

Interview Summary – Trans Oral History

Interviewee name:	Miqqi Alicia / Michael A. Gilbert
Interviewer:	Evan Taylor
Date of Interview:	January 6, 2020

Summary:

Miqqi, or Michael, Gilbert is a 74 year old secular Jewish, retired academic (York University), born in Brooklyn NY, who came to Canada in 1968. Miqqi is a life-long crossdresser who goes by both male and female pronouns (depending on how dressed), and who identifies as heterosexual. He has been married 3 times, and has been with his current wife for 30 years; he has one son and five grandchildren. Miqqi discusses cross-dressing in Toronto in the early-mid 1980s, and her participation in the Monarch Society, a cross-dressing club. In 1995, while an associate prof at York University, Miqqi played a central role in advocating for the rights of trans students, in particular, especially regarding bathrooms; eventually joined the 'SexGen York' committee. Also in 1995, she attended and presented at the 1st International Conference on Cross-dressing and Sexuality, organized by Vern and Bernie Bulloch in Northridge CA, where Miqqi met Ari Kane, Virginia Prince, and Dallas Denny, among others. In 1998, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* did an article on trans faculty, which was picked up by the *Globe*, basically outing MG to a much larger community. It was a very public coming out; fortunately, she had already come out to family, who were accepting. As most cross-dressers are stealth, Miqqi became a spokesperson for cross-dressers. Discusses involvement with Fantasia Fair: she attended for 25 years; was Program Director for 8 years, and Executive Director for 8 years. In Toronto, she founded a new and bolder cross-dressing group "Xpressions," which went to various restaurants each month. They created a magazine, *The Monarch Reader*, for which Miqqi was editor for a while. Miqqi discusses the dangers of being out as a cross-dresser, but also the affirming climate at York University. Miqqi describes encountering a trans group on the very early internet, c 1986, via CompuServe. Miqqi developed a strong relationship with the folks in this group, even meeting one member in real life. Discusses how academic and trade literature in the 1980s had begun exploring differences between men and women in terms of communication and psychology (eg, Carol Gilligan's *A Different Voice*); thinking through these questions began to inform how Michael/Miqqi approached cross-dressing, moving from clothes to the whole being in thinking about being *en femme*. Miqqi became what she calls a "committed cross-dresser." Discusses Nancy Nangeroni as a mentor figure; her partner Gordene Olga MacKenzie wrote a book called *Transgender Nation* that was important to Gilbert in 1994. Work by academics such as Judith Butler central, especially ideas of performativity. The work of authors such as Kate Bornstein, Margery Garber, Rikki Wilkins, Aaron Devor was very central to Gilbert understanding her cross-dressing. Evan and Miqqi discuss the challenges and opportunities relating to cross-dressing, in the context of a time when the gender binary is being complicated by a younger generation. Discusses his legacy as relating to his writing for *Tapestry* and his work with Fantasia Fair, which increased from 60 people to 150 people during Miqqi's leadership as Program Director.