

**Born on July 23, 1946**

**Growing up in San Angelo, Texas, People called me Sissy, queer, and little black sambo.**

**Living in San Jose, Ca. Came to the Tenderloin in the early 1960's, the police would haul you to jail for having long hair, dressing as a female, or just obstructing the sidewalk. They put you in the Queen's tank.**

**US Navy, Viet Nam, after 2 years, I told them I was Gay, I was dishonorably discharged. Later, I fought to change it to an Honorable discharge.**

**I am one of four queens from San Jose moved to the Tenderloin, El Rosa Hotel, in 1967. I started my life as a prostitute.**

**Delores (DeeDee) Yubeta, best friend of 52 years.**

**Went to Gene Compton's Cafeteria. It was the center of the Universe for us because that was nothing else for us.**

**In 1969, Movie about Christine Jorgensen, A trans pioneer.**

**I met her in person went she gave a talk at San Jose State.**

**In 1974, sex change. My Mom/ call me Mija.**

**I know I had arrived**

**1987, I contracted AIDS. Raising funds for AIDS in San Jose, Ca. I performed as a Drag Queen.**

**Six years, as a volunteer, Emotional and practical support for AIDS patients. Aris Project.**

**I volunteered for the Names Project, made 80 AIDS Memorial Quilts.**

**I moved back in to San Francisco in 1993,**

**I volunteered for SF AIDS Foundation, Project Open Hand, Open House. Shanti, LGBT Community Center.**

**Today, my work and the work of others to fight for Trans rights is finally being recognized: Making sure that our Transgender History is never forgotten another 40 years.**

**Sisters, SF Dual count, Shanti, Open House, TNDC, LGBT Community of Albuquerque, SF Pride, Trans March, Howard Greyson Elder Life Conference**

**I blown away when President Barack Obama sent me a letter honoring me for my activism for my years of service to the Transgender Community.**

**Vicki Mar Lane Name, 100 Block of Turk St., 100 Block of Taylor St. Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way.**

**Steer Committee,**

**ame, Supervisor Jane Kim and Sue Englander, Jasmin Gee, Orlan, Harvey MILK Democratic Club, And many others.**

**Today**

**Tenderloin Queen's Revue involved in going Senior Centers to make sure they are entertain for the Holiday, And not forgotten.**

# THIS IS MY LIFE

MALE TO FEMALE  
LIFE I WAS GIVEN

FELICIA FLAMES ELIZONDO

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE ULGY

My mother  
Juanita Alvarado Elizondo



# My brother Javier



# Javier in the military



Felix Elizondo

Mary Ellen Elizondo

# Felipe Jr.



## **ADVERTISEMENT**

**What would you like those young people to know out there?**

**Don't forget the people who made it happen. Don't forget that all those people that died.**

**Another thing that I'm against is the "queer" word. The "queer" word, in our generation, was being murdered by that name. The "queer" word was just horrible for us because if we were queer we were killed, thrown out, or disposed like trash. Now that the new generation is restoring "queer," you have to be proud. You have to know the history of what "queer" was to us. To be proud of that word—it's not in my vocabulary at all.**

**"I am your history. You can never change that no matter what you do to me."**

**All of my friends passed—died. All the people that, years before us, came and they were killed and murdered and thrown in jail because they were queers.**

**“Gay” was the word that we used in the diction for all of us. We weren’t lesbian, gay, queer, whatever, transgender, whatever. We were gay. We were a community. We weren't silent. We were together. Now that they have it in little boxes, we can't get in here. We're not allowed to go into the little boxes. Do you know what I mean?**

**One more thing, too, I think that the “transgender” umbrella is a joke.**

**Why?**

**How can we ever unite when everybody's got their own little piece of the puzzle, you know what I mean?**

**Transgender is before surgery. Transsexual is after surgery. That should be it. You can do whatever you want to with whatever sexual you are, but don't name it because that destroys the unity of our whole existence.**

## **ADVERTISEMENT**

**What were some of the things that helped you survive those difficult times?**

**I don't know how I survived at Tenderloin. I really don't. Because it was bad, but Compton's was the center of the universe for us.**

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**That's why I tell the kids: I am your history. You can never change that no matter what you do to me. I was the number one person putting Gene Compton's Cafeteria historical plaque on the 100 block of Taylor Street.**

---

**This year, we had our 52nd anniversary of [the] Compton's Cafeteria [riot] and the person that runs that building actually walked into Compton's Cafeteria. I mean, it's not "Cafeteria" anymore—it's transitional housing for criminals. We walked into that door and I cried. I cried because the people that walked in through those doors, whatever became of them, or whatever their future, they came through here. They came through those revolving doors of Compton's, where it was the center of the universe because we had nowhere else to go. The end.**

**SHARE**

**TWEET**

**TAGGED:CULTURESAN FRANCISCOTRANSGENDER  
HISTORYFELICIA ELIZONDOCOMPTON'S  
CAFETERIATENDERLOIN DISTRICT**

## Watch This Next

Felicia A. Elizondo aka: Felicia Flames,

Transsexual women since 1964

Activist, Entertainer, Historian, Trailblazer, Tenderloin Queen, Hair Fairy,

Pioneer, Legend, Icon, Diva, A Viet Nam War Veteran, 32 years of AIDS/HIV.

Game to the Tenderloin in the early 1960's, Saw the Hair Fairey,

Enlisted in the US Navy and was stationed in Coronado Navy Base,

Volunteered to go to View Nam, Maybe they would make me a man,

They gave me a undesirable discharge, later I fault to change it to Honorable discharge.

We came to the Tenderloin in 1967, four queens moved in to the ElRosa hotel, Amada was the manager.

WE were taken to jail for dressing as female, for have long hair, We were taken to jail for anything to make their quota.

In 1987 I became AIDS/HIV Survivor, 32 years. I started raising funds for AIDS in 1987 in San Jose, Ca. I perform as Drag Queen. I was emotional and practical Volunteer for AIDS patients.

I moved back in To San Francisco in 1993,

Volunteer for Project Open Hand, than became a staff.

Volunteer for Shanti, than became a staff.

Volunteer for LGBT Community Center, staff and than retired.

AWARDS:

AIDS Hero Award from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence,

Shanti, Testimony of Spirit Award

Open House, Trailblazer Award

LGBT Community of Albuquerque, Lifetime Achievement Award

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Joined the San Francisco Ducal, Miss Debutante got two years. Crown Princess to Grand Duchass to Collette La Grand

Trans March for about 4 years,

One of the leaders to put the name of Vicki Mar Lane to the 100 Block of Turk St. And to the 100 Block of Taylor St. Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way, steer name, With Supervisor Jane Kim and Sue Englander, Jasmin Gee, and many other and Aunt Charlies Lounge.

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The Names Project, Volunteered and have made about 80 AIDS Memorial Quilts. Volunteer for the Names Project in 1993 on Market St. near the Castro St OpenHouseSF Volunteered and Worked, Aris Project San Jose, Ca Emotional Support Volunteer, Project Open Hand, Volunteer and worked, LGBT Community Center Volunteer and worked, Shanti Volunteer and worked

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San Francisco Ducal Court. Miss Debutante for two years. And became Gran Duchess Collette LaGrand, Crown Princess for the Ducal Court.

Trans March, 4 years as a member.

One of the main Leaders of the Naming street name on 100 Block of Turk St. Vicki Mar Lane

One to the main Leaders of the Naming street name Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way Along with Harvey Milk Democratic Club, Anaconda (Glendon Hyde), Sue Englander, Jasmine Gee, with Supervisor Jane Kim, and many others with Trans March. Gwen Parks,

She has kept of flame of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, one of this countries first rebellions against police harassment and social oppression of trans people.

**But before that I went to see Christine Jorgensen she gave a talk at San Jose State College and I spoke to her and she gave good advise, Be truth to your self. 1974 I have my sex change. And the best part of all this was when my Mom was beside after my surgery Called me Mija, which is daughter in Spanish. I knew I had arrived.**

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**We came to the Tenderloin in 1967, four queens moved in to  
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manager. I started my life as a prostitute and drug user and  
dealer. And I still have one good friend Delores (DeeDee)  
Yubeta of 52 Years, and we are still great friends. She went  
threw with me.**

**We often went to Gene Compton's Cafeteria, It was the  
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**And more important of All is when President Barack sent me a letter of honoring me for my activism for my years of service to the Transgender Community and Gay Community for my years of service.**

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**And I am invloved with many other thing, My book and My Life.**

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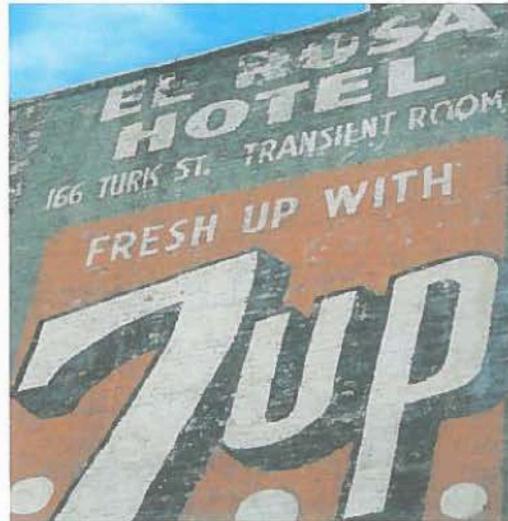
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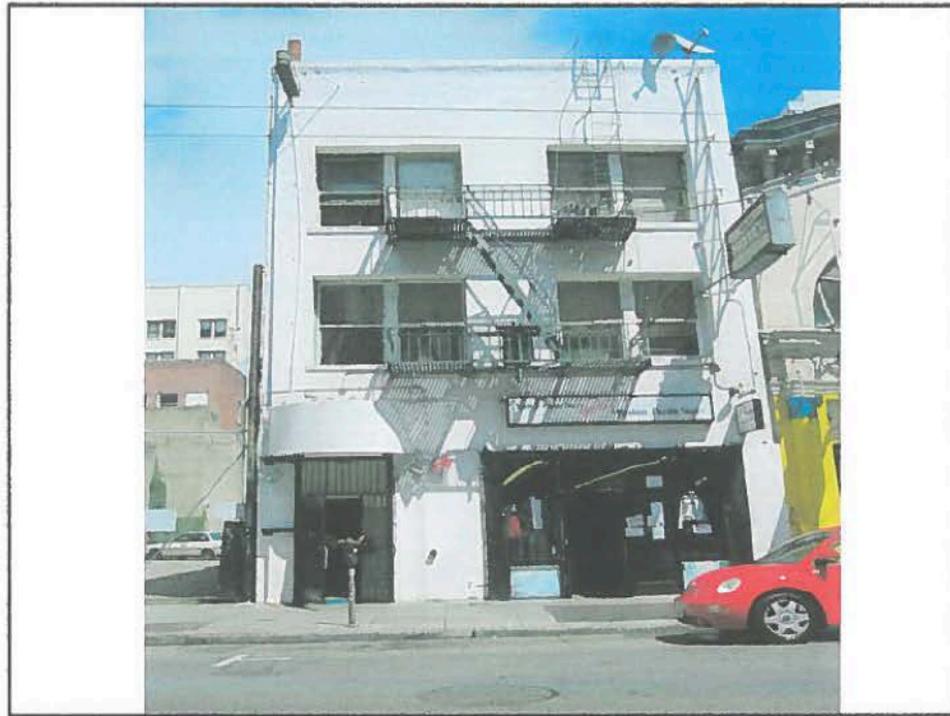
**And I am invloved with many other thing, My book and My Life.**

Vounteer for LGBT Community Center and became staff.

El Rosa Hotel at 166 Turk St.  
Tenderloin, San Francisco



This sign is still visible today. Every time I see it memories flood back of the way it used to be.



- I landed back in San Francisco shortly after my discharge and I knew I was home.
- This is the front of the building which use to be a Transgender Hotel in the 1960's, The El Rosa Hotel.
- This is where most of the girls came to start their new life.
- Five of us moved from San Jose CA to start a new life gay in San Francisco.

---

**a Transsexual woman.**

## Danang, Viet Nam



**I was in Vietnam working unloading cargo from a ship freezer when I realized that the military was not for me. I went to military chaplain first and shared my secret. He escorted me to the Captain and together we told him I was gay. They got me discharged so fast and gave me an UNDESIRABLE discharge. Later it was revised to an Honorable discharge. Because later I proved to them that I was**

Felipe or Phillip before being shipped  
to Danang, Vietnam



I came home on two-week leave before  
being shipped out to Vietnam.  
I never told my mother why I had  
volunteered to go to Vietnam.

**NOTHING** would.

Felipe at 19 years old, San Diego, CA.  
Vietnam Veteran



Confused and trying to be a man that I wasn't, I enlisted in the Navy because I didn't want to be known as a queer, a sissy or Joto. I volunteered because I hoped I would get killed so that the pain I felt of hiding who I was, would go away. I should have won an academy award for impersonating a man in time of war.

If the military didn't make me a man,

## Gene Compton's Cafeteria 1960's



This was my first vision of the Tenderloin. On the corner of Turk and Taylor St. was the center of the Gay Movement in the 1960's. This was the first time I met all kinds of people, JUST LIKE ME. Frankie and I met Siro and he called himself a "HAIR FAIRY."

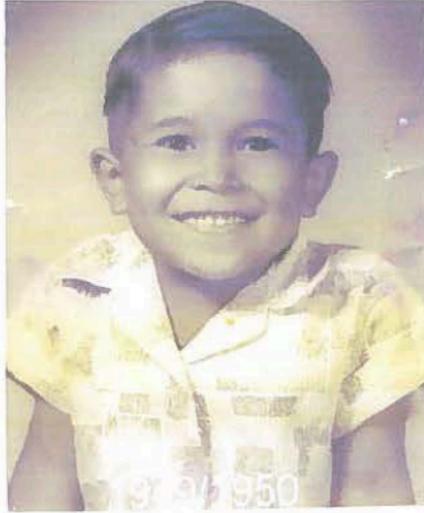
- He took us to his home and showed us what he meant.
- He ratted his hair, put makeup on, put on an angora sweater and skin-tight pants, and tennis shoes.
- He taught us that this was as far as we could go.
- Anything more than that, we could go to jail for impersonating a female.

At 15 years old I came to San Francisco



This was the first time I had ever seen such a big city. I didn't know then, that a small town boy would become a big City Queen.

Felipe Elizondo Jr. at 5 years old.



Am I not a pretty boy.

Felipe at 5 months old



**Born in San Angelo, Texas at 300 W. Ave. V**

***Screaming Queen to Transsexual Woman***  
**Felicia "Flames" Elizondo**

*If These Walls Could Speak*  
*All the stories they would tell.*

- Felicia A. Elizondo aka: Felicia Flames
- Born July 23, 1946 in San Angelo, Texas
- ~~Cherokee~~, Spanish and Aztec

MEXICAN.

# The Gay Community dedicated this plaque in 2006



Chicago, IL 1969

Working as a female impersonator



May 23, 2020

What I remember of my life 1946 to now.

San Angelo, Texas

  
Live at this address.

---

Father Felipe Antu Elizondo

Mother Juanita Alvarado

Javier A. Elizondo

Felix A. Elizondo

Maria Ellen A. Elizondo

Felipe A. Elizondo Jr.

Lola A. Elizondo

---

Grandma, Aunts, Cousins,

My neighborhood/ All Mexican

Friends from childhood.

---

Cub Souts

---

School Rio Vista Elimentary Maxafee, Crenhaw,

Teacher's How nice they were to m.

Dogs, Whitie

Cowboy boots.

Lolie ant bite, with Mary helping her.

How I broke my arm,

How my arm went thru the washing machine.

How I got a mark on my nose.

How the little played with each other.

How kids made fun of me because I was dark skin, even our own family.

---

Friends, Ruben, Rey, Roy, Bobby, Richard Pena, Frank,

My Brother Javier getting married Lille

My first Love, Susan Ortiz / Fred ?

---

My breaking my arm,

My putting my arm in the washing machine

My sister Dolores Ant bite.

---

Amelia Rios taught how to dance the Mambo.

How cousins treat us because of our color of our skin, We knew racism in our own family and neighbors..

---

How Woolworth had fountain that had Black and white.

How I remember blacks in the back of the bus.

Why we didn't want whites or blacks in our school.

But our teachers were white.

---

# **My Life**

**1946 till Now**

**San Angelo, Texas**

**1940's till 2020's**

**My Dad born in 1903 Felipe Antu Elizondo, born in Mexico**

**Came to the USA when there were no borders**

**My Mother Juanita Alvarado born in March 7 1906 in San Angelo, Texas.**

**Jabier Alvarado Elizondo, Born December 3, 1926**

**Feliz Alvarado Elizondo,**

**Mary Ellen Alvarado Elizondo Born June 32, 1945**

**Felipe Alvarado Elizondo Jr., Born July 23, 1946**

**Lola Alvarado Elizondo Born October 1, 1947**

# DNA Results Summary for Felicia Elizondo



© Mapbox, © OpenStreetMap contributors

## Geographic Diversity Estimate

- Indigenous Americas—Mexico 44%
- Indigenous Americas—Mexico 40%
- ▶ Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
  - Northeastern Coahuila & South Texas
  - Eastern Coahuila & Western Nuevo Leon
  - Northern Coahuila
- ▶ Northeastern Mexico
  - Eastern Coahuila & Northern Nuevo Leon
- ▶ Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas

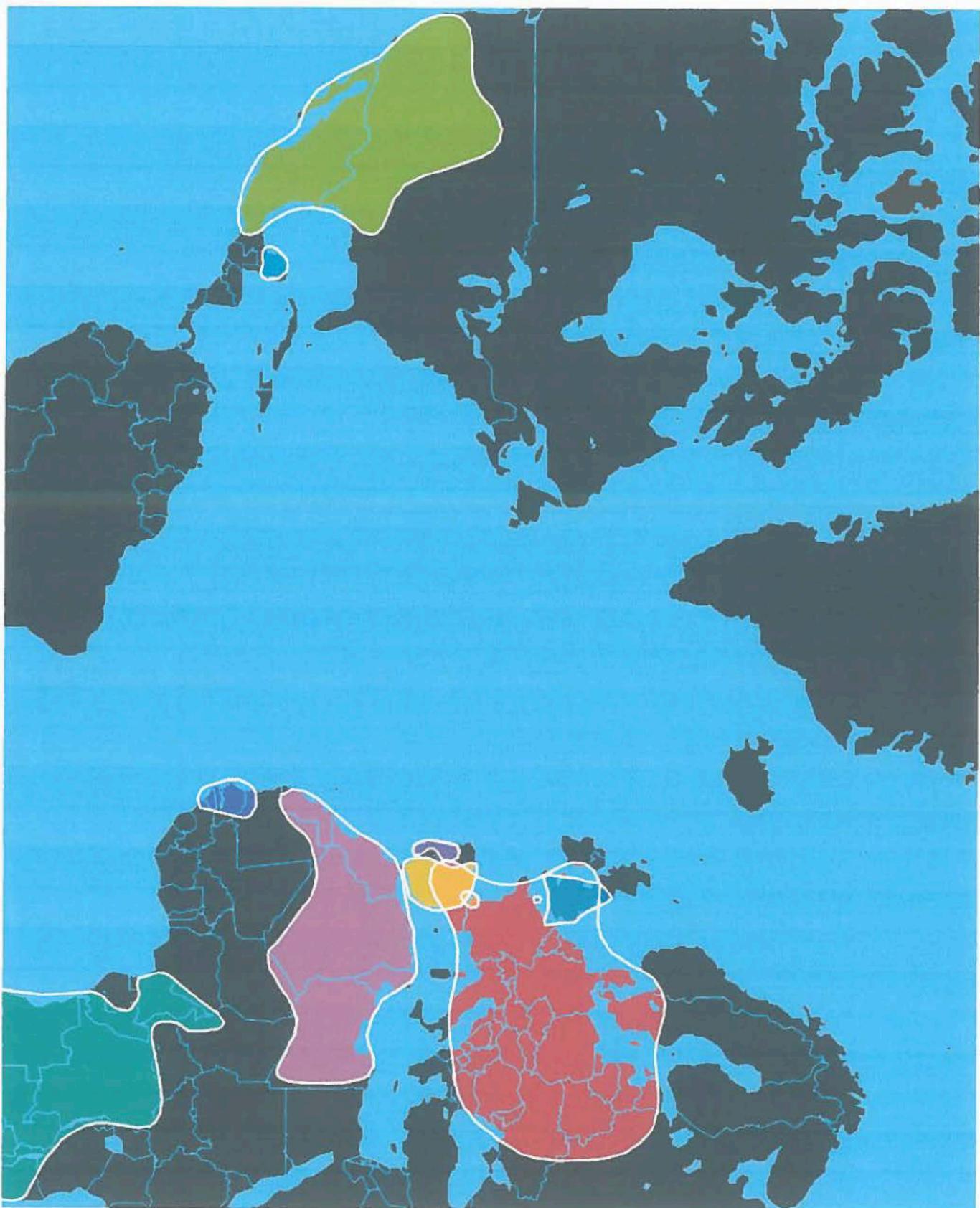
- Durango, Zacatecas & Southern Chihuahua 3%
- Cameroon, Congo & Southern Bantu Peoples 3%
- Indigenous Americas—Yucatan Peninsula 3%
- England, Wales & Northwestern Europe 2%
- Senegal 2%
- Portugal 2%
- Northern Africa 2%
- European Jewish 1%
- Basque 1%

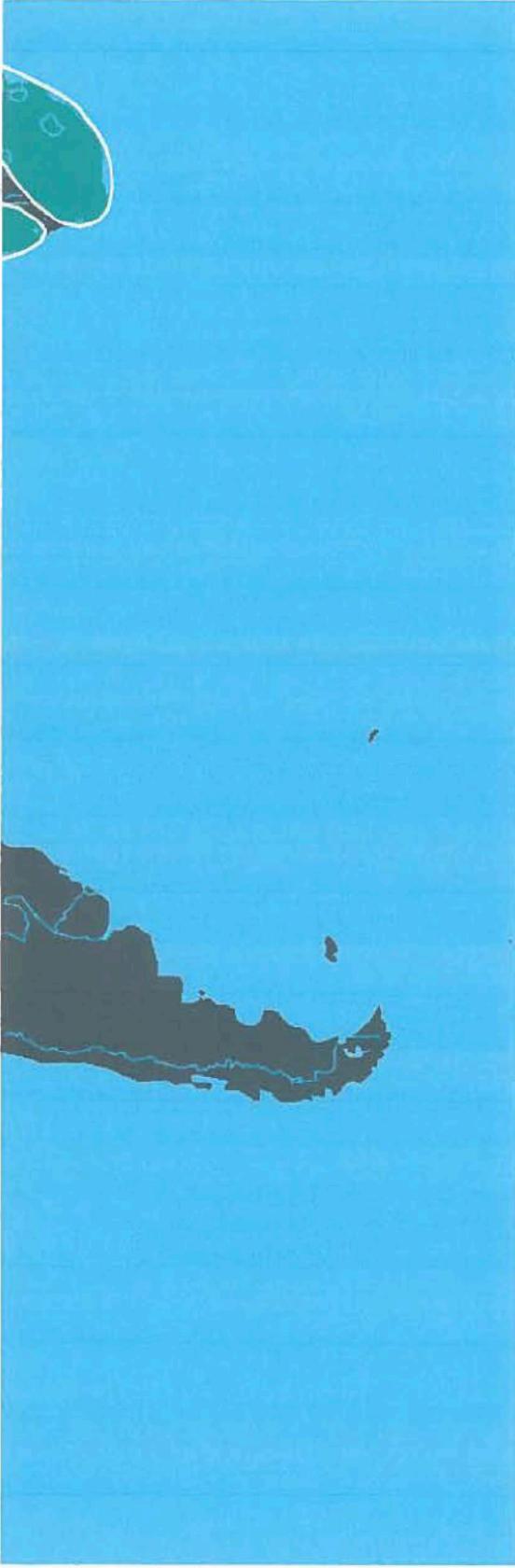


Who your ancestors were and where they came from.

# DNA Story for Felicia Elizondo

19 Dec 2019





© Mapbox, © OpenStreetMap

**Ethnicity Estimate**

- Spain
  - Indigenous Americas—Mexico
  - Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
  - Northeastern Coahuila & South Texas
  - Eastern Coahuila & Western Nuevo Leon
  - Northern Coahuila
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  - Senegal
  - Portugal
  - Northern Africa
  - European Jewish
  - Basque

44%  
40%

3%  
3%  
2%  
2%  
2%  
2%  
1%  
1%

**Early History**



- Spain 44%
- Indigenous Americas—Mexico 40%
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- Indigenous Americas—Yucatan Peninsula 3%
- England, Wales & Northwestern Europe 2%
- Senegal 2%
- Portugal 2%
- Northern Africa 2%
- European Jewish 1%
- Basque 1%

**1750 - 1775**



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1775 - 1800



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1800 - 1825



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1825 - 1850



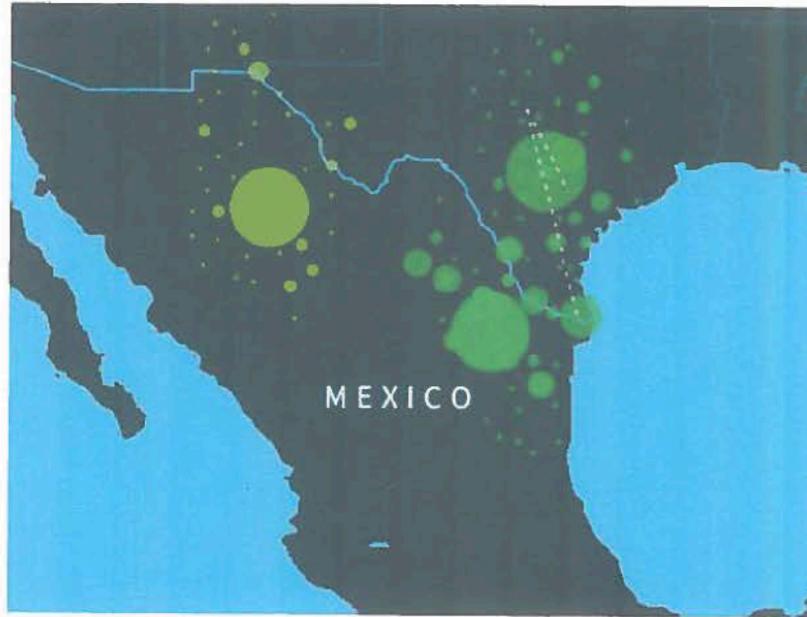
- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1850 - 1875



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1875 - 1900



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1900 - 1925



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

1925 - 1950



- Northeastern Mexico & South Texas
- Chihuahua, Durango & Zacatecas
- Northeastern Mexico

## **Board of Supervisor Speech.**

**I was born in San Angelo, Texas July 23, 1946**

**When I was growing up in San Angelo, Texas, People called me Sissy, queer, and little black sambo.**

**Living in San Jose, Ca. I was introduced to the Tenderloin in the 1960's by my sugar daddy. In those days, the police would haul you to jail for having long hair, dressing as a female, or just obstructing the sidewalk. And put you in Queen's tank.**

**When I was 18, I enlisted in the US Navy and volunteered to go to Vietnam. I was dishonorably discharged. Later, I fought to change it to an Honorable discharge.**

**I was one of four queens from San Jose who moved to the Tenderloin together and to El Rosa Hotel, in 1967. That's when I started my life as a prostitute. And Amada was the clerk.**

**Delores (DeeDee) Yubeta, is one of my best friend for 52 years.**

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**I volunteered for the Names Project, and have made about 80 AIDS Memorial Quilts.**

**I moved back in To San Francisco in 1993, where I volunteered for SF AIDS Foundation, Project Open Hand, OpenHouse. Shanti, LGBT Community Center.**

**Today, my work and the work of others to fight for LGBT rights is finally being recognized:**

**AIDS Hero Award from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence,**

**Join the SF Dual count. Was given countless of Awards.**

**Shanti, Testimony of Spirit Award**

**Open House, Trailblazer Award**

**TNDC Brother Kelly Cullen Award,**

**LGBT Community of Albuquerque, Lifetime Achievement Award**

**SF Pride Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Trans March for about 4 years,**

**And more important of All is when President Barack Obama sent me a letter honoring me for my activism for my years of service to the Transgender Community.**

**We added Vicki Mar Lane Name to the 100 Block of Turk St. And to the 100 Block of Taylor St. Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way, steer name, Supervisor Jane Kim and Sue Englander, Jasmin Gee, and many other and Aunt Charlies Lounge.**

**Howard Grayson LGBT Elder Life Conference 2019, Community Shero Award.**

**And I am involved with many other thing, My book and My Life.**

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**Howard Grayson LGBT Elder Life Conference 2019, Community Shero Award.**

## **Board of Supervisor Speech.**

**I was born in San Angelo, Texas July 23, 1946**

**When I was growing up in San Angelo, Texas, People called me Sissy, queer, and little black sambo.**

**Living in San Jose, Ca. I was introduced to the Tenderloin in the 1960's by my sugar daddy. In those days, the police would haul you to jail for having long hair, dressing as a female, or just obstructing the sidewalk. And put you in Queen's tank.**

**When I was 18, I enlisted in the US Navy and volunteered to go to Vietnam. I thought maybe it would make me a man, or I would get killed and become a hero to my family. When I told my priest and Captain that I was gay, I was dishonorably discharged. Later, I fought to change it to an Honorable discharge.**

**I was one of four queens from San Jose who moved to the Tenderloin together in 1967. Together, we moved into the El Rosa hotel. That's when I started my life as a prostitute. And Amada was the clerk.**

**Delores (DeeDee) Yubeta, is one of my best friend for 52 years.**

**We often went to Gene Compton's Cafeteria. It was the center of the Universe for us because that was nothing else for us.**

**In 1969, I saw a movie that changed my life. It was about Christine Jorgensen, A trans pioneer. It was the first time I heard someone who'd had a sex change surgery. Then and there, I knew where I was going. I didn't know when I'd get my surgery, but I knew it was my goal.**

**I met my hero Christine Jorgensen in person.**

**She gave a talk at San Jose State College in San Jose, Ca. She gave me good advice. Be truth to yourself.**

**In 1974, I had my sex change. BlueCross Ca. Paid it which working for Pacific Telepone.**

**My Mom sat beside me after my surgery she called me Mija, daughter in Spanish. I knew I had arrived.**

**In 1987, I contracted AIDS. I have been a survivor for 32 years. I started raising funds for AIDS in 1987 in San Jose, Ca. I performed as a Drag Queen.**

**For six years, as a volunteer, I provided emotional and practical support for AIDS patients. Aris Project. 87-94 San Jose, Ca.**

**I volunteered for the Names Project, and have made about 80 AIDS Memorial Quilts.**

**For 24 years, I performed as a Transsexual Drag Queen alongside entertainers like Vicki Marlane at Aunt Charlie's lounge to raise funds for AIDS, and many other nonprofit organizations.**

**When I was little they called Sissy, queer, and little black sambo,**

**Livin in San Jose, CA. Enlisted in the US Navy**

**Volunteered to go to View Nam, Maybe it would make me a man, or I would get killed and become a hero to my family.**

**Undesirable discharge, I told I was gay, later I fault to change it to Honorable discharge.**

**I was introduced to the Tenderloin in early 1960's, by my sugar daddy, Police would you to jail for having long hair, dressing as a female, or obstruting a side walk.**

**Four queens from San Jose, Ca. came to the Tenderloin in 1967, moved in to the ElRosa hotel, Amada was the manager. I started my life as a prostitute, Delores (DeeDee) Yubeta of 52 Years, we still friends**

**We often went to Gene Compton's Cafeteria, It was the center of the Universe for us because that was nothing else for us.**

**In 1969 I was living in Chicago, Ill, Saw the Christine Jorgensen movie about her life. Than and there I knew where I was going, Didn't when but that was my goal.**

**I met my hero Christine Jorgensen in person, she gave a talk at San Jose State College in San Jose, Ca. Gave me good advise, Be truth to your self.**

**1974 I have my sex change. my Mom was beside after my surgery Called me Mija, which is daughter in Spanish. I knew I had arrived.**

**In 1987 I became AIDS/HIV Survivor, 32 years. I started raising funds for AIDS in 1987 in San Jose, Ca. I perform as a Drag Queen.**

**I was an emotional and practical Volunteer for AIDS patients. Aris Project. 87-94 San Jose, Ca.**

**I volunteered for the Names Project, and have made about 80 AIDS Memoroeal Quilts.**

**I moved back in To San Francisco in 1993,**

**Volunteered for Project Open Hand, Shanti, LGBT Community Center, staff and than retired.**

**AWARDS:**

**AIDS Hero Award from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence,**

**Shanti, Testimony of Spirit Award**

**Open House, Trailblazer Award**

**TNDC Brother Kelly Cullen Award, 2013**

**LGBT Community of Albuquerque, Lifetime Achievement Award**

**SF Pride Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Performed as a Transsexual Drag Queen, since 1987-2011 to raise funds for AIDS, and many other non profit organizations at Aunt Charlie Lounge, With Vicki Marlane.**

**Joined the San Francisco Ducal, Miss Debutante got two years. Crown Princess to Grand Duchess to Collette La Grand**

**Trans March for about 4 years,**

**And more important of All is when President Barack Obama sent me a letter honoring me for my activism for my years of service to the Transgender Community and Gay Community.**

**One of the leaders to put the name of Vicki Mar Lane Name to the 100 Block of Turk St. And to the 100 Block of Taylor St. Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way, steer name, With Supervisor Jane Kim and Sue Englander, Jasmin Gee, and many other and Aunt Charlies Lounge.**

**Howard Grayson LGBT Elder Life Conference 2019, Community Shero Award.**

**And I am invloved with many other thing, My book and My Life.**

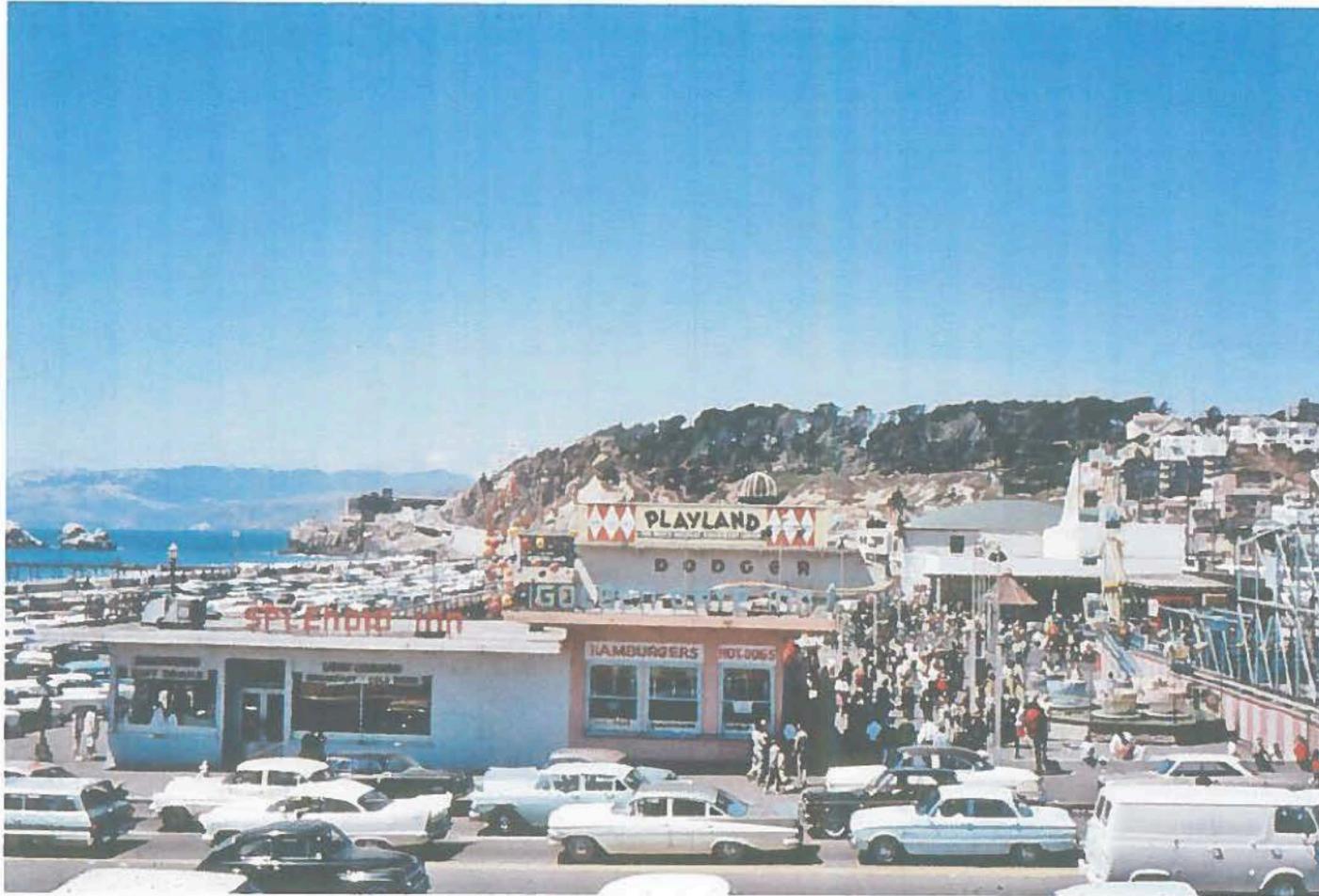
# Felipe Jr. 1965



# Felipe Jr. 1966 on a ship in Viet Nam



# San Francisco Play Land on Ocean Beach in 1960's



# El Rosa Hotel

## Tenderloin, San Francisco, Ca.



I joined the US Navy in 1964. I lowered my voice, I played the role of an Academy Award winner, okay? I decided if the military doesn't make me a man, nothing will. And it didn't. I went into the boot camp in San Diego, then I was stationed at Coronado, and then they were asking for volunteers to go to Vietnam. Then I said, "Oh, there's more money." And I was [a] scared little sissy, but I volunteered to go to Vietnam. Not only because of that; because this is the only way that I could prove to my family that I was a man.

And another thought behind my head: If I got killed, I would become a hero to my family. And it was important to make my mother proud, because I hadn't made her proud before, because she knew what I was. She never said anything; she never turned against me or anything. But I still wanted to make my mother proud.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

So, one day, I was in Da Nang, Vietnam, and I was working unloading cargo from freezer ships where they had all the freezers in the bottom of the boat, and you would come up. And then one day I thought, "Oh my God. I've had enough. I am not going to do this. I've put myself through hell, and I will not put myself through hell anymore." I went to my priest and told him that I was gay. I went to my commander and told him I was gay. They put me in the "brick," whatever they call it. And they interrogated me, then they sent me back home. I came to Treasure Island here in San Francisco. There was a gay barrack.

I was discharged from the military January of 1967. I tried to do the straight thing like work for Goodwill, work for a hospital as a receptionist and all that stuff, but it didn't work. So what happened is, five queens from San Jose, we were living together in this house and the cops busted us. And it's either you go to jail or get out of town. Well, there's five queens on the Greyhound bus depot in 1967 headed to the Tenderloin.

1544647412818-feliciaspeaking

Felicia Elizondo speaking at the 50th anniversary of the Compton's Cafeteria riot. Photo by Pax Ahimsa Gethen, via Wikimedia Commons.

We moved back into the El Rosa Hotel. That's how we became female impersonator prostitutes. Cause nobody would hire us because we wanted to be who we were meant to be and be free, and the Tenderloin was the only place that we could do that. We had a whole bunch of people who were doing it with us.

Compton's was a place where you could go and you could see whether some girls had stayed, some girls had left, some people had been killed, raped, put in jail.

## ADVERTISEMENT

It was against the law to wear long hair. It was against the law to dress like a woman. If the police [saw] you on the sidewalk walking, they would take you to jail for obstructing the sidewalk.

We were in danger all the time, because we didn't know if the pigs were going to target us, find out about us.

"Compton's was a place where you could go and you could see whether some girls had stayed, some girls had left, some people had been killed, raped, put in jail."

So, I moved in with Larry, he was one of my girlfriend's boyfriend. He was a martial artist, and we moved to Chicago. He didn't want me to stay there, all that time at home by myself. So later on that year, we went to the movies to see that Christine Jorgensen movie. And I thought that, Oh my god, that's who I am! How the hell am I gonna get there? Being in my twenties and whatnot, I had no money, no future, no nothing.

So I came back home to the Tenderloin, got another boyfriend, and his name was Joe. He was a longshoreman. He took me to North Beach here, to a nice, high society apartment. But one day he got a flashback from Vietnam and started beating me with an iron over my head. So I went to the hospital and they told me, "Are you guys queer?" I says, "No!"

"If you are you're gonna go to jail," [they said].

I says, "Oh no, we are not queer! We are not queer!"

So, when I went back to the Tenderloin, [but] it wasn't the same anymore. So, I started working in the early 70s; they were hiring minority people for the telephone company. I got hired as [a] male long distance operator. But they wanted me to lower my voice because it was so feminine. So I went through all that stuff, and then I heard about a gender dysphoria clinic in San Mateo, California. And there was a doctor that was doing surgery there. So I went to there and they gave me a letter. I saw a psychiatrist, and I gave it to my supervisor. And they read it, they accepted it, they told all my coworkers what I was gonna be doing. And I transitioned in 1973. From male to female, at work with the Pacific Telephone at the time.

When I came to the first day at work, I still had my male ID, so I showed it to the security guard and he told me, "Hey you know something? You look better than some of these real girls." And that made my day!

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The telephone company and their employees and their management were the best thing that ever happened to me, because they made sure that when I went to the restroom, there was a girl standing outside to protect me from anybody complaining that I was a man and stuff like that.

"My community who started the gay movement in San Jose and started the gay movement here in the Tenderloin will never be forgotten."

I applied for [the company insurance to cover] my surgery, and about four months later they approved me and three other kids that worked at the telephone company to do the surgery.

The company gave me all of the time that I needed to recuperate. They paid my wages. Years later, after I'd been married, my boyfriend David, I married him. I stayed in San Jose working for the telephone company from 1972 or '73 when I first got hired, 'til 1992 or '93.

Wow! So that was a really stable job for you.

Yeah. Because I was a girl now. And I was happy. And nobody could tell me anything, you know what I mean? So in 1987, I became HIV positive. And I joined the ARIS Project and volunteered. I wanted to make sure that the trans community was involved because we needed a community.

So I started volunteering, and I made the first AIDS memorial quilt for Michael Burnay, a mother that had just lost her son. And we all gathered together, and they organized it, and I sewed every little piece by hand; that was my first one. I've made eighty something quilts by now.

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I moved to San Francisco in 1993, because the best possibility of surviving AIDS was the mecca of the medical center of everything. I worked for The Shanti Project for years. I worked for Project Open Hand for years. I worked for the LGBT community center for years.

1544647100549-riot

Via Wikimedia commons.

Although you weren't present for the Compton's Cafeteria riot, you appeared in Susan Stryker's documentary about the riot, *Screaming Queens*, and you were very much part of the broader movement at that time...

My community who started the gay movement in San Jose and started the gay movement here in the Tenderloin will never be forgotten. I'll be damned if Stonewall, which was the primary struggle in our community, is the only uprising remembered. Compton's had been forgotten for 40 years until Susan Stryker came out with the movie. [After that,] I said, "Okay. I am going to take the torch and going to make sure [the world knows] the transgender community started the gay movement, no matter where."

But when you have no money, you can't do nothing.

What happened to the seniors that made this happen that were killed, raped, thrown in jail, murdered? What happened to them? What happened to those people that made it happen? If it wasn't for us, a lot of the kids today wouldn't be who they are today. We had the balls to go out there and be who we were meant to be, because that was who we were. We couldn't be nothing else—no matter how many times I tried to. I even tried to get married and stuff like that. It was not the place. You know what I mean?

What's really good about [the younger generation] is that we had no family when we were young. But you guys do. You guys have family. You've got your families backing up a lot of you guys, where we were thrown out like trash. It just makes me think that the kids of today don't understand what we went through to be who we are today, and it's just upsetting that I'm 72 years old but the kids today don't want to hear about us. They've got their own lives, their own destiny, their own goals. They don't have to worry about the seniors that made it happen.

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What would you like those young people to know out there?

Don't forget the people who made it happen. Don't forget that all those people that died.

Another thing that I'm against is the "queer" word. The "queer" word, in our generation, was being murdered by that name. The "queer" word was just horrible for us because if we were queer we were killed, thrown out, or disposed like trash. Now that the new generation is restoring "queer," you have to be proud. You have to know the history of what "queer" was to us. To be proud of that word—it's not in my vocabulary at all.

"I am your history. You can never change that no matter what you do to me."

All of my friends passed—died. All the people that, years before us, came and they were killed and murdered and thrown in jail because they were queers.

"Gay" was the word that we used in the diction for all of us. We weren't lesbian, gay, queer, whatever, transgender, whatever. We were gay. We were a community. We weren't silent. We were together. Now that they have it in little boxes, we can't get in here. We're not allowed to go into the little boxes. Do you know what I mean?

One more thing, too, I think that the "transgender" umbrella is a joke.

Why?

How can we ever unite when everybody's got their own little piece of the puzzle, you know what I mean?

Transgender is before surgery. Transsexual is after surgery. That should be it. You can do whatever you want to with whatever sexual you are, but don't name it because that destroys the unity of our whole existence.

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What were some of the things that helped you survive those difficult times?

I don't know how I survived at Tenderloin. I really don't. Because it was bad, but Compton's was the center of the universe for us.

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That's why I tell the kids: I am your history. You can never change that no matter what you do to me. I was the number one person putting Gene Compton's Cafeteria historical plaque on the 100 block of Taylor Street.

This year, we had our 52nd anniversary of [the] Compton's Cafeteria [riot] and the person that runs that building actually walked into Compton's Cafeteria. I mean, it's not "Cafeteria" anymore—it's transitional housing for criminals. We walked into that door and I cried. I cried because the people that walked in through those doors, whatever became of them, or whatever their future, they came through here. They came through those revolving doors of Compton's, where it was the center of the universe because we had nowhere else to go. The end.

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Photo by Jordan Reznick.

TRANS LEGENDS

|

By Zackary Drucker

|

Dec 19 2018, 1:20pm

Sandy Stone on Living Among Lesbian Separatists as a Trans Woman in the 70s

Before pioneering transgender studies in academia, Sandy Stone was a member of the legendary lesbian music collective Olivia Records—and the target of vitriol from early trans exclusive radical feminists.

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Read more from our Trans Legends oral history project, a growing archive of interviews with transgender icons and pioneers.

Deeply esoteric and decades ahead of her time, Allucquère Rosanne “Sandy” Stone, referred to more widely as Sandy Stone, has a unique tale of survival situated at the heart of 1970s radical lesbian feminism.

Throughout the 70s, Stone was part of the famous radical feminist music collective, Olivia Records. But her presence did not go unchallenged. She describes attending a community meeting only to be met with an angry swarm of trans exclusive radical feminists (TERFs) assembled for the sole purpose of expelling her from her own collective simply because she was assigned male at birth. TERFs posit that biological sex characteristics are immutable, that gender is determined by genitals at birth, and that trans women are gynephiliac fetishists invading women’s spaces with male privilege. Some women had travelled from across the country to participate in Stone’s public shaming and intended expulsion.

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Not long before, in 1979, lesbian writer Janice Raymond had published *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, which included an ad hominem attack on Stone, and which led to the town hall meeting on that red-letter day. As a response, in 1987, Stone effectively birthed the academic discipline of transgender studies by publishing her enduringly influential essay, *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*.

Sandy Stone is the original trans girl computer hacker. After building a computer in the early 1980s and teaching herself to code, she parlayed her years of experience as a music engineer into technology development and academia. Stone’s work as a writer, thinker, artist, and performer helped establish the genre of New Media art. And, over decades, she has inspired generations of irreverent trans women to fight transmisogyny unapologetically and bring new, unafraid forms of thinking and making into the world.

At 82 years old, Stone is the senior-most trans woman in this series. I was introduced to her by my (chosen) aunt, Kate Bornstein. Bornstein and Stone are kindred spirits, both trans pioneers unafraid of claiming outsider identities as freaks and heretics; both people who center dissension and nonconformity as sacred values.

1545247958569-sandy

Photo by Jordan Reznick.

Interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

ZACKARY DRUCKER: Maybe you can first tell me about your path to trans identity. Where were you in your life? When was it? What was the breadcrumb trail that you followed?

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SANDY STONE: I was one of those very classic literature trans people. I realized there was something wrong when I was five years old, but at that time, which was the 1940s, there were little boys and there were little girls. There was no trans information out there whatsoever. The funny thing was, I thought of myself as a little girl. But I didn't think of myself the way, apparently, other little girls that I knew thought of themselves as little girls. I'm binarizing this, because it was binarized at the time. The girls that I was hanging out with as a girl, in my fantasies, were climbing mountains and swimming rivers and hunting critters in the woods and meeting big animals and learning to get along with them. Strange adventure fantasies, which boys think of happening with boys, I thought of them as happening with girls.

Later, after I did transition, I discovered that in fact, there were women like that and I wound up hanging out with them. I hung mainly with a group that called itself the Amazon 9, all of whom were lesbians and liked hiking, hanging out in the woods, swimming; at one point we were dropped by airplane above the Arctic Circle and kayaked down the Kobuk River for 13 days to get back to civilization. Entirely a group of women, before this was kind of a thing. So, what I mean by all this, is my introduction was weird. I thought of myself as a woman, but at the time when thinking of oneself as a stereotypical woman probably involved homemaking. It didn't involve anything like that, and it never has.

Eventually, when I got something that could kind of vaguely be called a role model, it was Christine Jorgensen, because she was the only thing around, and Christine Jorgensen was tall, willowy, blonde, and liked to wear high heels and makeup. That was absolutely as far away from me as you can get. Once I did transition, I didn't wear makeup, I wore T-shirts—pretty much what anyone else of any gender was wearing at the time. The only role model around being Christine Jorgensen, I couldn't use it. Everything else that was going on at the time was hostile.

Eventually, when I did find an organization that might help, it was the Transsexual Counseling Unit, which was a part of the police department in San Francisco. A woman there tried very, very hard to discourage me from transitioning by walking me around the Tenderloin [neighborhood of San Francisco] and showing me every possible horrible thing about [being] transgender that she possibly could. I took it differently. It didn't discourage me, it just made me angry that the transgender people I saw were being neglected and abused in the ways that they were. The woman made a point to show me a lot of people who got stuck in the middle of transitioning; who had gone halfway through electrolysis, say, if they were male-to-female—I'm using terms [of] the time—then ran out of money, so their faces looked like the surface of the moon. It was really a bunch of the sorriest-ass characters that she could find. She had either collected them or they were living—I think they were actually living in basements in the Tenderloin. Some of them had red light bulbs in the ceiling, so those visits were like Dante-esque descents into hell.

.The woman looked at me and said, "So, you still want to do it?" She was trying to frighten me off and it was just making me angrier and angrier.

How did you find your way to her?

That was the first time that I managed to get far enough away from my parents that I felt I had enough space to pursue anything. I made it to San Francisco, I got into mainstream recording, and I did that for as long as I wanted to, and then in the middle of it, I suddenly realized I couldn't go on with that particular form of deception, and I had to do something about it.

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Who were you working with as a recording engineer at the time?

Well this was the West Coast. When I was on the East Coast, I had been working with Jimi Hendrix primarily, but a bunch of other people whose names might not mean anything. Karen Dalton, that sort of thing. When I got to the West Coast, I worked with Crosby, Stills, & Nash, Grateful Dead, Marty Bound, with the Airplane, a bunch of other—did I say Van Morrison? Anyway, that era of people, all of whom at one time or another I got to work with. I was having a good time, and it was very stressful, and if you threw your heart into it, which I did, it could be really exhausting. At some point, I said, I've got to do something about becoming who I am.

I started calling around in San Francisco. Of course, there was nothing. There were no transgender support people, no health focus groups; none of that. There was the Mattachine Society.

What year is this approximately?

This would've been the mid or late 60s, I think—something like that. Then there was the Daughters of Bilitis, which it turned out, also were reachable by phone. No internet, no cell phones, none of that. I had a dial-up phone and a phone book. At that time, the phone book was Google, and I was trying to find help for a word that didn't exist. Somebody told me it could be the Mattachine Society.

So I called them. It was a bunch of middle-aged gay guys and they were not at all interested in trans, and they more or less turned up their polite noses at me, and went, "hmm, well we don't do anything like that, why don't you call Daughters of Bilitis?" Daughters of Bilitis was basically the same thing, with the gender swapped. So I don't remember how I got in touch with them, but somebody over there mentioned that the best way for me to get help, you poor thing, was to call the police. And I thought, What!?

Well, actually, the police were the closest thing to a support organization that you could get. They had a project called the Transsexual Counseling Unit, and they did outreach to the trans people in the Tenderloin who were sex workers.

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What was the word they were using at the time? You're saying trans people, but at the time were they saying "female impersonators," were they saying "cross-dressers," were they saying "transvestites"?

Well, in my conversations, I was saying "transsexual," because it was the only word I knew, and they were saying "transsexual." Maybe they said it first and then I picked it up. But the word "transsexual" was definitely the word of choice. Mattachine mostly said "people like you," or something like that. But once I got in touch with the TCU, the transsexual counseling unit, we began using the word "transsexual." It seems to be that the bounds were very porous between whatever we were calling "transsexual," what we were calling "crossdressing" ... the distinctions were not quite as clear as they are now.

Generally, it seems to me that everyone they were working with had surgery as a goal. It might be a distant goal, it might be totally impractical, it might be a thousand light-years away, but there was some sort of goal out there, and it was surgery as a magic solution to problems that were clearly insuperable by any human means. There were people who, by the standards at the time, were not passable in any

sense of the word—and remember, I'm talking about a particular time. I'm not sure I would use "passing" in the same way now. They couldn't pass so they were stuck in a half-world. By the TCU standards, they were still transsexuals. The term was "transies," which we used all the time. So anyone I saw there was a transy. And everyone I saw at the TCU was a failed sex worker, or occasionally a cocktail waitress in the Tenderloin. So that was my kind of growing-up. I didn't really grow up there, I looked at it and said, "This is not me, this is crazy, it's nice to see that the police department is trying to do some kind of outreach. That's great. But I don't belong here, what do I do now?"

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Eventually, I found a doctor in Boulder Creek who was very positively disposed towards the trans issue. He would get me estrogen by the quart bottle of .75mg purple pills. Eventually, I switched to yellow pills and stayed on them until three years ago. Those are 2.5 mg estrogen, which is several hundred times the dose you're supposed to be on, and I didn't know it because it never came up with anybody. Occasionally, I would have a doctor find out I was doing that, he'd say "What are you doing?! You fool! You're going to get breast cancer, or strokes!" I'd say, "When I get my first stroke, I'll quit."

I got my first stroke three years ago. It was very minor, and my wonderful doctor sat on the foot of my bed and folded her arms and looked at me and said, "What the hell are you doing?" I explained: "I take Premarin 2.5." No one else would dream of doing that. And she said, "Well, you took your last one. Here's this patch." Same system.

There I was for thirty-whatever years on these pills I originally got from a very interesting sympathetic doctor in Boulder Creek, California, and I spent a year or two trying to figure out how to transition. I found an electrologist who was quite wonderful. We worked out a deal: I was going to be there a lot so I got a bit of a discount. I went every day of the week I could go, plus weekends, and I spent like half my life at that point on her table.

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She and I talked about almost everything in the world, and I picked up an education about an entirely different universe I knew nothing about. I ran out of money about, I think, three months out from being done. All this time, I've been passing as male, and we've been working at it from the bottom up, which I guess is what everybody does these days. She said, "We can get rid of a tremendous amount of hair without anybody noticing. It just looks like you're shaving differently." I ran out of money and she said, "Look, we've come this far, I'll continue without charge. I'm intending to retire when we're done anyway." We hugged each other, and she did. She did that. And she retired and gave me a china set as she was closing out her home. I went back to Stanford and started on that road with them.

This is in the early 1970s at this point?

Yeah, I actually transitioned publicly in 1974.

And the Amazon 9, were they trans women, were they cis lesbians?

As far as I know, they were all cis, they were all lesbians, and they were all adventurers. I just became one of the tribe! I wouldn't say that I was adopted as much as I was absorbed. We did a lot of interesting stuff together. That happened in a number of different ways. As I began to explore further in a community of women, I ran into women circles and all-women groups who did other things. That was just as interesting. I discovered—of course as everybody knows now, but it was such a revelation then—that you could be a woman without stereotyping anything, without encountering traditional cis female culture at all. Particularly, when I got to Olivia [Records] and discovered that there were lesbian safe houses across the United States, and that you could travel from coast to coast and never encounter someone presenting as male, like a wonderful parallel subculture—or superculture. Everywhere. A rhizome all over the country. For a while, I inhabited that rhizome.

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Encountering the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, it sounds like you were conscious of how entrenched the binary was. How were you perceived by the lesbian separatists? It was before Janice Raymond's attack in the late 70's. It was a less formed time.

I spent most of my time, at that point, in Santa Cruz. Because of what Santa Cruz is, there weren't many separatists around. It wasn't until after [The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male] came out, really, that I encountered any. I encountered one or two in Santa Cruz. When that came about, I immediately thought of what Janice Raymond said about the way transsexuals divide the women's community. My way of dividing the Santa Cruz women's community was that the very few separatists—trans-exclusionary separatists, because not all separatists were trans-exclusionary—but the few who were, called a meeting of the women's community in Santa Cruz. Which, at the time, was possible, because we all knew each other; it was like the days of ancient Greece when the polis consisted of everybody you could see from atop the Agora. You could get all the women in the women's community in Santa Cruz in one room. You could see who they were. So we did that, and this was not a meeting caused specifically for this purpose, we were there for several agenda items; one of them was, "Will Sandy Stone be accepted as a woman in Santa Cruz?" This was put forward by the transphobic separatists. It being Santa Cruz, there was reasonable discussion from the accepting side. The transphobes said what they always say: Men divide community and so-forth. Then we took a vote on it and it was all of the rest of the community in favor, and the two radical separatists against. So, the two transphobes against. I want to be really clear about that: it wasn't separatists, it was radical (i.e.,

transphobic) separatists. So, as Janice Raymond predicted, I did, in fact, divide the Santa Cruz women's community. I divided it into the transphobes and the non-transphobes. It being Santa Cruz, everybody left the meeting and life went on. The transphobes went off and grumbled about it and that was pretty much the end of that. Since that time, I have not encountered any transphobes in Santa Cruz. As you know, we have a huge gay pride event every year. You'd think they'd show up there.

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How did you make your way to Olivia Records?

Olivia headhunted me. A little bit of backstory: My choice of leaving the recording world was just to get out, close that door, and not look back. Later, after I transitioned, obviously I did look back, because I went with Olivia.

At first, I didn't, and I had to find work in Santa Cruz. So I took the easiest thing I could do, which was get a job repairing stereos for some kind of chain of audio stores in the Best Buy mold. They had a store in the mall in Santa Cruz. Worked at that, then I transitioned, carefully explained to them what I was doing, and they fired me.

I essentially ran across the street and I rented a storefront and I opened up a stereo repair shop, which was, again, the default, lowest denominator thing I could do. I called it the Wizard of Aud, and it became a little collective of women. The deal was: I taught them to repair stereos and we hung out there and we fixed stuff and sold used equipment. We became something of a meeting point for parts of the community. The whole thing was run in a ridiculous manner. We set our prices arbitrarily, so we could make our rent by fixing five stereo units in a month. You could do that at that time. Pretty soon, we were just inundated with business. We became extremely popular and we became more, perhaps, of a center for women than I had ever expected. I mean, we were a store with a couch in it; people would sit and schmooze and drop off things to be repaired, and, eventually, I put [the stereo store across the street] out of business. They had multiple factors going against them, but one of them was that no one went to them to have anything repaired anymore.

I was doing that one day, and I looked up from whatever the hell I was doing, and there were two women in the front of the store looking at me, and I said, "Can I help you?" and they said, "We're from Olivia Records, and we hear that you're a recording engineer. We're looking for a woman to engineer some music for us. Would you like to try doing that?" I said, "Yeah, but I think I should tell you before we go any further that I'm a transsexual." And they said, "Yeah, we know." I said, "Oh, how's that?" They said, "We talked to Leslie Ann Jones in San Francisco and she mentioned you were down here."

Apparently, they asked Leslie if she'd like to do it and she didn't. So I said, "Okay, let's talk a little more about what you do."

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They told me about Women's Music, and I didn't quite get it. I drove down to LA, and I did a project with them—actually I didn't do it in LA, we did it at Different Fur in the East Bay. The band was called BeBe K'Roche. Afterward the Olivia women asked me if I would come do work with them. They looked like a younger version of the Amazon 9, but making music. At that point, they were renting two houses next to each other and one across the street [in Los Angeles]. The main one had some rooms where some of the women stayed, kitchen and dining facilities, and the meeting room, and a mailroom. The other house was a dorm for other women, where we eventually tried to build our first recording studio; and the one across the street was the graphics department, with literature, and flyers, and album covers and inserts. I hung out with them, and they looked like a very interesting and friendly group.

They had tremendous group spirit, as you could imagine, and a huge amount of positive energy. It looked to me like they were doing really good stuff—valuable political work for women—and they were doing it in ways that they probably shouldn't have been, but extending more credit than what was advisable to their network of women distributors. I became enthralled by this idea, and I hung out with them, and they invited me to hang and stay for a few days, which I did. One thing led to another, and I wound up being invited to join the collective, which was what you did instead of getting hired. So I did that. The fact that they were all separatists didn't bother me at all. Apparently, it frightened away a lot of other people, but I had been hanging out with the Amazon 9, so it was just another group of women. We worked very well that way for quite a while, until Janice Raymond came along.

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So Janice Raymond came out of thin air, as it were. What was it like when you realized she had mentioned you and the collective in her book?

I don't remember how we first found out that it was out there, but eventually somebody showed it to me and said "What do you think of this?" and I looked at it and read it and said, "Well that's disgusting! But what the hell. My life is not covered with rose petals. It's another thing."

And then an interesting thing happened. In addition to our usual volume of mail, we began to get 20 pieces a day, could be as high as 50, and they all had about the same thing in them. There was a paragraph that said "Hello Olivia, I'm a loyal fan of yours," then there was a paragraph about how bad our last album was. Leading into how terrible the mix was! And how the instruments just sounded awful, and then they would compare to an album that had been done a few years ago, and then the last paragraph would be something like, "I hear that there's a transsexual person working with you in

engineering, and maybe you should think about getting a real woman to do your engineering, your records might sound better!" It was as if people were out there passing around a form letter.

That went on for a while, and then the letters began getting wilder. They began getting nastier and more threatening and then after a while, I found out there were letters coming in that they were not showing me. I asked why and [my collective member] Sandy Ramsey said, "because they contained personal attacks on you, we didn't want to alarm you with." It went up and up like that; that was the beginning. We ended up getting attacked in the press, then we had a tour.

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Photo by Jordan Reznick.

Was it press within the ecosystem of lesbian feminism, or was it local press? What was the impact it was having inside your own life or the community?

Well, I don't know personally, because I wasn't spending that much time in the local community, which was the LA Wilshire district community. But some of the women, it turned out, were quite transphobic. On Black Thursday or Black Friday, we had a meeting, which you probably know about, that was called by the community in Oakland, where we were planning on moving, and we heard rumors that the meeting was being packed by people from out of town who were there to disrupt it. We didn't pay much attention to that. Shame on us. We really didn't understand the level of what was going on. The thing was: It wasn't simply directed at me. Partly, I was the point of it. But partly, also, I was an excuse for people who didn't like Olivia Records. It took us a while to get that sorted out, and it was a very sad thing that there were women who hated Olivia Records.

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It's irrational hatred within the community. In small, marginalized groups, there's just this vitriol and you know, I do believe that all anger is self-anger.

Well, it makes a lot of sense to me. Do you have an acronym for that yet?

No, I'm just thinking out loud.

Well, that event blew the lid off everything for us. We went home shellshocked. That was the turning point, because we had just assumed we were going to go in there and have rational dialogue. When we

got there, we were told that there was a group that had come down from Chicago who were notorious head-breakers. We didn't know what that meant. I assumed that it was metaphorical.

We decided to defer to the other group to make an opening statement, and we would make our opening statement second. The first woman was one of the people from Chicago. She stood up, I didn't know her because I didn't know anyone from Chicago, and she made a very calm, quiet matter-of-fact statement of which the general tenor was, "Of course we all know that transgender people are really men, transsexuals are all men, they're really destructive and carry male energy with them. One must be really misguided to be around them. So we've come to ask Olivia why they..."

How were they so sure? Did they have a ton of contact with trans people? It seems like it was coming out of a vacuum.

None of us had any idea and we never found out. I made a terrible mistake, because I didn't understand how bad the situation was or what the stakes were. When she finished, it was our turn to make an opening statement, and I had assumed Jenny Ginny (Berson) would do it. Jenny Ginny says my memory is probably wrong because she's not sure she was there. But whoever it was, I assume that one of the older members of the collective, some of the original people, would get up and make our opening statement, but I discovered everybody in the collective that was there, we had seven women, they were all looking at me, and I hadn't prepared anything. This woman whom I didn't know had just unloaded a huge truckload of bullshit on the group, and I looked at my collective mates and they were all looking at me, saying "Sandy, say something!" I said the first thing that came into my head, which was, "First of all, that's all bullshit!" and the room exploded. Apparently, I had just said a totally male thing, and they were off!

It didn't matter what you said.

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I had given them the perfect excuse to be verbally violent. It literally turned into screaming. That was the end of the meeting. We couldn't quiet it down. Eventually, we retreated to the far corner of the room. The other group said, "We won't continue the discussion unless that guy leaves," pointing at me. We had no plan for this at all! We were so naive. So, we went off to the corner of the room, and we caucused. All the other women said, "We're not gonna let you leave." So, we chose someone to go to the other side of the room and palaver with the other group. They went on and on, and we watched it from a distance. There was a lot of gesticulating and hand waving and moving of mouths and eventually she came back and said, "they won't move or talk with us unless you leave, Sandy." That's realpolitik in the real world. What are you gonna do? We were a bunch of naive, young women, and we looked at

each other, tongues tied, trying to get somewhere. I said, "I'll tell you what, do you think we're gonna get dialogue if I do go?" And she said, "Well at least it opens up the possibility that there might be some dialogue, because they say they won't even talk to us if you're here. So we have either the choice of us leaving or you leaving." I said, "Let's see if you can get dialogue going, I'll go home." So I did.

I left and went back to—I don't remember if I went back to the hotel room or how the hell I got back there because I was in shock. But I did get back to the collective home to Olivia House in Wilshire District of LA and went into my room and curled up in a ball. There was no further dialogue. They wouldn't engage in reasonable discourse even after I left; my leaving was for nothing. The rest came back shell-shocked in their own way.

We did our best to process that, and then we went on the big tour. That was the West Coast Olivia tour. It was the first one they ever did. I had built all the audio equipment—not all of it, but most of it—by hand. We had made our own mic stands. We handmade a couple of our own microphones, though not all of them. I built the mixing board from scratch; I etched the circuit boards in the Olivia kitchen using an aquarium tank and a heater I had filled with etching solution. It was a totally homegrown operation. We made it work, and we were using things like brake drums for mic stand bases, and I built all the speakers; the stage wedges from scratch by hand in my bedroom. We built the whole thing up from nothing, and we went out on the tour, and before we got to Seattle, we heard about this group that had said when we got to Seattle they were gonna kill me. At this point, we were prepared to take such a threat dead-serious.

We had our first women's concert—I'm laughing because it's so completely absurd and was utterly scary at the time—we did the first women's music concert with security. We had honest-to-god heavy-duty people. The group that issued the threat was this radical, transphobic separatist group up there. They shaved their heads, wore camo gear, and had live weapons. We had people at the door checking for weapons. A couple of them did come. I don't know if they brought any weapons—if they did, they were taken away. But I did the concert with—I could feel the hair standing up on my back the whole time, because I was working the board, which was set up right in the middle of the auditorium. I was the sole tech person.

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Sitting duck, right in the center of the crowd!

Halfway through the concert, between numbers, somebody in the auditorium screamed the name of the group and I went under the console table so fast, I think I exceeded the speed of light. I was totally

cowardly. I regret that. I feel it was a moment of shame. I should've stood up and turned around and looked at the audience, but my reflex was to duck.

To survive, yeah! It's totally instinctual.

We got through the concert. Nothing happened. After the concert, I passed out. Not from fear, just from, I had—all right, I have to back up a bit if you don't mind.

At some point, near the peak of the transphobic hysteria regarding Olivia Records, I suddenly realized, while they knew I was trans, I hadn't bothered to tell them I was preoperative. At the time that was a no-no. At the time that was a huge thing.

In 1979, 1980, it was everybody's business.

You remember that, right? Remember how that was? I didn't keep it from them out of malice; I hadn't told them because I thought, well this is just personal information. Now, I was putting them in a really dangerous position. After a series of really horrible, agonizing meetings with only the core collective, we arranged for me to have surgery in secret, just before the tour. And we chose to do it right before the tour because we were also in the process of moving to Oakland. Part of the collective was in the Wilshire district at the Olivia house, part of it was in Oakland, and people were flying back and forth, and nobody was really keeping track of where anyone was. It would be possible for me to disappear for a week or two without anybody noticing. So that's what we did.

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How big was your influence to get surgery based on the hysteria around you?

Well I think it was all mine, but the timing was because of the hysteria. If you wanted to, maybe we could throw in forced feminization of an extreme kind!

Oh totally, are you kidding me?

I had been approved by Stanford before that. I was in Olivia living out my time before I could put together enough money to have surgery I had been doing that, saving up. And Olivia said, "We'll contribute the balance, just go do it right now, and you can't tell anybody else. Not our collective, not

the women's community, you can't tell your family, you can't tell anybody!" Those were the terms under which I did it. I want to tell you, it was scary. It was fucking terrifying.

It's terrifying to begin with, but under these extenuating circumstances, having a mob behind you basically.

It was not fun. [It] could've been celebratory the way many peoples' are, but it was not celebratory. Nobody from the collective could go anywhere near the hospital. Of course, Stanford, at that point, was being sued by somebody, and they were not doing gender confirmation surgery at the Stanford hospital. They were generally doing it at San Mateo General (a.k.a. Chope Hospital). That was where San Mateo had the prison ward. They put me in the prison ward because they didn't know where else to put a transy. I had two guys on gurneys on either side of me. The one on the left side was just ranting incoherently and thrashing around. The one on the right was looking at me silently with this "I'll kill you if I get loose" stare. It was not an enjoyable moment. They had guards for the other guys. Fortunately, they were handcuffed and couldn't roll over and make a grab for me. I don't think we were that close together.

I came back from surgery and went right back to the collective and pretended nothing had happened. I think I'm a week out of the hospital at this point. We go on tour, and after the strain of the Seattle one, I passed out. And the reason I passed out was I was still so weak from surgery. A few people on the tour knew, but most did not. I was busy pretending being a very macho woman and pretending everything was fine and doing the setup, and eventually the tank just ran empty.

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Just hearing about that meeting in Los Angeles, it's so volatile and irrational, and so dangerous. To be the only trans person in that space, with a room full of people out to get you... I'm wondering what is the take away? What is the survival strategy from that experience that can be applied today to trans people who are encountering the same kind of irrational fears about who we are? You know, what you're describing is a microcosm of what's happening on a larger cultural level right now.

I'm afraid having told you what I have, I don't have much of a strategy for you; I only have what worked for me, which is how I got through that one and the next one and got into graduate school and got my job and got through the transphobia at University of Texas: you just put your head down and you keep fucking moving forward. That's the only thing I know. And it's terrifying and exhausting, and if you're very, very lucky, you break through into something eventually, which I did. I also had the extreme privilege that I know a good many of my brothers and sisters don't have. I have the extreme privilege of

choosing to go to Santa Cruz. I thought, "I know this place is safe. It feels good to me." I'm going to stay here as long as I can, and I'm gonna make this work for me. I did that and I'm still here.

Famously, you were vindicated and wrote what many would perceive as the penultimate beginning of trans feminism with *The Empire Strikes Back*. That's the antidote! That's the real survival strategy, right? To produce and create something, to take that trauma and manifest it into something. Words, especially books, last forever. How is that a healing mechanism for you, and how did you channel all of that frustration?

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I wrote it for Donna [Haraway]. It was my first year project in [the] History of Consciousness [department at the University of California, Santa Cruz]. I got into History of Consciousness the same way.

When Donna suggested I go down to San Diego to spend a year with their science studies program, I went over to the hard science side, to look at the people who were in the [Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Program]. I forget who was running the program. When I came into the lab, two of his grad students took me in to see him, and the first thing out of his mouth was "Why the fuck should I take any time to talk to you?" That makes you think really fast, and I did.

I got a two-second breather by taking the time to stretch or put my hands behind my head, which was kind of a fake maneuver to get a little moment, and I looked him in the fucking eyes and I said, "I'm the brightest person you're likely to ever meet. I'm not in your field. I'm down here for sociology, but one of these days, I might just do something that you'll need very much. And it pays you to talk to me right now, if for no other reason than that."

He sat back and looked at me in an entirely different way and said, "Okay, what do you want to know?" And he gave me a tour of the glass cockpit project [they were working on] and we talked about how this and that was done from a technical viewpoint and I left. That kind of thing happened all the time! I never got used to it, but after a while, I got to realize it was going to happen, so at least I you know, I developed a gesture like that of putting my hands behind my head which gave me a second or two to think, "What the hell do I do now?" I don't know if I'm the brightest person he's ever likely to meet, that was completely false, but it was enough to get his attention.

I also developed another strategy that won't be useful to anybody! While I was down there, I was having a horrible time. I was away from everyone I knew, I was away from my home, I was in a hostile

environment. I was working in a sociology department, and I didn't have that much affinity with it. I was there to visit a program—maybe the science studies program—which was totally traditional. They didn't believe in cultural theory or critical theory, they were hostile to me and they later in fact threw me out. And I developed a strategy. There was an elevator in the humanities and social sciences building, which had eight floors. The sociology department was on one of the top ones. The elevator was very slow. I'd get in, the doors would close, I'd pick a time of day when there were few people in the building or traveling in it, and if I was lucky enough to be alone in the elevator, the doors would close, I'd lean against the wall of the elevator and I'd cry. I'd cry and cry 'til I got to my floor and the doors would open, and I'd be on! I'd go in and do whatever the hell needed to be done. I wound up doing that for almost five years. But that was purely accidental, because I said something cultural or theoretical and they kicked me out. But I got rehired.

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To paint with broad strokes, it seems like a big piece of your survival strategy was letting yourself be a full person, letting emotions pass through you, knowing that you would survive. I think that's the trick of life: not being so overwhelmed and ruled and directed by your emotional space. You can get lost in it forever.

And I didn't know I was going to survive. I just knew I needed to survive the next couple minutes. At least for me, my time sense closed in until it was just in the present moment. Okay, you're in the present, something's happening that hurts like hell, just be with it, now it goes away. It was kind of like that.

Sandy, how did you get your full name?

Allucquère Roseanne?

Sandy was a name you were using back then? I'm so interested in the journey.

Sandy was originally "Sanne," which was a contraction of "Roseanne;" and I didn't shorten it, friends did. It was a nickname that friends chose rather than I did. Allucquère was a name that a friend of mine named Robert Heinlein used in a novel, do you know that work?

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I don't but I'm a huge science fiction fan. But if your name is in it, I'm gonna read it! If it's your namesake!

It is and she isn't, but she's the person I wouldn't mind being! In the book, the protagonist, who goes by the name of Sam, meets someone who goes by the name of Mary. Because they both work for a secret organization, her name may or may not be Mary, but she likes being called Mary, so he calls her Mary throughout the book until you get to the point where it turns out that she had another identity when she was a kid. She was born into a very strange off-world sect that had customs that didn't fit with the customs of any civilization they came into contact with, so they emigrated to another planet, and she was born there. There, she was named Allucquère. I thought, Damn! This is another hot damn moment. This is a woman who is known by one name who in fact, down a couple of layers of reality, has another name and another layer of reality. Let's go down there. I don't think Bob ever intended the name to be used by any living person, but I didn't care! So I borrowed it and that was okay with him. I like names that have layers of identity to them.

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