

Episode 5: “Dance Our Dances” with L. Frank

Desiree Introduction

Desiree This is YouSpeak radio. With generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, an intergenerational project by one institute and the outwords archive on Tongva land.

[MUSIC]

L. Frank Introduction

Desiree My name is Jasper Chen. I can be and him pronouns. I am a rising high school senior in the Los Angeles area and a queer trans guy. I interviewed L. Frank, a Two-Spirit artist, activist, and writer. Much of their work focuses on indigenous identity and indigenous language revitalization. We spoke about L. Frank's childhood, their connections with activism and Two-Spirit identity, their art, their thoughts on the connections between language revitalization and queerness, and much more. I find L. Frank's work and fearlessness in their identity very inspiring, so it was really great to speak to someone I see as a role model.

[MUSIC]

L. Frank I was the protector of the weirdos. Those who had often been on the outs by others, ostracized by others I found them quite charming or friendly or smart or whatever, so I would become friends with them. If you had to have teams, my teams were always the outcasts, and oh, we were happy because we always liked everybody's but because we were odd by our uniqueness. Being different isn't always comfortable, so it was a good way to show our strength.

Desiree When I was younger, I used to tell my friends that the people I liked were the people nobody liked, so I really relate to that a lot.

[MUSIC]

Interview Begins

Desiree My name is Jasper

L. Frank My name is L. Frank. I am Tongva Subanawat, and Apsachan, and Barikani. I am a Hollywood Indian, three tribes.

Desiree You've talked about being particularly close with your maternal grandparents.

L. Frank My mother was quite young, so my grandparents were like, “Oh, we’ll take care of this child.” In Hawaii, they call it being *hahai-ele* was really fortunate— not fortunate that there was somebody there, but the somebody who were there totally got me. From then on, it was pretty hi and low as to who, who got me. My grandfather was ill, so I was around him all the time. He’s the one who bathed me in the morning and taught me to be my shoes and talked to me about activism. My searching for my indigeneity started before I was even born because I could hear the language. When I got here, there wasn’t the language. I was already connected, but no other human being knew I was. I did. They just