

Episode 2: “Not Going Back” with Joey Terrill

Interview Introduction

Joey: This is you speak radio. With generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, an intergenerational project by one institute and the subwords archive on Tongue land.

[MUSIC]

Joey's Introduction

Modelline: My name is Modelline. I'm an Asian American high schooler from the Bay Area, California. I'm involved with my local Pride Center, currently working on producing a picture book for kids that celebrates queer history. In this episode, I spoke to Joey Terrill, a renowned artist who draws on aspects of his queer and Chinese identity to create beautiful paintings and performance art. We talked about the importance of seeing representation in the art world, his work documenting victims of the AIDS crisis through portraits as well as in the many projects he's worked on as a director for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Lastly, we spoke about our own “coming out” journeys and how much progress the queer community has experienced since he was a child, creating a truly meaningful, intergenerational dialogue.

[MUSIC]

Joey Terrill: AIDS brought out the worst and the best in human beings. I saw mothers and fathers reject their children because they had AIDS, even as they lay dying. I saw medical staff, whose charge is to heal and help people, would not enter their rooms. But then, I also saw people rise up to the challenge in ways that, that I, I found very surprising and loving, and I like to think that I was part of that. Especially today, the LGBTQ community is a target, and I think that everyone has to come together as a chosen family and work together to fight this. I know I'm definitely not going back in anyone's closet.

Modelline: Thank you so much for sharing that. That's a good message. I'm inspired to keep preserving the stories of queer history because they're very valuable, and I think a lot of people in my generation maybe don't recognize that the work that you guys have done before. We should keep on talking about this and sharing it.

[MUSIC]

Interview Begins

Modelline: My name is Modelline. I'm an Asian American high schooler from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Joey: My name is Joey Terrill, and I'm an artist. I live in Los Angeles, and I'm in my studio in Boyle Heights. In four months, I will turn sixty-nine years old. As far back as I can remember, I was always interested in art. Even as a toddler, I was already drawing and scribbling and then my father was an artist. He wasn't a professional artist; he was working there. He would paint and sculpt, and I grew up with his paintings on the walls and sculpture and furniture. Through kindergarten and first grade and second grade, I would work with my dad on things, and I thought, “Well, that's what people do. They make art,” but I soon realized, “Well, no, not everybody makes art.” But I always wanted to be an artist, so when I went to college, I majored in art.

Modelline: So it's something that's been a part of your life forever?