53
Holmes:

Sure, in 1978. I want to get to that.

01-02:27:54
Terrill:

Yeah. And then he also showed *Thirty Lesbian Photos*, he showed that, and this young Latina made a comment, she said it's obvious that Mr. Terrill chose to use very handsome men in *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, and chose very homely, horrible pictures of these women, and Rob was perplexed, and I wish I had been there! What he should have told her is that, first of all, the men in *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine were just friends of mine, whoever was available. There was no criteria for who's handsome, who's good-looking, so that's your judgment, you think we're good-looking. And then, the other thing is that I didn't choose the pictures of the women. They chose to represent themselves and you just think they're homely because they're not lipstick lesbians or whatever you think is supposed to be attractive or hot. Plus, I don't think that the women look that homely. I just thought it was the 1970s and women were dressed like they would in the '70s. Anyway, I just thought that was funny like oh wow, all these years later, here's this critique from a Latina.

01-02:29:11
Holmes:

Another critique of the same work, right, from a completely different angle.

01-02:17
Terrill:

Anyway, I look forward to a moment if that ever comes up again, that I can inform somebody that, "You're projecting." You're projecting what you think is attractive or not, which maybe is part of the piece, but I mean my intent was that this was sort of critiquing the idea of how men and society look at

lesbians as something erotic or playful, and something titillating, and what I was doing was just showing real women, the ones that I knew.

01-02:29:57

Holmes: So your art is developing at this time, in that, as you mentioned, painting is on hold and you began to do these collage works. I know there were some shows in 1975, and in one of these you did a cookbook in a similar type of fashion. Can you discuss that a little bit?

01-02:30:15

Terrill: Sure, so my cookbook was a Khalil Gibran, calendar, diary and a book form, and it was the last year, so it was already done, and so I would just collage over it. I did the covers in color Xerox and it was the *Art and Joy of Cooking*, instead of the *Art and Joy of Sex*, and then I would ask artists to take a page and contribute to it, and I said you can contribute whatever you want, whatever recipe you want. It could be a recipe for enchiladas, it could be a recipe for rice pudding, it could be a recipe for happiness. I left it up to the artist and it was an ongoing project, so like maybe half the pages were filled in, and I'd ask someone, "Hey we've got a space here, we've got an empty page, do you want to add to it."

01-02:31:15

Holmes: Nice.

01-02:31:16

Terrill: Yeah, and so that's what I did, but at the exhibit where that was on display, at Richard Nieblas's house in East L.A., the reception got pretty wild and I had already left. From what I understand, Fernando, who actually ended up being a friend of mine, Fernando Torres, was doing some kind of performance or something, but he ended up peeing on stuff, but then they were splashing water, and they ended up ruining my book, it just got all wet. I was livid, I was furious, and I just thought oh, how unprofessional. But I guess it was sort of the gestalt, the idea you know, that this was to be a wild art party and nothing is sacred, including art. So, yeah, that was ruined. I think I have like two pages and maybe the cover left. Richard Nieblas took a photograph of the destroyed book and then actually stapled it into the book as his contribution to it and apologized. That was the last entry into the cookbook, I didn't go back to it after then, because it was all messed up.

01-02:32:54

Holmes: Yeah, yeah. Maybe a year or so later, you did a similar type of collage work on Frida Kahlo?

01-02:33:06

Terrill: If it's what I'm thinking of, it would be 1978, and I actually have it right here. There was an exhibit at Teddy Sandoval's studio and it was a homage to Frida Kahlo, and what I think people today, if they're hearing this, what they need to understand is that in 1978, most people, most Americans did not know who Frida Kahlo was at all. A lot of Mexicans didn't even know who Frida Kahlo

was. They knew Diego Rivera. They might know that oh, Frida Kahlo, she was the wife of Diego, but her work was just really being investigated by a lot of art students and myself, and so we wanted to do this homage to her. The show was called "Corazon Herido" or the "Wounded Heart," and we all did contributions related to Frida Kahlo on some level. Mine was titled, *If Andy Had Been Born in Mexico City*, and what I did was I just took this Xeroxed image of Frida Kahlo, one of her drawings or paintings where she's wearing the little hand earrings that were given to her, I think by Salvador Dali, I took that collage and then did multiples of it, similar to the way that Andy Warhol did Marilyn Monroe, and I just colored them in to simulate that. Of course they weren't big, huge silkscreens, it was just my concentrated version of that, and then titled it, *If Andy Had Been Born in Mexico City*, with the implication being that Frida Kahlo was just as much of an icon or celebrity as Marilyn Monroe, in some ways even more so, for Mexico.

01-02:35:00

Holmes:

Thinking also, of how your art is developing at this time, there's was of course the "maricón" t-shirts, and later photo series.

01-02:35:14

Terrill:

The t-shirts, yeah, yeah.

01-02:35:15

Holmes:

Talk a little bit about that. That started with the Gay Pride Parade, as we were talking earlier off camera. The shirts that most people see are from '74 or '75, but you had earlier English versions of this, is that correct?

01-02:35:31

Terrill:

Right. Yeah, so I guess '74, for what was called at the time, the Christopher Street West Parade, which was to commemorate the Stonewall Riots, and it was down Hollywood Boulevard. I was working at the time at Sears and Roebuck in Hollywood, in the coffee shop there, and in the boy's department, they were having a sale, a promotion on t-shirts, where you could get lettering, like press-on lettering, and they would put your name on it and they would run it through the machine and press it on there.

01-02:36:08

Holmes:

Sure.

01-02:36:10

Terrill:

And so I came up with this idea of making t-shirts, one that said "faggot," you know re-appropriating the word—in the same way that Chicano was once a derogatory word. I said okay, I'm going to apply that to faggot, right? And so I made one for myself, "faggot," and then I made one for my cousin Pat and her partner, Martha, my friend Martha, that said "lesbian" and "dyke." I went in early, before the store opened, so that I could commandeer the machine and did that, and we marched in the pride parade and they were a hit. Then there was oh gosh, I guess it was the next year, the following year, that I decided to make—well, me and Teddy Sandoval were talking about doing a maricón

version, like we should do something like a maricón series. At the time, we also were doing mail art, mail, M-A-I-L, art, which was sort of a thing, where to get away from the art institutions, get out of the museums, forget about the white cube space, the gallery system, especially since none of them seem to be interested in the art that we were making. So there was a group of artists that were doing mail art, where you would take something, like a postcard or image, and you could collage it, you could do whatever, you put a stamp on it, and then you mailed it to someone else, another artist, and the United States Government was a collaborator, because they would stamp it with the time and date. Then you would get that work and then you would change it, alter it, put some glue, cross something out, re-stamp it and then mail it to someone else, and it was just a continuous.

01-02:38:19
Holmes:

Oh wow, how cool.

01-02:38:22
Terrill:

One of the famous mail art artists, Ray Johnson out of New York, we would get his correspondence. There was a couple of artists in Italy, London, and so Teddy and I came up with doing a maricón series, and so we did a maricón photo shoot where I made a t-shirt, just with fabric dye wrote maricón on it, and I was the model. I think there were about six shots of me posing, some with my eyes closed, some smiling, some trying to look sexy, and then we would Xerox those images and we would use those as the basis for our mail art.

01-02:39:11
Holmes:

Oh, interesting, because I've seen copies of these, of the photos, and one of my questions was how were they displayed or distributed?

01-02:39:22
Terrill:

They were never actually displayed in a traditional art setting. They were always part of this mail art thing. And yeah, Teddy would use them and alter them. So you know, we were fully aware that there are probably some artists somewhere, especially in London or New York, that are getting this thing, and they're like "what's maricón?" You know what I mean? They weren't even that familiar with it. But that was one of the collaborations that Teddy and I did. He was one of my best friends and I loved working with him. I just adored Teddy, and his partner Paul, who I know you have spoken to. I forget, they were together for a really long time and we have a history of parties and going over to each other's houses and going to each other's studios, and investigating different kinds of art making strategies. So out of the maricón series came my thinking about *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine.

01-02:40:34
Holmes:

Which we're going to talk about in our next session.

01-02:40:36

Terrill:

But with what we thought was our successful collaboration with the maricón series, for the next year's Gay Pride Parade I thought, I'm going to make maricón t-shirts for everyone, but not just plain white with dark lettering. Instead, I got these t-shirts that were sort of a creamy yellow or lemon yellow, and then again with the fabric dye, which I got from the fabric silkscreen class that I had at Immaculate Heart College, I still had dye left, so I did "maricón" and "maflora," which is a slang lesbian slur, but I did it in cholo writing, on our t-shirts. So, most of the Scans and my cousin Pat and Martha and my other friends, wore theirs, and we all went as a contingent, to gay pride. You know, to be honest, no one else was necessarily doing—I mean, there were Latinos at pride, but there wasn't anyone that put out "maricón" as a source of identity or pride.

01-02:41:53

Holmes:

And it's very interesting, when we think of that art form and statement. You're not just reclaiming a slur, but in a sense you're also taking the power out of it and turning it on its head.

01-02:42:07

Terrill:

Yes.

01-02:42:09

Holmes:

And there is a duality to it as well. So it's not just in an effort of social justice and pride in your identity as a gay man, but then once you do it in Spanish, you're also pushing the envelope even further again, within the Chicano community.

01-02:42:23

Terrill:

Within the Chicano community but also within the mostly white gay community as well.

01-02:42:28

Holmes:

Indeed.

01-02:42:30

Terrill:

I was aware of—I mean it was an eye-opener for me. Just like when I saw those lesbians fighting and I thought oh, women could be violent, and perhaps that related to their own self-loathing. I don't want to make a judgment call there. But I was also aware that gay men can be racist too, and so my naïve idea or sense of what the world should be was like utopian, but reality is otherwise. We felt it was important for us to assert our own Chicano, gay, maricón identity, and not to be defiant necessarily, but to be part of this whole burgeoning, what we call gay, queer, LGBT culture, and that's what we were doing.

01-02:43:37

Holmes:

Well and again, as we'll discuss in our later sessions, when we look at your art, there is clearly that kind of coupling of race and sexuality together.

01-02:43:48

Terrill: Right, right.

01-02:43:50

Holmes: That's part of the power in your art—that kind of message.

01-02:43:55

Terrill: Well you know the other thing too is that in the 1970s, it was known that art institutions like LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art rejected Chicano art. And to me that was an art establishment rejecting Chicano art, in the same way that the art world would reject queer art, gay art.

01-02:44:25

Holmes: Sure.

01-02:44:25

Terrill: There were some rare exceptions, like David Hockney's work. I loved David Hockney's work, and when he did the Los Angeles based paintings, the pool paintings, I loved those. I loved that they were so gay and I loved that they were L.A., and so that was an inspiration to me. I also knew that he was a British expat that moved to L.A. and was embracing his vision of this California dream state.

01-02:45:02

Holmes: Sure, sure.

01-02:45:06

Terrill: So I thought, if I were to do that, it would have to be Chicano or Mexican, my version, and I'm not a visitor, I'm from here. That was sort of my way of thinking. And then the artists that I hung out with and I considered friends, like Teddy, Jack Vargas, Jef Huereque, Mundo Meza, we were all Chicanos and we were all definitely open about being gay, and we wanted to incorporate that in our art. So whether it was Jef just doing these beautiful illustrations of mermen, instead of mermaids, or Jack Vargas, which his work was more literary and cerebral, so he would do wordsmithing. One of his pieces, I remember, was a little catalog of words and definitions for the new age. One that I remember was Mexi-queen, which I thought oh, clever, perfect, Mexi-queen, love that.

01-02:46:21

Holmes: Yeah, that is clever.

01-02:46:23

Terrill: Another one was dick-mates. Not quite boyfriends, you're not quite, you know, but you're dick-mates. I thought oh, okay, I can kind of see that. I loved his cleverness with that. And then also, with mail art, came this notion or idea that it was the antithesis of the art institution, so we had correspondence schools that were just made up. Jack Vargas had Le Club for Boys, which sounded like a fancy spa, but it was just him. He was Le Club for Boys, right? Teddy Sandoval had Butch Gardens School of Art. There was no school of art. There

was a bar called Butch Gardens in Silver Lake, which was a gay cholo, Latino bar, and we loved going there for that reason. He just took the name—and of course the name of the bar itself was a takeoff, or parody of Busch Gardens, which was the Busch Brewing Company.

01-02:47:34

Holmes: Oh yeah.

01-02:47:38

Terrill: So, you know, in the correspondence that would go on in mail art, there was usually some of this, it was coming from Butch Gardens School of Art or it was coming from Le Club for Boys. Mine, I guess I didn't think of it as a school of art but I just thought of mine as more of a publishing company. I did the magazine, *Homeboy Beautiful*, that was my version.

01-02:48:10

Holmes: The kind of genesis of what would come of that. Well I definitely want to spend more time, which we will in the next session, really discussing *Homeboy Beautiful*, which was a brilliant concept on so many levels. But before we end, I wanted to kind of talk about the art scene. As you mentioned, artists, such as you and your friends, were trying out new venues of art, particularly in an art world that was, dare I say, racist, that didn't want to acknowledge Chicano art, the institutions of high art turned up their noses. On the other hand, then you also have an art community that, at the same time, did not really want to recognize gay art as well.

01-02:49:01

Terrill: Right.

01-02:49:03

Holmes: Talk a bit about that. Give us your observations on Chicano art during this period, artists and groups such as ASCO, who you were friends with. Because when we think of Chicano art during this period, artists trying to get a foothold and push back against this high art of culture, what new mediums were they using? We usually think of muralists if we think of this.

01-02:49:38

Terrill: Yeah, the murals, yeah.

01-02:49:40

Holmes: Yeah, during this early time of Chicano art, often linked with say Cesar Chavez and the UFW.

01-02:49:44

Terrill: Yes.

01-02:49:46

Holmes: What else was going on with this kind of subculture? Happening on the ground within the community?

01-02:49:52

Terrill:

So, at the same time that you had the murals going on—the mural movement as an expression of Chicano identity, history, political statements, social activism, and a range from actual pictures taken from the Chicano moratorium and police brutality, all the way to Aztec fantasies. Just this whole range of visual imagery

01-02:50:20

Holmes:

Yes, yes.

01-02:40:24

Terrill:

We also had ASCO, the performance art group, and I just looked at it as ASCO was part of what was percolating at the time, and they were an avant-garde inspiration to me, probably more than I ever acknowledged or gave them credit for, meaning that I didn't realize just how special they were until years later. So when ASCO was going to do something, it was like, that's Harry and Gronk and Patsy Valdez, and I knew them all individually, and whenever they were going to do something, you need to go to the ASCO event. Or if there's going to be an exhibit of their photographs, that's what you would do. And it was always different than the usual, you know, visual imagery of the Chicano art movement, where there was lots of emphasis on *la familia*, Aztec, brown power, the fist, a big Olmec face, the indigenous, etc. And for me, it was thinking everyone is going back to this mythological heritage of the Aztecs, but ASCO is about being contemporary urban Chicanos in L.A. That's what I related to and that's what I loved about their work, and then there was also a queer element to it. ASCO first started out with Mundo Meza and Roberto Lagorretta (also known as Cyclona), and Gronk, and they would do these performances that were transgender and incorporated gender fuck, and they were equal partners. I mean, to me it had a flavor of the Cockettes, it had a flavor of John Waters, you know, Monty Python, it was improvisational and transitory. It was a conceptual art performance and one of my favorite things they did was the mural that Gronk did, where they taped Patsy Valdez to a wall.

01-02:52:52

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

01-02:52:54

Terrill:

I thought it was brilliant. It was critiquing the muralist tradition or the definitions. These are the parameters of what constitutes Chicano art, and I always thought ASCO and some of my other friends, particularly the queer Chicano artists, were saying “No, it's way more than that and it's all of these other things as well.” That's how I think we looked at it and viewed it. And then Gronk, who was part of ASCO, Gronk, he was gay but didn't shout it from the rooftops the way that I did. He did a couple of collaborations. He did that one with Teddy Sandoval called *Dos Fritos*, and they parodied Frida Kahlo, *Dos Fridas*. But always, with ASCO, it always seemed like there was a gay or queer element that was always there and it was accepted, like we're all

artists. Whereas a lot of "Chicano" art shows with a capital C, or C-H, you know, seemed confined to traditional visual representation, some of which I loved—

01-0s:54:18

Holmes: Sure, sure.

01-02:54:19

Terrill: But then there was also Carlos Almaraz, who is going to have a big retrospective, he would do these paintings of impressionistic, almost hallucinatory, visions of Echo Park and car crashes, and things that were very L.A. and very Chicano. But there was always this subversive element that would come out, particularly when he had images of body parts and things. I knew Carlos, but I didn't know him as well as other people did, like Elsa, his wife, but he was bisexual at the very least, or he had his issues with homosexuality. I think when you look at his work, you can see those elements, his interval conversations, while a lot of traditional Chicano art is just focused on La Huelga, it's just focused on police brutality, it's just focused on certain social issues. There was very little introspective.

01-02:55:25

Holmes: Self-reflection. Yes, yes.

01-02:55:28

Terrill: Certainly not very much that, at the time, explored sexual diversity. In fact, I think there was, and there still is, an element within the Chicano art scene that would reject the more queer Chicano works. Did I ever tell you when I went and spoke at Cal State L.A., to a Chicano Studies class?

01-02:55:56

Holmes: No. Tell it now.

01-02:56:00

Terrill: I guess it was '74, '75, but somebody that I knew from the clubs, one of my friends named Victor, he was taking a class at Cal State L.A., and he said you know what, it's a Chicano Studies class, and I asked the instructor and he finally agreed that I could bring you in to talk about being a gay Chicano, and he said we could find a woman. I said, "Well, I could bring Martha, my friend Martha, she could speak as a lesbian." And we did and we went, and one of the things I remember was that there was the Pinto Program, which is prisoners who can come out and study and then they go back into prison, but they can earn their degrees. They were there and we spoke about what it was like to be gay and Chicano, and what that meant within the context of the Chicano familia. And I said the fact is there is a lot of gay and lesbian Chicanos that take on caregiver roles in families where the straight brothers and sisters are all married and have their own families, so the person who isn't married and doesn't have kids to take care of, will take care of the abuela. So I said we have been part of the community all along.

01-02:57:21

Holmes: Sure.

01-02:57:22

Terrill: Then, just as an aside, this woman raised her hand and asked about how is it that somebody could get married and then come out, like not be fully aware, and stuff. And I said you don't understand the struggles. Well, that was Martha Abeytia, who I hadn't met, but I met who she was talking about, I didn't realize it though. Rick Abeytia was somebody that I knew from the clubs and he was very good-looking, very hot, and I knew that he had been married. Well, that was his ex-wife, and I had no idea, and I hope I wasn't too strident in my response. But at the end of our talk, the instructor, who I blanked his name out (Professor Ricky Rodriguez knows it though), he said well thank you for presenting today, but then he goes, "I just need to repeat: I don't feel that gays or lesbians have any role in Chicanismo, *la familia* blah-blah-blah-blah." I looked to the students and I said, "See, see what I'm saying, right here?" Years later, I was relating that to Professor Ricky Rodriguez, who has written about my art, and apparently he ended up at some point studying under the same instructor.

01-02:58:57

Holmes: Under the same professor? Oh, wow.

01-02:58:58

Terrill: Yeah, and he said that he had given him flack about his coursework and his investigation of homosexuality within Chicano communities. I was like wow, so it's still happening?

01-02:59:12

Holmes: So it really shows you not just in the art world, but in the larger Chicano community, the type of intervention to be recognized, that you and many other artists were trying to make.

01-02:59:27

Terrill: I don't know if you're familiar with Shifra Goldman. She was one of the preeminent writers about Chicano art, and she came from a Jewish, leftist perspective, et cetera. When I was involved in VIVA in the 1990s, the gay and lesbian Latino arts organization, we would do these little quarterly journals, and they were very humorous and tongue-and-cheek, and of course they were serious as well, but we had a page for people to donate, and you could donate at different levels. It said you can be an art lover and donate such and such, and the next level had a higher amount and the level was called "art slave". Well, she took offense at that and she criticized us for using the word "slave," because she felt that we were not taking slavery seriously and the historical significance. That wasn't even in our thinking. Our thinking was more along the sexual innuendo, like S&M and being an art slave, that's what we were thinking, because our whole premise for doing this work was about incorporating sexual identities and variations within a Chicano or Latino context. I went and met with her, and it was the only time I met with her, and I

thought, she's a historical person that's written about Chicano art. I met with her in Silver Lake, at her apartment, and she just could not understand. She said it wasn't even about "slave." She asked, "Why do you feel you need to talk about being homosexual?" And I was like whoa, I said, "Why do you feel you need to write about Chicano art? You know, it's all intertwined and I said when you read critiques of Picasso and all the women that he had as lovers and as wives, you know it's just as important. But she just totally had this notion that homosexuality could not and was not part of any kind of discourse on Chicano creative output.

01-03:01:55

Holmes: Wow.

01-03:01:56

Terrill: Yeah. It was a bit of an eye-opener for me, as she was considered an expert in the field. But I realized, I guess we really are marginal to what a lot of the academics and writers think where Chicano art should be focused.

01-03:02:26

Holmes: Well, as we will discuss in our next sessions, you certainly made an intervention on that with your art. And I think in our next session, *Homeboy Beautiful* certainly responds to that. So I think that's a good place to stop for today Joey.

01-03:02:40

Terrill: Okay, all right.

01-03:02:41

Holmes: Thanks so much.

01-03:02:42

Terrill: Yeah, sure.

[This page added by the interviewee during editing]

Dad

When I was about 4 years old (my sister hadn't been born yet), as my dad and I were reading my story books which I loved to do, he asked me to pick out two of my favorite pictures from the books. I chose the last page illustration from the Three Little Pigs story where they had successfully killed the wolf and they were celebrating in their house playing musical instruments. I think one had a flute, one was playing a violin, and I think the third was seated at a piano and they were dancing a jig. Each one (and why it was a favorite illustration) had a different colored outfit with what looked like sailor tops and I think shorts with big buttons and Ascots tied around their necks matching their outfits and hats. One piggy wore a yellow outfit, one was lavender or purple, and I think one piggy had blue overalls, and there was a circular rug of various rings of color on the floor. The other picture I chose was of Popeye and Olive Oyl where they were seated at a table with a can of spinach. Popeye had his corn cob pipe and the can of spinach with a popped open lid still attached like it had been pulled open with a can opener, and Popeye was flexing his big arm with an anchor tattoo while Olive looked at him with loving eyes and her one button earring. Popeye had a dialogue balloon (like a comic strip) which said, "I yam what I yam".

I was then going to my cousin's house to spend the day or maybe even stay overnight. When I came home and walked into my bedroom, my dad had painted the illustrations like murals one on each wall facing each other. I was THRILLED! I loved that he did that! They were huge to my four year-old eyes and I knew he must have been the greatest artist ever. And for years I would "study" the murals which had been done in tempera paint. I would lie in bed looking at Popeye's exaggerated forearms (no biceps at all!) and the green spinach and the simplicity of Olive's hairdo and the pig's smiles and little musical notes floating up from their music instruments. I didn't know what pop art was at that time, but my dad certainly did. I wish I had pictures of my room.

Interview 2: May 23, 2017

02-00:00:06

Holmes: All right, this is Todd Holmes, with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is May 23, 2017, and I am here once again with Joey Terrill, for our second session in his oral history, graciously sponsored by the Getty Center, for their upcoming exhibit *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*. Joey, thanks so much for joining me again today.

02-00:00:27

Terrill: Sure.

02-00:00:29

Holmes: When we left off in our last session, we discussed your childhood, your upbringing and how you really found your voice, both as a Chicano and as a gay man, and how this began to really confluence together for you as an artist. So we talked about some of those earlier works. I wanted to discuss, in this session, what seemed to be one of your really first powerful works that you put out there, that addressed those issues of race and sexuality, which was *Homeboy Beautiful*. Where did the genesis of this idea actually come from?

02-00:01:14

Terrill: Like I said, I attended Immaculate Heart College and I had a group of artist friends from there, as well as my other friends, like Teddy Sandoval and Jef Huereque, Mundo Meza, and folks who were Chicanos, part of the art scene. Mail art was something that was being done and I came up with this idea of wanting to do a parody of middle class magazines like *House Beautiful*, you know, *Vogue*, *Los Angeles*, because you didn't see the Chicano portrayed at all. Harry Gamboa from ASCO, I think, once referred to Chicano culture as "the phantom culture." We didn't see ourselves on TV, we didn't see ourselves in media, you looked at all the magazines about L.A. and it was all about the West Side, Beverly Hills, this, that and the other. So I decided to do an art piece in a magazine format. It wasn't like I was thinking it was going to be a zine, or something that was going to be a continuous sort of magazine circulation. It was to be a parody of those middle class magazines, print media, but through the lens of being homeboys, or cholos or Chicanos. But at the same time, I wanted to point out, ridicule, and make fun of the misogyny and homophobia that I found within Chicano culture.

The first issue I did in 1978. As I conceptualized it, it was *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, and in each issue I was going to do an exposé. It was sort of like a cross between the *Enquirer* and *Alarma Magazine*, you know the Spanish language *Alarma*, which usually had photos that were very lurid. So in that, in the magazine, I played all the roles. I was the editor, I was the one that pulled it all together, but I just pretended like it was a group of editors and people at *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, which didn't exist. I also played Santo, a journalist that was doing an exposé on a secret underground homo-homeboy party. In it, I take a hidden camera and I go to a party in East L.A., and I

photograph this homo-homeboy party like a novella. It was really fun. The whole effort, the whole thing was a collaborative art form from the start.

We also did—we were making fun of beauty magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, and things like that, and so we did a beauty makeover. I used one of my colleagues who was a friend of Scott's from Immaculate Heart College, Janet Lemontine, who was doing this sort of Dada art thing on her own, and with Skot Armstrong, mail art. I had her pose as a librarian from Gardena named Virginia Leibowitz, and she looked really nerdy with glasses, you know a white girl, and we re-do her and totally take off her glasses, mess up her hair and we turned her into a big chola, and at the end she's there spray-painting her "placa" on the side of a wall "lavirgie." So there was that little photo session.

The *Homeboy Beautiful* party, I just got my friends essentially. It was very organic, it was very improv. It wasn't like I had a whole storyboard lined up with what we were going to do. I just said okay, who wants to join in on this photo shoot we're going to do? We're going to do a Homo-Homeboy party, so Teddy Sandoval, my collaborator from "Maricón," he was in it, and my friends Efren Valdez and Ronnie Carillo and some of the *Escandalosas*, and it was great. At the party, what I show is that after midnight, and everyone is already really drunk, the homeboys start to take off their bandanas from their forehead, which at the time in the 1970s, that's what a lot of homeboys were wearing. They take off their bandanas and put them in either their left or right pocket, which followed the hankie codes of the gay culture at the time. Then we had the homeboys take off the forty-fives, the oldies but goodies, and bring out the Judy Garland records, so they're listening to Judy Garland, getting stoned to the Trolley Song. Then I showed the homeboys slow dancing and again, as the narrator, I was this incredulous, naïve reporter that actually ends up blacking out and essentially, if you follow the storyline, he ends up getting gang raped and is trying to remember what happened. But it was all fun, it was all parody. It was sort of along the lines of a lot of the things that I was absorbing and looking at. At that time, it was John Waters films, *Divine*, the Cockettes films, alternative sort of underground movies, art things, Monty Python on TV, but it also goes back to *Mad Magazine* and always doing these parodies.

I did an edition of 100, and it was all just Xeroxed with a color Xerox cover. Did edition of 100 and sold them at Chatterton's Bookstore on Vermont Avenue, and the Soap Plant down on Sunset, and that's how they sold, and then we mailed them out to a lot of the mail art artists that we would send postcards to. So I know there were artists that were getting this homo-homeboy issue of this magazine and they had no idea what it was all about, but I don't think they cared, they just, they knew it was art. I also, though, had attempted to see if I could get it sold or carried at Papa Bach's Bookstore on the West Side, Papa Bach's, Bach like Sebastian Bach, B-A-C-H, that was the big bookstore on the West Side at the time. I went in and I don't know if it was

the owner or the manager, but he looked at it, he looked at *Homeboy Beautiful* and he just said, "This is shit, this is crap," he goes "this is not art." I was really offended and I thought, this is exactly an indication of why I needed to do *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine. I said, "Well then you don't know about art, you don't know about Dada art, you don't know about surrealism, you don't know about parody." I go, "This is art," and you know I was so upset. To be honest, once I left, I started crying, I was just so angry. But we had so much fun in doing *Homeboy Beautiful*.

I decided to do the second issue in 1979, and I was inspired for the second issue, because there was a magazine called *New West Magazine*. It was sort of like the West Coast version of *New York Magazine*, that they were running at the time, and of course *New West Magazine* was all about California and L.A., but you know all the advertisements were for Rolex watches and Beverly Hills and Pacific Palisades.

02-00:09:35
Holmes:

Of course. Sure.

02-00:09:37
Terrill:

But they did this—I forget who it was, but they did a photo essay. If I recall, I think they were black and white photos of cholas, and thought, let's see what they do here. I just remember thinking that it was a really condescending and patronizing look at cholas, almost like they were a freak show, and that was my inspiration for the second issue's exposé, which was "East L.A. Terrorism," which was totally made up, but just playing on the fear of the West Side ever going east of La Brea or going into downtown or the East Side. And so in the photo essay for the second issue, I follow a group of terrorist homeboys that go into Westwood and kidnap a white husband and wife and their Japanese maid, and we take them to East L.A. and we tie them up and we torture them. We force them to eat menudo, we force them to watch Channel 34, Spanish language TV, listening to oldies but goodies, and it was fun. We had the best time and it was really fun, and again it was a collaborative effort and it was all very improvisational. I didn't have a real plan necessarily, but Gregory Poe, who had gone to Immaculate Heart College and was a friend of mine, and he was gay, he actually ended up having—he did very well for himself, with his fashion line. Greg Poe was sold here in the U.S., but also in Japan it was really hot. He had said hey my parents are on vacation this weekend, we can use my house. I said great, and so we had a house that we used for the shoot.

We determined the photo shoot around the house that was there, and so we'd sneak in through the back, walking around the pool. To my friends that I recruited for the photo shoot, I said, "We need to have like an old cholo kind of car," and Ricky said, "My friend Virgie has one," and she was this little dyke that was sort of a homegirl, and she said, "Sure!" She wasn't an artist. All she knew was hey, this is this art thing that we're going to do and it's going

to be fun, and so little Virgie was the driver of the homeboy terrorists. Donald Krieger (who was an artist), agreed to be the white guy that we kidnapped, and then Greg Poe's friend, Rea Tajiri, who is herself a very accomplished artist now, and she was Japanese American, he goes, "Well, can Rea be part of it?" I said, "Sure, do you want to be the maid?" And if she had been Maria, the maid would have been Latin, you know, or if she had been Franny, she would have been Swedish. It just was determined by who was available. So that was the photo essay in the second issue, that was really fun.

I also then followed up on the first issue, where a group of terrorist homo-homeboys that were upset with the first issue of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, because they felt it was exploitive of homo-homeboys, so they invade the editorial offices. It was actually Teddy's studio, we set it up like a pretend office, and they go in and they take over the office. At the time, there was Prop 6 here in California, which was the proposition by Senator John Briggs, based upon support from Anita Bryant, to outlaw or be able to fire teachers for being gay. That was the issue that Harvey Milk took the lead on. So in it, I have the homo-homeboys spray-painting "No on 6" and "Chale, Briggs and Anita Bryant". So I was bringing in that gay activism through the homeboys taking over the offices there. My friend Jessie played Tencha, the secretary, and the homeboys kidnap her, take her away. In response, in that second issue, we do a couple of pages dedicated to the demands of the homo-homeboys, and it's their art, their poetry, their voice, and a lot of that was just contributions from Jack Vargas, Teddy Sandoval. They were just Xeroxed, some of the mail art that they had done. We also had a homeboy makeover. The first issue was a homegirl makeover. This was a homeboy and it was Joseph Cornish, who was a friend of a friend, again, a cool white guy, and he allowed us to take him and sort of rough him up, beat him up, like a hazing ritual. We actually water-colored his face so he was darker brown, and slicked his hair back so then he posed like a cholo. Yeah, so that was fun.

We also had, in both issues I had an advice column called "Ask Lil Loca," which is totally fun, sarcastic, and politically incorrect, and it was just great, it was really fun. I was intending to do a third issue and the issue I was considering, the thing I was looking at doing was the concept of passing, how people pass from being Latino or homeboy, into being accepted into the dominant white culture. To be honest, I was overwhelmed, because I would pay for everything. At the time, each issue cost me about \$400 to \$500, which was a lot when you consider I had to buy the film, and get the film processed, and I had to pay for the printing, and then to have everybody come together like that, I had to give them something to drink and feed them, because I wanted to be good to the participants. Yeah, so I ended up not doing the third issue. It was popular amongst the limited group of people who would get *Homeboy Beautiful*, who purchased it or that were in Immaculate Heart College and art school, or among the Chicano queer community that I was aware of.

Then, two years ago, three years ago actually, Professor Robb Hernandez sent me an email with some photos of some guys known as Maricón Collective, and they had t-shirts that were in old English letters, said Maricón Collective, which were indicative of the maricón t-shirts that I had done in the 1970s. And he asked, "Do you know these guys?" And I said, "No, I've never heard of them," and he goes, "Well they've heard of you, they like your work, they follow your work." I was like really? Wow! It never occurred to me that I had a younger generation of folks who were familiar with my work, especially from the 1970s. So, I saw that the Maricón Collective would do mixed tapes, they would DJ these parties in backyards and houses, but also at Akbar in Silver Lake, and so I went down one afternoon because Rudy Bleu was the head guy, DJ, and it was his birthday. I walked in and when he saw me he said, "You're Joey Terrill," and I said yeah, and I go, "You're Rudy," and we bonded right away and so we developed this friendship. I felt, here is this tribe that reminded me of all my friends, the *Escandalosas* back in the day. They were going to have a table, a presence at the MOCA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Book Fair, which is held every year at the Geffen Contemporary, and Rudy suggested to me, "Hey, what if we do a reissue of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine?" "Okay, like do you think there's interest in this?" I really didn't realize that it would be popular, but we reissued the two volumes, did a hundred each. I had thought you know, if we sell twenty, I'll be happy. We were going to sell them for \$20 each. Originally, back in '78, they were \$3.50.

02-00:19:00

Holmes:

So in some regards, I mean at \$3.50, you were losing money with each issue. [laughs]

02-00:19:04

Terrill:

Yes, I was. You know, but I wasn't in it for any kind of profit motivation, it was purely art and it really was about fun, collaboration, and getting the issue of the Latino phantom culture that no one talks about, all that stuff, including all the stereotypes, that was the focus. Anyway, the reissuing of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine was a hit. I wasn't used to this kind of attention and so I didn't take it for granted, but *L.A. Weekly* put it as the pick of the week, "Come on down, get your reissue of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine." There were all these kids, they're young people but I call them kids, that weren't even born in 1978 and there they were, and I was signing issues, you know autographing their issue of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine. And I realized there was this whole generation of now queer identified or gay identified Latinos and Chicanos that I loved seeing, because that didn't exist back in the 1970s to the extent that it did in 2015.

02-00:20:25

Holmes:

But it also shows that your work continued to resonate. So on one hand, if we break it down, in those issues you're critiquing, in a very tongue-and-cheek way, using satire, you're critiquing white L.A., consumerist L.A. But at the

same time you're also making that intervention about the Chicano community of East L.A.—we're here, you know, we aren't that phantom culture, right?

02-00:21:00

Terrill: Right, right.

02-00:21:00

Holmes: Simultaneously, you're also, it seems, speaking to that very phantom culture, saying “Hey, by the way, gay Chicanos, yeah we're here too.”

02-00:21:07

Terrill: Are here too, yes.

02-00:21:08

Holmes: And we've been here a long time, right?

02-00:21:09

Terrill: Yeah, exactly, and that was actually a reflection of reality. There were so many—you know, in the same way that the civil rights issues of the 1960s, there was a lot of religious people, priests and Catholic nuns and Christians, who felt it was the right thing to do. There was also a lot of gay people who played prominent roles in civil rights, even though they were closeted, but I know that it had to do with their connection to the idea of their own oppression, which then by the 1970s, everyone started to come out. It was no different in the Chicano Power movement. A lot of the Chicano artists were gay, but people didn't feature it necessarily or they were closeted. Members of MEChA, the Brown Berets, the students groups, there were gay and bisexual and lesbian participants, but they were sort of on the down-low or in the closet. I was all about wanting to kind of blow that up and make sure that our presence was documented, maybe even exploited. I also had an element of wanting to be in your face, and I think it worked. I know there were people who loved the magazine and there were other people that hated it for the exact reasons that I wanted to do it. It triggered all their homophobic reactions. Yeah, so there was a lot of thought in my doing the magazine.

Then, it was within a couple years after that, like the zine scene really seemed to have taken off. Certainly, by the mid-1980s into the 1990s, there were zines for the punk scene, punk music, for art, skateboarders, different subcultures, and in some ways, *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine was a precursor to that, but it was never meant to be a zine that was going to be participatory, where people could write, editorialize, and it wasn't taking itself seriously, any more than one would take a John Waters film, at that time, before he got commercial, you know, took it seriously.

02-00:24:05

Holmes: I wanted to ask you about the term “homeboy.” This is a very East L.A. term, and it's a term that when we, you know later on, say in the 1980s, into the 1990s and up until today, this became a very universal term, a very popular term.

02-00:24:22

Terrill: Yes.

02-00:24:24

Holmes: But at this stage, in 1978 and '79, this was a very unique term, like unless you were in East L.A., you really didn't understand that term just yet.

02-00:24:34

Terrill: Correct. In fact, I was surprised when, by the mid-1980s, I saw that homeboy was being used by African Americans and other people in the music scene, that were referring to each other as a sort of slang term. That was borrowed from the homeboy gang culture, which yeah, back in '78, in fact there were folks that didn't know at all what homeboy meant, and so the title itself, *Homeboy Beautiful*, what? They weren't quite sure what that was, whereas people in East L.A., they got it right away, you know, they totally related to it.

02-00:25:20

Holmes: And when we think about that too, it seems that all the various levels that you're trying to critique, to poke at, the Chicano, East L.A. gang culture, the machismo of that, is very much front and center.

02-00:25:42

Terrill: Yes.

02-00:25:43

Holmes: Can you talk a little bit about that? What was the intervention there, but also your experience of growing up in East L.A. and seeing this culture.

02-00:25:51

Terrill: When I finally settled in with my mom, when she came out of the hospital in 1966, we lived in Highland Park, or Northeast L.A. Then with friends of mine, it was either Highland Park, Lincoln Heights, Cypress Park, East L.A. itself, Boyle Heights. That was my trajectory, that was my hood, that was my idea of what Los Angeles was, that was the geography. Within that, there was the prevalent gang culture that existed. I was never involved in a gang myself, I never wanted to, in the same way that I never really wanted to be a quarterback, playing on a football team, I also didn't want to be a gangbanger, you know? At that time, all of the graffiti, so-called graffiti, was all cholo writing. All that sort of "wild style" that came out of New York and the Bronx, the big, huge, cartoony, balloon type lettering, with all these different colors spray-painted, that didn't exist back then. If you walked down the L.A. River back in the late 1960s, all of the graffiti was cholo writing that documented everyone's names. I used to enjoy looking at it, I used to enjoy reading it. I mean, there was a certain style to it that I really appreciated as calligraphic art.

02-00:27:23

Holmes: There's very much an art to that.

02-00:27:24

Terrill:

Yeah, and I loved the names: Spooky, Puppet, Little Man, Sad Girl. I just thought there was something really clever about that, so I appreciated that aspect of homeboy culture. I totally did not appreciate any of the violent parts to it, and also back then, you know, when we talk about violence, like “Oh, you heard there was a gang fight?” “Oh yeah, they beat each other up.” They used their fists, right? People weren't driving by and shooting each other like they do today, it was very different. Also, to be honest, there were cholos and homeboys that I just thought were so handsome, there was a certain pride that one would take, and that was an extension of the pachucos from the 1940s. I loved the style, I liked some of the attitudes that could be very respectful of *familia*, your abuelos. There were definitely aspects to homeboy culture that I embraced and I thought were good. It's that homophobic element that I really don't like, it grated against me.

Also, in the early 1970s, I dated a guy, Ronnie, who was like an ex-cholo, and very good-looking, very handsome, and just the nicest guy. But when he started drinking, oh my God, he became like you know, just evil. That was my first introduction to the concept of alcoholism. But, a lot of that, I realized, had to do with his own internalized homophobia and what he thought he was supposed to be as a man. So I was very aware of how the machismo element within homeboy culture was detrimental to people being fully authentic about being gay or lesbian, and so I was thinking of those things in my head, trying to somehow project that onto the zine, the art of it. And I think there was an element that was embraced by Teddy Sandoval, other artists, I mean I wasn't unique in this. There were a lot of the gay Chicano artists that related to homeboy culture, but also were very aware of the homophobia and misogyny that went into people being very prejudicial towards gay people, gay folks.

02-00:30:24

Holmes:

The two issues of *Homeboy Beautiful* seemed to be multidimensional in a lot of ways. I mean we have narratives, we also have dialogue. I want to talk a little bit about that, as well as when we look at the illustrations. So there's some portions that were drawn, right, in very much a comic book style. But then you also have photoshoots, as you talked about.

02-00:30:52

Terrill:

Yes, sure.

02-00:30:55

Holmes:

So, for something so multidimensional, and then you say well, there was a lot of improvising in this, I mean that's just amazing, to think of how this all came together.

02-00:31:06

Terrill:

The thing was, what I was trying to do, was I was trying to kind of fake out that this was a magazine, with different photographers, different editors, different writers, different people and personas, and it was all me. So, I was

Santo the photojournalist, but, I was also the person who was writing the "Ask Lil Loca" advice column. There was a comic strip that I did in there, in the second issue, where the homo-homeboys said they wanted to see their own voices and their own lives in poetry and art, and so I did a one-page comic called "The Adventures of Spooky and Puppet." It was two homeboys, it's a Saturday night, and I show them in their car. It's kind of silly, I mean it was all very silly and absurd, but I had them listening to classical music and sniffing poppers, but trying to find a place where they could make out without being seen. They go into an alley park, and as they're making out, this woman comes out from her back door in the alley and starts flipping them the finger and telling them to get out, calling them maricónes, jotos, and as Spooky and Puppet are taking off, they say, "That was a quick escape," and they said, "Yeah, because that was actually my comadre's cousin, like she didn't realize that it was us." But the idea again, that family and friends and neighborhoods could be very homophobic and you had to watch where you were, where you could express yourself. In fact, as the homeboys are taking off, they make a wrong turn and they're on the Hollywood Freeway, heading to Hollywood, and they ask rhetorically, "Well maybe in Hollywood we can find a place for ourselves." That was also an indication of how the gay, West Hollywood and Hollywood community wasn't exactly embracing of Latinos, I mean there was racism within the gay culture as well. So I was kind of pointing these things out on both sides.

Also in the second issue, one of my favorite parts in the photo shoots was we did the fashion layout, and it was fashion for the working girl. I recruited some of my friends that we used to call the *Mijas*, and that was pretty Jim, or Ariana, Jim Aguilar, who is actually the subject of an extensive photo essay by Anthony Friedkin. Him and Mundo Meza were featured in his photo shoots from the 1970s, and in fact, they were photographed at Troopers Hall, at the site of the Gay Liberation Dances, and that's where we had all met each other. I had Juanita Miller, Christina, and Ariana, Pretty Jim, because they were available on this Sunday, and we went downtown and did a photoshoot in front of Robinson's Department Store on 7th Street. They were in full drag as girls, and played straight as girls. I wasn't saying that they were guys, but you know, it was obvious to anyone who had a queer eye. In fact, I had mentioned before, Michael, Michael Ochoa, who I wanted to take to the prom, Michael was one of the *Mijas*, and for whatever reason, he couldn't make it to the photo shoot that day. So again it was like well, there's three that I'm going to work with. Then, one of the fans of *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, Rick Valencia, he said he wanted to participate, and so I said hey, do you want to take the photos for the working girl? He said sure, and so he photographed that, and in the fashion layout, the photoshoot, I have the girls standing in front of Robinson's, and they're supposed to be on their lunch hour, trying to think up some extracurricular activities. They're sort of dressed in cholo style, but with baggy pants and sirguy shirts, and Juanita Miller plays a very proper lady, with her hat, and she's waiting for the bus and they jump her. They jump her and they steal her money, and they take off running, rushing back to work

because their lunch hour is over. Again, very tongue-and-cheek, but also again, sort of referencing the inherent violence, or implied violence, of homegirl, homeboy culture, but in this case it was all transgender. I would imagine, I mean, I don't know how innovative it was, but it might be one of the first photoshoots utilizing transgender models, certainly homegirls.

02-00:36:19
Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

02-00:36:21
Terrill:

The thing was that I would do this one photoshoot because I had the time and they were available. Rick said he would do the photos, and so we did it this weekend, boom, got it done. Then we'd wait, and when the photos came out, I would sort of lay them out and see how they would fit on the page, and then it might be a whole month later where we did another photoshoot of the kidnapping of the white family. So there wasn't a set timeframe; it was just sort of as things occurred, as people were available, as time allowed, would determine what we did and when I did it. And then finally putting it together and saying okay, this is the issue. As opposed to—

02-00:37:10
Holmes:

A regular production schedule.

02-00:37:10
Terrill:

Yeah, right. I had been doing serigraphy, silk-screening, at Immaculate Heart College, and when you're going to do a piece in serigraphy, you have to plan out your drawing ahead of time. If you were doing the tracing paper kind of layout, cutting, or whether you were doing the photographic silkscreen, there was a whole process involved, step-by-step, that actually ended up with the finished product. *Homeboy Beautiful* was sort of this, "I'm going to try this here, I'm going to pull in this element there, I've got an idea for this, who's available for that, and let's just do it." That's what made it fun, and I think everyone that was involved in it got a kick out of it, I think they all enjoyed themselves.

02-00:38:04
Holmes:

I was going to ask you, Santo, the character you used, for me that actually rings a bell, as if we look at the cartoons of the *El Malcriado*, you know of the UFW newspaper. Santo became the name given to the character that came to represent farmworkers, right?

02-00:38:25
Terrill:

Yes.

02-00:38:26
Holmes:

So was that an inspiration there or did you arrive at the name differently?

02-00:38:29
Terrill:

I'll be honest, no, I mean I hadn't associated that name with that, but I chose Santo in the sense of the saints, you know being a saint.

02-00:38:41

Holmes:

Well they probably did the same, the illustrators, right?

02-00:38:42

Terrill:

Yeah, yeah, and maybe even specifically referencing Catholicism, as opposed to just being named Jose. I wanted to have the name because Santo evoked for me, the saints and we're in Los Angeles, the City of the Angels, so you know there was a little bit of a Catholic subtext going on there. And then the character himself, if you read the narrative, he goes into the homeboy party and he's making his observations, and this was in the same way that a lot of articles that I would read, where somebody was reporting on a particular culture or event or movement, as an outsider. So, I'm attending this, there's a room here in Delano, with farmworkers, who are all seated over here, you know making these observations as the outsider, the observer. I wanted that quality to the narrative, but of course in doing it, he was like, "you know it got later and later, people are getting more drunk and oh my God, the cholos, the homeboys were actually French-kissing! I was outraged, I was mortified. I promised myself that one more dance and then I'm leaving." So he was already getting involved there, and towards the end, I do this editorial at the end where the men were lining up, and Santo says all he remembers thinking is that, "Piss didn't taste that bad after all," and then he blacked out. And so then there's a note from the editor, like this was the last words from our reporter, he's currently in the hospital recovering. So it was, again, a total parody, but that Santo himself would immerse himself into this subculture and participate.

In the second issue, for the homeboy terrorist group, he documents this kidnapping. He says "I know some of you may question my ethics and why I do this, how could I stand by and watch this kidnapping take place." And he goes, "well actually, I don't really like white people that much anyway," so you know, again, he's injecting his own value system or judgment in that, which again, all very tongue-and-cheek. I know people might find some of the stuff offensive, but you know, contextually, it was no more offensive than what you might see on a parody in mad magazine or underground movie or something.

The other thing is that I also made fun of the homeboys when they kidnapped the white family. Apparently the man and wife were playing backgammon. So they come in and they tie them up. The homeboys sit down to take a rest and have a drink and they're playing backgammon, and the one guy said "King me," and he's like, "King me? This isn't checkers, pendejo." So I'm making fun of how stupid they are as well. Nobody gets unscathed, everyone was a target.

02-00:42:21

Holmes:

Thinking of that first issue, Santo having to go to the hospital because he was gang raped, I mean that's pretty dark in the tongue-and-cheek.

02-00:42:30

Terrill: Yes it is.

02-00:42:32

Holmes: What was your motivation there, by having that? Is that another reference to the violence that was also inherent within the culture?

02-00:42:40

Terrill: I would hear from different people or friends. There was what we called the East L.A. crowd, there was the Highland Park crowd, I mean within the queer or gay Chicano groups or subcultures, there was also territorial issues. If you were from Montebello, you were a gay homeboy from Montebello, but you might not necessarily like the East L.A. crowd. There was rivalries among each other as well, and then I would also hear about oh, you know, so and so got drunk and somebody beat them up or they were raped. There were all these things but they were always whispered. It was never at the forefront, it was always sort of underground, this subtext. Now certainly, there were great homo-homeboy parties that were just totally fun, I mean I would go to them, especially as a teenager, house parties—you know, we couldn't go to bars, but we could do house parties. I loved slow dancing with other gay teens and Chicanos, and also understanding and realizing, there's a lot of us, because just a few years before that, I had thought that I was alone—that there was only very few of us. I didn't think that there were a lot of gay people around. So that was part of my wanting to just express this whole world that was existing out there, with warts and all.

02-00:44:29

Holmes: Yes, yes.

02-00:44:31

Terrill: One of the other things—I mean this sort of relates to this—but a few years before *Homeboy Beautiful*, when I was still living in Highland Park, and I guess I was still in high school. We lived across the street, across from Figueroa, there was a Lucky Supermarket. It was actually Shoppers Supermarket and then it changed hands, it became Lucky Supermarket for years, and it was right across the street, so that's where we always went shopping for groceries. And I was most familiar with that market and I knew by face, a lot of the people that worked there, by you going in every week or two. One day I was in there and I guess I was fifteen, sixteen, I had my shag haircut, and there was this new checker who was bagging the groceries, really tall, stood out, he was African American. Actually, it turned out he was Jamaican, but very dark-skinned and had a big, huge Cheshire cat grin, and as he was packing my groceries he's like, "Hi." I said "Hi," and he said, "Can I talk to you?" I was like sure, I guess, and he was tall, he was like six-four or whatever. He introduced himself and he asked, "You're gay aren't you?" And he was so direct, and I said, "Yeah, I am," and then he started talking to me, I work here, blah-blah-blah, this, that and the other, and he asked, "Do you know Charlie who works here? Do you know Susan?" And I realized that

three quarters of the people that worked at the supermarket across the street from where I lived were gay! And here I was, thinking I was the only gay person in the neighborhood, and all along, people that worked in the supermarket that I used to see every other day or every week were all gay.

02-00:46:40

Holmes: Oh, wow.

02-00:46:42

Terrill: And they were all Latinos. But it was a very...

02-00:46:45

Holmes: Subculture. Yeah.

02-00:46:46

Terrill: Yeah. His name was Carlton, Carlton Dinnall, and he was very friendly, really sweet, and he lived in Mount Washington. He had a boyfriend named Lucky, who was Chinese. Carlton was trying to make it in Hollywood. He had written a song that was being used in a Blaxploitation film, "Honky," for whom the music and score was being done by Quincy Jones.

02-00:47:20

Holmes: Oh wow.

02-00:47:21

Terrill: Yeah. But this is you know, early 1970s, 1971 I believe, so Quincy Jones was not the big, huge music titan—I mean, he was married to Peggy Lipton, who was from the Mod Squad, and to me, that was the extra special thing, he's married to Peggy Lipton. So, I accompanied Carlton to go deliver some papers, the music score or something, a contract, to Quincy Jones's house in the Hollywood Hills. Here I was, thinking that if I could just see Peggy Lipton, that would have been really cool, but they weren't home when we got there, so we just went around to the back and he put it under the door. So, I was starting to fully grasp that there's many more gay people and Latinos and Chicanos than I had ever thought before, and so that was also part of my impetus for doing the magazine, as though there was this publishing empire called *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine.

The thing about the homo-homeboys in the second issue, taking over the offices? That was actually taken from a real life incident, I think from the early '70s, where the offices of *Ladies Home Journal* were taken over by radical feminists.

02-00:48:46

Holmes: Yes, yes.

02-00:48:47

Terrill: Right? And their demands were met, where they had a special edition, where they looked at the issues of women, not just ladies and what you're wearing and what makeup and how to make tea or something. And I just thought that

was great, that was a great political action. I loved that the women had done that, and so I parodied it with the homo-homeboys coming into the *Homeboy Beautiful* offices.

02-00:48:20

Holmes: Now, part of what you're also addressing, is what you've called a double cultural stigma, right?

02-00:48:28

Terrill: Yes.

02-00:48:29

Holmes: And that's race and sexuality, coupling those two issues. Would you say that this was really your first major work where you took both of those on in a real way?

02-00:48:41

Terrill: Yes. Yes, it was. I mean, I had already been doing work that was "gay," meaning two male images, two male bodies being affectionate. I was doing these silkscreens. Even cartoon images of myself and my boyfriend Roberto at the time, but I felt like I wanted to do something that looked at, what I already knew was going on, because there were issues with racism—we would go to West Hollywood or Hollywood, to the clubs and bars. So, me and my friends would get on the 26 Bus or whoever had the car would pick us all up, and we'd drive out to Hollywood, because there were gay bars there that we could go to, and some of us had fake IDs, some of us would sneak in. Sometimes they would do a stamp at the door, whether it was a star or whatever image it was, on your wrist, and then that person would come back out and we'd take a marker and we'd all try to replicate it on our wrist, so then we'd walk in as though we had already been inside.

02-00:50:57

Holmes: Which is probably good, to be around artists who can actually draw the star perfectly, right?

02-00:51:02

Terrill: Well yeah, if they weren't drunk. So, it was this sort of discovery of this whole world that was out there that was gay. But at the same time, I was also very aware that some of the club owners were prejudiced, racist. I know Studio One, which was the big huge discotheque or disco, gay disco, in West Hollywood. They had a policy where the owner, I'm blanking on his name right now—Scott Forbes—he tended to like pretty blonde boys, and if you were a person of color, they would ask you for three pieces of ID. Really? Like in the 1970s, who had three pieces of ID? But even if you did have three pieces of ID, they would say oh, we meant three picture ID's. Again, outside of a drivers license, who carries three picture IDs in the '70s? It was obvious, and just the same way they would refuse women, "Oh no open toed shoes." Like really? That was the style, that was the fashion, everyone was wearing them, ankle straps. It just was stupid and in fact there was a protest in front of

Studio One, by people of color and people from the Gay Community Center, against their policies, and that led to, I believe, Gene La Pietra opening up Circus Disco in the mid-1970s, which was specifically for Latino gay people. It was a hit, it was really popular. I mean from the day it opened, I was there, four to five nights a week, I mean I have a whole history with Circus Disco.

02-00:53:06

Holmes:

Was that open to all people of color or was it just largely more that this was going to be kind of the Chicano gay club?

02-00:53:13

Terrill:

I think it was going to be the Chicano gay disco, but by extension, it was essentially open to everyone. So if there were white guys that loved the music there or they loved Latinos, they'd be there. So it was Chicanos and all who loved them. It was also African American, Asian, like it didn't matter, but the vast majority were Latinos, and there was a certain style that was going on, that I think was specific to Circus and gay Latinos, separate from what was going on with the dominant gay culture and the clone look. At Circus, it was more about Hollywood glam, or a Latino version of Hollywood glam. Yeah, so it was very fun but there was definitely a distinct separation between West Hollywood and the focus on white culture, and gay boys and muscle guys and stuff, and then Circus Disco. In fact, Circus Disco started attracting a lot of heterosexual Latinos and couples, because it was such a great space, a great party and fun, great music. Tuesday night was "Boy's Night," so on Tuesday nights, because you know there were times, on a Saturday night where oh, somebody is starting a fight in the parking lot because some straight guy didn't like that somebody asked him to dance. We were dealing with our own issues there, but also, there would be folks that I'd see. I'd see the guy with his girlfriend on a Saturday night and then the following week, on Tuesday, "Boy's Night," oh, he's here tonight by himself, without his girlfriend. Eventually, you realized this was part of his coming out process. His entrée into the gay world was to go with his girlfriend to the disco, I guess figuring out that he definitely likes guys, and then transition into boy's night.

02-00:55:35

Holmes:

The interesting thing about Circus Disco is that it seemed to be one of the very first, very open clubs, right?

02-00:55:48

Terrill:

Yes.

02-00:55:50

Holmes:

Which when we talk about gay liberation, the issues which you do point to, certainly within your work by coupling this, is that it was a very elite scene, like it was a very white male, middle class type of vision of what gay culture is. Right?

02-00:56:11

Terrill:

Right.

02-00:56:12

Holmes:

And as you said, a lot of people kind of forget that racism—even though they're fighting for liberation—racism was still an undercurrent there too.

02-00:56:20

Terrill:

Yeah. And you know, when I say racism, I'll want to expand on that. There were racist gay men who just thought all Latinos are dumb or stupid or uneducated, period, that level. Even if they thought they were hot and “oh, a hot Latin, I want to fuck them,” but they knew that somehow they were patronizing towards them. I would run into that, “Oh my God, you speak English so well.” Like, really? So do you, all right. But also, it was just differences. Folks that grew up in upper middle class lifestyles and went to college just like their parents did and they grew up around other white folks, Latinos were “different” than them. And so there were times, like at the Gay Community Center, where there were folks—and this was also at Immaculate Heart, I remember. There were white, I consider them students that came from wealthy families, that were sort of rebelling against their status, rebelling against the establishment, the institutions, consumerism, a consumerist culture. They were more inclined to embrace being a hippie and rejecting those consumerist values of American culture, whereas a lot of Latinos were coming from the standpoint of we're trying to achieve and bring ourselves up to that level and attain some of that access to being able to consume. We were not in a position to reject “our privilege.”

02-00:58:16

Holmes:

Yes, yes.

02-00:58:17

Terrill:

Right? And so we were coming at things from very different directions at times. I remember being at Immaculate Heart and talking to these other Latino students and going oh, look at her, she's barefoot. And of course this was a woman that came from wealth, but that was her way of rebelling and just kind of being free and hippie-like. And I realized no, we wouldn't do that. If we were to walk around barefoot, I think we would have perceived it differently, and I know my mom would have perceived it as, why can't you afford shoes, what's the matter with you? You know what I mean? I remember my mom telling me about presenting well, because you don't want people to judge you, particularly being Mexican. So, when I went through my phase where I was walking around barefoot she would say, “Joey, people are going to think that you can't afford shoes.” “No, mom, the young kids today, we don't care,” you know. So there was class differences as well.

Now, on the East Side, there were always gay bars, but they were small, mostly like drinking bars, they weren't advertised per se very openly. In Highland Park, where I grew up, there was Tykes gay bar, which was a drinking bar; there was the Bon Mot, which was another bar. Again, the name was there and that was it. There was nothing that indicated that it was gay, per se, and it was sort of that was your place, that was where folks, or men could

go to meet and sort of be covert. There was also Ken's River Club on Riverside Drive, which was a little bit more of like a disco, you know it was dancing and stuff. But even there, when I was there with my boyfriend Ronnie, the cholo, one day, and I remember we were there, standing by the dance floor and we kissed and the manager or owner came over and said, "Excuse me, you can't do that here." I was like, "What? This is a gay bar, hello!" I remember thinking oh, even here, there's still that kind of thinking keep it to yourself, can't be out, can't be open, whereas Circus, Circus Disco was like a circus in town, and bright lights and everyone welcome.

When you went into Circus, back in the day when it first opened, the décor was like a circus. So you paid your money, you walked down this corridor to get into the big main dance floor and there were all these, what do you call those, funhouse mirrors? So there everyone would be looking really stylish, especially if some people were inebriated or in an alternative universe, and you'd walk by these mirrors and they were funny because you know, my head was this big or I looked like this, and you were all misshapen. So even just entering into Circus, you entered already kind of smiling and joking and animation. And then there were big, old fashioned circus posters, like antique circus posters, with the elephants, the strong man, I think even a tattooed lady, and then there were acrobats, live acrobats.

02-01:01:56

Holmes:

Live acrobats, oh wow.

02-01:01:58

Terrill:

They would perform at a certain time. I have a feeling, my impression was that probably stopped after a while, probably for liability issues or insurance, I think, I could be wrong, but I know those first couple years, that's what they would do. Also, Circus on Sundays would have, in the afternoon, they would open and they would have a free barbecue. So I used to go on Sundays to go eat, whether it was hotdogs, hamburgers, ribs, and then corn on the cob. People would go there and eat in the patio in front and socialize and break bread, and then go into the club to dance their hearts out. Circus also evolved, so there were two huge dance floors, and at a certain point, I think by the 1980s, one dance floor was more new wave and rock and roll music, and the folks that were going in there were all Latinos, but they were affecting a different kind of style than the main Circus Disco floor, where the focus was on disco music. So for a while there, there was this intermingling of two different styles of music and two different Chicano subcultures related to the music as well, and that was fun, that was interesting. The coat check, you know you used to be able to buy poppers right at the coat check, just like cigarettes or gum. It was like oh yeah, get me some poppers, because people would pass poppers on the dance floor and that was what you did when you were having fun.

02-01:03:46

Holmes:

Describe for our readers, what would poppers be?

02-01:03:50

Terrill:

Amyl nitrite, which was in little bottles, little brown bottles, and yeah, I was talking to somebody a couple months ago and they had no idea why it was called poppers. Why do they call it poppers? I said well because the original amyl nitrite was used as smelling salts that were used to revive people, and I think it still is used in some configuration like that. But they were in little glass vials, ampules, that were covered in netting. The idea was that when they were needed, like if somebody was fainting and they needed to be revived, you would break the glass ampule, that would stay contained within the little netting but it would pop, it would make a popping sound, and that's why they called them poppers. Originally, those were being used on the dance floor and you could break them and in some cases even, because once they were broken like that, you could just put both ends in your nose and they'd be hanging there. I'm sure that it's all written in history somewhere, someone determined oh, we can market these into little bottles and do it that way, instead of the breaking of the ampules. So yeah, that's why they were called poppers.

02-01:05:12

Holmes:

As it went on, did you see—because you were describing the two different dance floors, two different types of music. Were these also kind of a generational difference as the time went on too on these dance floors, or was it just two different subcultures?

02-01:05:30

Terrill:

I don't know, there might have been some generational difference for sure, but it wasn't as distinct. I remember there were some people that I knew that were club acquaintances or club friends, where I had felt I had moved on musically, I was totally embracing the new rock and roll that was coming out of New York, and the Ramones and Patti Smith and Talking Heads, and they weren't. They didn't really get it, they didn't like that music, and they were still listening to disco and at a certain point, what was really vibrant, great disco music back in the day, I mean Donna Summer and "I Feel Love," had morphed into this parody of itself, like "Disco Duck."

02-01:06:30

Holmes:

I had that record, I had Disco Duck. [laughs]

02-01:06:31

Terrill:

Oh do you, okay, see. Your favorite, right?

02-01:06:34

Holmes:

When I was a kid, yeah.

02-01:06:35

Terrill:

Well yeah, if you're a kid, but if you're an adult, you were just like, what? This isn't Donna Summer any more. The first time I heard Donna Summer, "I Feel Love", I thought the world is changing, and that was actually at Studio One. My friend Steven dragged me down there, they had just opened the doors, it

was early, and so there was maybe like six people in the whole place and he goes, "You've got to hear this song," and it came on and we got up and we're dancing to it and I'm like, this is so cool. You knew that there was something going on musically that was really evolving, because in the clubs, prior to disco, it was more like rhythm and blues and club music. You'd go into the clubs in West Hollywood like the Farm, Bitter End West, it was Etta James, it was O'Jays, it was a lot of black music, and it hadn't quite become disco music yet, and then when it did, it definitely became a culture that seemed to be embraced by a lot of heterosexuals. By the time it was on, I think it was *TIME Magazine*, disco era, I already felt it was dead. Once it becomes the...

02-01:08:01

Holmes:

Was that before then? Wasn't it in the late 1970s, when they had like the record burning party of all the Bee Gees records and that kind of protest?

02-01:08:12

Terrill:

Part of me you know, I wasn't that extreme. I was more like, what if somebody is into their disco music? Let them be into it. I didn't care, right? Any more than if I cared somebody was into salsa and only, exclusively Latino music, that's their choice, let them do that. You want to be into punk then be into punk, I didn't care. I was more ecumenical in my musical taste and embraced it all. I could listen to Dead Kennedys, but I also could get up and dance to LaBelle, you know I was able to relate to different parts of it. Also, within the punk scene in L.A. anyway, there was racism there as well and sometimes even more pronounced than in other music genres.

02-01:09:12

Holmes:

Very much so, yeah.

02-01:09:07

Terrill:

That's a whole other thing, like the East L.A. punk scene and the punk bands that I used to follow, like The Brat, and then I used to follow Los Illegals, which Willie Heron was a part of, from ASCO. I remember seeing Los Illegals at the Whiskey, when we went to the Whiskey a Go Go. They were the opening band and there were all these white punks that were shouting, "go back to where you came from, fuck you, beaners." This isn't fun and it wasn't The Ramones or The Dead Kennedys.

02-01:09:40

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

02-01:09:40

Terrill:

Right? And that's why the venues for music like Alice Bag and the Bags, there was the Brave Dog, the Vex, which is the old self-help graphics. They would have rock and roll shows or punk band shows there, and it was all mostly Latinos. So it seemed like there was always this—being Chicano in L.A. anyway, there was always this underlying subtext of being marginalized or prejudice against you. Now, that's just on the music scene. We haven't talked about LAPD, that's a whole other thing, but I used to get harassed all the time

by cops, just because I was young, a teenager, I had a moustache. The police would pull me over, "Put your hands where we can see them, mother fucker," that's their greeting. "What gang do you belong to?" "I don't belong to a gang." I think one time they asked me what gang I belonged to and I said *Las Reinas*, which is "The Queens." I don't think they got it.

When I grew up there was always this racism from the LAPD, and then some in the music scene, and you sort of just ignored it, made fun of it and lived your life. You couldn't let it get to you. I mean of course you had to speak out against it, and we did. When I met people that will say oh, I've never been harassed by police, I'm like well how nice for you. Truly, that's really nice for you, if they've treated you with respect, because I know that does happen. I've had family members who are cops, LAPD, and I know that they were good ones, so I know that it does exist. But there's still that—and it's usually the profiling that comes with that, it's a presumption of you're a bad person, you're a "bad hombre," right? To quote a certain number 45 President. So that was always my experience, and sometimes in little subtle ways.

Long story, but I worked at the Center for the Partially Sighted in Santa Monica for thirteen years, so I would commute from Alhambra and from Silver Lake, when I lived in these places, all the way to Santa Monica, and it was mostly West Side, white folks. I was a sighted guide for some of the people on the speaker's bureau who were legally blind, and I was there at a little function and there was some guy there, says, I'm from New York, and I'm like oh great, and he goes, "Where are you from?" I said, "I'm from East L.A.," and he's like, "Oh, I should watch my wallet." Ba-dum-bum! Like yeah, big joke, real funny. I go, "Why, you're not in Brooklyn." You know what I mean? Like why even go there, you know what I mean?

02-01:13:33

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

02-01:13:19

Terrill:

I guess he's expressing to me that he thinks that we're all gangbangers or something. So there were little things that people would say that I used to find surprising, because I thought, "Oh, I thought we were colleagues but when you say that, that tells me that you harbor this bigotry" and that was wherever I worked. When I worked at Auto Club, I used to work at Auto Club, dispatching emergency road service and I worked with all kinds of people there. People would, even if they were secret about it, "Oh you know, I don't like someone because you know." And it was also about being black too, and that's the employees, but even people that would call up for emergency road service: "Yes sir, what is the year, make and color of your car and what is the nature of the problem? Oh and you're calling from—oh, you're at a gas station. If that's a place of repair, technically it's not covered under emergency road service if you can get service there, you're already there." And they'd say, "Yeah, but they're all Mexican here." "Really? Well, I'm terribly sorry, but it

doesn't get covered under your membership.” And they're not even realizing that they're talking to a Mexican.

So you know, there was always these little reminders, and even as far back as, I guess 8 years ago, 7 or 8 years ago. It's a convoluted story, but for my little cousins, I determined that I was going to give them for Christmas, rather than give them little gifts or gift cards, I was going to make them these little tickets that were going to be stamped with a theater proscenium, and each one was going to be a ticket good for French food with cousin Joey or Cuban food with cousin Joey, or Mexican food or Armenian food. I would give these to them so that throughout the year, “Hey, you want to use your ticket, tell me when you're available and I'll take you out to eat.” But, as it turns out, the rubber stamp that I had was really big and Staples and all these stores didn't have ink pads that were large enough. There was only this one store that I could find that was close by, it was in Lawndale, right, which you never go to Lawndale. The store opened at 8:30 in the morning, so last minute Joey, Christmas Eve, I go there and I'm standing in front of the store and it's got a glass window and it says right on there, “printing,” and you can see all the stuff, the merchandise, and they have their hours posted. So there it was, 8:40 and I was waiting and hoping they would open, I guess they're opening late, and these two cops pull up, they must have been in their twenties, a male and female officer. They asked, “Excuse me, what are you doing here?” I said, “I'm waiting for the store to open.” “The store is going to open?” I said “Yeah, see right here, it says 8:30, it's 8:40. “Could you step to the curb please? Do you have any drugs on you?” I was like “No, I don't have drugs on me.” “Have I arrested you before?” “No, you haven't arrested me before.” I was already pissed. I'm thinking, I'm an adult man and you're treating me like some punk, and I was born before you were even thought of. I felt disrespected as an adult, not even Latino at that point, it was just as an adult.

02-01:17:14
Holmes:

Yeah.

02-01:17:17
Terrill:

And when I said, “No, you haven't arrested me before,” he said, “You know because I can check.” Okay, so now you're calling me a liar and I'm feeling totally disrespected, they frisked me, they had me sit on the curb with my hands behind my back, to run a check on me, I guess thinking again, that presumption that oh, they're going to find a record, that I'm going to have a record or something because I'm Latino. They didn't find anything. I was fuming, I was so upset, because I thought damn, even as I've gotten older, I still get harassed as though I was some teenager, I mean I thought those days were over. Of course when they find that there is no record it's like, “Oh, Mr. Terrill, I'm really sorry,” blah-blah-blah, whatever, “you have to understand that you'd be appreciative if you were a business owner, because we're trying to keep the neighborhood safe.” I said, “No, what I understand is that I'm here going about my business as a citizen, as I have a right to do, in front of a store

which is supposed to open at 8:30, which it says right here. You don't see me climbing onto the roof at midnight, trying to break into a store." I said, "You're just harassing me and I really don't appreciate it, I really don't." Here I was, the adult now, speaking back and thinking like oh, Joey, just don't get too much, because I didn't want to get arrested, or shot.

And as I was there with my hands behind my back, sitting on the curb, the owner of the store comes in to open up for the day, about 20 minutes late, but he's looking at me sitting on the curb, and once the cops let me go I went in and he goes, "What was that?" I said, "Well, I got here early and apparently you opened late, and so I was there and they thought I was trying to break in." And so he goes, "Oh yeah, I know the cops around here"—and he was African American. He said, "They stopped me before and I'm the owner of the store." Then when I actually purchased the ink pad, the large ink pad and then I left, as I was approaching the freeway entrance, I saw another cop car across the street and they had stopped a car. And in the backseat, it looked like a 9, 10 year-old kid, and then there was, I assume the mother, young mother, she was sitting on the curb with her hands behind her back.

02-01:19:43
Holmes:

Oh man, yeah.

02-01:19:44
Terrill:

And I just thought, if I hadn't just gone through that, I would have thought, what did she do, right? What did they catch her doing? Instead, I knew they're just harassing her, and she was Latina. They're harassing her and there's her poor kid in the back of the car. So anyway, just a thing.

02-01:20:06
Holmes:

Speaking of harassment, because I think it's an important piece of your experience. We were talking about the clubs in West Hollywood, but there was also the gay bars in East L.A., and you were describing some of the differences. Was there also a fear of harassment, not as much as say in a place as open and free as Circus Disco, but the establishments in East L.A., if you were there. And not harassment by others of the community, but harassment by police.

02-01:20:46
Terrill:

You mean at the gay clubs?

02-01:20:47
Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

02-01:20:49
Terrill:

No, but what would happen, what I mentioned before about the inherent violence within homeboy culture, which I viewed, among the gay homeboys, as being an indication of their own self-loathing or self-hatred. So, you know, there were fights and sometimes even at after hours, like Gino's over in West Hollywood, where after hours, it was eighteen and over, and we used to

sometimes go there. There were Latinos, *mi gente*, and somebody was jealous of that one, and they couldn't just argue about it, they had to start throwing punches and tables being turned over and people running and screaming. I saw that several times and again, I just kept thinking to myself, these people need to get a better sense of themselves and respect one another. I mean we're already being harassed and being profiled for being Latinos and then here we are, arguing and fighting with each other.

I went to one of the gay liberation dances at Larchmont Hall one time and it was really fun, it was really cool, and there were a lot of women there, a lot of the East L.A. crowd, a lot of the girls, and I was in my early twenties I think, and a fight broke out. I had no idea there were these two factions that everyone took one or the other girl's sides, and some of the femmes were even more vicious than the more butch women, and we had to close it down. I remember trying to get down the stairs to get out, because I didn't want to get hit or beat up. So there was violence that was in the gay networks, which isn't that unusual—there's violence in all these bars all the time.

02-01:23:01

Holmes:

Oh yeah, sure.

02-01:23:03

Terrill:

But it's usually these macho guys, and they take it outside and they're drunk. That used to happen a lot within the gay Latino clubs as well, and that was something I was just convinced in my head that it's connected to not feeling good about yourself not having good self-esteem, feeling that somehow you have to prove now, that you're masculine or something. That was where my boyfriend Ronnie, who was just a sweetheart when he was sober, but once he got drunk, became this macho angry guy, looking for a fight. Anyway, those were all the kind of things that were being filtered into my head when I was doing *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine.

02-01:24:00

Holmes:

You had also, some of your other first art exhibitions around this same time, around '78, '79, or at least there was the annual downtown artist show in Los Angeles, as well as one in '79, in Mexico City. These were group exhibitions. What pieces of art were you working on to exhibit in these?

02-01:24:27

Terrill:

At the downtown show, the LACE show, the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, I know that Gronk, and I think Robert Gil de Montes were involved in that. They told me hey, we're going to do this show, come on and do something. I had done, for that show specifically, I did three pieces that were collaged, and what I chose to do was three pieces about three restaurants that I frequented, that I liked, that I loved, my hangouts. One was Philippe's downtown, which was at that time, there were lots of people who went to Philippe's, but it was also specifically, from my perspective, the place where Latino artists, from Teddy Sandoval to myself to ASCO, Gronk, Marisela

Norte, the writer. Philippe's was a place where you could go and eat and sit, and with communal tables, and there was still the sawdust on the floors, still 9 cents for a cup of coffee, which was pretty cool, pretty cheap. So I did Philippe's.

I did Lupe's, which was over in East L.A., and that was just a little Mexican café that my partner Rick and I used to always go to in the mornings, before we would go on our job doing wall covering. We knew Rosie who worked there and she would always greet us, and so I did this collage that had color Xeroxed images of Rosie cooking at Lupe's, and I did an image of a Latina just totally dressed in full costume. Then I did Yee-Mee-Lou's. Yee-Mee-Lou's was another haunt that I totally bemoan that it's gone, but it was not that far from Philippe's. It was in Chinatown and it was the coolest restaurant/bar. It was particularly special for Latinos, Chicanos, artists, writers. The bar was dense, packed. They had the best jukebox, that had everything from Tony Bennett singing, "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," to Judy Garland, to rock and roll, Patsy Cline, and then rancheros, I mean it was this whole mixture, it was very cool music. It had this really ornate bar with a carved wood background and mirror, and I forget the bartender's name but he'd been there for years. That's again, where you could go in there any given night and you would run into some Chicano or Latino artists, cool folks. So that's what I did, I focused on—since it was downtown—I focused on three downtown kind of restaurants, that's what I did back then. Three haunts – Phillippe's, Lupe's, and Yee-Mee-Lou's.

The other early shows, I like to think I was getting real conceptual. In '76, we did a show at Cal State Long Beach, and that was one of the first ones where—and I loved that I was collaborating with this show, with Teddy Sandoval, Jack Vargas, other Latino artists. I was trying to think of how can I do something that is so unlike Chicano art, the expected imagery, and I just did a letter piece, it was lettering, big letters, bright, beautiful block lettering, different colors, and it was in French, and I'm sure it was totally fucked up, broken French, but it was, "Pour quois les mots ont-il besoin de sens," which I'm totally mispronouncing but it was like "why do the words have to mean anything?" So it was a total conceptual art idea that was perhaps absurdist or surrealist, and of course inevitably folks would go "Oh, what does it say?" And I'd say, "Why do the words have to mean anything." Ba-dum-bum! Right? They go, "No, but what I mean is—" and I'd say, "that's what it says: why do the words have to mean anything." So I was experimenting. I was young and trying to figure out things. My art joke!

I always looked at my art, and I've said this before, there's an old joke about, "Did you hear about the conceptual artist who took up painting? Because he thought it was a good idea." There were always Latino artists or Chicano artists that I knew, that would always sort of paint the same, or create the same images all the time. And I didn't want to do that or be that, just because I

felt I've got so much, there's so much to pull from, there's so many ideas that I have, I didn't want to be stuck or known for just one image or strategy.

02-01:29:50

Holmes:

So would you use, particularly in those early shows or even now, would you use your shows to experiment and to do something different each time?

02-01:29:57

Terrill:

Yes, and to be honest with you, especially if it was going to be with other Chicano artists. So sometimes I'd think, there's something that's sort of a homage to Frida Kahlo, there's something that is indicative of the barrio, oh there's something that is social activist, there's the big brown fist, like oh what's this? This is an idea that I had, and it had to do with just being young and an art student or freshly out of college and trying to think outside the box. And then when I did decide to do something specific about identity and being Chicano, I kind of subverted it into something like *Homeboy Beautiful* magazine, and at the same time looking at racism from the dominant white culture, also pointing out the homophobia, misogyny, machismo, that's in the Chicano culture as well.

02-01:31:02

Holmes:

You did, which I mentioned the other day, a group exhibition in Mexico City. Was that the first time you've been down to Mexico City?

02-01:31:11

Terrill:

No, I didn't actually get to go to Mexico City for that. That was through Armando Cristeto, who I got to meet, and who was a friend of Robert Gil de Montes. I adored Armando. He didn't really speak English very well and I didn't speak Spanish very well. And sometimes, I have found that those that don't speak English very well, when I'm engaged with them and I don't speak Spanish very well, we somehow have a particular connection, like we both can relate to the idea that, you know, you're not very adept at one language and neither am I, so we bond in that way. The exhibits he did, there were images from our *Corazon Herido* show that I did at Teddy's studio, so it was the Frida Kahlo work that I submitted and sent down there. I wish I could have gone but I wasn't able to, and from what I understand, Armando had intentionally wanted to bring Chicano artists or Chicano art, to Mexico City, because there was, there's that difference between identity.

02-01:32:40

Holmes:

Oh absolutely.

02-01:32:40

Terrill:

Right? So one of the things growing up here in L.A. that was constantly pointed out to me, mostly by white folks: "you're Mexican, you're Mexican, you're Mexican." I mean sometimes that's a good thing, like "Hey, you're Mexican," but sometimes it's not. But when I would visit Mexico, "*Eres gringo, eres gringo?*" And that's part of the identity of being Chicago, *ni aqui, ni alla* (neither here nor there), you don't really fit into Mexican culture

because you're Americanized and then you're in the United States and you're a Chicano, so you're not really—you didn't come on the Mayflower. Which is part of the identity that I think a lot of Chicano artists in the '70s were starting to grapple with and make art about, and write about as well. I don't know if that answered your question or not.

02-01:33:36

Holmes:

Yeah. What I also thought was interesting is in a lot of your work, and as you were just describing with the expositions, you liked to push the envelope.

02-01:33:46

Terrill:

A little bit, yeah.

02-01:33:47

Holmes:

And at the same time, also be different. So as you were saying, you wanted your piece to stand out, not just fall right into the regular fold of Chicano art, during a Chicano art exhibition.

02-01:34:00

Terrill:

Right, right.

02-01:34:02

Holmes:

What was the reception of that, both by other artists as well as the community?

02-01:34:08

Terrill:

Well, by my circle of friends that were artists, I mean it was a great reception, but there were other patrons of the arts and Chicano academic that looked askance, like “what is that?” They didn't get it, or they didn't want to get it, or they got it and then they dumped it, because when you don't like something, I mean you can get it but you don't have to like it. I do that all the time and it's not about not understanding something. Another example of that was an exhibit we did, “Dia de Los Muertos” at Echo Park Gallery. It was for *Dia de Los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), and there were paintings, as opposed to just altars, and the paintings were indicative of *La Calaveras* and all of the usual imagery that you associate with *Dia de Los Muertos*. But I chose to go a different route and I did a painting of the quilt that I made for my friend Jerry Matus who had died from AIDS. It was a painted canvas “quilt” that I made that was part of the Names Project Quilt, and so I took an image of that and did a painting and it was called, *The Quilt I Made for My Friend Jerry*. That was my homage to recognizing death. I remember some people were like, “hmm?” They didn't quite get it, especially if they weren't involved or their circles weren't being hit by HIV and AIDS, whereas other artists, they liked it, they said, “Oh, I totally love it, I get it, great interpretation of Dia De Los Muertos.”

02-01:36:03

Holmes: Yeah, I mean it's brilliant in so many respects, of taking something that is personal and referencing the AIDS epidemic, but then putting it back into that Chicano culture, right?

02-01:36:16

Terrill: Right, context, yeah, definitely. Thank you, I'm glad you think it was brilliant.

02-01:36:24

Holmes: I get it and I like it. You also, in wrapping up, in 1980, you did your own solo. Was that your solo exhibition at A Different Light Bookstore?

02-01:36:40

Terrill: A Different Light? Yeah.

02-01:36:42

Holmes: Was that your first solo show?

02-01:36:47

Terrill: You know what, I believe it was, yes, it was. A Different Light Bookstore, for those that don't know—I mean back in the day there were things called bookstores, first of all, where one could go and actually buy books. But also, in the early 1970s, there were gay bookstores, because we went to stores. There wasn't Amazon, there wasn't online shopping, and you couldn't go to some of the major bookstores and find a gay section, right? I mean, you might be able to go and find the poetry of Walt Whitman over here, and there might be some psychological study over there, but A Different Light Bookstore was all gay, all LGBT, all the time. It had everything from Tom of Finland books to analysis and academic theory on homosexuality; to novels, John Rechy and James Baldwin, you know just a number of different writers, Rita Mae Brown, Audre Lorde; and poetry, and they would do workshops and they would do readings. So it was a community space and one could go to A Different Light Bookstore and meet other gay people who were interested in writing and reading and the arts, and engage with them in a way that you can't when you go to a Barnes and Noble today.

02-01:38:16

Holmes: Absolutely.

02-01:38:18

Terrill: And then they would have changing art exhibits. Norman was one of the owners of A Different Light, and he was just really cool and he's like, "Oh yeah, I like your art, you should exhibit here," and so I did. My painting style at that time was sort of that cartoonlike imagery, and it was autobiographical. So there was images of some of my lovers and then also images of myself. Again, that personal, confessional narrative. So one of the paintings I had in there—I was breaking up with Rick, and he had left me again for a sugar daddy, for somebody that had lots of money, which was always his issue. He was bipolar, I learned later, but one of his issues was money, money, money, money. He'd be with the sugar daddy and they'd be on vacation in Hawaii, and

he would send me a postcard or a letter, or he would call me up: "I'm sitting at the beach, I'm eating at this great restaurant, but all I can think of is you." I'm like "Well?" What am I to do with that, right?

02-01:39:33

Holmes: Yeah.

02-01:39:36

Terrill: So, I did a painting, a self-portrait, taking a picture of myself, this was before selfies, but I'm in the mirror. I did a painting of myself, photographing myself, and it was titled, *If I Were Rich I'd Buy My Lover Expensive Gifts*, and then I had Fiorucci, Armani advertising, just painted on there, the background. And that was a prelude to my moving to New York in 1980, which becomes a whole other chapter, the beginning of the '80s. It was also when I was infected in New York with HIV, in 1980, before HIV even had a name. Then I had a one man show in New York, at an alternative art space, Windows on White Street, which was the "Chicanos Invade New York" series.

02-01:40:32

Holmes: That's what it was, yeah. I was wondering about that.

02-01:40:35

Terrill: Which is a whole other thing. First, when I had broken up with Rick I said okay, what do I want to do? I had visited New York in April of that year, just as a vacation and I loved it, absolutely loved it; related to it, felt connected to it, loved everything from the grit, the grime, the glamour, all of the above. And so when Rick and I broke up I thought okay, where am I going to move to, what do I want to do? I thought, you know what, I'm going to go to New York. As it turns out, my good friend Victor Durazo, and his boyfriend Steven Fregoso, who I introduced him to because Steven used to go to Cathedral High School as well, and then he ended up going to Immaculate Heart, so I saw him at Immaculate Heart and that's when we both knew we were gay. We dated for a little bit but anyway, he ended up being lovers with Victor. But when I heard they were moving to New York I thought okay, it was meant for me to go as well. And then my sister, who was in her third year at UC Santa Barbara, she called me up and goes, "You know what, I feel I need a break," and she said, "What do you think if I moved with you to New York for a little while?" I was like, "Oh my God, yes let's do it," you know, it was an adventure. Silly me, I went with \$400 in my pocket and we ended up just staying where Victor was staying, and then we had to find jobs and then look for an apartment. It was an adventure, but it was a gnarly, difficult one. My sister moved back after four months, but back when we were there, first of all, you could count the number of Mexicans in New York on one hand.

02-01:42:39

Holmes: Oh sure, yeah.

02-01:42:30

Terrill:

We just did not exist there. My sister was very beautiful, her personality but also physically, she was very attractive and you know, New Yorkers are very direct. Every day, someone would stop her, literally every day, "Oh my God, you have beautiful eyes," and then walk on, or, "Oh my God, what great hair you have," or, "Where are you from?" meaning what's your ethnicity. People would guess, "Are you Italian? Are you Russian? Are you Irish?" They would name every ethnicity going to Malaysia, before they would ever think Mexican. Puerto Ricans were everywhere but Mexicans weren't.

02-01:43:12

Holmes:

Were you ever confused as a Puerto Rican? Because I know on the East Coast, in Spanish speaking communities, if you're not from Spain, usually they assume Puerto Rico.

02-01:43:24

Terrill:

Well, all I had to do was open my mouth and everyone knew I wasn't New York and I wasn't Puerto Rican. I didn't have the accent, and I just thought Puerto Rican New Yorkers, "Nu-yoricans," I thought they were hot, they were the greatest thing since flour tortillas, I mean I loved them. But I was definitely not—I know I stood out, even among the Latinos there, the Puerto Ricans. So when we would say, "Oh, I'm Mexican," we were greeted with, "Oh really, wow, how nice, wow that's really exotic." My sister and I thought, "My God, we're so used to Mexicans being a dime a dozen in L.A. or Southern California" and/or were looked at with disdain, so it was refreshing for us. But, you know on the other hand, I just remember after our first month or two, I was craving a burrito. There were, I think two or three Mexican restaurants I guess, and I went to one in the Village, just to try it out. The owner, she was white—I think she was from Denmark or something. But what I ordered, the food was not good, it was like the chili, it felt like it was made with Hunts tomato sauce or something, or ketchup. It was not very authentic. She asked me what I thought and I said well, it's not what I'm used to, it's not like home Mexican cooking. We couldn't find tortillas. The tortillas that we found down on 14th Street in a Mercado, there was Nally's (the company Nally's for Mexican food) tortillas.

02-01:45:24

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah, sure.

02-01:45:27

Terrill:

You know they used to do canned tortillas?

02-01:46:28

Holmes:

No?

02-01:48:30

Terrill:

Yes. So you know those pudding cups, with a flip-top, that aluminum you flip and the little top comes off like that? They were bigger like that, round and flat, but they had a flip-top, and the tortillas were in a can. I remember I

bought some and sent them to my cousin or something just as a joke, like, "Oh my God look, canned tortillas!" I called up my uncle Rudy in L.A. and just said uncle Rudy, give me your—because he was the cook, he used to cook all the time. I said, "I need the recipe for making tortillas, because I need to make some myself," and he told me, and so I made tortillas. I chose to do a painting called *Making Tortillas in Soho*. So you know, the idea being again, that all these people and artists come to Soho to make art, I come there and I make tortillas.

02-01:46:26
Holmes:

And make tortillas.

02-01:46:31
Terrill:

So there were three paintings that I did for that show and one of them was called *Searching for Burritos*, and it was Victor and Steven and my sister and myself, and Eddie Dominguez was visiting at the time, and one of his friends, Laura, who was a dancer with the Ballet Folklorico. And it's just a group picture of us like this, but we're in the snow, in front of the Guggenheim, and we're trying to find burritos. And then the third painting from that was *Reading the Local Paper*. One of my goals, when I had moved to New York was I wanted to exhibit my art at least once, you know that was the goal.

Then also, my second goal: I wanted to see John and Yoko, even if it was just John Lennon and Yoko Ono walking through Central Park and I could wave to them or something, that was my goal. But instead, I was four blocks away when John Lennon was killed. That was extremely traumatic. I mean it's hard for some people, particularly young folks, to understand what John Lennon represented. I mean to me personally, but I think also to our generation, musically, the effect that the Beatles had on a culture, it was tremendous, truly tremendous. Yeah, so I always thought that I would see them because they lived at the Dakota.

I was on 72nd Street, about four blocks away, living with Steven and Victor, when my sister called me up. She was staying on 89th Street and she called me up and just said, "Oh my God, did you hear the news, turn on the news, John Lennon was shot." I was like what? He was my hero. So I ran down to the Dakota and as I was running, it was a cold evening, but I remember, there were people coming out of restaurants and walking in the street, and they were laughing and talking and I thought, "Oh my God, they don't know, nobody knows." I got down there and the police car was still parked there and the ambulance was just pulling away, and there were about six, seven people, and we were just kind of standing there, across the street from the front entrance of the Dakota, just stunned and just standing there solemnly, silently. And in fact, as I was running down to the Dakota, I remember these two people who were coming out of, I think it was one of the restaurants, and the woman was wearing this big, huge rabbit fur coat, so it was really extra special and it really stood out, and she looked beautiful, and I remember they were smiling

and laughing. And as I was standing there, about 20 minutes later, she and her partner, with the big coat, they came and they stood there, and again, we were just in tears and silent.

The crowd kept growing and growing, and people had radios on. It was just, the whole city went into mass depression. I was there until probably 3:30 in the morning and a taxicab pulled up and a guy that I had seen and dated, we were fuck buddies, Jose Pearl, he pulled up in a taxi and he goes, "Joey, come on, you need to—" I mean I was there and I was shivering cold, and I didn't have a big coat, and it was already starting to drizzle and snow flurries, little icy things. So we went and got some coffee or tea or something, and then I went back the next day and by that time there were hundreds of people out there, and I photographed it all, and in fact that's the painting that I'm doing right now, it's unfinished, it's over there.

02-01:50:34
Holmes:

Yes it is. Oh, wow – that's going be amazing.

02-01:50:36
Terrill:

Yeah, that was a trauma. The whole city was in shock and depressed. I remember riding the subway that next day and you could hear a pin drop, everyone was silent. [chokes up] I don't know, these things trigger emotions. There was this one punk rocker who was wearing a trench coat, he had white bleached hair, and I just remember he was standing up and he was holding the newspaper open and he was just weeping, loud, you could hear his crying echoing through the cars. Everyone else just kind of sat there like this [bowed head], I mean all ages, all races, young people, old people, everyone was just really depressed.

02-01:51:33
Holmes:

And what a powerful image, when we think about that, because a punk rocker is supposed to—there's a type of machismo usually attached to that identity.

02-01:51:43
Terrill:

Yes.

02-01:51:44
Holmes:

And particularly during that time of 1980, you know there's a class element to punk, they're very hardedge, and to see them publicly weeping, I mean that says volumes, that's a powerful image.

02-01:51:58
Terrill:

And I also had thought to myself at the time, I didn't know if he was a New Yorker, I didn't know if he was British, but the idea that he was punk, which came out of England, I mean I saw the connections. I worked at Conran's Department Store, which is a British store, and on that Sunday they were going to do a memorial service at Central Park, right near the Dakota, but I had to work that day. I had already been out for the last two days, I had been standing out there holding vigil, but I had to work that day and Bruce, one of

the managers, he said, "They're going to do that memorial at 1:00," he goes, "I think I'm going to announce on the intercom, for people to just take a moment of silence." He asked, "Do you think people will?" I said I don't know, all these people are buying their duvets and their bed linens and silverware, and they were all like, you know, wealthy East Siders. I said, "I don't know that people are going to respond," and he goes, "I'm going to do it anyway." I said okay. And he did and everyone [chokes up] stopped, I mean from the wealthiest people that were there shopping, to the coworkers, everyone just stopped and bowed their heads and we had about a good two minutes of silence. No one continued shopping and it was great, you know, you felt this connection to all of New York for what was a huge tragedy.

Now to me, what was also happening, unbeknownst to me, was that—and I guess there's a certain kind of ethereal Aphex Twin music that could be playing in the background as the soundtrack—that this was an indication that the '60s were dead, the '70s were dead, and 1980 was going to be a huge change. Harvey Milk had been assassinated two years before, now John Lennon was killed. HIV and AIDS was already percolating, I was probably already infected and didn't know it, and so there was this sense that the '80s were going to be different, and not necessarily in a good way.

02-01:54:37

Holmes:

And then Ronald Reagan gets elected.

02-01:54:38

Terrill:

Yes, and Ronald Reagan had just been elected, and the Pope had also been shot.

02-01:54:42

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

02-01:54:43

Terrill:

So it was this kind of like hmm, there's something changing here and the 1980s are going to be very weird. I just didn't know how weird, you know, and a lot of the friends that I made in New York all ended up dying of AIDS.

02-01:55:05

Holmes:

Well that might be a good place to stop for our next session.

02-01:55:06

Terrill:

Okay, all right.

02-01:65:07

Holmes:

Thanks, Joey.

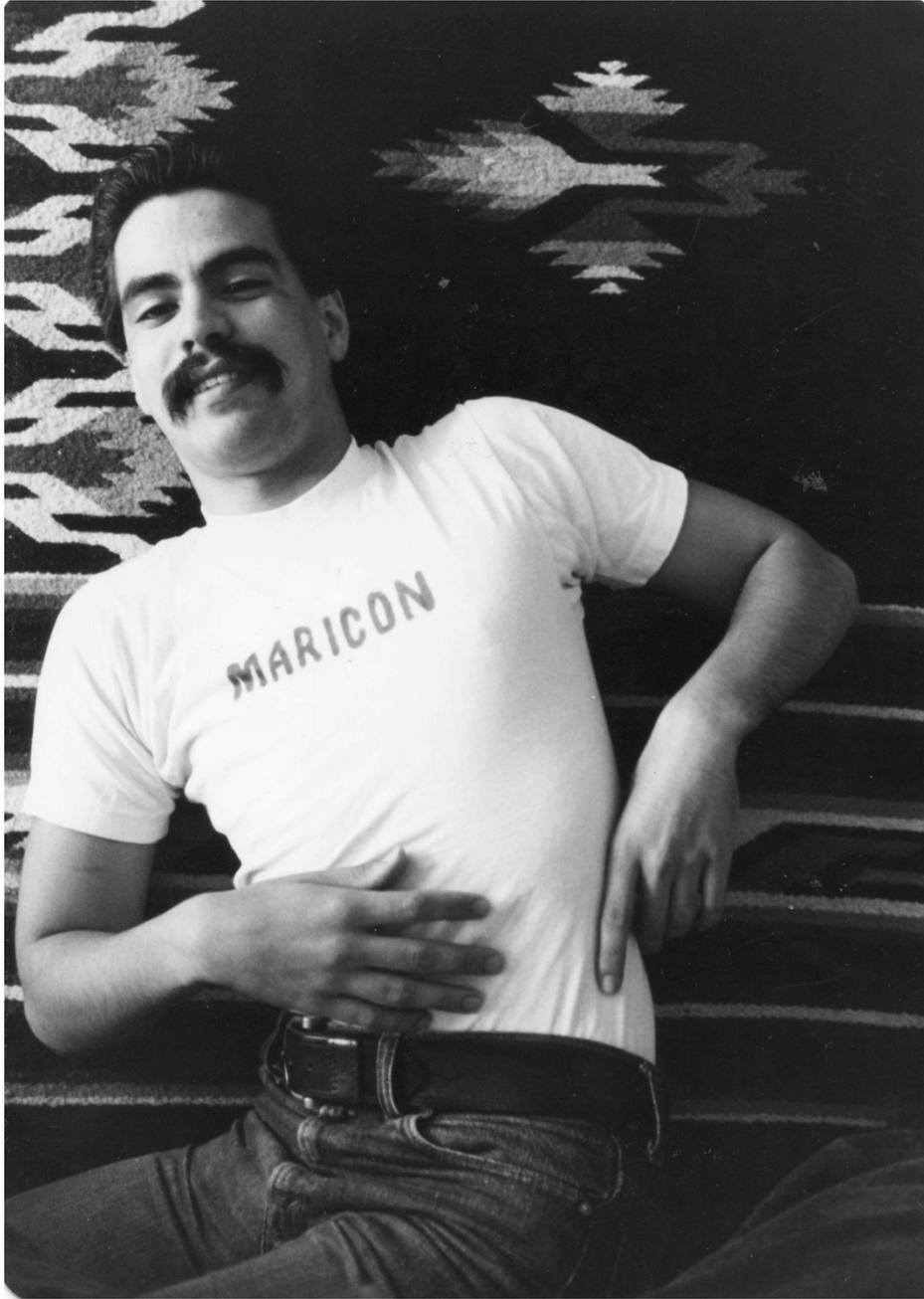
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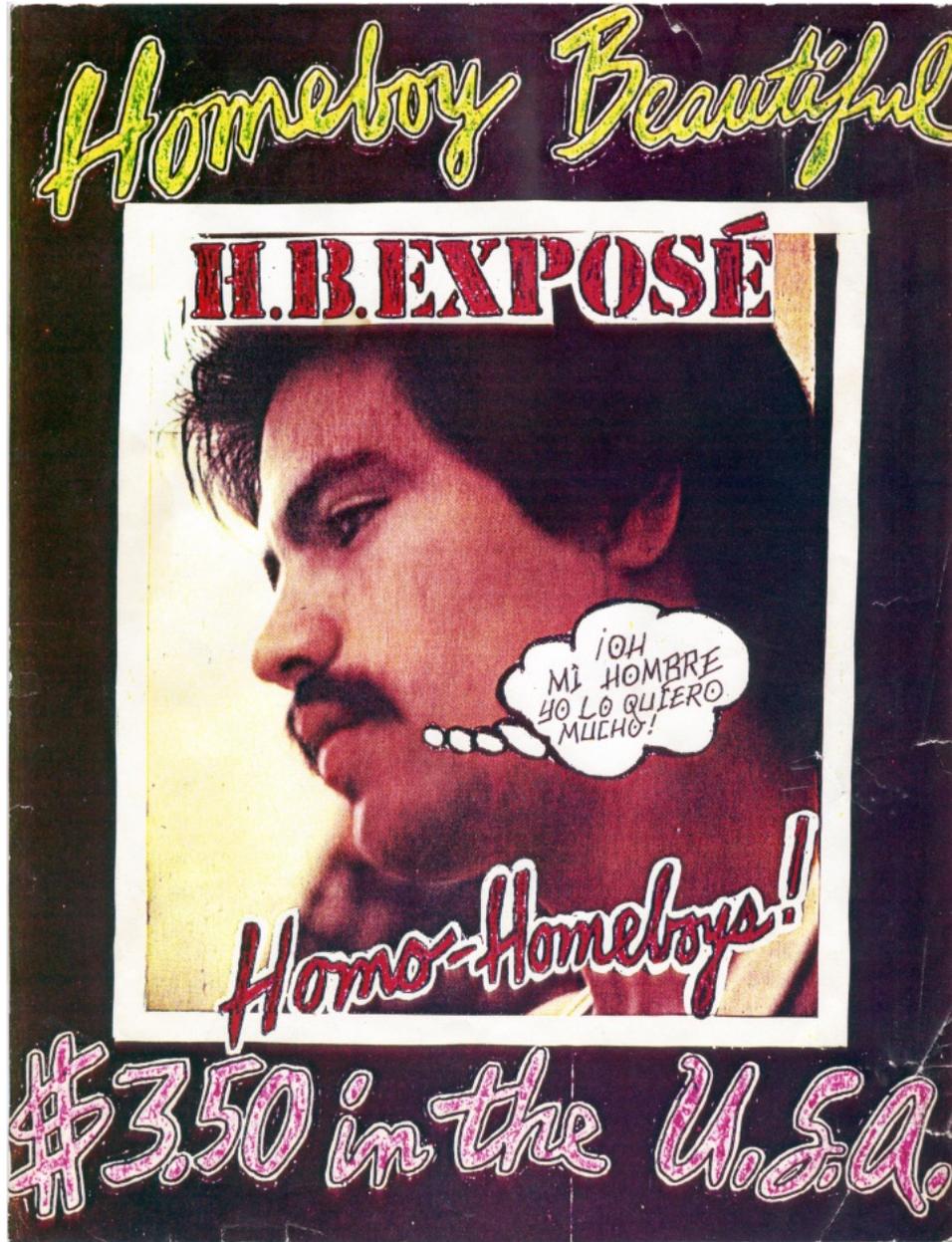
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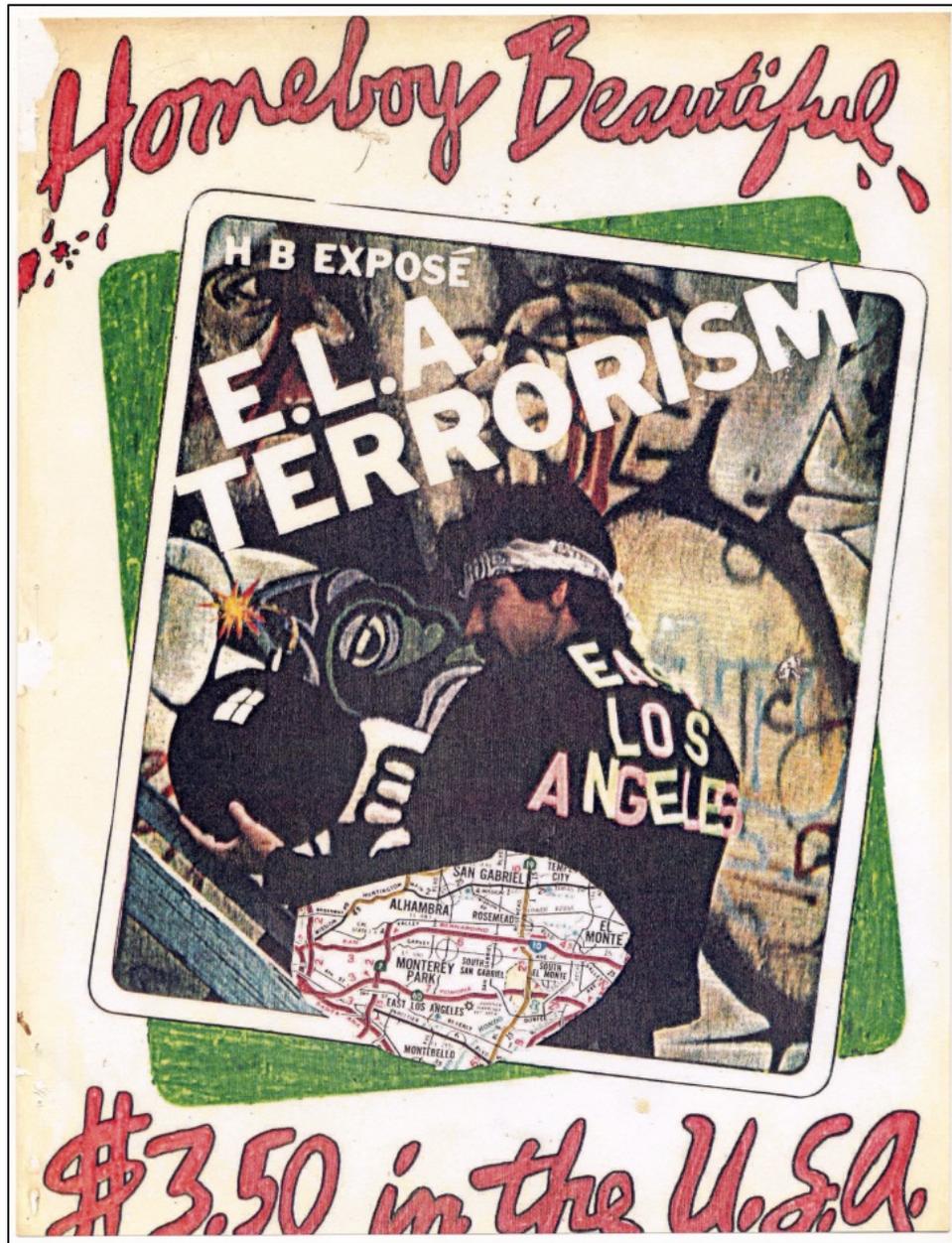
If Andy Had Been Born in Mexico
Homage to Frida Kahlo
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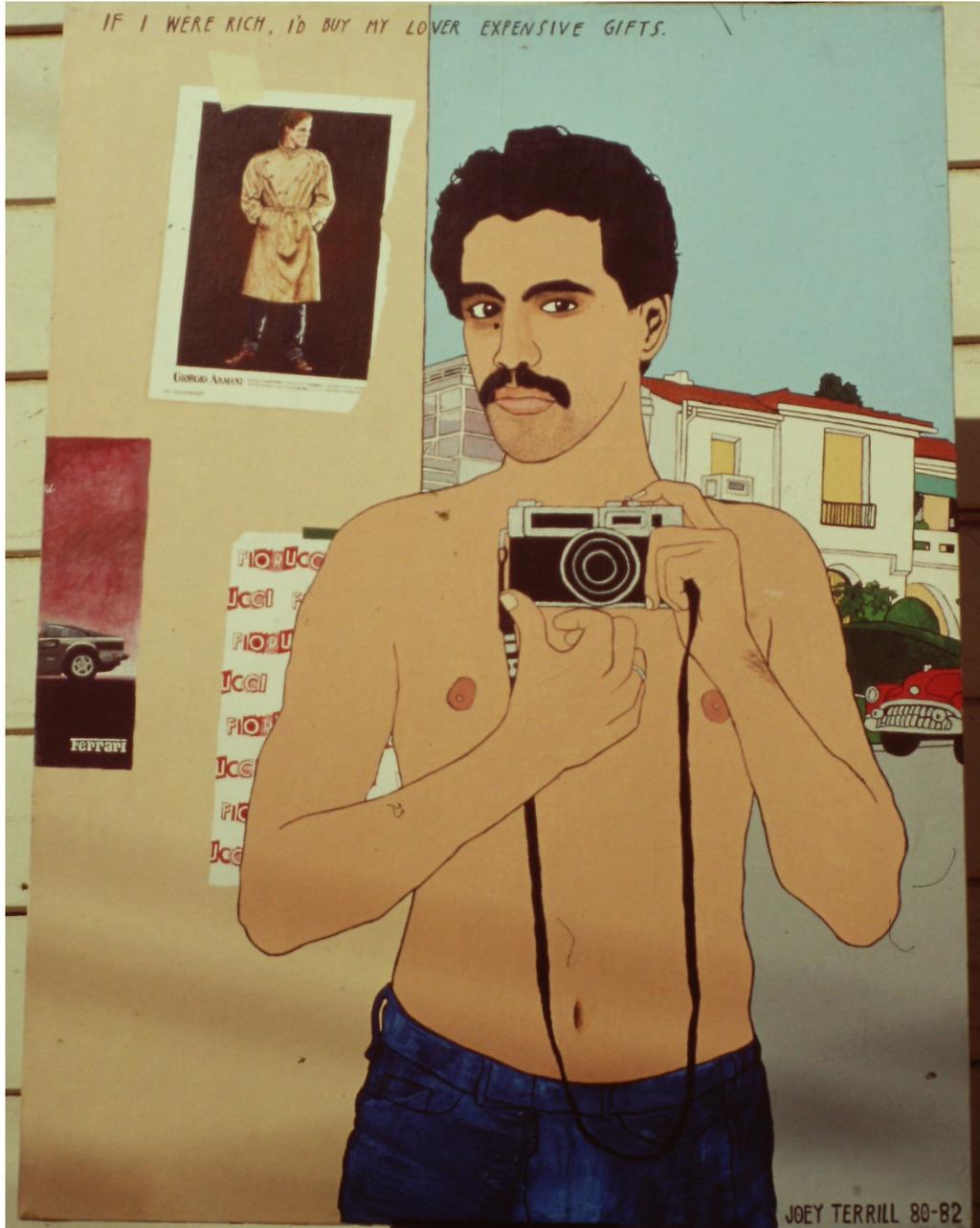
Maricón Series
Joey Terrill, Photo by Teddy Sandoval
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Homeboy Beautiful, vol. I
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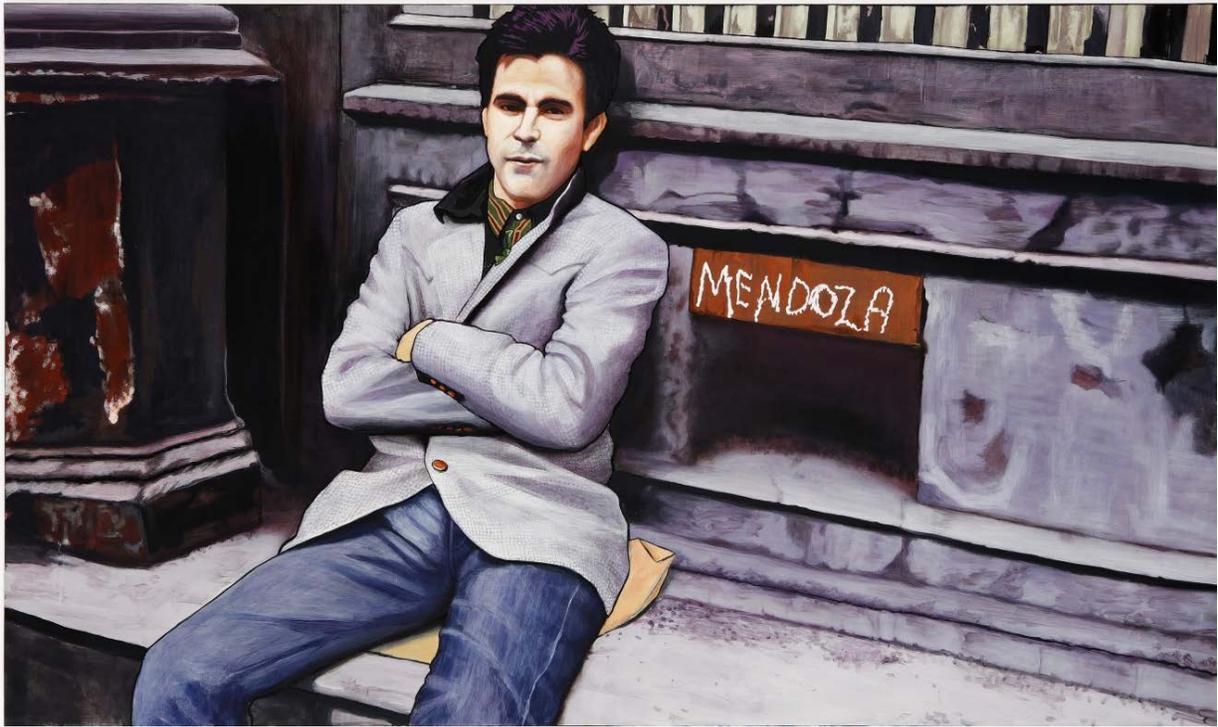


Homeboy Beautiful, vol. II
© Joey Terrill



If I Were Rich, I'd Buy My Lover Expensive Gifts

© Joey Terrill



My Mother's Maiden Name
© Joey Terrill



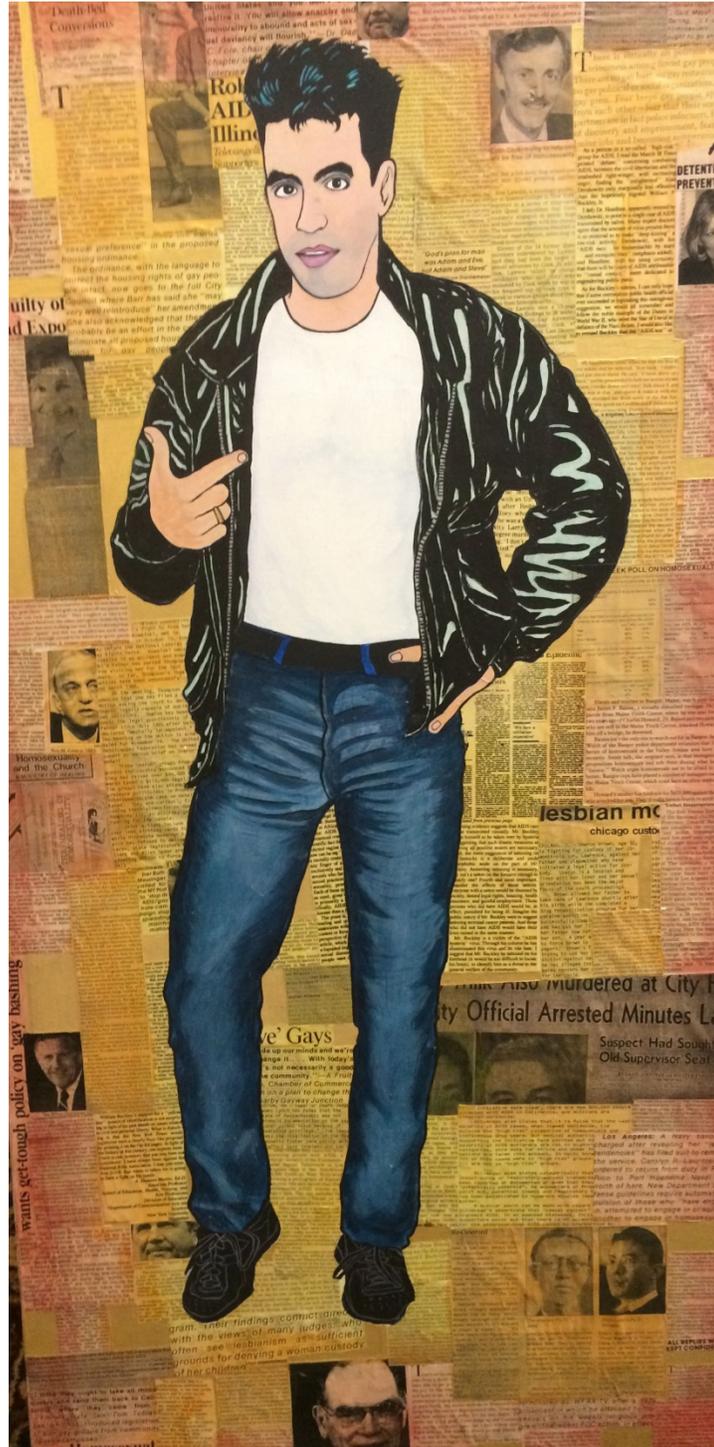
Mother & Son
© Joey Terrill



Tom Guitierrez
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Oscar Ernesto
© Joey Terrill



Makes Me Think You Don't Like Me or Something
© Joey Terrill



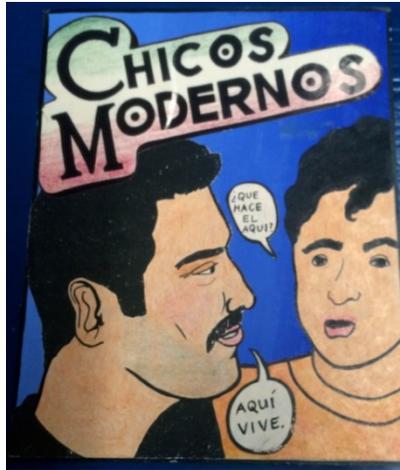
The Good Sodomite
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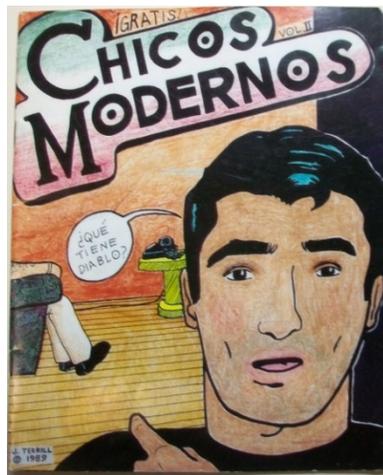
Remembrance
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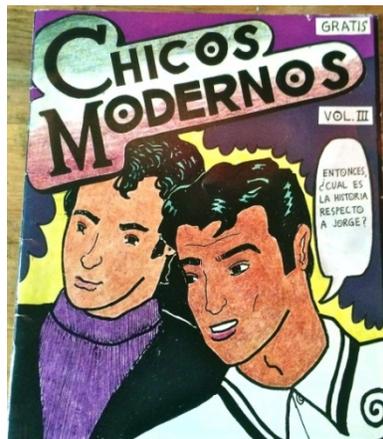
Remembrance, For Teddy & Arnie
(Screen Print)
© Joey Terrill



Chicos Modernos, vol. I
© Joey Terrill



Chicos Modernos, vol. II
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Chicos Modernos, vol. III
© Joey Terrill



Still-Life with Two Blue Pills
© Joey Terrill



Still-Life with Crixivan
© Joey Terrill



La Historia De Amor

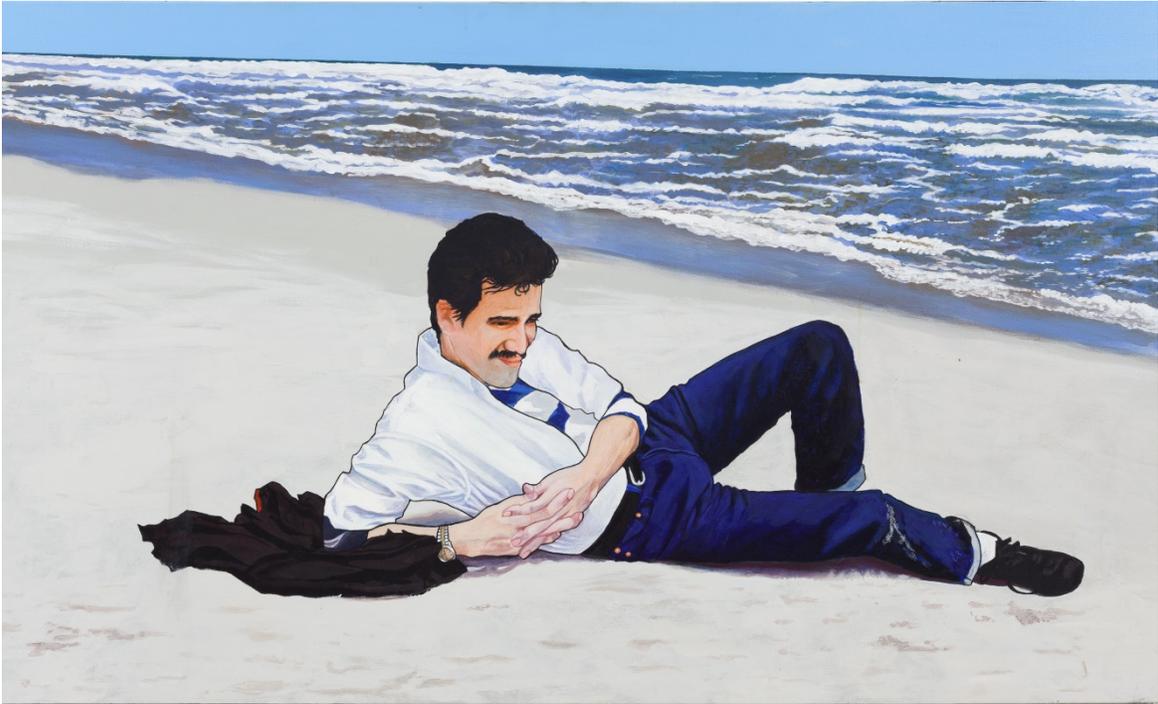
Joey Terrill, 1994

Apoya tus hermanos con VIH
Support your brothers with HIV

La Historia de Amor
VIVA Calendar
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Just What Is It About Today's Homos that Makes Them So Different, So Appealing?
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My Last Day In New York, Fire Island 1981
© Joey Terrill



New York 1980 – The Year of Infection
© Joey Terrill

Interview 3: May 23, 2017

03-00:00:03

Holmes: All right, this is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. I'm sitting down once again with Joey Terrill, for our third session. Today's date is May 23, 2017. We are in his beautiful studio here in the Santa Fe Art Colony in Los Angeles, California. Joey, thanks again. We were talking about the 1980s in our last session, which is where we left off before a wonderful lunch. As you were mentioning, there was a lot of harbingers during that year, 1980, that the '80s were going to be some hard times. You were living in New York at this time.

03-00:00:47

Terrill: Yes.

03-00:00:48

Holmes: Before we start talking about some of the art that you began to make during that period, could you also give us a sense of the different experience New York offered for you. I mean, you've been in the art scene and gay community in San Francisco, as well as those communities in Los Angeles, and then New York.

03-00:01:12

Terrill: Well, for San Francisco, I wasn't that involved or engaged rather, with any of the "art" communities. I mean, I visited art museums, I visited some galleries, but I was never—I never stayed in San Francisco more than three weeks at a time, when I would go visit friends and stuff, so I really didn't exhibit in San Francisco.

New York was the center of the art world at the time. On the one hand, very intimidating; but on the other hand, there seemed to be all these loose networks of artists, and it was very different from L.A., because L.A., it was Chicano artists, it was artists that went to the same schools, they were all from this area. There was this network that we all knew each other. In New York, I got the sense that just like I was from somewhere else, everyone else was from somewhere else. So, some of the artists that I did meet there, but I never really bonded with or connected with the way that I have here in L.A., they were from other places. They were from Dallas, Texas or Chicago, or England or other places, and that seemed to be, to my mind, that New York was this international kind of city.

I just peripherally got involved with an artist collective that was looking at exhibiting in alternative spaces. I went to a couple of meetings, they said well, hey, you can be part of this too. They didn't really know me very well. It's hard to say, I didn't really find anyone that I could connect with or be friends with, you know, like where in L.A., I was collaborating with artists and visiting with them and spending time together and getting into trouble together, we went out to clubs together. So in New York it was just, "Oh,

going to a meeting, here sign here, do this, or having another meeting on such and such a date, and the schedule allows for April, do you want to exhibit in April?" I'm like, "Sure," and it was Windows on White Street.

Now, having said that, the other context was that there was all this burgeoning stuff happening all around me. The New York art scene in the East Village was starting to bloom and in the subways, oh there's that guy that does the chalk drawings of the babies and torsos and dogs, and his name is Keith. And we'd find, in the subways, when they would have their big advertising, when the advertising was gone, they would just black out those segments, where they would put up the bills for advertising, and that's when Keith Haring would go in when no one was looking and using white chalk, would make his drawings. We'd come upon them and it was always a surprise, it was sort of a guerilla art action, and there seemed to be a lot of that going on in New York. I appreciated it and engaged with it, but not to the extent that—I didn't ever get to meet him—I mean, you know, I went to a Keith Haring opening but I never got to really engage with him as a friend.

There was another guy, Billy, from Dallas, Texas, who was sort of an artist and what I would consider to be kind of new wave-ish, and he and I were friendly. And then my friends Victor and Steven, who I had shared an apartment with and moved there with, they were both from L.A., we already had a connection from L.A., so they were the artists that I hung out with and that I would work on things together with. So, yeah, I never felt like I was going to be a New Yorker the way that some artists did.

One of the other people who had moved to New York at that time was Joey Arias, who had gone to Cathedral High School. He was a senior when I was a freshman, I had a big crush on him, he lived in Highland Park. I thought he was hot, big eyes, and he was into rock and roll. He ended up moving to New York and became a cult figure on the New York art scene, and at the time when I moved there in 1980, he had a band called Strange Party, and we would go to whatever club he was playing at, just to follow, but I never became like really close to him there. He also worked at Fiorucci's and was a celebrity there. Fiorucci's was the Italian pop culture store that was like trendy and hot. He's an example of somebody that went to New York and then became New York. I was in New York and always sort of felt like I was visiting. In fact, when somebody had told me, "Oh, you know what, you're going to feel like a native New Yorker in no time, you know you're going to be—" I'm like, "No that's okay," I said, "I like that I feel like I'm visiting this big megalopolis called New York City." I enjoyed that, I enjoyed that sense or that feeling, that I wasn't from there. It wasn't a bad thing, it was an adventure, it was part of being an adventurer, an explorer, and that's what I was embracing at the time. Perhaps if I had stayed in New York for a few more years, maybe, who knows, maybe I would have become really entrenched in the New York scene and/or maybe I would be dead by now who knows, right?

03-00:07:50

Holmes: Yeah, you never know.

03-00:07:51

Terrill: Yeah, you never know. So I always looked at Los Angeles and the art scene as being connected to neighborhood, community, family, the art students at Immaculate Heart, Cal State Long Beach, I had a circle of friends. In New York, it was more piecemeal and checking out the art shows and exhibits, but always kind of being a visitor, if that makes sense.

03-00:08:15

Holmes: Yeah, yeah. And it's during this time too that your art seems to be branching out into much more acrylic painting. Discuss this a bit.

03-00:08:34

Terrill: I had fallen in love with acrylic painting in grammar school, when I was taking art lessons with Mr. Pavini. By the time I got to Immaculate Heart College, painting was considered dead or passé, and everything was conceptual art. It was earth works, it was feminist art, it was art performance, installation. Nobody was really looking at painting as being at the forefront of art, but yet I still appreciated and wrote about painters. At Immaculate Heart, being exposed to, within the feminist perspective, all of these female artists; Leonor Fini, Romaine Brooks—who still is my favorite—and other feminist artists, and Judy Chicago, all these folks. I was doing silkscreens, serigraphy, and in this serigraphy it was very flat color. And I sort of based my paintings on my love of serigraphy. I thought you know, I want to start getting back to acrylic painting. I felt like I wanted to do that, and so I did my first large acrylic painting in 1978, I guess, '77, '78, in which it wasn't a concept of words text, it was figurative. It was based on, actually it was two men embracing and kissing each other, and I did it in that kind of flat, cartoonlike style that I adapted. It was minimal flat color, sort of I was looking at works by Alex Katz and the pop artists, and so I wasn't interested in realistic rendering of the figures. I removed shadow and sources of light, keeping it cartoonlike. I was interested in portraying my life as a cartoon and that's what I started to do. It is titled “Dos Hombres”.

03-00:10:58

Holmes: And we see, in *Homeboy Beautiful*, the same kind of cartoon drawings and work as well.

03-00:11:05

Terrill: Right, and part of that goes back to when I was a kid, I mean I loved cartoons. I loved cartoons, I loved illustrations, *Mad Magazine*. I loved *Eerie Magazine*, I don't know if you remember *Eerie Magazine*, that was comics but it was all the macabre, or there were illustrations, out of the *Tell-Tale Heart*, by Edgar Allen Poe and horror stuff. I loved all that, in a comic book style, which I wasn't trying to necessarily copy, but I just liked that sort of cartoon, hardedge outlining and wanted to try to adopt that into my work, and that's what I did. I did that for a couple years, but it started to change when indicating my life

around me and the people that I knew, things started to get a little bit heavier perhaps, with the onslaught of HIV and AIDS. It then seemed like it was more important to me to now be more realistic in my rendition of people and images, and I started to incorporate light and shadow and trying to more realistically render figures and people, which I think segued into more serious concerns, like HIV.

03-00:12:48

Holmes: I wanted to talk about a few of the paintings.

03-01:12:50

Terrill: Sure.

03-01:12:53

Holmes: Actually, the first one of which, and these came, I should mention, they came from recommendations from friends.

03-00:13:02

Terrill: Okay, all right.

03-00:13:04

Holmes: Who wanted to hear you talk about these pieces, also pieces that I found that I thought were fascinating. If there's others that strike you that you want to also talk about, you definitely feel free to throw those in. The first one was, actually it's hanging here on the wall, *Mother and Son*.

03-00:13:24

Terrill: Yes.

03-00:13:25

Holmes: I'm taking, this is a tribute to your mother.

03-00:13:29

Terrill: Yes.

03-00:13:31

Holmes: But it's also done as—which is why we're going to have photos of these in the transcript, so our readers can see this. It's also done in that style of the Virgin Guadalupe as well.

03-00:13:42

Terrill: Yes.

03-00:13:44

Holmes: Can you describe it a little bit and what you were trying to convey.

03-00:13:48

Terrill: Sure. One of the things, in terms of Chicano art and Chicano artists, every Chicano artist I knew, at some point seemed to do some version of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, and whether it was with total reverence, whether it was trying to replicate the actual image, the tilma of Juan Diego, the image that's in

Mexico, or whether it was parody or caricature, it just seemed like that was ingrained in us and it was apparent to me. I never wanted to do repetitive versions of the *Virgen*. I obviously knew that the *Virgen de Guadalupe* was the iconic female image of Mexico. So in the mid-1980s I had said to myself, I think it's time for me to do my *Virgen de Guadalupe*, and when I thought about it, as the iconic female image of Mexico, there's a mystery about her. I mean even from the authenticity of the image on Juan Diego's cloak. Also, how she represents (depending on your perspective and depending on which academic I was reading) either an indication of the indigenous Mexico, embracing Catholicism, because here they had an image that was an indigenous woman wearing Indian garb, as opposed to the white, fair, European, Spanish image of saints. One could also look at it, though, like some of the people I hung around with, as the image that encapsulated the conquering of the indigenous and the obliteration of their culture by the European, under the guise of this female indigenous version of the Catholic mother of God.

So, in looking at the mysteriousness of the image, which by the way, I should also tell you that I grew up with the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* in an oval shaped frame that belonged to my grandmother. It's one of the first images that I recall, even being like two or three years old, because my parents had it in their bedroom. My dad had built a little shelf in the corner, where the walls met. It would sit there with a little candle, a votive candle, in front of it. So at night, I used to be able to look at it and see, by candlelight, the flickering image of the *Virgen*, and it was always a mystery to me, and yet comforting in its candlelit vision.

When I determined to do my own version, I thought the most mysterious woman in my life is my mother and I felt like it just seemed natural for me to render her as the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. I wasn't trying to be sacrilegious or anything like that, but it just seemed the most authentic version that I felt I could do. What I chose to do was I chose to work from a photograph, that was a black and white photograph from 1957, taken actually in Cananea, Mexico, when I was about two years old. My mom and dad, we had driven down to Cananea and I met my grandparents for the first time. That's the only time I met my grandfather on my dad's side, and family, and that image was taken at Christmastime. My mother is shown standing there, looking very beautiful I think, in a long, dark skirt, and she's smiling, and she's holding me as a child, this baby, and I realized that that was when she was at her happiest, it seemed to me; the epitome of her happiest moment. She was a success as a Catholic mother, wife, she had a son. She was at the height of her happiness. It was only five years after that picture that my parents ended up divorcing, my mom had a nervous breakdown, she was diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic and was never the same since then.

So I chose to use that image, which indicated the epitome of her happiness, and juxtapose it in the aura of the *Virgen*. Usually the traditional renderings of

the *Virgen de Guadalupe* show scenes from the tale of Juan Diego, either going to the mountain asking the *Virgen* for proof of her appearance, and then she tells him open your cloak, and she gives him all these roses, and he takes the roses back to the town as evidence that he had seen this lady. And that's when he drops the roses that you see the image of the *Virgen* in his cloak. But instead, I chose to put images that were indicative of growing up and being in L.A., of my family's life. In the images, there's a picture up in the corner of me and my friends at my sister's wedding, and then there's another little image of my sister and brother in-law at the wedding. I chose those specifically because that was one of the happiest moments in our lives as a family, meaning my mother, my sister and myself. I gave my sister away at the wedding. It was one of the only events where we were the focus of the event and everybody was so happy about my sister and brother in-law getting married, as was I, and so I chose to put that in there. Then also, there's an image of the newspaper headline when Robert Kennedy was assassinated, and I chose to put that in there because that happened in Los Angeles, and it was also one of those events that would occur, that triggered my mom's depression. So when that happened—and I knew, I knew the minute that happened—I knew that was going to set my mom off at least for a week or two, of being kind of down and depressed, and I had to make sure she had her medication. I was always constantly aware of needing to filter what was communicated to my mom, to keep her well, so to speak, right?

03-00:20:47

Holmes: Yeah, yeah.

03-00:20:48

Terrill: There's city hall located in there. There's also the address of the apartment where I was living in West Hollywood at the time, when I was painting the picture; 708 North Huntley Drive. Then, it's a little bit hard to see, but there's a statue and it's Saint Joseph, which is my namesake, and the only way that you could actually tell that it might be Saint Joseph if you're not really familiar with the saints, is, it's hard to see but he's holding a square, an architect square, because he was a carpenter. You might be interested in knowing that that image of Saint Joseph was actually taken from the Cathedral Church in Sacramento.

03-00:21:32

Holmes: Oh, interesting.

03-00:21:34

Terrill: It was on one of my visits to Sacramento, I think when I went up there during an ACT UP demonstration, we did a die-in, in Sacramento. I had gone around and taken pictures, which is what I always do, I always would take pictures and then just keep them, because I know at some point I might pull images from those pictures to put into paintings, and so that's the Saint Joseph there.

03-00:21:54

Holmes: Yeah, because the Cathedral is right there by the Capitol.

03-00:21:57

Terrill: Yes, right there, yeah. Then, so my mom is holding me and I seem to be preoccupied with something in my hand, I'm not even looking out at the viewer. It really didn't occur to me at the time, I swear to God I didn't think about this until I had actually painted the painting, that someone pointed out to me, "Well, if your mother is the *Virgen*, then what does that make you as her son?" I said, "Oh, well, I guess, yeah, I guess for what it's worth that's me." I've got to tell you, I was also apprehensive about showing the painting to my mother, because she was very Catholic, devout, and I think she was going to think it was sacrilegious and to my pleasant surprise she didn't think it was. She did ask me, she said, "Oh, I love this painting, but don't you think some people might think it's sacrilegious?" I said, "Well, they might mom, but that's not my intent so I'm not going to worry about it." She said okay. But yeah, she really liked the painting, she approved of it.

03-00:23:04

Holmes: Oh that's great.

03-00:23:06

Terrill: Yeah. And I don't think I've painted a *Virgen* image since. That was sort of like my—

03-00:23:34

Holmes: That was your one.

03-00:23:35

Terrill: That was my one and that's it.

03-00:23:17

Holmes: It's really well done.

03-00:23:19

Terrill: Thank you, thanks.

03-00:23:21

Holmes: Another painting that is also connected with your mother, and it may be another tribute, is *My Mother's Maiden Name*, which is actually sitting right behind you. We can play with the camera on this one and show it.

03-00:23:37

Terrill: Sure.

03-00:23:44

Holmes: Oh, this is going to be hard because it's high on the wall.

03-00:23:48

Terrill: Because what?

03-00:23:49

Holmes:

I can't raise the camera that high, but that's the one we're talking about there. I have to oil that camera stand. [Laughs] And that was painted during your— well, not painted during your time in New York, but at least that's off a picture during your time in New York.

03-00:24:13

Terrill:

Yes. When I moved to New York in 1980, and I think I had mentioned that the reason I chose to move to New York was I found myself free, meaning that Rick and I had broken up, Rick the big love of my life, the passion. We were off and on together for 8 years but we ended up being friends for 38 years. He knew me inside out, backwards, forwards, and could make me laugh like easy. He had a lot of faults but he had a lot of great things about him as well. After I moved to New York, of course, you know, absence makes the heart grow fonder, so he was missing me and “Oh, I'm so sorry, we need to get back together and I'm going to come and visit you.” So he did and we were walking around Soho in New York and one of the old iron buildings that was there, someone had scribbled in chalk, the name Mendoza, which is my mother's maiden name. And so I just went, “Oh, Rick, take a picture of me, take a picture of me,” and I just posed there, taking a picture next to the name.

03-00:25:27

Holmes:

There on the bench next to the sign.

03-00:25:28

Terrill:

Yeah, “Mendoza,” and that was it. It was a picture that I had, that I kept with me for years, never ever thinking of it at that time as a source for painting, but when I turned 50, I realized that wow, I have now been living with HIV for 25 years. I was infected when I was 25, and now I've been living. So I have been living just as long with HIV as I had without it, and I realized it at that midway point, that with each new day, I was now living longer with HIV than I had without it. That was a turning point for me and I started to think about wanting to do this New York series based on photographs of when I first moved to New York and became infected, in 1980.

This image, I was looking through pictures, this one came up and I liked it because to me, I saw myself at that point in time. I think it was probably just before I was infected, I still did not have HIV, I was new to New York, I was a little bit homesick, but I was also on my adventure, and that's what I chose to paint and that's the painting that you see here before me. There's other images that I'm taking from New York, where there was one that I did my last day in New York, and it's not here right now, but I was at Fire Island, just sitting at the beach, contemplating moving back to L.A., going back to Rick. There was a lot of contemplation going on, and you can kind of see it in the photograph, and again, when these photographs were taken back then, it was never occurring to me that they would be the source for anything outside of just having photographs to look at, so it wasn't until years later that I chose to look at them. This one in New York, *My Mother's Maiden Name*, it's again

connecting my identity to Mendoza or Latin, Hispanic heritage. I like the fact that it was actually in Soho and to me, it just encapsulated my presence in New York at that time, as well as a little bit of homesickness and nostalgia, and that's what I chose to paint.

03-00:28:12

Holmes:

It's somewhat fitting if you think of the "Chicanos Invade New York" series, you were walking around and someone had put your mother's maiden name right there. Yeah, that's interesting. So, branching out and wanting to paint in a much more realistic fashion, photographs really seemed to be part of your process of capturing that.

03-00:28:44

Terrill:

Yes, always.

03-00:28:47

Holmes:

It's probably easier to work with photographs than real models, in some respect.

03-00:28:54

Terrill:

Well yeah, and there's limitations to doing life drawing. For one, you're confined to that present moment and whatever it is that you're drawing, and if you're drawing a building or a scene, depending on is the sun setting, is the light changing? I mean there's always these elements that can interfere with the process in a way, which is one of the advantages for people that actually like to do that. Also, with images of people posing for you, you're limited to how long are they going to be able to hold that pose and how quickly can you work to illustrate what it is you're looking at. And while I like that and I do life drawings, I was really interested in looking at images from my life and people that I know. The idea about looking at, working from photographs, is if I get a wild hair and decide, it's 2:00 in the morning but I feel like painting right now, I can pull up the photograph and work on the piece. I can also stop when I want, pull the photograph back out, I mean I have much more control over that

03-00:30:09

Holmes:

Yes.

03-00:30:11

Terrill:

As well as looking at images that go way, way back, instead of just remembering oh, what did I look like back in New York, when I was 25.

03-00:30:20

Holmes:

Sure, sure.

03-00:30:21

Terrill:

I can look at that photograph and then make a determination as to how much of that photograph do I want to put in. I work from photographs but it's not photorealism. I do alter, edit the photograph, sometimes taking out certain

things, and just distilling what I think is the important figuration or the important formal picture, you know what form it takes.

03-00:30:50

Holmes: Other examples of this actually come from the paintings you've produced from your Halloween parties.

03-00:30:57

Terrill: Yes.

03-00:30:59

Holmes: Now, I have to tell you, so doing the background interviews for this, word around the campfire is that you used to throw the best Halloween parties in Los Angeles, I'll put that as broadly and definitively as I can.

03-00:31:15

Terrill: Well you know, it's not like they were fancy, it's not like I spent lots of money. They weren't catered. I was renting a house on 5th Street, 5th and Wilton, borderline Koreatown and Hancock Park, and I loved it, I loved this house. Halloween was always one of my favorite holidays, even as a kid, and so in the late 1980s, I had an idea, with my boyfriend Robert, that you know what, let's have a Halloween party, and he's like oh great, let's do that. So I started two or three weeks before the party, since I used to do wallcovering, one of the things that you do in wallcovering, depending on the job, is you prep the walls and you will put up what's called blank stock first, and you do this paper and once it dries, it pulls and makes it a really flat, smooth surface, so whatever wallcovering or wallpaper you put on top of it, it's very smooth. It's like putting Gesso on your canvas. So I would do the rooms, our big dining room and part of our living room, do it in blank stock, so essentially they became like a canvas. And then I would paint and draw different images and murals, as well as collage different things, all throughout the house, and visually, it was pretty astounding, I think. I would incorporate themes like Tom of Finland imagery, but in multiples. I was going for as hallucinatory of a work that I could without actually taking drugs, and in fact on our invitations, I told everyone what time to be there, costume mandatory, and bring your own hallucinogenics.

So you know, there were images of a lot of gay or queer identified photographs, scenes from Fellini movies, Robert Mapplethorpe imagery, you know just all mixed up and juxtaposed, and they were really great. Then the fact that I was inviting artist friends and some were designers and musicians, and I was hanging out at the Anti Club at the time, so there was a whole group of friends and club-goers that I knew, as well as the Theoretical parties which were music, alternative, very queer, friendly, usually held at the One Way leather bar, and they were great.

So I would invite all these people and it was such creative energy, folks would come with these great costumes and then we'd just have a blast. We'd have

music going and it was crazy. They were more successful than I had anticipated or thought. And then what would happen is I would invite my friend Arnie who was a designer, and then he would end up inviting like a whole entourage of people that I had no idea who they were, but they were all involved in either like clothing or design or music, on Melrose or in different locations in L.A., and so it was this nice mix of Chicano, homeboy, artists, and then friends from Mexico, of Robert Gil de Montes, coming in, juxtaposed with the Melrose crowd, and punks. It was this real interesting mix, and then everyone was in costume. And then Curtis and Arnie, Arnie had his own clothing line, and he made a costume for Curtis, who was his boyfriend, who was really, really tall, six-feet tall. Curtis was a dinosaur. He had a green velvet, huge, huge dinosaur outfit with big humps, and then Arnie who was short, came dressed as a sort of like stereotypical caveman, with a big bone through his hair, and a leopard print kind of a thong kind of thing, and then you had leather guys.

One year, one of my favorite, favorite occurrences, was when a group of the guys from the Anti Club and the Theoreticals, who were all different musicians and in bands and stuff, they all came to the party as Catholic school girls, and they were all guys and they all had the same little plaid uniforms, with blue sweaters, and their hair in pigtails or pulled back. There was one that came as a nun and one came as the priest, the father, John, with his sunglasses, and they all came in. They had Pee-Chee folders, and it was great, because I knew all of them obviously, out of costume, and to see all these punk rockers and they were all dressed like Catholic school girls. And so immediately, I got inspired and I went and pulled out my records, because we were playing records at the time too. I pulled out the singing nun, Soeur Sourire, singing, "Dominique", which for those people that are unfamiliar with it, it's a cult favorite, at least for me. I put that on and they just did this impromptu choreographed dance with everyone. It was just really, really fun. People would get rowdy and they were always on the verge of being out of control, but never quite got there. I don't think we ever had police or anything. Wait yeah we did, at least once.

I think I did that three years in a row, actually, it was three parties, and the reason I stopped was things were getting gnarly in the neighborhood. There was more and more crime that was occurring. A neighbor was accosted and robbed right in front of my house, right in front, where her car was parked, and I came out there just when I heard her scream. Another time, I went out there and the same neighbor, someone had attacked her and shot at her, and her little finger was bleeding. He had shot, she had moved, and it hit her finger. I mean it was weird, it was really getting ugly, but this person approached my door this one time, and it was daylight, daytime, but he came up with this story. This guy had this story about oh, you know, something occurred, blah-blah-blah, and they towed my car and we just need \$28.33, you know this weird amount of money, and he doesn't have his wallet with him, but he has this watch that he can leave as collateral, if I was to give him the \$28 or

something. This is a total drug scam, he's just looking for money and that's probably a stolen watch, and he goes, "I'm your neighbor, I'm your neighbor, you've got to know who I am, because I know you." He goes, "You give those great Halloween parties." And it dawned on me, "Here's this guy that's going to scam me, he's drug dealing, and he knows about my parties?" He might have even been at my parties, who knows, because I'm realizing, all these hundreds of people that are coming to these parties, I don't know who they are, they're all in costume. And so that just freaked me out and I thought, "Oh, you know what, I'm not going to have a party again." And in fact, within that year we were broken into, came home and I was robbed. Stereo equipment was taken and things, and so I just started to not feel very comfortable with that, that's the only reason I stopped.

The other thing about the parties though, that I think is important to mention, is that people came at it with passion and fire and wanting to party, and laugh and dance your ass off and have fun, but the subtext was that many of us had friends that were dying from AIDS and many of the people at the parties already had HIV. And in some cases it was one of their last parties, or they would be there that year and then the next year they were no longer with us. So by the last year, '91, the party, I was becoming aware of how many people aren't here now that were here two years ago, three years ago and you know, that was something that seemed to be prevalent. So there was this sense or attitude of we're all here to party really hard because life is getting pretty difficult for a lot of us. So we were defiantly having ourselves a really good time and being creative.

03-00:40:50

Holmes:

And in this, not just the artwork that you would produce inside the house, but from photographs taken at the parties, you then began to do paintings from those.

03-00:41:03

Terrill:

Yeah. It was such a rich source of visual images, so like Teddy Sandoval and Paul Polubinskas—Teddy Sandoval, who had collaborated with the maricón t-shirt. Teddy came one day, as one of his ceramic vases, and it was actually, it was kind of stylized out of Styrofoam, but it looked like the vase on his head, and his face was painted up as though it were part of the statue, connected to the vase on his head, and then wearing this draped like gold sheath that looked like it might have been a stylized vase upon a pedestal, with a gold drape on it, but it was actually him. And then Paul came one time, and Paul is tall, a white boy, but he came as one of Teddy's drawings of a homeboy. He was colored brown like one of his drawings, he had his hair slicked back, it was dyed black, and then he had the white t-shirt, it was real cholo, had the teardrop tattoo, and then like a sandwich board, he had an ornate gold frame that he was walking around in. So everywhere, you know, you were looking at him in a frame, but he was alive, true life. And then, like in the painting over here, I had Jef and Luiz Sampaio, his partner, and they're still together, they came as the painting

Dos Fridas, which is a famous Frida Kahlo painting. They were dressed in their garb and their traditional, like flowers around the head. It's hard to see, but they also had, indicative of the painting, they had a red velvet heart with plastic tubing that replicated like the veins, the blood, connecting the two Fridas, and when we would have them pose, I was going to take a picture, they would stop and sit and pose like the two Fridas as painted in the painting.

03-00:43:16

Holmes: Oh, wow.

03-00:43:17

Terrill: So there was always this art element, creative element going on at the parties. I'm still not through, because I'm sure I've got another three or four paintings in the series that I could do, especially for folks that are no longer here with us. I like to think that they captured this energy that was both gay, queer, artist, Chicano, Latino, and everything in-between.

03-00:43:55

Holmes: Yeah, most certainly. Again, the technique on this would be again, just working from those pictures. These are years later, right? Reflecting out on these events, or was this work concurrent?

03-00:44:08

Terrill: No it wasn't concurrent, it was like a couple years after the parties, that I started to—I missed the parties and I missed some of the people that were no longer here and I thought well, it's a good way to commemorate. So, I think I started about two years after my last party, where I was kind of reminiscing and thinking hey, I've got all these great photographs. Because one of the things that we would do after, at least for two years, after the party, and you've got to remember back then, we didn't have the cell phones, where you got the immediate image. So everyone would take all these pictures and then Teddy would call, "Oh my God, I've got these great pictures," and I'd go, "Well, I got some great ones too," and Jef, "Oh, I got a good one of you guys." And I'd say you know what, come on over, we'll do a pot luck, and it was just a picture party. So we all brought our photographs of the parties and just shared them with each other and laughed and drank. We made the picture sharing a party, and so I got a lot of images, some of which were mine, but some of them were given to me by Teddy or Paul or Jef or whoever, and those were the sources for the Halloween paintings.

03-00:45:26

Holmes: You also were branching out, and this was a picture that, I believe it's titled, *Something Tells Me You Don't Like Me Very Much?*

03-00:45:36

Terrill: Actually, the title of the painting is, *It Makes Me Think You Don't Like Me or Something*, and I mean in my version, what I was thinking in my head—it's a self-portrait of myself, I'm wearing a black leather jacket, I sort of look like maybe the stereotype of the black leather jacket and jeans, like a rebel maybe,

but I was thinking of it more like you know, Travis Bickle in Taxi Driver, and who I'm saying that, "It makes me think you don't like me or something," to all the homophobes out there. I painted myself against this collaged background of all of these magazine articles, newspaper articles, that are indicative of homophobic policies, incidents. It's everything from the assassination of Harvey Milk, to Jesse Helms, to the removal of children from a lesbian couple because they were gay, just all this homophobia, and I'm standing in front of it and sort of almost as a challenge just saying, "It makes me think you don't like me or something." And it did, I mean I've always been curious about it and I've done that in other paintings too, where yeah, we're so appealing as a target, gay men, or the gay community, it sometimes surprises me, the level of homophobia and hatred that's directed at us from politicians, from leaders in the church, to gay bashers, people in positions of authority. Yeah, so that was a defiant self-portrait towards all the homophobes out there.

03-00:47:45

Holmes:

You mentioned last session, as well as in this session, that during the early 1980s, the rise of what would become known as AIDS was hitting close to home. Your art has always been autobiographical in many respects, that powerful coupling again of race and sexuality, and yet even before you knew you were HIV positive, which in what year did you find out?

03-00:48:15

Terrill:

I got tested in 1989.

03-00:48:17

Holmes:

Okay.

03-00:48:19

Terrill:

I can tell you why.

03-00:48:22

Holmes:

Sure.

03-00:48:24

Terrill:

Prior to '89, I didn't see any value in getting tested. At the time, when the test came out, essentially it was the verification of a death sentence, that you tested positive and the idea was that you knew you were going to die from AIDS. I thought, if that's all that this test was going to do, that's going to freak me out, I'm going to be depressed, so there seemed no point to it. But there were some new studies that were coming out, which indicated that if someone got tested and they were positive, the idea was that they could start on certain medications that might actually delay the onset of AIDS. You didn't have to wait to actually develop symptomology to start taking medications to treat those symptoms, that one could enroll in clinical trials and potentially really delay—not prevent AIDS, but delay it as much as possible. That to me made sense, and so my boyfriend Robert and I went and got tested.

Back in the day, in '89, you would go in, it was anonymous, you had a code, a number, and then you had to wait two weeks to get your test. And although I had said to myself well, more than likely I'm probably positive, I really didn't know, and in my heart of hearts I kept hoping that I was negative. So when I tested positive, it hit me like a ton of bricks, and I remember the counselor—this was at the Gay and Lesbian Center—and the counselor, upon giving me the information, she asked if I needed to talk to someone or needed counseling and I said, “No, I'm fine, I'm okay.” I had already been working in HIV advocacy, and I was quite familiar with it and the issues. I had friends that had already died from AIDS and were sick, so I thought, you know, I'm fine. But I actually got in the car, drove home just blubbing, tears. I was upset and I was scared, and it wasn't so much about myself. I knew that there was going to be pain involved and I knew that I had to face that. I already saw friends die horrible deaths from HIV and AIDS, but I kept thinking of my mom and my sister. I kept thinking that, my mom is going to have to deal with her son's death, her only son, right? And my mom's mental health was already frail to begin with, and I just thought oh, that was going to be such a blow to her. And then my sister, that my sister would, at the same time, having to grieve for the loss of her brother, her only brother, she was also going to be left to have to deal with my mom's grieving. And so I mean I was just—that was something that just upset me to a great degree.

Anyway, so I went to Pac Oaks, Pacific Oaks, which was one of the prominent HIV specialty groups, medical providers. I went to Dr. Eugene Rogolsky, who had been the doctor for Carlos Almaraz, an artist who died from AIDS. He was also the doctor of Arnie, my friend Arnie. I went to Rogolsky and Rogolsky was very cool, very easy to talk to. He collected Chicano art, and he kind of knew my circle of friends and stuff, and he was one of the experts. And he said to me, “The first thing we need to do is we want to try to figure out when you were actually infected,” because at that point in time, the prevailing theory or thought was that you become infected and then HIV lays dormant for up to ten years. And then after ten years, you start to develop what we called at that time full blown AIDS, or an AIDS diagnosis, and your t-cells start to drop and your immune system starts to get compromised. So he asked me, he said when seroconversion occurs, when you actually become HIV positive, sometimes people will manifest a mysterious little reaction or illness or breaking out in hives, or a bout of flulike symptoms for two days or something. It's your body adjusting or reacting to HIV. And he asked me if anything like that had ever happened and I said you know, there's only one time where something like that happened, and that was when I was living in New York, in 1980. I woke up one morning and I had broken out in hives all over my face and body. I was so freaked out, I looked like a monster, I didn't know what it was. I had to call into work and say I couldn't go in. The manager, Ewa—who I think was Swedish and a cocaine addict, but that's another story—she didn't believe me. I could tell on the phone, she was like, “Oh yeah, hives, okay sure, yeah, all right don't come in.” I went to a doctor. I didn't have any medical insurance, I didn't know anything. I went to a doctor

on 5th Avenue, he said, "You know, you could be allergic to 3,000 different things and we could do tests and this and that, but there's no conclusive—" I just thought oh, I don't know what to do. And then it seemed to go away, like within 24 hours, it seemed to lighten up, but then it kind of came back again. So for a 48 hour period it kind of came and went. When it seemed to finally go away, I went back to work and when I went in, Ewa, my manager, she looked at me and she goes, "Oh, I guess it went away," and I said, "Yeah, it did." And I could tell she didn't believe me, she was just like "Ah-huh, sure, yeah, okay, hives." What can you do?

03-00:54:50

Holmes:

Yeah.

03-00:54:51

Terrill:

And it didn't occur to me to take a photograph to show her. But there I was at work, I remember I was folding the dhurries from India, folding the rugs, and I felt my arm get really hot, and I looked and I could see that the rash was coming back on my arm, and I said oh my God, let me go show Ewa, and I went over to her and I said, "Look, Ewa, look, look," and she looked at me and she screamed, "Oh my God, go home, go home!" Apparently, I had broken out all over my face as well, I only felt my arm. She believed me after that. So yeah, so it came back, and so it was like a four day period where it just came and then disappeared, and Dr. Rogolsky said, "I can guarantee you, that's when you seroconverted."

I also knew, in the back of my head, I mean just to be frank or honest, sexually, I was usually a top, not the receptive partner, and because Rick and I were broken up, I was free. I started to see this guy, we went out on a couple dates and I let him fuck me and, so I actually was a receptive partner at that time and I have a feeling that probably was when that occurred. So, I did the math and said that was 1980, here it is 1989. If HIV lays dormant for ten years, I have one year left before I get AIDS, and that was my mindset, that I had a year left before I got AIDS. And remember, back at that time, when I say getting AIDS, I had friends that were already—they had Kaposi sarcoma, the skin cancer, pneumocystis pneumonia, wasting syndrome, chronic diarrhea. The ones that were really, really getting sick were also going blind, from CMV retinitis. It was just a host of illnesses and things and opportunistic infections that would just ravage you, ravage your body, and that's what I was anticipating within 12 months.

So, I enrolled in clinical trials through Dr. Rogolsky, for Crixivan, that was one of them, it was a drug that was being used and experimented. After a couple months I had to quit that, because I had side effects, I had kidney stones, which if you never had a kidney stone you don't want one. Very painful. So I was doing what I could in terms of enrolling in clinical trials, because I thought maybe this will delay the onset of AIDS, but even if it doesn't, I knew that I was contributing to the research to find a cure. I mean

that was what I was thinking at the time, maybe this is research that's going to find a cure, I would contribute to that, that would help someone else later on. So that's what happened in '89.

03-00:58:17

Holmes:

As you were saying, in years previous though, before you knew, your circle of friends were being decimated by this disease. Share a little bit of that experience with us, and how that also helped you take a stand into advocacy, which we can talk about some of those examples. The experience that you were trying to capture, both as an artist but also as a human being, of dealing with that.

03-00:58:51

Terrill:

Sure. Well, so you know, I had already had experience in advocating on behalf of the farmworkers, social justice on several levels, certainly gay advocacy, gay liberation movement, workers' rights, things like that. I was also working at the Center for the Partially Sighted in Santa Monica, which was a low vision optometric clinic and rehabilitation center, of which I think at that time there were only five in the country. The focus was on vision enhancement as opposed to vision substitution. So you know, organizations like the Braille Institute, focused on vision substitution, and that's fine for the totally blind or people that had very little residual vision, or people who were born blind, and you could learn to use a white cane, you could have a guide dog, you could learn braille, do all this vision substitution. But our focus was working with folks, most of whom were seniors, who were born fully sighted, and at the age of 60, at the age of 70, started to have some form of either macular degeneration, where they were having difficulty focusing, difficulty reading, they could no longer drive, a lot of their freedoms and activities were being impaired by the onset of vision loss, vision problems. So we could help them with glasses and spectacles, magnifiers, they could relearn how to read, even if it was just for a limited time. So you might not be able to sit down and read *War and Peace*, but at least, with this closed circuit TV, with this magnifier, you could read your mail, you could read certain sentences, and depending on how much you wanted to put into it, you could still function as independently as possible. That included independent living skills, how to function within your home, make small changes involving contrast and labeling things, making them larger, things like that. That's what we worked with.

So, I was out and speaking on behalf of the visually impaired community and doing all that kind of work, and when HIV came along, I mean it was something in which I was already involved. In 1986, three years before I got tested, there was a proposition on the California ballot, Proposition 64, which was by Lyndon LaRouche, who is a political wacko, and it called for quarantining people with HIV, which I got goosebumps, I was so scared. I thought, "Oh my God, they're going to totally round up the queers, the Haitians, the intravenous drug users." They were talking about reopening

Manzanar, where they had interned the Japanese Americans during World War II, as a location where they could put people with HIV. So I was scared shitless about it and I was walking through Silver Lake and on a telephone pole there was a flyer that said "Stop the AIDS quarantine, come to a meeting," and I went to that meeting, it was in the back of a furniture store on Melrose, and there was about 20 people there, and it was Michael Weinstein, who I knew from the gay liberation movement and whatever, and he had been involved with the Lavender and Red Union out of UCLA. It was Chris Brownlie, Phil Wilson, who later went on to open up and create the Black AIDS Institute; Richard Starr, Paul Coleman, a couple of priests, punk rockers.

It was just this ragtag group and we said we need to fight this amendment, and so I volunteered. We rented a little office and we went through the voter rolls and we would call people up, because the polls showed that 75 percent of the electorate would have voted for it, they were in favor of it, because of the fear and the stigma. We would call up people and talk to them about Prop 64, do they know what it meant and why it was not good public health policy. We held a big demonstration, I think it was one of the first public demonstrations advocating on behalf of the right policy regarding HIV. There were 3,000 people. It was in front of the LaRouche headquarters, on Los Feliz Boulevard, which was right next door or above Mr. Mike's, a gay bar. I mean the fact that they opened up their office right there, I was like, "Okay, they're asking for it." Patty Duke, the actress, who I believe—I know she was with SAG but I don't know if she was already the head of SAG at the time, the Screen Actors Guild, she came and spoke out, and I applauded her for it, because she was one of the only people in Hollywood at the time who was willing to speak out.

03-01:04:16
Holmes:

Oh really?

03-01:04:17
Terrill:

So I was involved in that advocacy already. Then, there were—I was keeping abreast, through newsletters and Being Alive, which was an organization started by and for gay people. I also got involved with the Shanti. The Shanti Organization, that was dealing with the holistic, spiritual needs of people living with HIV, and I went through their Sexual Health Education Project, or SHEP, and we would meet for, I think it was eight weeks, a group of us, all talking about our emotions, our feelings, what we were going through, and that really helped me with developing a sense of being able to, when I got tested for HIV, to kind of be open about it. Chris Brownlie, who was Michael Weinstein's best friend and was active in the Stops AIDS Quarantine Committee, he was someone that was living with HIV and he was the poster child for someone who was out and open about having HIV, and actually about having AIDS, because he was already getting sick. I considered him a mentor and I learned a lot from him, I admired him for doing that. I didn't know, to be honest with you, I didn't know if I could be that brave. I was also concerned that whatever public face I put to my activism, meant that

potentially, it could get back to my mom, and while I went on this journey of telling friends and people about my status, my sister, very wise, she told me—and my sister was the best support I could have had. She made me realize, she said, "You know think about it, Joey, if you tell mom, what purpose will it serve?" She goes, "Mom is going to get upset, she's going to think all kinds of things, she thinks you're going to die tomorrow, she's going to get depressed, then we're going to have to deal with her depression." I said, "You know what, you're absolutely right."

One of the things that I learned about through my mom having paranoia and being schizophrenic, was that sometimes, when she was on one of her spells, she was thinking that everyone was talking about her or around her, that people were doing this stuff. And what I realized is because she would think that, it actually created that reality, because in fact, the family would, we would talk about let's not tell mom this, or they'd say don't tell your aunt this because blah-blah-blah, you don't want her to get upset. It was out of wanting to just shield her because of her fragility in being able to cope with things.

Also, working at the Center for the Partially Sighted, like I told you, it was around '89 or '90 that I saw my first patient. I would do case management. I would interview every new patient that would come in and do an assessment of what their needs were. They were there for an optometric appointment, determine whether they could use counseling, be in a support group, all of these things. We were used to people who were 60 years old coming in, they were depressed, upset, because they had to give up driving, they couldn't be the breadwinner like they used to, all of these things that were affecting their identify and their self-worth. Get them counseling and a year later they're fine. Ten years later, they're coming in, they're 70 years old, they're vision impaired and they're fine, they're doing good, their vision is stable. Here, we have our first person with HIV related sight loss, and it was Roger Horwitz, the lawyer, the famous West Hollywood lawyer that was partners with Paul Monette, the writer. I remember thinking oh, it's an honor to meet Paul Monette, you're an author and writer. Well, apparently Roger came in and while most of the folks with HIV or AIDS related sight loss had cytomegalovirus, which would affect your retina and you would develop CMV retinitis and eventually you could go blind or have a detached retina, he on the other hand had PML, or progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, which when I knew that he was coming in, I researched it, looked it up, and it was a disease that came on for people with AIDS, that would affect the optic nerve in your brain. It was something where, even if you could help them with reading something, it was their brain that was not functioning. So he could read CAT but then not know what that meant. So even if he could see the words—

03-01:09:48
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

03-01:09:49

Terrill:

It was really difficult and I knew that the system, the infrastructure that we had in place to provide services to people with sight loss, was not going to work. Usually, what we had is somebody calling up and saying oh yeah, I need to make an appointment and we're like okay, we can see you in two weeks and come on in, and this, that and the other. Oh, you need independent living skills, there's a 13 week course, this and that. These were people that had 5 or 6 different opportunistic infections; they had 18 different medications that they needed to take at different times of day, sometimes with food, sometimes without, that had to be timed; they had to keep X amount of doctors appointments; they had chronic diarrhea and fragility and mental problems and issues, and lesions and any number of things. It was just not going to work and if we were going to provide services to people with AIDS related sight loss, we had to come up with a different protocol, a different program, and we did. I went to the clinical director of the center, Dr. Phyllis Amaral, and I expressed to her that we needed to do something, she said, "Okay let 's do it, what can we come up with. Why don't you find out what's available to folks." So I called up all the different AIDS organizations that I knew of, including AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which came out of the Stop AIDS Quarantine Committee that I was a part of.

03-01:11:23

Holmes:

Yeah.

03-01:11:24

Terrill:

I called AIDS Project Los Angeles and the AIDS Center in Pasadena, and Being Alive, and I asked them, "what do you do when you have somebody who has AIDS related sight loss or is going blind?" And across the board they said we don't know what to do, we don't have any services for them. Or, we have support groups but you know what, when somebody comes in to that support group, and even if they've been a member for a long time, if they start going blind, nobody wants to deal with them. People will say you know what, I'm dealing with X, Y, and Z, the last thing I want to deal with is blindness. So, I became a member of the L.A. AIDS Regional Board, where the first funding was coming in to treat HIV and AIDS, and get it distributed, and I advocated for creating the HIV and Vision Loss Program, and became the manager of that program, at the Center for the Partially Sighted.

We made it concise. I used to call it our kamikaze style of providing services, so instead of an individual having to make an appointment to come in, I would go in and do a home assessment. I would visit them in their home environment to first of all determine to what extent we might be able to help them or not. Many times, there was very little that we could do for them. So, that's what I was doing, and I was already HIV positive myself, thinking that I had a year to go before I got AIDS, so every time I would visit someone, you know, who was dying, because the average life expectancy at that point was usually six months. By the time your t-cells were at 50, that's when you started to manifest problems related to vision loss. So you could have

toxoplasmosis, you could have CMV retinitis. If the cytomegalovirus attacked, depending on what organ in your body it attacked, determined what kind of symptomology or disease you got. If it was your stomach, you got CMV gastritis, but CMV retinitis was the main one that we saw.

I would go in and do these home assessments, and sometimes just help out with making changes in the home. Sometimes, just adjusting the microwave oven with a dial that was tactile, so they could at least be able to heat up a cup of water for tea. Or sometimes taking their medications and marking them or labeling them with rubber bands: one rubber band means the one you take in the morning; two rubber bands, the one you take in the afternoon; three rubber bands for the evening; writing things out very large for them, using their residual sight. High contrast in the home or adjusting steps and stairs, things like that. I learned very quickly, through the psychologist I worked with, that we learned to measure our successes in very small increments and occasionally, I would do a home visit and there was nothing that I could do, it was already too late. I had to inform the partner, the family member, the mother, the son, that there was nothing we could do. I would—[chokes up] I would leave these visits a wreck, I mean it would just tear my heart out. Along with feeling horrible and feeling bad about my inability to help these folks, I also was thinking, “Is that going to be me in a few months?” So I mean it was very personal. We also developed the support and counseling groups, so we held these at the organizations that were already set up to work with HIV and AIDS.

So the AIDS Center Pasadena, AIDS Project Los Angeles, we would meet for, I think it was 6 to 7 weeks. The first hour would be a counseling session with Dr. LaDonna Ringering, the clinical psychologist, talking to the folks who were diagnosed, whether or not they were already starting to have vision problems, usually with their partners or if they were by themselves, alone. So talking about themselves, the counseling part was first, and then the second half of the session or program would be someone coming in and talking to them about a particular service or medical update. So it might be coming in and talking about white cane instruction; what it was, what it meant, so that they could prepare themselves for what was an option for them if they chose, what was available. That was a huge psychological barrier that they needed to have, because there was always the question of what's going to happen. I would come in and talk about doing home visits in independent living skills. Another time it was someone coming in and talking to them about going to get a guide dog, and we had to explain to them that a guide dog is a 6-month program where you train with the dog. It's a commitment. And this is not just about AIDS. If you were an elderly person and frail, it wasn't very good for you to have a guide dog.

So we were doing all that stuff and by 5 years of doing that, I finally had to leave, I had to quit, because I was a mess. I was an emotional wreck and I started to do crystal meth as a drug, to self-medicate. I had a couple friends

and my roommate who said here, take a bump, and I did a bump and I'm like wow, I feel really good, I mean I just felt good, all the clouds seemed to go away. I also was able to wash the dishes and get the laundry done and do all this stuff, and paint and whatever. But, I also recognized that the come down from the crystal was not good, and whatever depression might have already been there was exacerbated. Anyway, I ended up stopping that and determining that I needed to leave the Center for the Partially Sighted, after being there for 13 years, whatever it was.

Also, at the center, I have to say, the staff was maybe a staff of 16 people, 20 people all together. The optometrists, the doctors that we worked with, and the assistants, the billing staff, we were close, like a little family. One of our employees who had breast cancer and had announced to the staff and we all gave her support like about two or three years prior. I held a staff meeting where I announced that I was HIV positive, and I got a lot of support from everyone. The other part to that is that we also had two other caseworkers, case managers, my friend Javier Gomez, who was actually there ahead of me and had his degree in gerontology, and he and I were friends since we met at Immaculate Heart College.

03-01:18:46
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

03-01:18:47
Terrill:

Yeah. But he ended up dying of AIDS. Then, Roberto Herrera, who was another caseworker there, and coincidentally, after he was hired, we realized that his partner was Ray Navarro, who was a good friend of my friend Richard from Australia. They were best friends and it was just a coincidence but Ray, his partner, Ray Navarro, died from AIDS, and then within a year Robert also died from AIDS. So again, I kept thinking, you know, my colleagues here around me are dying from AIDS and why would I be any different, but it turns out that I was. I probably went off on a tangent there, sorry.

03-01:19:35
Holmes:

No, not at all. That's not a tangent. And this is also your life history, so it's part of that story.

03-01:19:40
Terrill:

Yeah. Sure.

03-01:19:44
Holmes:

Well outside of that advocacy, you were also part of the 1987 march on Washington. That was, I believe the year after Prop 64, which was in 1986, and you're also starting this advocacy and working.

03-01:20:00
Terrill:

Right.

03-01:20:01

Holmes: Working in that field—helping people who are suffering with AIDS, as well as other medical issues. And it's actually important to note too, that in fighting Proposition 64, California voters voted that down 71 percent to 29 percent.

03-01:20:25

Terrill: We were able to turn it around.

03-01:20:27

Holmes: Big time.

03-01:20:28

Terrill: The thing about that is the group, the Stop AIDS Quarantine Committee, after—and there were other politics involved. Some of the gay leaders in the political world that didn't want to make waves, they didn't like the direct advocacy and demonstrations that ACT UP was doing, or what we were doing, so we were kind of considered a radical group of advocates. But once we defeated Proposition 64, the group said, “Well what are we going to do with this great synergy that we have now?” And what was needed was hospice care, because at that time people would be admitted to county general hospital and nursing staff would refuse to enter the rooms. They would leave the trays of food outside the door, for someone who was too frail or weak to even get out of bed. They would refuse to change the bed linens as they soiled themselves. It was really ugly at that time, and the level of disrespect, the level of stigma, allowed for people that otherwise should have been compassionate, to just be so indifferent to the suffering of people, it was remarkable.

So, the group incorporated its AIDS Hospice Foundation and started advocating for the County Board of Supervisors to open up the first HIV specific hospice, which they did as part of the, it was the Barlow Respiratory Hospital Complex in Elysian Park. It was actually the former dorms of the nursing staff, that then became the Chris Brownlie Hospice, they named it after Chris Brownlie, who died there with dignity, along with, I forget how many, I think it was 1,200 people, maybe 1,100, over the X amount of years. And then years later, when I became an employee of AIDS Healthcare Foundation, because the group reincorporated as AIDS Healthcare Foundation about a year or two after that, because they knew that the future of HIV was going to be in providing care and treatment. So that was that.

When we went to Washington, it was to be present, to advocate on behalf of needing to address AIDS, and the fact that the government still had been, in our view negligent, or indifferent, certainly under [Ronald] Reagan's administration, which I will never forgive him for. If folks think that we were being—I don't know what the right word would be—crybabies or something, I mean the fact is that Larry Kramer, in creating ACT UP and calling for action, we were looking at the numbers and we could see that 50 cases of AIDS, now 1,000 cases of AIDS, now 1,200 cases of AIDS. It was like it just kept growing and growing and the government did nothing. At that same time, in

the early 1980s I think it was, Legionnaires disease occurred in Pennsylvania, where at the Legionnaires [American Legion] convention, some of the Legionnaires attendees got sick, and it was because of a pathogen that was, I think distributed through the air conditioning system. The government responded immediately, because there were 12 people that were sick, and they put, I don't know how many thousands of dollars into research, into finding out what was going on. And here, thousands of gay men were dying and the government did nothing. That was the political landscape at the time when we went to see the Names Project Quilt, which I contributed a panel to, for my friend Jerry Matus, who was one of my first friends that died from AIDS.

03-01:24:51

Holmes:

That was one of the questions some of your friends wanted to ask, is how many panels that you contributed. Was it just one?

03-01:25:00

Terrill:

I just did one.

03-01:25:00

Holmes:

You just did one, okay.

03-01:25:01

Terrill:

Yeah. And when I did the one, I had thought, "Oh, I'm going to do one for every one of my friends," and I realized if I did that, I wouldn't have time to do anything else, and so you know.

03-01:25:17

Holmes:

You've said before in an interview, that you stopped counting at about 50.

03-01:25:22

Terrill:

50, yeah, and when I say 50, I mean friends, people that I dated, people that I loved, people that I knew as acquaintances, I mean we weren't the best of friends, but we were acquaintances for 20-something years. Or I knew them from the clubs for years, coworkers, people I went to school with, people I sat in classrooms with. People that I knew from working at the cleaners, working at the supermarket, people that I didn't like. There were a couple people that "Oh, I can't stand that queen," whatever, and they would tell me, "Oh, you know so and so died of AIDS." I was like oh my God, I couldn't stand that guy, but I couldn't stand him for 20 years, and even they were being removed, you know?

03-01:26:12

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

03-01:26:13

Terrill:

There was this sense of like when you play musical chairs, and the circle gets smaller and smaller and smaller. That was happening all around me and then various friends had different ways of dealing or coping, which sometimes astounded me, sometimes it frustrated me, it angered me. I wanted to be there for friends, but sometimes those friends couldn't or wouldn't allow us to be

near them, to accept our support and love. My friend Peter, who I've documented in this painting over here, he started to develop vision problems and immediately, I was like "Dude, let me go in, let me do an assessment in your home, I can help you, that's what I do for a living, through the HIV program you know, and it's not even a question of coming through our program. I will just go there to your house as a friend," and he said no, he refused. For me it was one thing that I can do for you and he just gave up.

I had another friend at the time, Steve Lopez, who had a brother named Joey, a younger brother who was gay, and he had moved down from Fresno because he was sick. And I knew that Steve, in his own way of dealing or not dealing with it, would ignore his brother's moans and groans in the bedroom next door. Cousin Pat was a roommate at the time, in their home, and she would call me and say, "I tell Steve, have you checked on Joey? He's in pain," and he says, "he's okay, he's alright." I didn't understand that, like how could you be like that, so callous towards your brother? Well, they took Joey to the hospital, county, and I think it was within a day, the next day or two days later, he jumped from the fourth floor window.

I had another friend, Jim Van Tyne, from the Theoreticals and the Anti Club, the parties I used to go to, the music scene. He was loved by everyone in the music scene. He went and shot himself in the head, and I don't think he was even sick at the time, it was just that he had an HIV diagnosis. People from the clubs, the music scene, you would see them come in and you could tell, oh my God, they look like they've lost 30 pounds, and they're gaunt, and then the next time they'd be gone. It was constant, it was a constant barrage, and so when we went to see the Names Project Quilt on display in D.C., [chokes up] you could not walk through it and look at things and not be affected, I mean people were just weeping for people they lost. But even people I didn't know, to see these quilts, stitched by the grandmother of the one person, or pictures with the person and their partner, their lover, or babies that had died from AIDS, I mean there was all these. One of the things, when we first arrived there and they had already laid out the quilt, it became the tradition that they would have individuals get up and read the names, all the thousands of names. A person would get up and for about 20 minutes, they would read 100 names, 200 names or something. When I got there, I could hear, over the intercom, the voice, which I thought sounded familiar, and when I got up close it was Cesar Chavez, reading the names.

03-01:30:04
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

03-01:30:03
Terrill:

Yeah, and it hit me. The other thing too, and it's funny now when I think about it, but back in the early 1980s, when I was reading about this mysterious illness and this cancer that was happening to homosexual men, and going up to San Francisco where my friend Danny lived and all the Scans would go up

there and party, have a great time. But now, I was going up to San Francisco and things had changed. I remember, on the pharmacy there on 18th and Castro, there were already Xerox flyers with—and some had Xeroxed polaroid pictures of people with KS, and said look out, this is what's happening in the community, what's going on? People were writing about what could it be? There were conspiracy theories: this is a plot to kill homosexual men; or how is this transmitted; and beware, don't do poppers. It was just like you didn't know what was the cause or the source of this. It was scary, it was a really scary time. The frivolity, a lot of the laughter and fun was gone, and yeah, it was becoming dark and kind of scary, no matter where you were.

Now the other thing is that, like I've said before, AIDS or HIV, brought out the best and the worst in people. I saw people care for one another with spirit, with passion, with love, really, truly. I saw women, and I've got to do a shout-out to the women. Some of the lesbians that a few years before had been lesbian separatists, they wanted nothing to do with men and all their sexism, and even the gay men were even more sexist, and some of them were right, but there was definitely a split. I had thought that the 1980s were going to be a total split in the gay community, with the women over here and gay men over there, our priorities were different and stuff. And I saw these women taking their gay brothers to hospital visits, donating blood, walking the AIDS walk, taking care of their gay friends, feeding them, changing their diapers. A lot of the women really stepped up and they themselves weren't necessarily being infected by HIV. And there was some indication, or I know that some gay men, we had had these discussions, like if it had been women who had gotten sick, would gay men have stepped up and been the same? I don't know.

03-01:33:20

Holmes:

That's a really interesting question.

03-01:33:21

Terrill:

I like to think that we would have, particularly if the homophobia within the culture was coming down hard, I think we would have stepped up, but I don't know.

03-01:33:32

Holmes:

It's interesting, talking to your friend Robert, he discussed the 1987 march, and he was talking about the community and the solidarity that was there. He was telling me that if you want an example of that, we had 30 guys crashing in a small, one bedroom apartment, and there was just one bathroom. We all got along and we were all ready on time. [laughs]

03-01:34:03

Terrill:

[laughs] That was a gay activist, Robert Bray, who was just a sweetheart. Back then, we kind of had to save our money to get the airfare to fly to D.C., I mean we weren't making tons of money, and so there was a network, communication from Being Alive and the different AIDS organizations, about

here are the hotels where they're having special deals for people to come in, but there's also gay activists who are opening up their homes. So yeah Robert and I went, and we met Robert Bray, who was an activist, and we stayed at his place in D.C. I remember that from the hallway to the kitchen, people had their sleeping blankets, sleeping bags and stuff, and they were all laid out and ready to go. We were from all over and we were all ages, and I met some wonderful people there, but there was this sense of it's wartime and we are all in this war together. Then, Robert was such a sweetheart, he had a map of D.C., he had a list of emergency phone numbers, all this stuff, and it was like this, you know? I remember I thought of it like when I think of World War II and people all coming together to pitch in.

03-01:35:26

Holmes:

Working together, yeah, yeah.

03-01:35:31

Terrill:

Solidarity, the sense of community, was the rule of the day, was prevalent, and psychologically, I needed that. I needed to know that—I needed to sense it, I needed to feel connected to the larger community and we certainly did that. I know that it was such a boost for us psychologically. We met some great advocates there in D.C. as well, and it was the sort of thing where you just immediately became friends, so to speak, meaning that you knew we were all here for the same reason and we were all there out of love, compassion and anger, and any combination thereof, and that was great. There were also people there who were visibly sick and so you wanted to be there for them too, and we were. We marched and we rallied and we shouted and advocated for the government to stop their indifference, and then connected with networks that extended to not just D.C. I went up to Sacramento and there was a big gathering, a die-in, in Sacramento, on the capitol steps there. That's when I took that picture of Saint Joseph, at the time.

Just an aside—so, I took a shuttle from the hotel where I was staying, to get back to the airport, to fly back to L.A. And the shuttle driver, the van driver, I was the only passenger and he says, "Oh, so what were you here visiting for?" I said we were at the rally for HIV and AIDS here at the capitol, and he said, "I think they should take all those homosexuals and diseased and put them on an island and just nuke them, just bomb them." I screamed, "What the fuck? Who the fuck do you think you're talking to?" I was so angry and I think he was surprised at my outburst, but I had all this built-up, pent-up and I'm like, "You're a fucking employee, supposed to drive me. I'm the customer, and how dare you!" I wrote letters, I called up, I tried to get him fired. And I just said, "I don't care what the issue is: HIV, civil rights, a woman, whatever. The fact is he was so insulting. He didn't just say, 'Oh, I don't agree with that.' He said he advocated for me to be put on an island and nuked, to be killed. I'm sorry, is that what your hotel stands for? Is that what you consider service?" We had exchange of mail and I forget, they said they were going to discipline him or something. I was livid.

03-01:38:57

Holmes: Well and today, for younger generations whose first experience with HIV as a public discussion probably came when Magic Johnson announced he was HIV positive. That was much later.

03-01:39:19

Terrill: Yes.

03-01:39:20

Holmes: And what I think gets forgotten is that type of vitriol that was there, that type of indifference, and it's not just indifference. Again, I think your friend Robert said it best, "that people need to understand, they wanted us to die." And when we look at, say Prop 64, which again was reintroduced in 1988, right?

03-01:39:48

Terrill: Yes it was, yes, it came back again.

03-01:39:50

Holmes: That type of attack was something much of the gay community across the board was confronting.

03-01:40:10

Terrill: Yeah. One of the paintings I did was called, *My Patron Saint, Praying for My Immune System*. It's one of my, for lack of a better word, "religious" iconography paintings, in which I might include *Mother and Son*. In it, I paint this image of San Martin de Porres. I don't know how familiar you are with the saints in the Catholic world, but San Martin de Porres is known as the Black Saint. He was Peruvian and he took it upon himself to take care of the sick and dying, and so he's usually shown wearing his green robe and holding a broom, and he's in a room where you can see in the background, are beds where people are sick. He's there with the broom because he sweeps and cleans for them and takes care of them. He also would bathe them and wash their hair and cut their hair, so he is officially the patron saint of hairdressers, which I love that connection. Martin is also my middle name, so he was always—

In my version, I show myself, in the lower left-hand corner, asleep, kind of envisioning, you know with Zs coming up. I'm envisioning this dream version of San Martin, who above him I have a herald, that instead of the usual name of the saint, it's actually a collaged *New York Times* article on an edict from the Vatican. And it's the Vatican's edict on homosexuality, on homosexuals, and in it, it kind of quotes that one has to understand that those people who continue to publicly advocate, they have to understand when other folks react, essentially almost sanctioning gay-bashing. I was outraged by it, as were every AIDS advocate, homosexual advocate, and so I put that up there on the top as the herald, and I show San Martin so upset with the Vatican that he puts his broom down and he sits there to pray, and he's praying for my immune system. The person I had pose for that was Robert Herrera, who I worked with at the Center for the Partially Sighted, and within a few years, Robert Herrera

himself was dead. Yeah, so the Catholic Church, the Federal Government, even the state government, medical providers, doctors, nurses, I mean the stigma was so heavy.

We also had gone from the 1970s, where it was like the high class and low class were all intermixing at the gay clubs, it was like kind of hip to go to the disco and stuff. Once AIDS came along that shifted, that changed, and a lot of people that were our friends or allies weren't coming to the clubs any more, they weren't associating with us. There were people who were allies, heterosexuals, that I recall reading where they were saying they try to get their friends to help out with fundraisers and stuff, and they refused. They would say come on this is serious, such and such friends are dying, and they said, you just chose the wrong friends. I mean to me that was so callous and indifferent, and it was a real wakeup call.

There were families, families that rejected their sons. I met a woman, I knew a woman, her son had died and his partner was now sick. She was Latina, she was Mexican and her son had died of AIDS, and his partner was white, and she was caregiving, she was taking care of him, once her son had died. She had reached out to the mother in the Midwest and the mother had said no we're Christian, we want nothing to do with him. She said she could not understand how a mother could turn and reject their child, even as they were dying. She told me that what she did is when he died and she took care of everything, she went ahead and took the best picture that she could find, a really nice picture of the son, and she mailed it to the mother and just said here, this is yours. Again, I was just like how could people be so cruel, it was hard for me to understand. People were getting evicted from apartments, I mean it was really ugly. Also, in some cases, if people thought you were gay, they associated that immediately with, "Oh, then you must be infected with AIDS so don't get near me." It was so irrational, so stupid.

My friend Eddie, he had left his apartment, and he's HIV-negative. Long story but he had to go live with his sister, who was the Wicked Witch of the West, out in the valley, in the San Gabriel Valley. And she told him, "I don't want your friends here, coming over to the swimming pool, because I know probably half of them have AIDS." That meant me, she was talking about me, and his other friends, and we knew her since high school. It's like what a bitch, you know? Yeah, it was really, really ugly.

Again, it would always surprise me at just how unsympathetic and uncaring people could be. It was at the AIDS walk at APLA, which used to start at Paramount Studios, that's where everyone would gather and we'd march, and I was there before the march and I was meeting with my friend Martha, who was one of my good friends. She's the one that wore the "malflora" t-shirt back in the day. She had this acquaintance who was Latina, lesbian, and she owned an apartment building, a fourplex. We were there talking, I was talking about discrimination and how people with HIV and AIDS are getting kicked

out, this, that and the other, and she looked at me and she says, "Well what about if the other tenants don't want them there?" I said, "Excuse me, like what do you mean if what the other tenants want? If this is a tenant who is paying his rent and he's sick, whether it's HIV or diabetes, they have a right to be there." She goes, "Well not if the other tenants are going to threaten to move." She was Landlord, with a capital L, and she had no other concern. So not every lesbian was as compassionate as I had first said, but most of them were. I'm just saying, that even within the gay community—

When we were getting petitions, signing petitions against Proposition 64, at Sunset Junction, which was the community that had all the different groups, gay groups and gay bars, and we would go up to gay men and say yeah, this is against Proposition 64. "Oh, I don't want nothing to do with it, no, AIDS, no."

03-01:48:02
Holmes:

Wow.

03-01:48:05
Terrill:

And I can guarantee you, probably half of those that were saying "AIDS, no," were probably dead within a year or two. It was an emotional rollercoaster. So, I was working at the Center for the Partially Sighted, I would go do these home visits, I would just be devastated emotionally. I'd come home and there would be my machine, with messages that people would leave, and "Oh Joey, it's cousin Pat, the funeral services for Arnie are going to be on Saturday." Then, "Oh, hi, this is Toya, Roberto is at Saint John's Hospital, we're going to go visit him tonight." It was like I was afraid to even answer the phone. It was a nightmare, it was very nightmarish, and I could see how people coped or didn't cope; drugs, alcohol, spirituality, religion. There were folks that embraced—people that I had never, they were the devil incarnate, they found religion or some sense of spiritual something, because AIDS had changed their perspective. I suppose for some of those people, that was a good thing, and some of them are alive, but the ones that I knew are dead. Like my friend Robert, he said "Oh, I'm not going to do any of those drugs, those medications." He said, "I'm just going to do organic and herbal, and positivity," and I'm like Robert, this is not—this is Robert Vasquez, a friend of ours. He was like, "No, I'm going to be okay, I'm going to live," and I could see, I already knew, that he's not going to survive. I don't know how I knew, I just knew.

Then on top of it, if you did go to funerals, you'd go to a funeral that was all arranged by the family that wanted nothing to do with the individual when they were alive and gay and openly gay. They didn't allow the partner to sit up in front, they had to be in the back of the church with the rest of us. James Carter, who was a signer on the cruise ships, apparently when he was 18, he had married his girlfriend-friend Susan, and it was almost like a lark kind of thing that they did. I think it was annulled, I don't know how long ago, but he had a partner for years, and the family swooped in; the homophobic family

swooped in. They didn't want the partner there, and at the service, the priest got up and talked about him and "his wife Susan," like that was when they were 18. He's 40 years old, he hasn't been with a woman in 20 years, you know what I mean? It was like this world, it was bizarro world, really truly.

When Robert, the organic herbal friend, for his service, they were talking about an open casket and the priest had said they didn't want an open casket. And it wasn't because he didn't look good, he didn't think it was safe. The priest didn't think it was safe to have the open casket with a dead body. Now the thing is, and I would tell folks, look: first of all, you're condemning all of us, because he's saying God's punishing us because we're so evil and we're sodomites and we're bad. But yet at the same time, you think that going near someone you're going to get AIDS? Does that mean that God's punishing you too? I mean what is it? Is it something that is caught too easily, that we can all get it, or is it something that's specific to those of us that are sinners and getting punished? Make up your mind, it's one or the other and you can't have both, you can't have it both ways. I'm sorry, I'm just thinking right now.

03-01:52:21

Holmes: No, no. That's alright—this is important.

03-01:52:22

Terrill: My favorite movie of all time is Ken Russell's *The Devils*. I don't know if you've ever seen it.

03-01:52:31

Holmes: No.

03-01:52:32

Terrill: You will after this. So Ken Russell, the British filmmaker who was the *enfants terrible* of the cinema world and certainly British cinema. It was 1971, based on the Aldous Huxley novel, *The Devils of Loudun*, which was a historical novel, based on fact, in the 1670s, during the time of Richelieu rising to power in France, in the small town of Loudun. There is an accusation by the Order of Saint Ursuline Nuns, against a priest, Father Grandier, of conjuring up devils and coming in and debauching and raping the nuns. And because Father Grandier is a political threat to Richelieu, he puts in place a trial for heresy and they accuse Father Grandier of heresy and conjuring up devils, and it's all made up, and in fact they burn him at the stake in a public setting. Vanessa Redgrave, a young Vanessa Redgrave, plays Sister Jeanne of the Angels. She's excellent in it. I think she was nominated for an Academy Award. Oliver Reed plays Father Grandier, and then this great British ensemble cast that includes Gemma Jones and some other great folks. Visually, it's stunning. Some of the art production or direction was done by Derek Jarman, who is "Saint Derek" in my mind, who died of AIDS. The movie, in 1971, was rated X. It was one of the only X-rated movies ever that received Academy Award considerations.

03-01:54:13

Holmes: Yeah, that's interesting.

03-01:54:15

Terrill: At the time, the religious wars in France—between the Huguenots (the Protestants), and the Catholics—were fermenting there, and people were being tortured and killed in the name of religion. At the same time, the plague was occurring, so people were dying of the plague, back and forth, and it's very graphic. I remember coming out of the theater thinking, wow, back in the day, people used to actually kill each other over religion. Isn't that weird? Wow, and people used to die from disease, huh, how weird is that? That was '71 and ten years later, I started to understand. Today, when I see the film, it's the power of the universal themes that are still with us. Anyway, I recommend it.

03-01:55:15

Holmes: Well, in dealing with all of this, as we saw with the AIDS Quilt, art also once again became an avenue. Not just an audio-biographical one for you, but also as a way of remembrance, a way of tribute, a way of grappling with these emotions.

03-01:55:34

Terrill: Yes.

03-01:55:36

Holmes: When you look at an aerial photo of the AIDS quilt, to me, I couldn't help but joke, it's exactly the size that Donald Trump probably wished his inaugural crowd was, I mean it's actually stunning. It takes up the entire Washington Mall. If readers haven't seen that, they should, it's amazing. You did a panel for that for Jerry.

03-01:56:03

Terrill: For Jerry, yeah.

03-01:56:06

Holmes: But then you also began to do other pieces of remembrance in your art, and one of those was called "Remembrance."

03-01:56:15

Terrill: Yes.

03-01:56:16

Holmes: Can you talk a little bit about that?

03-01:56:19

Terrill: Sure. I wanted to do an art piece that was indicative of my grieving and wanting to remember friends who were dying all around me. I knew that a lot of art that was related to HIV and AIDS at the time was either agitprop, political, ACT UP, it was lots of anger and very righteous, definitely, or it was filled with sympathy, but almost like to a sickeningly sweet level, that I

didn't—like “Oh, the angels are looking over you.” Well, I didn't believe any of that, I didn't think that. If the angels are really looking over that person now that they're dead, why didn't they look over them when they were alive? I was one of those, right?

So I did this piece called *Remembrance*, in which was about me and remembering my friends, and my grieving. My partner was Robert at the time, and that's one where I came up with the idea, and I had Robert help me, assist me, and we went and posed for it. I placed myself sort of on bended knee, kind of genuflecting, but holding a bouquet of gladiolas and birds of paradise. I'm looking at the bouquet as though I might be laying it down perhaps, at a grave, or just gathering it up. I like to think I'm looking sad in it. I also picture Robert behind me, holding the same bouquet, and he's a little bit smaller and behind me, and that was indicative of a 10 year age difference. He was younger and he was going through the grieving as well, but they were all my friends. His generation and his friends that he knew weren't, at least at that point in time, getting sick or dying yet. It was all my friends and he was there, by my side and backing me up, and that's why I have him behind me.

In the painting, I picture us surrounded by this kind of cactus, succulent garden, which I wanted the painting to be indicative of the Southwest or Los Angeles, as opposed to New York or any other place. The bird of paradise is also the official flower of Los Angeles and I wanted us to seemingly be overwhelmed by all of this at once beautiful foliage and succulents and cactus, but also a little bit threatening because they have thorns and *picas*. There's just a little bit of sky that shows through up at the top, and that to me was a little bit of hope. I also painted myself wearing my favorite shirt at the time, which was a design by my friend Arnie, Arnie Araica, he was a designer. And Arnie, when he saw the painting he really liked it and he thanked me for painting the image with his shirt, because he said, "Oh, I'm so glad you did that, because now my work, my shirt is going to live on." He goes, "I'm not going to make it, I'm going to die," and he was right, he died, I think within a year after I finished that painting. Yeah, that's one of my paintings.

Then, years later, in 2008, I was invited to be part of the Homo Hombre Atelier at Self Help Graphics, and did a silkscreen. Miguel Angel Reyes, who oversaw the Atelier, requested reproducing an early work. I had come up with one design regarding marriage and he said “Oh, Joey, I really wanted you to try to do something like some of your older images that are more detailed and complex,” and I came up with doing a version of *Remembrance*, in silkscreen and he said, "Yeah, that's it, that's it." So I redid it in a silkscreen format, which is over here, and then I retitled it *Remembrance*, and this time I put “For Arnie and Teddy,” which were two of my best friends that died from AIDS.

03-02:00:52

Holmes: You mentioned another painting which I wanted to talk about before we end for today, which was for your friend Peter. Was that the one you titled, *The Good Sodomite*? Is that correct?

03-02:01:07

Terrill: Those are two paintings. There's *The Good Sodomite*, and then there's *My Friend Peter*.

03-02:01:13

Holmes: Okay, two paintings.

03-02:01:16

Terrill: Yeah, two.

03-02:01:18

Holmes: Let's talk about, *The Good Sodomite*. What were you trying to do there?

03-02:01:22

Terrill: As you know, in some of my works, I've looked at religious iconography and how one can play with that, and particularly being Mexican Catholic, from *Mother and Son* to San Martin de Porres, the patron saint, *Pray for My Immune System*. And I think within a one-hour timespan, I was watching something on TV where you know, someone was talking about the sodomy laws of colonial British Empire, which are now still in place in Africa, and I remember thinking, that whole Sodom and Gomorrah fable or story, has become such a part of our culture that even legally, they've named the homosexual act as sodomy, and people that are accused of that as sodomites, and it's always bad, bad, bad, bad. g

And within that same hour, there was a news story about a Good Samaritan, who stepped in and did something. I thought, wait a minute, the Good Samaritan, there's that same story from the Bible, the Samaritan is always the good person, and the fable of that story is that there's a traveler who's accosted and robbed, beaten up and left by the roadside, and one of the priests, high priests, walks by and just ignores him, and then a Samaritan passes by. At the time that the fable was told, I guess by Jesus, the Jews and Samaritans were not friendly to each other, so the fact that a Samaritan came by and provided solace and care to the traveler who was beat up, and put him on his donkey and took him into town to rescue him, he's forever the Good Samaritan. And I was thinking about how we look at those words and they mean things, so I determined to do my version called *The Good Sodomite*, because not every sodomite was bad and not every Samaritan is good, right? In my version here, my image source was from an 18th century stained glass window from France, and I forget the name of the town, but in it, I did the imagery just like it is in the stained glass, but the traveler, I've substituted with the Los Angeles artist Barry Morse, who is this great artist whose work is all about identity. He's a bodybuilder, but he does these great images of himself as everything from Osama bin Laden to Cher to Abraham Lincoln to Jesus Christ. He's really a

chameleon, a master of disguise, sexy, intelligent, Avant-garde. I love his work, and I just asked him if he would pose for me for this painting and he did, and that's him there, posing. And then part of it, as *The Good Sodomite*, I'm also indicating that yeah, we are good sodomites. I mean, I'm taking that term.

03-02:04:25

Holmes: And recapturing it.

03-02:04:27

Terrill: Recapturing it, and especially, when I see that, for me I look at that as those of us who took care of our friends who were dying from AIDS. So yeah, we were good, unlike the government, unlike the church, unlike a lot of the institutions.

03-02:04:48

Holmes: That's well said.

03-02:04:49

Terrill: Thanks.

03-02:04:50

Holmes: I think that's a good place to stop for today, thank you, Joey.

03-02:04:51

Terrill: Okay, all right.

Interview 4: May 24, 2017

04-00:00:04

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes, with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. I am sitting down for our fourth session with Joey Terrill. Today's date is May 24, 2017. We are here in his studio at the Santa Fe Art Colony in East Los Angeles. Joey, good morning.

04-00:00:26

Terrill: Hi.

04-00:00:27

Holmes: This is our final session. These past few days have been just so enlightening and a great conversation, and I wanted to pick up where we left off in our last session, speaking about your activism and art, in regards to raising awareness about AIDS and HIV. We spoke about you fighting Proposition 64, the march on Washington in 1987, the AIDS Quilt and your contribution to that, as well as the paintings of remembrance that you also began during this time. I wanted to talk a little bit more about AIDS and art during the 1980s and then moving to today. And one of the starting points, I believe, was in 1989—at least it was a big event for 1989—A Day Without Art. What were your thoughts about that activity and your participation?

04-00:01:29

Terrill: The Day Without Art was an effort by galleries, museums, art museums, institutions, to fully recognize that AIDS and HIV had really affected and decimated the arts community, a lot of artists were dying, some of my friends. So, if I recall, I think the first Day Without Art, some museums actually closed for the day and there were public gatherings and lectures, and talking about HIV and AIDS, and how to respond, how to become more active. I know that some smaller galleries, popups, would do exhibits that, even though it was called a Day Without Art, we would exhibit art that was about HIV and AIDS, just recognizing that people were gone. In the Chicano art community, Carlos Almaraz was one of the first artists who, quite famous or recognized for his work, died of AIDS, and that was a blow. That was a blow to all of us. That was a blow to obviously his wife Elsa Flores, who was herself a photographer. Carlos was known within the Chicano arts community here in Los Angeles and ironically, I actually met Carlos and Elsa when I moved to New York, they were visiting in New York, and that's when I met them, there, and we joked about it, "Oh, we had to move to New York to actually meet each other."

In terms of art about HIV and AIDS, for myself, since my work was always autobiographical and documenting my friends and people I knew—partners, boyfriends, lovers, but my family as well, my sister, friends—it was inevitable that the work started to become about HIV and AIDS, or loss, because it was happening all around me. For instance, that painting, *My Friend Peter*, which is actually a self-portrait posing with my friend Peter Egnozzi. This was in

the—by that time that was the early 1990s, '91 or so, where I was receiving an award from VIVA, the organization for gay and lesbian Latino artists in L.A. There was going to be a dinner and a little award ceremony at Friendship Auditorium over on Riverside Drive. My cousin and my sister and her friends were all supposed to go and my cousin Pat called me up two nights before and said, “Joey, I just wanted to tell you that Peter has really taken a turn for the worse—you know he was in the hospital—and so we're going to go visit him, so we won't be able to attend the dinner.” I said, “Got it, I understand, no problem, give him my best.” Well it turns out that when I arrived at the auditorium for the dinner, for the awards ceremony, cousin Pat had lied, and she was there with all my friends and Peter. Peter had come out of the hospital. She never really told me, but I have a feeling that knowing Peter and the way he liked to joke and his sense of humor, he probably said, “Oh tell Joey that none of us can be there and we'll surprise him and stuff.”

You know when I saw him—he was always a very good looking, robust, kind of muscular, bearded guy, and when he came out of the hospital he was 40, 50 pounds lighter. He was losing his eyebrows, his hair. He looked sick, he looked bad, and I sat with him and we posed and took pictures. It was good to see him. Those pictures that we took, that was actually the last time I saw him alive, so I decided to do a painting about that, and it's that painting of him and me sitting at that dinner, calling it *My Friend Peter*. I think, and I might be reading into it, but when I look at the painting of myself in there, I like to think anyway, that you can see that I am angry, I'm grieving, I'm upset. I would get very frustrated with what I considered people's lack of urgency.

We did the exhibit, “Images of Hope,” at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and it was the first time that I think the Santa Monica Museum of Art was doing a group show by Latinos, regarding HIV and AIDS, and it was to raise money for the AIDS programs and the organizations that provide services. The exhibit, it was great, it was really intriguing, I loved all the work. But it was this crowd of people that were all drinking white wine and clinking their glasses, and then someone got up and spoke a little bit about the need to contribute and thanked everyone for being there. I was getting mad because people weren't paying attention, people were still talking and laughing and joking, as they do at art receptions. I just got up there and I think I probably was louder than I could have been or should have been, but I just said, “I want everyone to stop, you need to just stop and listen, look at what is happening.” I said, “I am sick and tired of my friends dying and this is serious.” I had this sense that there were many in the art world that didn't want to have to look at what was going on.

In doing some of the Halloween series of paintings, that also was incorporating friends who were partying and dressing up and having fun, and that were then gone. There's a painting I did of Tom Gutierrez, right here, dressed as Pierrot the Clown, and again, he was someone that, he was the boyfriend of a friend of mine and he was wild and funny and good looking,

and really muscular, and he was dead the next year, so he wasn't at the party the next year. Some of the paintings that don't necessarily directly seem to be about HIV and AIDS are really about the personal loss that was going on with people I was portraying.

In '88, '89, at Sunset Junction Street Fair, which is a local street fair that was started in Silver Lake, and it was actually started to build bridges between communities. There was a gay presence that was developing in Silver Lake, and it was running into conflict with some of the Latino, young homeboys or gangbangers. This was about bringing the community together, so you had Thai restaurants setting up booths, and Mexican food, all this great food that was going on. They hired the homeboys to actually be security detail for the event, and that meant that they had to deal with some of the bars and the gay people coming in. It was really cool, but one of the things that was being distributed at Sunset Junction was this little comic book called *Chicos Modernos*. It was a little comic book novella, that showed these young Latinos dealing with or learning about HIV and AIDS. And it was done through the CORE Program, located in Hollywood, that was set up to provide information and education on HIV, to the street hustlers and some of the gay for pay, particularly Latinos, who didn't have access or certainly didn't read English or didn't feel connected to the organizations like Being Alive and AIDS Project Los Angeles, that were providing information. This was to be something that was accessible for them, easy to understand, and they could distribute it out in the streets to Latinos. I loved it. I thought, I should be doing something like this, I should be putting my creativity or my artistry towards doing something like that. And it was about six months later that a friend of mine, Steven Munoz, who I had gone to high school with, had gone to Cathedral, he was one of the Scans, I didn't realize that it was his partner, Bill Green, who ran the CORE Program, and it was Steven who actually wrote the script for *Chicos Modernos*.

04-00:11:12
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

04-00:11:13
Terrill:

He called me up and he says, "Are you familiar with *Chicos*?" And I said, "Yes, I am," and he says, "Well you know that was me that did it." I was like wow, that's so cool, that's great, and he says, "I wanted to ask you, the artist who did the illustrations, Bruce Rapp, he's too sick now to do the next edition, and I was just wondering, would you want to take that on and do the illustrations?" I said sure, I would love to. There was this sense or feeling like an old Hollywood movie plot, where the star breaks her leg and the understudy comes in, that's how I felt. In doing the drawings for it, I borrowed from Bruce Rapp's illustrations, which were totally different than anything that I had ever done, my style, so I sort of did this little hybrid in terms of the drawings, and we built these characters. I did three volumes over the course of two years, and that was funded through federal grant money that was subject

to Senator Jesse Helms amendment that was very homophobic, that wouldn't allow any funding for HIV education or information that supported or promoted or highlighted homosexuality. So, I had the restrictions of here we were, doing this little comic book about these gay boys, gay Latinos, and I shouldn't show them kissing, I couldn't show anything that—you know, I certainly couldn't show them having sex, which I would have loved to have done. So I had to work through those restrictions and in my head what I thought was, at the time, how would David Lynch, the filmmaker, how would he approach this, what could I do? That was my way of thinking, yeah, so that was very restricted.

The *Chicos Modernos* was distributed at Latino gay bars and someone from the CORE Program would go in and talk about education and information, and then they were distributing the Spanish language comic book to everyone, and at the end of the evenings, we felt it was a success because we didn't find them in the trash cans. The bartenders would keep an eye open and people took them and read them. Then, Bill Green from the CORE Program said he was getting requests for them from other states, as well as Mexico, and I know that they did probably a run or some copies that were distributed in Tijuana and a couple of other places, which I thought was really cool. That was one trajectory or way that I was being an artist in terms of HIV and AIDS.

04-00:14:20

Holmes:

Really quick. I wanted to ask, *Chicos Modernos*, in some ways was a return to kind of that comic book format that we saw with *Homeboy Beautiful*, but you said you had to do kind of a hybrid of styles, so that it would match Bruce Rapp's earlier work.

04-00:14:40

Terrill:

Well, and the intent and context was totally different, because this was focused on—

04-00:14:41

Holmes:

Sure, sure. It was not tongue-and-cheek, it was very serious.

04-00:14:46

Terrill:

Yeah, these are characters that are engaging with each other and talking about safe sex. One of the characters in it, Diablo, falls in love with this guy but he finds out, if you read the comic book, that he's married to a woman, he's on the down-low, and so he's probably bisexual. At the time, he was thinking that oh, well he's not at risk for HIV because he's married, and so it was going through this explanation about HIV and how it works and whether you're married or not, you still need to be safe. And then there was instructions about how to use a condom, in Spanish. Also, the language was definitely maybe what you would consider 6th grade level comprehension, because it was known that a lot of the hustlers that would receive the services from CORE, were themselves not very educated. Some of them weren't very literate, even in Spanish, so we had to make it as easy to understand as possible, and that's

in no way—I hope no one thinks of that as condescending or patronizing. It was just the reality and for folks that wouldn't benefit from reading an academic analysis and the latest clinical trials and results, things like that.

It was in '87? I was starting to do works that would look at HIV and AIDS like *My Patron Saint Praying for My Immune System*, responding to articles, like the *New York Times* article on the Vatican edict on homosexuals. When I did, *It Makes Me Think You Don't Like Me Or Something*, it was in response to all these articles I was finding in the newspaper that were downright homophobic and discriminatory towards gay people, as well as Harvey Milk being assassinated, Senator Jesse Helms. But even articles about Hollywood sort of whitewashing or changing the orientation of someone to meet what they thought would sell in the movies.

By '95, '96, I was one of the first to start on antiretroviral therapy, which was a game changer and people started to live longer. After about a year of being on antiretrovirals and my t-cells being high, I started to think that I'm probably not going to die, I think I'm going to be well or okay. I had this ambivalence about living in the age of the AIDS cocktail, as they called it, and the way that I would approach work, taking a singular photo image or working from photo sources and then replicating that in painting, just didn't seem to work for me in terms of how I wanted to express this more complex idea of my ambivalence. On the one hand, I was glad to be alive and healthy. But on the other hand, I saw that the AIDS medications and drugs were products by the pharmaceutical industry that was making millions and millions of dollars in profit off of that. So, I just rethought in my head, how would I want to indicate that, how could I do that in art? And what I did is I ended up getting inspiration from pop—I was always a fan of pop art, I always followed pop artists.

I always liked Tom Wesselmann. Tom Wesselmann was one of my favorite pop artists and he had done a series of still-lives in the 1960s, early '60s, and I even think starting in the late '50s, that took advertising images and juxtaposed them into this fake, still-life, usually on a tabletop, a domestic setting. And he would pull them from disparate sorts of advertising, so nothing meshed, nothing went together, the perspective was off. There was this surrealist quality to them and at once, one could say that they celebrated American consumerism, but also they were totally read as a critique of American consumerism, whereas the tradition of still-lives in the past, usually had a component that might be considered spiritual, looking at *memento mori*, reminders of our mortality, and so to me those things all seemed to fit. The critique of consumerist culture, the pharmaceutical industry, the still-life as a *memento mori*, reminding of us our mortality. So, I did my first still-life where I put and juxtaposed the pills with products like Coca-Cola and Cheerios, I would put the actual pills onto the canvas, and the way that I envisioned them, I structured it so that the tabletop for the still-life, first of all it always had a Mexican blanket on it, right?

04-00:20:21

Holmes: Yeah, yeah.

04-00:20:23

Terrill:

I wanted to be sure that people understood that this was a Chicano or Mexican artist or context. I started out by actually putting the pills directly on there, but juxtaposing them with images of Coca Cola, Cheerios, I collaged things together, and it really allowed me a lot of freedom. When I'm painting that's based on one image source, I'm kind of restricted to what that image is, and then looking at okay, how am I going to do the light, the shadow, indicate the face. These didn't have any people in them and because I could juxtapose things, I could play with them and do a lot of configurations. They actually became fun for me to do. But I made the determination that I would start doing these still-lives with HIV medications, and continue the series until I no longer had to take HIV meds or until I die or until there's a cure, whichever comes first. One of the reasons for doing this was also that I wanted to put the HIV medications in a context, in a picture if you will, where there was all these other products that people were quite familiar with, because the stigma around HIV and AIDS was still prevalent in the mid-1990s, but there was also this sort of division, if you yourself weren't taking HIV meds, if you weren't following the clinical trials and the updates, this was all foreign to you. There were people's lives going on and HIV and AIDS did not even touch them at all, they had no reference for it on a personal level.

I remember one time, coming back from one of our friend's funerals and we all went to go eat, and we were at a restaurant, and we were there eating and conversing and saying hey, it was a good service and yes, so and so would have loved it. There was a group of young people sitting at a booth next to ours, and they were laughing and talking and joking, and I could just tell by their frivolity, they don't know loss, they don't know grieving. They haven't had any of their friends die, I could just tell, they were so lighthearted and you know, it was different. We were going through this and many other people who weren't affected by AIDS were not going through it. It wasn't something that was affecting all of us. So I wanted to put the HIV medications in a context that people would be familiar with, and so when I would show the still-lives here in the open studio, people would come in and they'd say, "Oh, wow yeah, I like this, oh yeah, Coca Cola, oh Cheerios, but what are these pills?" And I would title the paintings, usually Still-Life with... whatever the HIV med was: *Still-Life with Videx*; *Still-Life with Viracept*; *Sustiva Still-Life*. I'd put in the names and people would be puzzled. Other people would walk in and say, "Oh my God, that's Videx! Oh yes, I take that med," or, "Oh that's part of my cocktail," you know, their reaction to the work was based upon their experience with the HIV meds. At a certain point, I realized that actually putting the medications themselves, the pills or capsules, in the work, was somewhat limiting, because pills and capsules are pretty small, and I'm putting these big, huge images of soda and fruit and things.

04-00:24:05

Holmes: Arm & Hammer. Yeah.

04-00:24:06

Terrill: And then I realized that you know what, I can do whatever I want with these, and so I started to just make my own, or paint extra big capsules or pills, so again, the perspective was always skewed. The idea about some of these still-lives is that they in fact indicate a still-life that has never existed in reality, and maybe it's the idea of being able to live long and not die from AIDS, was maybe also not necessarily based in reality. I mean, I still had these ambivalent feelings about it.

The other part to these is that they also are very personal, in a way, different from when I would paint friends or lovers. For about 20 years, off and on, my partner, ex-partner Rick and I, the love of my life, we used to hang wall covering. We would have about five or six designers that we worked with and we would get assigned jobs in Beverly Hills, Pacific Palisades, Montecito, Santa Barbara, Palm Springs. There are several aspects to this. One was that I realized that it provided me entrée into these big estates and homes and mansions, that there was no way there would be any other context where I would be invited in socially. Many times, I was perceived as, Rick and I both, "Oh you're the workers here," or "you're the Latino workers here," I could do a whole conversation just about some of those things.

You could usually tell, I think anyway, by the hired help or the maids that would answer the door, how well they were treated. If Maria answered the door and she'd say, "Oh, good morning gentlemen, come on in. Mrs. so and so is upstairs and here's the thing, you can start, and if you get thirsty, just help yourself in the refrigerator," it was like wow, this is a cool place. Other times, the person would answer the door and say, "Oh, hello." They were very droll, you could see, the atmosphere was really glum and people could be horrible.

But the thing is, is that with these jobs, there was a lot of high end wallpaper, very beautiful stuff. We'd do a 50 roll job or something, and there was usually a roll or two leftover, and the owners or the designer would say oh just toss it, you know that's trash. And I looked at it as, this is such beautiful paper and it's only half a roll. It's not enough to do a wall, it's not enough to do a job, but I couldn't just throw it away, and so I would just take it and keep it. And for years, I would carry these rolls of wallpaper and thought one day, I'm going to figure out where and how I can use them in art, and when I did the Still-Life Series I thought, that's where I can put the wallpaper. So the wallpaper documents actual jobs that I was on with Rick over the years, which makes it personal for me. I like the way that it plays with perspective in the still-lives. So, I started that in the mid-1990s and have continued with them, and it continues to provide me with a lot of different visual strategies and placing things in, that have various meanings.

So, some of the still-lives are more personal to me than others. I've incorporated things that either friends have given me, like there's a still-life that I have done, *Still-Life with Zerit*, which is in the collection of the Leslie Lohman Foundation, and in it, I have a knitted oven mitt. It's knitted and it looks like a big huge watermelon slice, and that was given to me by my friend Marisela Norte. I love that but I thought, I'm going to place this in there as this still-life, and it's playing with perspective, it's playing with reality. Is it a watermelon slice? Or is it an oven mitt? But for sure it's definitely something that was given to me by a friend.

I also incorporated in that piece, the calendar, the *calendario* that we did with VIVA. So, once I got the award with VIVA in '91, I think, '92, the next year, I joined VIVA. I was on the board of directors of VIVA for five years and loved it. I got to work with all these great artists and some of them continue to be friends to this day. It was Miguel Angel Reyes, Ruben Esparza, Jef Huereque, Teddy Sandoval, my friend Teddy, and filmmakers and writers like Luis Alfaro, Monica Palacios, Vangie Griego, I mean documentary filmmakers. It was great synergy and it was the '90s, and we became the, I like to think, the source for looking at queer Latino art. There was no other venue that looked at our art or took our art seriously, because of the homophobia within the gallery system, the art institutions, or that's how I perceived it.

04-00:29:58
Holmes:

And that's something that if we look back, by the time you began working with VIVA, I mean that's something you were trying to push and challenge for nearly 20 years. If we go back to *Homeboy Beautiful*, which was not just a social critique, but it was also trying to make an intervention within the art community at that time. And so we're looking at this even 20 years later, you're at the forefront with a group of other artists still trying to make headway into being recognized and being taken seriously.

04-00:30:42
Terrill:

We would have these art exhibits that were combinations of visual art and paintings and drawings, and sometimes installation work, but juxtaposed with either reading of poetry or written words. Cherrie Moraga would come in as a guest and read her latest work. Monica Palacios would do her stand-up routine and comedies. Marga Gomez, the Puerto Rican comic from San Francisco, would come down and do a show. So there was always—it was always a celebration of our queerness, of our Latino-ness, the *Latinidad*, but it also looked at and was serious about HIV and AIDS, how it affected all of us in the arts community. We received a grant, again through federal funding, for HIV education prevention, and the proposal we came up with was to do a calendar based on the calendars that are prevalent in Mexican restaurants, bakeries, and people's homes. You know businesses throughout, certainly in East L.A., would usually do a calendar and the images were usually a variation of Jesus Helguera's work that indicated fables or mythology from the

Aztec world. They were very stylized and perhaps very Europeanized in terms of their replication, but they were beautiful and kitschy, and I remember growing up with these images, looking at calendars in businesses and in homes, so we decided to do our own version.

So I did a parody of one of his works with El Popo, the volcano in Mexico, but instead of an Indian princess there dying, and the warrior bent over in grief, I chose to have an Indian boy, and I chose to not make him dead and pale. I made him alive, up on the mountain there, with the steam, with the Aztec warrior. It was, *Support Your Brothers with HIV*, "*Apoya a tus Hermanos con VIH.*" We did calendars and we were going to do, I believe it was going to be a run of 500 calendars and the guys from VIVA that took it to the printers, took it to a company that actually printed calendars, that's what they do, and we were worried that the company would say we can't do this, this is too queer, this is homosexual, too gay. Instead, they looked at it and they loved it, and so they doubled the edition without charging us extra, they did a thousand.

04-00:33:41

Holmes:

Oh wow.

04-00:33:43

Terrill:

I think they were very popular, they were distributed and very popular. I thought it was necessary to reach families, heterosexuals, Latinos, Chicanos, to fully understand and recognize that our community is being decimated by HIV and AIDS, and you need to get rid of your homophobia, you need to get rid of your stigma, you need to support one another. That was my attitude at the time with that. So there's been several trajectories in terms of my art making strategies regarding HIV and AIDS, and it's usually been associated, affiliated with being Chicano or Mexican. A lot of the work that came out of a response to HIV and AIDS, a lot of people are familiar with ACT UP and the agitprop that came out (as I was) out of New York. People are familiar with big name artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and then out of the East Village it was David Wojnarowicz, I mean they did all this great advocacy art. I was looking to do something that was more specific to the Latino, Chicano community, and by extension, people and friends that I had.

04-00:35:10

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you, the themes and imagery in your art, they're almost always autobiographical. There's also this thrust, you know, of addressing a triple stigma at this time, right? The double stigma of coupling race and sexuality as a Chicano gay man, and then—

04-00:35:32

Terrill:

And HIV, yeah.

04-00:35:34
Holmes: And now you're adding the HIV on to that. But there's also this—and I wonder if you would discuss it a little bit. There's also this tension that you've lost so many friends to this and yet—they have passed, you're still alive, right?

04-00:35:55
Terrill: Yes.

04-00:35:58
Holmes: Then also looking at the pills, the image of healthy vigor, you're able to stay alive by these pills and yet, the side effects of the pills, it's not just a day in the park, drinking a Coca Cola on a sunny day, right?

04-00:36:14
Terrill: Right.

04-00:36:16
Holmes: Discuss a little bit about those emotions that you were trying to capture in some of these works.

04-00:36:22
Terrill: The first pills that I started to use in the still-lives were ones that were part of clinical trials in which I was enrolled. I was in a clinical trial for Crixivan, that was the trial when I was first diagnosed in '89. I would take the Crixivan capsules and I ended up having side effects that were kidney stones; very painful, very, very painful, and at a point where I just, I needed to stop. I couldn't handle that. That's one of the things about the HIV meds, particularly back in the '90s, when they were trying to develop these antiretrovirals. People weren't sure about the dosing, that was one of the issues, I think, with AZT, they were giving too much AZT and people were having side effects that were, in some cases just as painful or harmful or disquieting than having the actual symptoms of AIDS.

So, when I would stop a trial, I would have these meds, and I kept them, I kind of hoard things. But there's also this other element with a lot of Chicano artists or within the Chicano culture that uses a term called *rascuache*, where you reuse something, nothing fancy. My favorite element of *rascuache* that I recall growing up was people would have gardens or niches, honoring the *Virgen de Guadalupe* in their gardens, and sometimes they'd have the statue of the *Virgen*, and as a backdrop they'd have an abalone shell, and it becomes an aura around the *Virgen*. I remember thinking that's really clever. Another one was there used to be Clorox bleach, that used to come in a plastic bottle that was a bright aqua blue. It was a beautiful shade of aqua blue, and people would cut that and that would become the sky for the backdrop of the saints or the *Virgen*, and then they might put stars on it or something. I always had that idea in my head and that has manifested itself in the still-lives.

04-00:38:47
Holmes: With both the wallpaper, the pills, and other material.

04-00:38:51

Terrill:

Yes. The other thing about the still-lives is that, as you probably already know, I've been very active in the drug advocacy, working at AIDS Healthcare Foundation. We are a huge customer of the pharmaceutical industry, because we provide medication to over 700,000 people in 39 countries, so we purchase a lot of their product and put it to use and keep people alive, but we are also aware of the price gouging that goes on with the medications. So, I've been an advocate that will attend shareholder meetings at Gilead and during public Q&A, get up and advocate for lower pricing, because state budgets and the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, the ADAP, have confined budgets and more and more people are requiring or needing medications, because as they're living longer, more people need these meds. The idea is that we're constantly needling the pharmaceutical industry, so we're a big thorn in their side. We're one of the only ones that does this, because a lot of the other AIDS organizations are dependent upon funding from the pharmaceutical industry. I'm not going to say that that's a bad thing, I understand, and if I were in a situation and that was my only source of funding, I would use whatever source of funding I could have, to work in my community to address HIV and AIDS. So there's that element as well, I've been very cognizant of that.

I also have, the last few years, in the 2000s, started to do some still-lives where I've now incorporated male figures. The male figures that I was putting in were men of color, some African American, some Latino, because I realize that here, in the still-life, these medications are keeping me alive to continue to be a homosexual, right? And so the men that I portray in the still-lives are ones that I have hooked up with from the dating sites, Grinder or Adam for Adam. And the images that I use of them are ones that they have put on their websites, on their profiles, many of which would not show their faces because they just weren't out publicly or they were on the down-low. So, they have contributed to the still-lives unknowingly, by providing their images where their heads are cut off, it's usually just their torso and their muscles. Yeah, and some of course, it's their genitalia, their dick or whatever, but I don't put the dicks in there (at least not yet), I just put the men, and I try to have fun with them.

There's things, there's innuendo. Like in the *Sustiva Still-Life*, the one that's behind you there, with Sustiva, I had to stop taking that drug because of its hallucinogenic qualities that would affect your dreams. I had been warned and we knew about that and I thought oh great, I love dreams. They were very cool on a certain level, but they were so intense, so intense. I mean the kind of dreams that I would start out in my head as I was dreaming, I would be dreaming of this family in 1880s, in the covered wagon, crossing the desert or something, and the story or narrative in my dream would go for generations, all the way up until the year 2030 and they're driving around like Jetsons, and so detailed. It was just, it was mindboggling to me. Maybe other people didn't have quite the same response that I did, maybe it's because I'm an artist, I don't know. But why I stopped, why I ended Sustiva was I would find myself

waking up and it would take me a good two to three minutes to fully realize that I was awake and no longer dreaming, and that was a little bit disconcerting.

04-00:43:33

Holmes: Yeah.

04-00:43:34

Terrill: The final straw was I took a yellow legal pad, put it by my bed, and I said, when I wake up in the morning, I am going to write down everything that I can remember about the dream that I just had; every detail from the color of the buttons that was on the uniform, to what kind of cars they were driving, et cetera, et cetera, and I did that. I woke up and I wrote and wrote, I had about five, six pages of writing, and then I woke up and realized that I had just dreamt that I had woken up and written six pages of writing, and I'm looking at an empty legal pad.

04-00:44:10

Holmes: Oh wow.

04-00:44:11

Terrill: That freaked me out! I said okay, doctor, I need to get off this med. The other thing about the medications and the drugs, and when I speak to young people particularly, if they're very cavalier about, "If I get HIV it's no big deal, because I can just take these drugs." I'm like well that is true that you do have options for antiretroviral therapy, but I said you have to remember that what worked for me did not work for my friend Javier or my friend Robert, or Jerry, or Arnie, or any number of people for whom the medications didn't work. Something works for you, but it may have side effects. So it's not just a walk in the park, it is something that you have to negotiate and figure out what works for you or doesn't work for you.

04-00:45:08

Holmes: And what you were referencing there is that it's not a guaranteed cure all.

04-00:45:12

Terrill: Right and it's definitely not a cure. You can manage your HIV as a chronic manageable disease.

04-00:45:24

Holmes: But there are also cases where, as you were referring to, cases where the medication didn't end up working at all, that you had patients who still would pass.

04-00:45:37

Terrill: Yeah, or what would happen a lot with friends of mine is that you would use a particular cocktail, group of meds, that would work for six months or a year and then stop working, and so you would have to move to a different combination therapy. And then like my friend Javier, Javier Gomez, who I had met when we were students at Immaculate Heart and then years later we

both worked at the Center for the Partially Sighted, and then we were roommates, he was someone that kept up on every clinical trial, the latest information. He worked at the organization Being Alive as well. He was really, really on top of things and he in fact used to inform his doctor about some of the latest updates that he had acquired or learned about. He ended up finally reaching a point where he had exhausted and used all the medication combinations that he could have used, and he ended up having resistance to all of them. And again, we really don't know why. He was clean and sober, he was not a high risk wild person. And so I always think of him when I see people who think that oh, taking these drugs is going to be something that's easy. It might be but then again it might not be, so why even put yourself in that situation if you don't need to.

04-00:47:12

Holmes:

You were discussing how you started, in the still-lives, started putting people into them. There was a picture I wanted to see if you would discuss, which even the name is a brilliant turn of another famous painting, *What is it About Today's Homos that Make Them So Different, So Appealing?*

04-00:47:38

Terrill:

So different, so appealing. That is sort of my—it's a large diptych in the Still-Life Series, and I was thinking along the lines of after doing a number of these still-lives, I really wanted to do something monumental, really big. My inspiration was from a very small collage by the British artist Richard Hamilton, who did a work called, *What is it About Today's Homes that Makes Them So Different, So Appealing*. In the collage, there's a Charles Atlas muscle guy and he's holding an extra large Tootsie pop, and that might even be the first time that "pop" was entered into the art world vernacular for calling it pop art. It's in a domestic setting, there's a couch in the back, and then sitting on the couch is a woman that obviously is collaged, cut out from some kind of porn thing, where she's holding her tits, and there's a vacuum cleaner, I think. It was funny and it was a parody, but I loved the title that used homes in it, and so I changed it to *Just What is it About Today's Homos that Makes Them So Different, So Appealing?*

In that diptych, I have the still-life in the front, but in the back, I have two men having sex with each other, in a 69 position, and one of them, one could read as Latino, kind of looks like—well you can't see the faces but it looks like my hair, and then there's a black guy. So I wanted it to be about men of color, in the background, and again, sort of implicating that these pills keep us alive to continue to be homosexuals and be sexually active. That 's one thing I wanted to kind of rub it in some of the homophobe's faces, because when I say what makes us so appealing, on the one hand, I look at the two men having sex and yeah, that's appealing to me. But I also know that to homophobes it's appealing to make us a target, it's that ick factor that drives a lot of homophobia.

In the diptych, in that still-life, I've incorporated some of the American products, consumerism of American products, but all of the imagery that I usually use for those products, I have taken from advertising from the mid-1950s, early '60s, when I was born and a child, because in looking at the pop art from the '60s, one of the things I like about it is it was contemporary for its day but as the years go on, the advertising that's used in pop art from that era is of that era, and logos change, and so they become almost historical references for advertising. I incorporate that, along with some Latino products, and so it's not just about American consumerism, it's about this idea that, as well as it's the identity of being a Latino, Chicano. I'm American but I'm also Chicano or Mexican. So we've got Cholula hot sauce in there, I'll incorporate the Mexican chocolate, and in that diptych as well, there's a skull, representing death, mortality, so it's a *memento mori*.

And there's an open window. Usually, in my still-lives, I incorporate this open window, which references Tom Wesselmann, but it's always this sense of somehow, that this is an interior space, a domestic space, and there's not necessarily a lot of Chicano artists, again with the machismo element of being Chicano, that focus on the interior space or domestic space—that's usually given over to the female or the woman. I've intentionally incorporated that, but also in that big diptych, I have about a dozen monarch butterflies, flying in and out of the window, and all throughout the still-life. For me, the monarch butterfly is definitely a symbol, certainly for Chicanos, because the monarch butterflies do this journey where they start in Canada and then cross over into the United States and fly into Mexico, crossing borders in North America, without any notion or idea that they're even crossing borders. And then the fact that the monarch butterflies, or being a butterfly, in and of itself, a *mariposa*, is and has been used as a slur for queer or gay men, in Mexico or among Chicanos. "*Eres una mariposa*," (you're a butterfly.)

And so I love all of those multiple meanings that one could read into that and yeah, that's the big diptych that I did. It was on display at University of Minnesota, for a show that just ended, that was honoring Professor Jesus Estrada, who died last year. The show was called "Remembrance," and it was remembrance of him and his work writing about queer Latinx artists. He was awarded his doctorate posthumously, but he did his dissertation on several artists' work: Ruben Esparza, Hector Silva, myself, there were a few of us, and so that diptych is located there. It's interesting, because it's blatant, there's two men having sex, and when I've had it on display here in my open studio where the public is welcome to come in and out, some people come in, they take a look and they just walk right out, it scares them away. Other folks will look at the work and admire it, and then after a few minutes they'll go, "Oh, I didn't realize, oh my God, look at them in the back." I'm like yeah, hey, so that's something, you know? Or people come in and they love it. It was one of the favorite still-lives of Professor Jesus Estrada, who wrote about it. So that's one.

Mind you, that's a diptych that is technically ten feet long by five feet, but I've also done still-lives very small, like this one here, *Still Life With Two Blue Pills*, of which one is Truvada. Right now, Truvada is used in an HIV cocktail for people to stay alive, but it also, since 2012, was FDA approved to be used as a big medical intervention, so for pre-exposure prophylaxis or PeEP. Someone who is considered at risk for HIV can get prescribed Truvada. You have to adhere to taking it daily so it builds up the therapeutic value in your system so that you can go out and have sex and you're not going to get HIV. There's certain controversies around it. I know that it works great for people who definitely have access to insurance that pays for it. It works great for people that can actually adhere to a daily regimen. There's a lot of folks who are at high risk that, because of other issues—homelessness, mental illness, poverty, there's just a number of things—that it might not be the best option for them.

The other thing though, that I feel like I want to say, as an older person looking at the younger generation of gay boys out there, is that some have taken on this persona, like they're a “prepper.” I see young gay men, their identity being commodified by this product, and that's disconcerting to me, in the same way that I didn't particularly care for all the clone look back in the 1970s, where all these gay men were like this is the one way to be a gay man, right? Now, your whole identity is wrapped up in this product, this pharmaceutical product, and it's chemotherapy as prophylaxis. Yeah, I find that a little disconcerting.

It's also interesting, just aside from any of the politics about it, but in terms of the pharmaceutical industry itself. This is the first time that the pharmaceutical industry is marketing a drug specifically to homosexual men, gay men. It's never happened before. There have been drugs that have been for women, there have been drugs for people who are predisposed to a certain type of disease or illness or diabetes, but this is the first time that this is a drug for gay men. It's been an interesting challenge, I think for them, as an industry. How do you market a drug that in essence is for a gay man, so that you can continue to be gay men. And it's not about getting your hair to grow or your muscles to be built, but rather it's specifically about fucking, right? Fucking bear-back, without a condom, the essential thing that makes us gay, the essential thing that I find appealing, the essential thing that the homophobes find appealing to target.

So I can see, in this current administration, number 45, at a certain point, and the same way that you've got these Rush Limbaughs and all these idiots out there that are against birth control, and “why should we pay for women's birth control?” He called the one advocate a slut. I can totally see, and I'm waiting to hear, if there's going to be pushback around, “Why is the pharmaceutical industry promoting homosexual sex? Even if it's saving lives, it's saving the lives of homosexuals.” The idiocy of homophobia can take all forms, but anyway, I digress, sorry.

04-00:59:17

Holmes: No, no. What you're also hitting on, which is something you and I talked about off camera, I believe yesterday, was in your still-lives, the presence of the pharmaceutical industry. And to think about when you started this in the mid-1990s, how much that has grown.

04-00:59:34

Terrill: Yes.

04-00:59:35

Holmes: To now where direct marketing of all sorts of medication and pills, some of which you question, particularly when you hear the side effects, you question.

04-00:59:46

Terrill: Sure.

04-00:59:47

Holmes: Is this something we're putting—this isn't Cheerios, this isn't Coca-Cola.

04-00:59:50

Terrill: Right. I think as I mentioned, it was '95, when the law was changed to allow for direct to consumer marketing. Prior to '95, you would not see advertising on television or in magazines or print media, for prescription drugs. You could find advertising, obviously, for over-the-counter drugs, aspirin, etc. all the time. I grew up with animated TV commercials about taking an aspirin to get rid of your headache and stuff. In '95, that changed and you started to see advertisements on TV for everything from erectile dysfunction to restless leg syndrome and for a number of maladies, and it's interesting, their marketing strategies. I particularly find it a little bit funny where by law, they have to list every side effect, potential side effect for these medications, and so they do this and sometimes they do it where they talk very quickly. They'll say, "and diarrhea, boils, and blah-blah-blah, and in some cases death," you know they try to do it fast, and it's while they're showing these images of people walking on the beach, playing with their dog. It's just an interesting visual juxtaposition.

The other thing is that you can look at graphs now that show, since '95, the huge number of prescription medications that have continued to climb and grow, and there's a correlation between the number of deaths now from prescription medications. Currently, I think the big topic is the opioid prescription crisis, which in many cases leads to a person then going on to heroin. And so you've got these pockets in rural America, in Middle America, that have communities that are decimated by this. And then there's also an issue going on where it's interesting to hear these politicians talking about "yes, we need to do something about the opioid crisis that's affecting the community." Well, because yeah, it's affecting a lot of white folks now. Back when the drug crisis and the deaths that were occurring were among African Americans or in the hood or the ghetto, the response from politicians was, lock them up, law and order. Now they're talking about rehabilitation.

04-01:02:27

Holmes: Sure, sure.

04-01:02:28

Terrill: It's interesting, how these things play out. I'm going to be really curious to see when and if there's a TV commercial for Truvada, for PrEP, pre-exposure prophylaxis. Now, from what I'm understanding, they're working on a formulation where, as a prophylaxis, it could be a quarterly injection. That would be a total game changer, that would be so good. You go in, in January, you get your shot, and then you're good for four months. When I was working on Skid Row, with the dually diagnosed homeless/mentally ill, HIV positive population, medication adherence was always an issue, particularly if it was something you needed to take daily. With this you come in, in January, get your shot, and you're good for four months. That would be a game changer, for someone to be protected against HIV for four months, and then it would be a lot easier for adherence, to just get a shot every four months, or once a year or whatever it is. So there are things coming down the road that I would totally embrace, but yeah, it's just interesting, the role that the pharmaceutical industry plays and continues to play in the conversation on healthcare in this country, and the cost of healthcare.

04-01:03:55

Holmes: On that note, we're here interviewing you as a very important artists, particularly in the Chicano community, the gay community, being one of the pioneers that have brought that together, and then also, your artwork addressing AIDS, which again was very pioneering, and particularly as a Chicano artist. What I think a lot of people who know your work don't actually know is that you've actually worked in HIV advocacy.

04-01:04:31

Terrill: Yes.

04-01:04:32

Holmes: Outside of *Chicano Modernos*, but as you were talking about the Center for the Partially Sighted, and then later with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. As probably some people reading this transcript would realize, like man, Joey Terrill really knows about this stuff, right?

04-01:04:53

Terrill: First of all the thing is, and let me state, I find it interesting when you say I'm an important artist. I'm an artist that has never been able to live off my art, right? Now mind you, when I was in 6th grade, 7th grade, I'll be honest, in my head, I wanted to be the Chicano Andy Warhol. I wanted to be famous and cool. I probably wouldn't have been as droll and cool as Warhol. I would have been much more gregarious and conversational, but I worshipped Warhol and I wanted to be a famous artist, important artist, which meant that I could live off my art. I have not been able to find a gallery in years that would accept my art or want to rep me, and so like most artists I know, I've had to work for a

living in order to buy the canvas and the paints, and put food on the table. You have to do a job.

In the early 1980s, for two years, I worked, believe it or not, at Deloitte Haskins & Sells, one of the Big Five accounting firms, and I hated it. I worked in the timesharing department, this was back before personal computers. Accountants would come in with all of their pages of information, and I had to enter in all this basic code to get a time appointment to share the big mainframe-computer in New York. It was so, by today's standards, so archaic. I didn't like that corporate culture, that world at all. It just wasn't me. And so when the opportunity arose to go work at the Center for the Partially Sighted, in case management, with the visually impaired, through my friend Javier, I took it. I told him, "I don't have a background," he says, "We will train you," and the minute I started to do that I realized oh, if I'm going to work for a living, I wanted to work at something where I was giving back to the community, where I was working with people, you know? A short psychological analysis here [laughs], but I was groomed to be a caregiver, with my mom, my sister and myself having to deal with my mom and her mental illness. We grew up with that and all that that entailed really made me a natural to working in social work and working with people and the visually impaired. I found it very rewarding. So over the years, I've worked with the visually impaired, I've worked with the homeless, mentally ill, and then of course HIV and AIDS.

I actually worked for AIDS Healthcare Foundation, '95 to '97. I was pharmacy services coordinator, enrolling folks in the AIDS Drug Assistance Program at that time, but I left in '97. I did other jobs. I worked at LAMP on Skid Row. I also worked for two years at MOCA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, which was a whole other thing, and at one point, I was actually working two jobs; at MOCA and at LAMP on Skid Row, with the dually diagnosed homeless/mentally ill, but I would do the night shift. So, I would be the staff person who would be there, on site, in the emergency crisis shelter, an 18-bed shelter, overnight. I'd leave that in the morning, at 7:00 a.m., change, shower, and then 13 blocks away, go to MOCA, a huge, multimillion dollar, iconic building by the Japanese architect, Arata Isozaki. And then I would deal with the art patrons coming into MOCA, some of whom, by their demeanor and the way they spoke to me, were no different than the homeless/mentally ill who were on Skid Row, coming off of crack cocaine. But at least I understood on Skid Row, well they're coming off of crack. What's this woman's excuse for yelling and screaming at me about the parking at MOCA? Like relax. But anyway, so it was this real dichotomy.

In 2004, I went back to work at AIDS Healthcare Foundation and worked for two years at the Carl Bean House, the last HIV specific hospice and rehabilitation medical facility. I loved it. Very rewarding work. And then once it closed—and it closed because the need for hospice care had dissipated. People are still dying from AIDS today in the United States, but most of those

deaths are occurring in some of the southern states, in locations where stigma, cultural stigma, religious stigma, homophobia, misogyny, all of these are factors. Socioeconomic disparities usually fall along racial lines, particularly in the South, and you still have people today that are dying from AIDS. Not like it was back in the day, but it still is occurring today. So yeah, I've always worked in social services, wanting to give back to community.

At some point, if I'm able to live off my art, I would love to. I would love to be able to be the artist 24 hours a day, and do fundraisers for the homeless/mentally ill, for the visually impaired, for breast cancer, for whatever issues I think are important, which I've done over the years. Whenever there's been fundraisers for organizations, from AltaMed to APLA to AHF, I would contribute art to be auctioned off. There's a number of paintings of mine for which I have no idea where they are, because someone purchased them at fundraisers.

04-01:11:05
Holmes:

And with these paintings, because I know, in talking to your cousin Pat and others, who have known your work for a long time, they've talked about the broad scope of your painting, like you've done landscape paintings in New York. Were these types of paintings at the auction, or were these in your regular genre of gay Chicano art being auctioned off?

04-01:11:31
Terrill:

No, it was all my work, my art strategies. There's a particular painting that I think my cousin was referencing, it was a snow scene at Riverside Park in New York, and it was part of my New York Series.

04-01:11:49
Holmes:

Oh, okay, yeah.

04-01:11:52
Terrill:

Which kind of, you know.

04-01:11:53
Holmes:

That one is as well, right.

04-01:11:54
Terrill:

This one is, right, *My Mother's Maiden Name*, where I'm looking back at what it was like living in New York, and I'm looking at photos, images taken back in the day. That painting is this desolate, snowy, beautiful but really—it was the largest blizzard they'd had in 20 years apparently, that winter, and there's not a soul in the piece. It's just very isolated, just pure white snow, with all these dark, stark trees. The title of the painting was, *The Year of Infection, New York, 1980.*"

04-01:12:36
Holmes:

Oh, wow. Okay, so yeah—

04-01:12:37

Terrill:

So I'm totally referencing 1980, right? There I was in New York, and I like to think anyway, that when you look at this isolated, beautiful view of all this snow-covered park, with all these bare trees, that the "Year of Infection," that maybe you might be able to glean from that, that I was probably lonely, homesick, coming from Southern California.

04-01:13:03

Holmes:

Cold.

04-01:13:04

Terrill:

Cold, yeah. Along those same themes, back when I was still working at the Center for the Partially Sighted, I had done an image that I took—well first of all, I used to carry a camera with me all the time, so wherever I was, I'd take a picture of the coffee cup, I'd take a picture of the street, I'd take a picture of the crowds, people on the bus, just whatever and whenever, and so I have all these images saved up over the years. Along those same lines, I did this painting that was actually taken when I was driving on the freeway. The storm had ended, there were clouds that were—I was looking towards the West and there were clouds on one side, but the sun was setting, and it was just gorgeous. You know, after a storm, this gorgeous orange, yellow, magenta sort of a sky. I was driving back from a home visit with one of my clients who was going blind from AIDS, so I did this painting, again with no people in it, just the sky, taken from the freeway, and I titled it, *The Week Five of My Clients Died*. So again, while one could look at the image and just see a landscape or nature, when you read the title, that's your clue about what I'm trying to get at.

04-01:14:34

Holmes:

What you're trying to get to, and again, it's very autobiographical.

04-01:14:37

Terrill:

Yes. In fact, I remember when that was on display during an exhibit somewhere, someone said, "Oh, I love that painting but I hate the title," and I thought well then, you obviously don't get it, that's precisely why I wanted that title. What it had to do with is, I can be very sentimental and romantic perhaps, but I remember driving, being really upset about this client visit and looking at this beautiful sky, and just taking a moment and saying wow, the sky is so beautiful right now. It's during this week, where five of my clients died. Either I would call up to schedule the appointment, "Oh I'm sorry, they went into the hospital, so we need to cancel the appointment." Okay, I understand, and then they died later that week. There are stories from interacting with those folks that will stay with me all my life and that were very—it was very rewarding work but really took a lot out of me. I don't consider myself to be a religious person, I'm not a spiritual person necessarily, but I once told someone—they were talking about their belief in God and I said, "For me, I think the closest I come to a concept of God is when I'm holding the hand of someone who's dying there," and making sure that I have

the radio, so they can listen to the music they want to hear, or whatever the thing was, that I was being of service to them, so to speak, or trying to make a slight difference in their lives. That to me was the closest that I think I come to a sense of something greater than myself.

04-01:16:54

Holmes:

I was going to ask you, with regard to your outreach work outside of being an artist, your artwork is autobiographical, how would you say that working as a caregiver has impacted your art? Would you say that there is certainly an impact there?

04-01:17:21

Terrill:

In a way, but I have never—I'm trying to think here. I don't think I've ever painted directly, any of my clients or patients, or people that I was providing service to, and I think because my sense was, I just felt like that might be exploitive. I didn't want to overly sentimentalize it or it didn't seem right to me. I would paint my friends, certainly, that are dying, and people I know more directly, people I'm involved with, et cetera, or I would try to paint, like I said, the landscape or that sunset, and just title it, *The Week Five of My Clients Died*, but without naming the clients, always being respectful of those folks. Now when I write my book, I will, very specifically talk about some of those moments that I think are worthy of sharing with people, particularly people who don't know, a lot of the younger generation that didn't live through all of the death and dying of everyone around us. That is something that is in my head and that I will, at some point, either want to write about, do stories about, something, but I haven't specifically done paintings about people that I've provided service to.

04-01:19:08

Holmes:

I was going to ask, so if we think of the larger work, over the decades, the genre of art that has been created and associated with AIDS, how would you situate your art in relation to those other genres?

04-01:19:27

Terrill:

Well, funny you should say that, because I was privileged to be in the Art AIDS America exhibit, which opened in 2015 at Tacoma Art Museum. It then traveled to Zimmerman Art Gallery at Kennesaw State in Georgia, and then went to the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and then ended in Chicago, at the Alphawood Gallery. It ended, I believe, in April of this year, and that was curated by Jonathan Katz, who I adore, and Rock Hushka from Tacoma Art Museum. Originally, Jonathan Katz's vision for the exhibit, particularly from his academic viewpoint about the art, was that he was looking to—he was trying to do a national retrospective of art created in response to HIV and AIDS, but specifically looking at some of the art strategies that were used, where artists were taking the postmodern method of removing the personal narrative from works. There was that whole movement where the art was about form, color, process, installation; you removed the personal aspects or narrative from the work.

But there were artists like Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who died from AIDS, who wanted the work shown in the art institutions, and the only way that you could do that would be to be subversive in the formal qualities of the art. Museums were not going to take art about HIV and AIDS that was in your face about it, so there were more subtle strategies. Felix Gonzalez-Torres did an installation work, and I'm going to get all the little details wrong, but it called for installing a bunch of colored candies of a certain weight, like 130 pounds of candies all piled up in a corner, which just looks like an installation work—it's color, it's form. Patrons were asked to go ahead and take a candy with them if they want. But when you realize the 130 pounds of candy was the weight of his partner or his lover who had AIDS, and as people would come and take candies, the weight of the candies would go down and diminish. That was very subtle, but for people who were experiencing friends dying and wasting and losing weight, the subtlety was heavy. We get it, we got it. Also, the fact that the patrons would come in, take a piece of candy and walk out with it, meant that you were now engaging with the art and you were carrying the art with you. It was almost like a viral infection right, it implicated that.

04-01:22:51

Holmes:

Oh yeah, yeah.

04-01:22:54

Terrill:

So there was all these strategies that were utilized, but it also brought in work like the agitprop of ACT UP in New York. My work, when I talked to Jonathan Katz, when he was saying to me that he was thinking of doing this show a few years ago, I said to him, "Well, I hope that the work that you have isn't so New York centric, because we've all been familiar with ACT UP, we've all been familiar with David Wojnarowicz and Peter Hujar and Robert Mapplethorpe." I said there were a lot of artists, Latino artists, artists of color on the West Coast, that were not part of the New York Art Center. We were doing art too and particularly among Latinos. Then he said to me, "Great. Why don't you write an essay about it for the catalog," and I said, "Sure!" The minute I said it I panicked, what am I doing? But I ended up contacting Professor Robb Hernandez and we collaborated on an essay for the catalogue, which I thought was really good, because the artistic response from Latinos was specific to our cultural identity. There were galleries that were using the *Dia de los Muertos* theme to do works that were advocating on behalf of HIV and AIDS. There was an artist, Cory Roberts-Auli, who exhibited with VIVA, that was doing these works where he would get people who were—and they were mostly Latinos—living with HIV and AIDS, and take their blood, and then paint their bodies in their blood and then do an imprint on cloth. It indicated the Shroud of Turin, but it also was provocative, because here was HIV infected blood, which everyone was fearing, you know that was the big thing. When you talk about, well you can't get AIDS just from sitting next to a person. Yeah, but what if they have a cut and it bleeds, you know people coming up with these weird convoluted ideas about how they might get HIV.

What if they're not aware and they have a drop of blood and goes into—? It's not going to happen, stop!

Anyway, the one piece that he chose, from the collection of the Leslie Lohman Foundation, where he's on the board, was a still-life, and the title of the still-life is *Still Life with One Week's Dose of Truvada and Forget Me Nots*. It was a combination of things, a confluence of things. On the one hand, you have these big Truvada capsules or pills, which are there in the arrangement, and for me, being HIV positive, the Truvada, that was one week's dosage for me. But, given the FDA ruling in 2012 and PrEP, that is now also one week's dose of Truvada for someone who is HIV negative, as a preventive measure. So there's a double meaning to the pills being put in there.

But I also was referencing the artist David Wojnarowicz, who was out of the East Village scene. He's a hero of mine in terms of his blatant work that he would do, that was very homoerotic. It was also very political. He had done a piece that I always loved called, *One Day This Kid Will...* I forget the whole title, but it's a picture of him at maybe the age of seven years old, and then the copy just says, one day this kid will discover something that is going to change his world, that he's going to feel a stirring in his loins, and blah-blah-blah, talking about how this little kid is going to be homosexual. And he is then going to be facing people who are going to try to give him shock therapy, people that are going to do this, that, and the other. So on the wall, in my still-life, I have that piece by David Wojnarowicz, and I have it sitting on the wall like it's in the domestic setting there.

Also, a few years before in Washington, D.C., at the National Portrait Gallery, there was an exhibit called "Hide Seek," that was curated by Jonathan Katz, and it was the first national retrospective of looking at American art where LGBT or queer artists were putting images and/or making art that was hiding and/or seeking a sexual orientation or identify that was different. It included everything from again, Mapplethorpe to Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, et cetera, but one of the pieces that was in there was by David Wojnarowicz. He had a small video called, "Fire in My Belly," that was like two or three minutes, and one of the little images in there for a few seconds, showed a crucifix with ants crawling on it, and of course his commentary on the Catholic Church or the Christian right. There was an outcry from the Catholic League about it, and the Smithsonian, the National Portrait Gallery, actually removed it, they censored it. They removed it from the exhibit and there was an outcry in the art world, and galleries and museums across the world protested and showed the video. So in essence, the censoring of the work, the outcry against it, actually turned it into something that many more people got to see and engage with, the attention that it brought to it.

In my work, I have not the crucifix, but I have the Truvada capsules with a huge ant crawling on it, and that's my sort of referencing David's work. But instead of looking at the Catholic Church, I'm looking at the pharmaceutical

industry, and it's just to be leery, be leery about it. And then the bouquet of forget me nots in the middle is—on the one hand I like the name, the term, “forget me not,” and there's a picture of David Wojnarowicz, like don't forget those artists that came before us and the advocates on whose shoulders we stand. But at the same time, the forget me nots bouquet was one that was traditionally used in marriage bouquets. This was the year of marriage equality happening, so I'm referencing marriage equality, and in my way of thinking, I'm also trying to implicate that the gay community had been so focused on marriage equality these last few years, that HIV and AIDS was no longer a priority, and that's why I think the term “forget me not” really works there. And instead of a blue or white ribbon around the bouquet of forget me nots, I have a red ribbon. So that was my work that was in there, more contemporary and made at a time when there were things like Truvada for PrEP, as opposed to a lot of other work from the 1980s, which shows photographs of people dying, of lesions, things that were *memento moris*, about grieving and/or political agitprop. Mine is more of a Latino focus, but also more contemporary, looking at the roll of pills and the pharmaceutical industry.

04-01:31:16

Holmes:

As you were just discussing there, I think we were also able to see that kind of trajectory, of how art about AIDS has changed and evolved over time, right?

04-01:31:26

Terrill:

Sure. Yes.

04-01:31:28

Holmes:

Just as our knowledge of it has also evolved. We're hoping, politically and socially, you know, that perception has also evolved, right?

04-01:31:39

Terrill:

Well, hearing you say that, one of the things I think is interesting is that, it took 10 years to put that show together (I think it was 10 years?), according to Jonathan Katz. I know he said he approached over 200 art museums, galleries, that refused to take on the show.

04-01:32:00

Holmes:

Interesting.

04-01:32:02

Terrill:

Right? So, it was in Tacoma, it was in Georgia, then it was in the Bronx in New York, and then Chicago, at the Alphawood Gallery. It wasn't at any of the major big name art institutions. A national retrospective of art in response to HIV and AIDS, and it was never shown in San Francisco? Technically, it was never shown in Los Angeles. There was a preview of the show in West Hollywood, which is definitely very LGBT focus and a supportive city, and it was honoring their 30 years of cityhood, as well as pride. So there was an exhibit at the West Hollywood Library, as well as the ONE institute gallery,

which are next door to each other, and it was just a smaller version of the show that opened in Tacoma.

04-01:32:52

Holmes: That's interesting. It's a bit surprising that the de Young or MOMA there in San Francisco did not choose to actually feature that kind of exhibit yet.

04-01:33:11

Terrill: And I don't know all of the details.

04-01:33:15

Holmes: Sure.

04-01:33:16

Terrill: I mean there might be something along the lines of SFMOMA might have been in the midst of their building, their expansion.

04-01:33:25

Holmes: Always, yeah.

04-01:33:26

Terrill: Maybe that might have been a part of it. I would also think that there would be some art gallery or institution in San Francisco that would have been willing to take it on. Maybe it was also that they didn't have a large enough space, I don't know. But I do know that in his talking to different curators in different levels of curatorship, at different museums, or directors, they would say that, "We're looking for blockbusters. We're looking for putting on exhibits that people are going to come to and pay money and tickets, buy tickets to go see. And people are not going to want to come and see an exhibit about AIDS, an exhibit that's going to be a downer." I don't look at it as an exhibit about being a downer, depressing. I think it's historic. It's also very cathartic, and it's also interesting to see the variety of responses to the work that came out in response to HIV and AIDS. There's some images in there, like Masami Teraoka, a Japanese American artist that used to be based in L.A., in Venice, and he had done a whole series of geisha and a thousand condoms; these beautiful, beautiful replications of Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints from the 17th, 18th century, with Japanese geisha, but there's a geisha and she's trying to open a condom package. But in the one piece that was there in the Art AIDS America exhibit, as the geisha is tearing open the condom package to be safe, her kanzashi, the wooden headdress that's traditional for Japanese geisha, you look at it and you can see that it itself has lesions on it. So the implication is that it's already too late, she's already infected. Something as subtle as that, referencing the Japanese tradition, all the way to photographs of men with lesions, to artists framing soiled underwear from back in the day.

Roger Brown has this great painting. He was from the Imagist School out of Chicago, and I think he was the only one that was gay out of that group, and he died from AIDS. But there's this image, a very cartoonlike image, and it's a skeleton, a black skeleton, a dark skeleton, wearing a leather cap, and the light,

the aura behind the skeleton, is kind of peach colored, and I think the title is something like *Peach Light*. That indicates how, back in the day, some of the bars would switch to peach lighting or soft lighting, because their patrons who were coming in sick and frail, looked better in peach lighting.

04-01:36:54

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

04-01:36:54

Terrill:

To me, there's all these little, I don't know what you would call them, these little cultural things that occurred within the gay community that are sort of lost now, because they're not as necessary as they were back then. But it was also an indication of the response from gay men, homosexuals and lesbians, responding to the AIDS crisis. I think one thing about HIV and AIDS that I think has occurred, is that it has totally shaped the perception of homosexuals in our culture. I know that there's been discussions and arguments about you could not have marriage equality if there hadn't been AIDS, because I think a lot of folks that didn't think they knew any homosexuals at that time, started to now realize, they're all around us; my neighbor, my hairdresser, and they're dying from AIDS. They started to see homosexual men as more than just sexual. They saw them as people with emotions, feelings, mortality, and they saw the response.

I remember reading an article about a man who could not accept his son's homosexuality, but he still was his son, he was very conservative. He was interviewed and he said that when he saw his son caring for his partner, [chokes up] as he died, I mean bathing him and changing his diaper and all of that stuff, he realized, he said, "I could never have done that for my wife, and yet my son was doing it for his partner." And so he started to recognize the depth of emotion and feelings that men can have for one another, I guess.

You know along those lines, I just thought of something. I had mentioned before how I was dating that kind of cholo that was an alcoholic, named Ronnie, who like I said was really nice when he was sober. Because of his alcoholic behavior, I had decided, I can't do this, we're going to break up. I'll just share this. I had gone to the movies with friends and when I came back to my apartment, my roommate who was there, I looked and the apartment, the door, opened right to the sidewalk. It was an old fashioned apartment from the 1930s, but it had four little glass windows, where you could look to see out. They were broken and there was cardboard there and I was like, what happened? I came back from the movies. My roommate says, "Oh my God, Ronnie was over here and I wouldn't let him in, and he was drunk and he was so upset, and he punched the glass window and that's why they're broken." I said, "Well where he is?" He goes, I don't know he took off and blah-blah-blah. And then my cousin Pat was there and she said, "Joey, your mom called, she wants you to call her." I said okay, and so I called my mom, who lived a half a block away, because remember my mom and sister had moved out.

04-01:40:36

Holmes: Yeah, yeah.

04-01:40:37

Terrill: I said, "Hey mom what's up," and she said, "Joey, Ronnie is here and he's bleeding. He needs to go to the doctor, could you come and get him?" My emotions, I was so angry with him, first of all, like why would you involve my mom in this drama, right? Especially given her mental frailty. It just made me so angry with him. My cousin Pat and I had to go a half a block away, to my mom's apartment, and I could see that there were drops of blood where the broken window was, and they went all the way up to the steps, to my mom's apartment. He had been there for a couple hours, talking, and my mom was saying Joey, please, get him to the—she wrapped a little towel around his hand, she said, "He needs to get some stitches." "Okay, mom, I'm really sorry that this happened." I was really surprised, my mom was just like, "Okay, all right," she was calm, she wasn't even freaking out. We took him to the hospital, he got his stitches, and when I talked to my mom after, I called her, because I thought she's traumatized, right? Of course she's traumatized by this. She said, "Mijo, I have to tell you, when Ronnie came in"—because she only saw Ronnie as sweet, when he was sober, and she said, "I was just so worried about him, with the blood," and she said, "We talked for two hours and he was saying how much he loved you," and she goes, "you know, I never thought two men could love each other like a man and a women, but I understand now. I understand that you do love each other the way that a man and woman would." Like yeah, that's what I've been trying to tell you. But again, I had assumed or thought that the response from my mom was going to be upset, depression, this drama, anger. The last thing I expected was that this incident was going to have a positive effect on my mom fully understanding.

04-01:42:53

Holmes: And eye-opening kind of experience, a window in.

04-01:42:53

Terrill: Yeah. Isn't that weird, it's kind of weird.

04-01:42:57

Holmes: I wanted to ask, before we end, thinking back as one who has now been doing art for nearly 50 years plus, right?

04-01:41:11

Terrill: Well, about, yeah, I'm getting there.

04-01:43:15

Holmes: Ok, ballpark, right? How have you seen the Chicano art scene change, and your place within that scene also change with it and evolve.

04-01:43:28

Terrill: Okay. Well, first of all, the Chicano art scene that really seemed to develop or blossom was concurrent with the farmworker movement, *La Huelga*. There was a blossoming of writing, as well as Teatro Campesino, and community

groups, arts projects, murals, Self-Help Graphics in East L.A., and the focus was on Chicano, Latino identity, you know, *La Familia*, and the messaging and subject matter was, for lack of a better word, maybe—I don't know if politically correct would be the right term, but it was highlighting and promoting Chicano culture. There wasn't a lot of critiquing of that culture, per se, and certainly, there wasn't any option for overt LGBT, homosexual, lesbian work within that. I mean, there were gay or lesbian artists who were doing work, but it was work that manifested in iconography that was specific to being Chicano, but you would not—there was no reading of it as gay or lesbian. Obviously, I was trying to do work that was sort of changing or adding to the canon of what constitutes Chicano art, and it wasn't very accepted. I would be turned down from group exhibits about Chicano art because well, that doesn't really fit, and what they were saying is that it's too queer, it's too gay.

I remember going to New Space Gallery, Joanie was the owner of New Space Gallery, I forget her last name right now, and it was a recommendation of someone that knew her, who really liked my work. I went and what I showed her was the "Chicanos Invade New York" series, so it wasn't even something that was overtly homosexual in nature. But I remember, it was very telling to me, she looked at it and she goes, "This just doesn't look like any Chicano art that I've seen before," and I said, "Great. Maybe you need to open up your definition of what Chicano art is, or what constitutes Chicano art." That seems so long ago, because today, oh my gosh, with social media, the Internet, and this whole new younger generation of queer, Latinx, Latin, gay, LGBT studies, academics, activism. It's just really blossomed and opened up a lot of possibilities, and then through social media, I'm connected to this whole new generation of young, out, proud, queer Latino investigation of art related to both sexual identity and ethnic identity, in a way that didn't exist in the '70s when I did *Homeboy Beautiful*.

And just the fact that Maricón Collective, in 2015, connects with me and says hey, what if we reprint *Homeboy Beautiful*, and like I said, I was like, "Would people even be interested?" I was shocked at how many people liked it, even if they just viewed it as oh wow, this is so retro, it's really cool! I actually have a following now, of young pups that weren't alive when I was doing the art, and I don't take that for granted, I really don't, because I never thought I was going to live this long, first of all. I have exhibited more in the last three years than I have in the previous ten, and that's been usually by academics, professors, cultural theorists reaching out to me, asking about my work, because they first saw it online. In the 1970s there was no online.

04-01:48:03
Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

04-01:48:05

Terrill:

So I've seen where technology has, certainly within the Chicano art community, expanded. Self Help Graphics, several years ago, doing the first openly gay atelier, or studio, for ten of us gay Latino artists, under Miguel Angel Reyes, and that's when I did the print, *Remembrance*. That to me was a game changer. There were gay artists who were doing work back in the day, through Self Help Graphics, internationally recognized serigraphy workshop, studio, gallery, founded by Sister Karen Bocalero, but they weren't open, they weren't out about it. In fact, if one were to try to be out about it, the response that you would get would be very homophobic, it would be very negative. Today, the response is being celebrated.

I'm going to open, on June 2nd, I'm opening in a Latinx, queer show, at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes there at *La Placita* near Olvera Street, La Plaza. There is a museum for Mexican American culture and history. It's got everything from *La Huelga* to Lalo Guerrero, you know all of these great images, as well as historical artifacts and exhibits, and I'm being a part of a Latinx queer show, which is amazing to me. That never would have happened years ago and I feel fortunate that I've lived long enough to see it, and I embrace it. I'm particularly tickled with the younger—and when I say younger, I mean people in their 20s and 30s, who have done research and written papers and follow the work, and they talk to me about the work and they already know the work, they've seen it online and it's familiar to them, and they appreciate it. I'm like wow, that is so cool, because where were all you guys back in the 1970s, do you know what I mean?

04-01:50:22

Holmes:

Yeah. [laughs]

04-01:50:25

Terrill:

Then, as I'm talking about back in the day, there are those of us that are still here talking about that, but a lot of the people, a lot of the artists that I engaged with and that I did things with, are no longer here, and that's something I'm very aware of. Like I look in the mirror and I see all the gray hair. I don't know if you noticed but in my bathroom there, there's a mirror that, when I was 33 years old, I painted my image on the mirror, as though I was looking into the mirror. It was just a thing. I was thinking about let's see if this works, and I might incorporate mirrors in my still-lives, so that not only is somebody looking at my domestic setting, with these HIV pills and things that they're maybe unfamiliar with, but if there's a mirror there, they now become part of the art, because they're reflected in the still-life.

04-01:51:26

Holmes:

They're there, yeah.

04-01:51:28

Terrill:

That was my way of thinking. Well today, I look in that mirror and there's the painted image of me at 33, and then here's this old man with the silver hair

actually looking in the mirror. I look at pictures of my friends and they're all in their 20s and 30s because they didn't live beyond that, you know what I mean, they don't grow old. It's the old Blondie song, "Die Young Stay Pretty." You know, that's what they say about James Dean, he died young and he's never going to—he's always going to be James Dean, at that age. I find that so true of looking at all of my friends who didn't live to see 40. So, I'm aware of it and I'm very appreciative, and I also feel like I'm here not to just talk about my art, but also to share what I know of my other friends who are artists, who are no longer here, like Mundo Meza and Teddy Sandoval, and Jack Vargas, the whole lot.

04-01:52:40

Holmes: You've surely given a fitting tribute to them, during our conversations, I think.

04-01:52:42

Terrill: Oh good, I hope so.

04-01:52:46

Holmes: I think so.

04-01:52:48

Terrill: And at some point, if there's anybody that looks at this, that wants to do a movie, that wants to do a movie about the era or whatever, I'd be more than happy to be a consultant or something. There's a lot of Latino stories and Chicano stories that have just not been looked at and investigated on a big level. Where are the big Hollywood movies about Latinos and Chicanos, that aren't about low riding, right?

04-01:53:28

Holmes: Yeah, yeah, especially even from my perspective, your work has really changed that, I mean not even stereotype, but have actually changed the perspective on how to look at Latino culture.

04-01:53:39

Terrill: And part of it is too, even back in the day, working with VIVA. This is also with certain writers and friends of mine, like Marisela Norte, I know we used to always, over coffee or something, we'd be talking and I go like, "How is your reading, Mari?" She's the Poet Laureate of East L.A., and she's like, "Ay, Joey," she goes, "I counted 20 Frida Kahlo look-alikes," or "Oh, some more images of the Aztec or the Olmec," like what does that have to do with growing up in urban Los Angeles today? Our perspective was trying to not just look at the history and historical iconography, but the realities of today, and that means I don't just look at things that are Chicano or Latino. I investigate and digest and engage with art and music and writing and novels, and articles that are from the African American diaspora, from American diaspora, Hollywood classics, foreign films, Japanese movies. I try to engage and involve myself with everything, because what that does for me is that actually shapes and determines my context and where I fit in or don't fit in, what I relate to or what I don't relate to. I'm saying this because I just had this

conversation with a young academic where they're reading all of the Latinx, queer, brown, Chicano literature. But have you looked at this? Have you looked at David Hockney's work? Have you—"oh no I haven't." "Oh really? Well, you should. Or listen to this music." I mean there's so much out there and I think that I want to try to engage with the world and show them my perspective. So that's my thing.

04-01:55:46

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you, before we go, where do you hope the promise of Chicano art goes here in the next few decades? In dealing with young scholars, young artists, where would you hope that the next step is taken, I mean considering your journey, where do you hope the next generation goes?

04-01:56:16

Terrill:

I'm not sure I know the answer to that, I'd have to think about it a lot, and one of the reasons is because when I look at where we were in the 1970s or where I was in the '70s, I'm second generation native Angeleno, which in and of itself is something. People in L.A., the population here, the majority of people in L.A. have come from somewhere else, whether it's Central America or Chicago or the Midwest, everyone usually tends to be from somewhere else. But I grew up here, my mom grew up here. My paternal grandparents were from Cananea, Mexico, or Durango, Mexico on my mom's side. But the thing is, I see my third cousins who are of this younger generation, and their connection to being Mexican American or Chicano isn't as strong, it's not as entrenched, they don't necessarily identify. I see that with a lot of immigrant communities. I know there's Chinese Americans and Chinese American students, and even Japanese American, that the farther away they get from their ethnic heritage or cultural roots, the more Americanized they become. Maybe that's inevitable in the same way that back in the day, there were communities of Germans and Italians that only spoke German, only spoke Italian, and their offspring today are hey, I'm from Chicago, I'm from the Bronx, I'm from wherever, but they don't necessarily identify strongly with their ethnic heritage. Do you know what I'm saying?

04-01:57:59

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah.

04-01:58:00

Terrill:

I don't know where that's going—how that's going to play itself out. I like to think that the Chicano art world would be flexible enough, and particularly, I'm hopeful, with all these young academics that are investigating particularly queer, Latino, Latinx, LGBTQI expression and art-making strategies, that that will actually help to expand the genre of what we call Chicano art, but I'm not sure I know what that looks like. Now of course, when my movie debuts and it's a big hit, that will change everything. [laughs] Yeah, so that's my—I'm not sure. I hope that what it ends up being is something that people can feel inspired by, connected to, because certainly within Mexican or Chicano

culture, art has played a big role in our culture, in a way that is different than United States, American culture. Right?

04-01:59:27

Holmes: Sure.

04-01:59:28

Terrill: My aunts that grew up in Arizona and Cananea, that always had some sort of creative outlet or output, whether it was tile-making, jewelry-making, things like that. When I've gone to Mexico City, when I visit Mexico City, I'm always enthralled with how public art is really present in a lot of the locations, the public spaces, and people seem connected to it. I know that that's different or separate than the way we are here in the United States. I'm not trying to be derogatory towards the United States. I'm just saying that I would love to see, 30 to 40 years from now, that there still is this identity called Chicano, and that we haven't been subsumed into a more banal or general sort of identity.

04-02:00:27

Holmes: Well Joey, thank you. This has been amazing.

04-02:00:33

Terrill: Good.

04-02:00:34

Holmes: I used the word amazing. [both laugh]

04-02:00:37

Terrill: You caught it though, you caught it, yes.

04-02:00:40

Holmes: It's just been a wonderful experience. Any last words before we part?

04-02:00:48

Terrill: Yeah, and I'm going to just say this really quickly. It was my mother, my sister and myself, we were the trio that was the family. My dad was sort of estranged, and there's a whole history there, but my dad died in 1999. My mom passed away 17 years ago, in 2000, and so after years of thinking that I was going to die and my mom would go through the grieving for her son, as well as my sister eventually having to grieve for her brother, it turns out that I've outlived them both and I'm "it." It's just me.

I never thought I was going to live this long, but also that I would ever outlive, certainly my sister, who was four years younger. She died of a very rare form of cancer five years ago this July, and the thing is, is that my sister was very smart, she was a businesswoman, she was marketing and communications director for Foothill Transit, huge, and just a sweetheart, and we were very close. Within the family, we were called two peas in a pod, and when she had cancer, was in the hospital, my assumption was that oh, she'll beat this, just like other women friends of mine who have beat—they had other forms of cancer, breast cancer. But, it was in 2012, it was the International AIDS

Conference in D.C., and the first time that the conference was held in the U.S. in 20 years, so I left my sister's bedside, my brother in-law was there by her side, we would tradeoff being with her, and she was okay, she was stable and things looked good. I went to the conference in D.C., and on our second day there, I was sharing a room in the hotel with one of our doctors from Nepal, which itself, was a pleasure to meet him.

I got this phone call from my brother in-law that just said, "Joey, your sister has taken a turn for the worse, there's an infection, she might not make it." I was shocked and horrified, and of course I knew that that meant I needed to just get on a plane and get back to L.A., like the heck with the conference, the heck with the advocacy, all that stuff. The poor doctor from Nepal, he must have just thought I was so weird, I'm throwing everything in my suitcase saying, "I need to go, I need to go, my sister is sick and she might die," and in my head I was envisioning that I'm going to go to the airport and go up and say give me your first ticket back to L.A like in a movie. But I got to the airport and it was close to midnight. I didn't know the airport was closed, it was empty, totally empty, and there was a maintenance guy there who said well, the first airlines—I don't know if it was American Airlines, he goes they open at 6:00 a.m., and I said I'm going to stay here and just wait until they open. I was sitting there, in this beautiful cavernous Dulles Airport that's totally empty when my brother in-law called me and told me, "She's gone." And it hit me hard, very hard, and I just wailed. I was like a wounded animal, just weeping, crying, in this big, huge, empty airport, and I knew my crying was just echoing throughout, and the only other sound was a maintenance guy on one of these machines that would buff the floors, and you could hear that buzzing. He was looking over at me and I guess he just figured, okay obviously, this man is in grief.

I sat there for six hours, grieving for my sister, before getting on a plane, and then when I arrived back in L.A., my brother in-law had texted, "Why don't you just come over directly to the house." I said yes, absolutely, and I went to the house. It was my brother in-law and my niece, and they said you know, let's go have breakfast, I said okay, let's do that. He said, "Your sister wanted me to have you do something." "Sure, whatever." He says, "Come on you drive," and I said okay, and we got in the car. I didn't know, whatever it was, I was like yeah I'll do it. We were going over on Vermont Avenue and then he said, "turn here," and I pulled in and I'm like, "Nick, this is a car wash." He said, "Your sister's last words to me were, 'If I die, can you just make sure that Joey gets his car washed?'" I started laughing, I was like oh my God, I had tears, I was grieving but laughing, and I said, "That is so my sister." So yeah, I got my car washed and then we went and had breakfast.

With all the grieving and death and dying of friends from HIV and AIDS that I have experienced, the death of my sister is unique, it has a place separate from everything else. I think about her every day and I know she's with me every day. I just wish she were alive to see the recognition that I'm finally

getting for my art. Anyway, I want to dedicate this whole process and interviews to my sister, Linda. That's it.

04-02:08:15

Holmes: Thank you, Joey.

[End of Interview]