

Interview Summary – Trans Activism Oral History

Interviewee name:	Lin Fraser
Interviewer:	Evan Taylor
Date of Interview:	February 7, 2020

Summary:

Lin is a 74-year-old cisgender psychotherapist living and practicing in San Francisco, CA, USA. The interview begins with some chitchat about Lin's blue scarf and setting up the recording, as well as Lin's age (born in 1946) and why she was invited to be part of the project, as an ally and care provider.

She talks about the relational approach she takes to her work and describes her first experience with a trans client and how she was struck by the person's resiliency. She made a point to learn what she could about working with trans people and soon found herself working with quite a number of them as the word got around that she was a welcoming and non-judgmental clinician. She was a graduate student at the time, but she recalls having some input into the early standards of care in order to increase access to care by including master's level clinicians as assessors, etc. She was working on her doctorate and was very close with Paul Walker, who drafted the first standards.

She talks about the changes she has seen in the trans community over time - with the rise in the number of non-binary people and identities being a key catalyst to those changes. On the other hand, she has also noticed that the effects of trauma and stigma on trans people has shifted, but not changed over time in terms of its effects on trans people, including internalized transphobia. She has noticed that the repeat clients who come back to her to deal with dysphoria, or to address increasing fluidity in their identity or sexuality. Complex trauma is a key area that Lin thinks clinicians need to have training in and she talks about the connection between trauma and attachment and gender identity and she talks about how this works in her clinical approaches with trans people, and particularly with non-binary people.

Lin was close with Lou Sullivan and talks about his work as well as the impact of the internet on how trans people communicated. Feminism and approaches to trans inclusion and gender diversity have changed a lot over time, and a key difference is that Lin notes she is able to help people think that they have more options now. She talks about her work on ethics of providing medical and surgical care and recalls watching 2 surgeries within a year: one performed through the Stanford program, and one performed in a garage on Lombard St in San Francisco. Access to care is a priority for Lin and she recalls helping Lou Sullivan to get access to surgery, as well as a significant amount of discussion about her work with Paul Walker and how this relates to developing the standard of care.

Lin talks about the importance of trans people feeling that they belong in gendered spaces, and the challenges presented by socialization and the loss of community for some trans people. This is a challenge that she sees hasn't changed much over the years. She talks about what clinicians needs to know about trans people and attachment and then talks about how she has learned from her trans clients about flexibility, resiliency, creativity, and the human spirit. She is proud of her clients and very much enjoys her work in the trans community