

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

Youspeak Introduction:

Jasper: This is Youspeak radio. With generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, an intergenerational project by one institute and the outwards archive on Tongva land.

[MUSIC]

Episode Introduction:

Jasper: My name is Jasper Chen. I use he 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 animism 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 uh, we were happy because we always kicked everybody's butt because we were solid by our uniqueness. Being different isn't always comfortable, so it was a good way to show our strength

Jasper: 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:

Jasper: My name is Jasper

L. Frank: My name is L. Frank. I am Tongvet Kukamovet, and Ajachmem, and Rarámuri. I am a Hollywood Indian, three tribes.

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

L. Frank: My mother was quite young, so my grandparents were like, “Okay, we'll take care of this child.” In Hawaii, they call it being hānai-ed. I was really fortunate— not fortunate that there was somebody there, but the somebody's who were there totally got me. From then on, it was pretty hit and miss 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 tie my shoes and talked to me about animism. 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