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Title

Larry Rodriguez Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

October 31, 2017

Extant

1 hour 30 minutes interview and 1 transcript

Abstract

In this oral history, Larry Rodriguez, a gay man and lay member of the Metropolitan Community Church board of elders, discusses his early struggle to accept and find acceptance for his homosexuality before coming to MCC. Within that Church he was one of few Latino people, and was the only layperson elected to the board, a role which he discusses encountering opposition over. Currently he serves on the MCC archives committee.

Biographical

Larry Rodriguez is a native of Los Angeles, California. After an early childhood in Boyle Heights, his family moved to what was then considered the distant suburbs of Los Angeles, Monterey Park.

Larry was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. Although he attended public schools, in his late teens Larry decided to join the parish choir. At the age of 21, Larry had his first gay experience with the music director of the folk mass. When people began to inquire about the nature of their close relationship the director concocted a story that outed Larry, but did not implicate himself. Larry was asked to leave the choir, if not the church.

In a soul-searching experience, Larry recalls the night he was closing up after Saturday night mass. He had turned out all the lights, approached the altar railing, knelt and prayed: "God, if being who I am is wrong, then change me. But if it is not, then find me a people who will love me for who I am and whom I can love."

A short time later, Larry found Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles. The year was 1969 and Reverend Troy Perry was the Pastor. Larry served in various ministries of the church, and served on the Board of Directors of MCC Los Angeles for a period of 10 years. He also

served as the Worship Coordinator of the church during a pulpit vacancy in 1985. Rev. June Norris, Rev. James Sandmire, Rev. Don Pederson & Larry (left to right). On the District level of the denomination, Larry served as the Southwest District Lay Representative from 1977 to 1987, and as a member of the District Committee from 1985 to 1987. Additionally, Larry has served as the chairperson of the denomination's Bylaws Committee, as a member of the Commission on Government Structures and Systems, and as Assistant Chairperson of the Commission on the Laity. Larry was elected to the Board of Elders of the denomination at the 1987 General Conference in Miami, Florida, and served on the Board of Elders for ten years. It was the second time a lay person had served on the Board of Elders. Larry continues to be active in his home church, Founders MCC Los Angeles, working with the Creative Worship Team and Archives Committee. Larry earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree and Master of Science Degree in Meteorology from UCLA. He taught Health, Mathematics, Physics, and Computer Science at Theodore Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles for 32 years before retiring in 2007. In the 1990's, Larry co-founded a Project 10 program at the school which provided support to LGBT students. Larry lives in Culver City, California, with his life partner of 36 years, Kees Van Vliet.

Scope and Content

In this oral history, Larry Rodriguez, a gay man and lay member of the Metropolitan Community Church board of elders, discusses his early struggle to accept and find acceptance for his homosexuality before coming to MCC. Within that Church he was one of few Latino people, and was the only layperson elected to the board, a role which he discusses encountering opposition over. Currently he serves on the MCC archives committee.

This interview was conducted by Obie Holman, a volunteer for Goodsoil, an LGBT advocacy coalition, and author of *Queer Clergy: A History of Gay and Lesbian Ministry in American Protestantism*.

Access

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/larry-rodriguez>.

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Languages

Collection material is in English

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Tags

MCC

Perry, Troy

Latinx

California

Los Angeles

Rodriguez, Larry