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Central Coast Queer Archive Project (CCQAP)

The Central Coast Queer Archive Project (CCQAP) is proud to present this recap of its recent work. As a recipient of a 2020 Humanities For All Quick Grant award from California Humanities (in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities) one of our tenets is to foster intergenerational mentorship between youth and elders. For this Pride edition of the Gala Newsletter we wish to share the reflections of two of the CCQAP interns, one a student from Cal Poly University and another from Cuesta College. Here, they reflect on the experience of interviewing elders in the San Luis Obispo LGBTQ+ community. For more information on the project and to view videos, please visit www.sloqueerarchive.org

Reflections of Michael Morris:

My name is Michael Morris and I have been involved with the Central Coast Queer Archive Project (CCQAP) for over two years. This weekend I had the opportunity to lead an interview with Carroll Leslie which was a really rewarding experience. Delayed over a year by Covid-19, our team was finally able to gather safely with Carroll. In 2006 Carroll was interviewed for an earlier oral history project, and my first task as a CCQAP member was to transcribe Carroll's old interview. The interview featured Carroll and her late partner Barbara reflecting on what their life was like as lesbians living in Laguna Beach, their move to San Luis Obispo, and what life is like here in SLO. As a new CCQAP member I was astounded by how much I was able to learn from all the stories that Carroll and Barbara shared in that interview. This was my first experience learning about queer life on the Central Coast and it paved the way for the work I have done since.

During spring of 2020, I worked as an intern for The Gala Pride and Diversity Center and researched local newspaper archives of the Mustang Daily and the Tribune



to locate significant moments of queer history. Through this work, I was able to learn about many of the different events and organizations that Carroll and Barbara spoke of in their interview, such as bringing the AIDS quilt to San Luis and fighting against discriminatory legislation in the 1990s. Through my research I also learned of the first openly gay organization in San Luis Obispo's history: The Gay Students Union (GSU) started at Cal Poly in 1972. As a history student at Cal Poly I recently finished my senior project, a 35 page research paper about the history of the Gay Students Union.

As I continue my work learning about queer life in San Luis Obispo, speaking with Carroll was a wonderful opportunity. We were able to go into more depth about what life was like when she first moved to Los Osos in 1990. We learned about how, through GALA, Carroll and others raised \$10,000 to bring the AIDS quilt into San Luis Obispo. Carroll reflected on what it was like to live through the AIDS epidemic and what it meant to bring the quilt to San Luis Obispo. She was also able to compare living through two separate pandemics: AIDS and now Covid-19. We talked to Carroll about her bookstore in Los Osos and how it compares to the gay and lesbian bookstore that she ran with Barbara in Laguna Beach. We discussed the role that spirituality has played in her life, and what it is like to be an older member of the lesbian community in Los Osos. However, my favorite part of the experience was just being able to meet and speak with Carroll Leslie. She is an overwhelmingly positive person, and when asked to give advice for future generations, she simply replied "kindness."



Reflections of Dylan Michael Canterbury Baker:

My name is Dylan Michael Canterbury Baker and I am currently a second-year student at Cuesta College. I am the founder of the Cuesta Pride club and a history major working to become a teacher with an emphasis on LGBTQ+ issues



and Caribbean history. I have been with the Central Coast Queer Archive Project for roughly seven months and have greatly enjoyed and appreciated being an intern. While growing up, I had to learn about every culture I that comprised my heritage. But there was always a hole because I never learned about gay history and culture, despite that being a part of who I am. Although originally from Washington D.C., I have come to find my place in San Luis Obispo County.



Interning for the CCQAP exposed me (and other LGBTQ+ young people) to our history. We often learn history through a textbook; but through the archive, young people can be part of history by recording and hearing it firsthand.

I have been able to participate in two oral histories, the first with Kelly Quiros and the second with Carroll Leslie. Listening to the interview with Kelly, I was astounded to hear what it was like to be gay in SLO and Cal Poly in the 1970s and 1980s. One of the things that struck me was Kelly's recounting of how his partner was made to sign an "admission" of his gayness in order to receive a security clearance for his job. Something else that stood out was how the LGBTQ+ community of SLO would socialize in the back of a Howard Johnson's restaurant because there was no other place for the LGBTQ+ community to meet. This stood out to me since so many younger LGBTQ+ people are accustomed to having bars, coffee shops, and bookstores to meet and come together as a community. I think

it so important that younger LGBTQ+ people learn their history from our elders. Now that there are things like same-sex marriage, we seem to forget the struggles that our forebearers went through to achieve such progress.

When I first learned about AIDS, it was not connected whatsoever to the LGBTQ+ community. Instead, I learned about the disease in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. Hearing Carroll Leslie talking about AIDS and its effects, it was astounding to hear



about its impact on the community. One thing that struck me in particular was that despite the calamity AIDS brought particularly to gay men, it also brought the gay and lesbian communities together where there had been divisions between the men and women before. I was amazed by the story of how Carroll and others were able to bring the AIDS quilt to SLO and better inform the large community about AIDS and the LGBTQ+ community within SLO County.

As I stated above, I grew up learning nothing about LGBTQ+ culture or history. But through the CCQAP, I have been able to not only learn but partake in the chronicling of our stories. I am very proud to be part of the essential work the CCQAP does, and I think it is so important that young people learn from their elders.

Pride's Radical Foundation

This pride month we ought not to forget the radical foundation of our community celebration which has often been diluted in wider representation. We as a community must remember that the Stonewall inn uprising, which served as a catalyst for the modern Pride movement, was first and foremost an act of resistance against homophobic and transphobic repression carried out by the police. Against the backdrop of uprisings (both recent and ongoing) against police violence and repression across the country, we ought to recognize the shared struggles and intersections of oppression faced by LGBTQ and BIPOC people. More than just a celebration and an opportunity to bring our community together, we ought to make this (and every) pride month a reminder of resistance both past and present.

