

COMING OUT, COMING HOME

A discussion among LGBTQ+ community members and allies about the life experiences which make us all who we really are.

Sponsored by



Background and History of Event

COMING OUT, COMING HOME

You might wonder why this program focuses on people who are over 60 years old... Here's some background which explains why.

As LGBTQ+ elders pass away, we lose valuable histories of trailblazers who, through their courage to come out and be visible, have paved the way for others to live authentically. Okaeri is grateful for LGBTQ+ Nikkei over the age of 60 who have made Japanese American communities more accepting. We wanted to document some of their life stories.

In 2018, the Aratani Foundation provided Okaeri funding to interview and capture the voices of four LGBTQ+ individuals over the age of 60. We received additional funding to videotape interviews with four additional people. Collectively, these videos comprise the "[Okaeri Voices](#)" oral history project.

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, compelled Okaeri to create virtual programs to keep the Nikkei LGBTQ+ community connected and engaged.

Visual Communications (VC), a media arts organization, suggested that we partner with them to include our "Okaeri Voices" videos in their 2020 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival. To boost viewing of the "Okaeri Voices" videos during the festival we co-hosted with VC and the Japanese American National Museum "Coming Out, Coming Home, a virtual panel discussion with some of the individuals featured in "Okaeri Voices."

Response to "Coming Out, Coming Home" was overwhelmingly positive. To share the wisdom, warmth, and impact of the event, we created this free program for organizations that want to generate greater awareness of LGBTQ+-identified Nikkei and to promote discussion within Japanese American communities. Here is the link to the edited version of the event for you to view.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpeVL_SWEjE

We hope you will find this program to be engaging and informative. Okaeri's goal is to create safe, nurturing and inclusive spaces for Nikkei LGBTQ+ individuals, their families, friends and allies. So, we hope this program will prompt members of your organization to have deep discussions about what it means to "come out" and find safe and warm places to belong.

Please enjoy! *Dozo*

Coming Out, Coming Home

Video Participants



Aya



Melvin



Bill



Marsha



Barney



Gary



Mia

Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel listening and watching the people sharing on the video?
2. Was there a person that you most identified with? Why do you think you connected to that person?
3. How does this video help you to either come out and/or give you a better perspective of the process of coming out for yourself or someone that you love?
4. If you are LGBTQ+, was there or is there a part of you that you felt “bad” about?
 - a. What steps might you take to reclaim that part of yourself as “beautiful?”
5. (Follow up to previous question) If you are an ally, can you brainstorm ways to show unconditional love and support to your children/relatives/friends/etc?
6. If you are LGBTQ+, can you explain the role that secrecy (hiding your true self) has played in your life?
 - a. Is there one thing you would consider doing to be more open with others?
7. **FINAL QUESTION** - (For those that are LGBTQ+)
What are some things that are/were sacred to you while being "in the closet"?
What are some supports that you wish you had?
What are some supports that you found nourishing/healing/helpful?

(For family, friends and allies)

What is something that you would like to say to your LGBTQ+ family member or friends to make them feel embraced, celebrated, and accepted?