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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**New Exhibition: Coming Out West: LGBTQ+ Elders Share Their Stories.**  
June 1 through December 2023

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Santa Monica, California, *May 4, 2023* – The Santa Monica History Museum is pleased to announce a new exhibition, opening June 1, 2023. *Coming Out West: LGBTQ+ Elders Share Their Stories* presents oral histories, images, art, and ephemera from well-known LGBTQ+ elders with ties to Los Angeles and the Santa Monica Bay area.

Created in collaboration with The Outwords Archive, the exhibition is a unique opportunity for the Santa Monica History Museum to share a history of the LGBTQ+ community through the lens of eight people who shaped it.

“We are thrilled to partner with The Outwords Archive to celebrate the rich history of the LGBTQ+ community and to use our museum as a conduit for bringing that to the public,” stated Rob Schwenker, Executive Director of Santa Monica History Museum. “In Santa Monica’s history, there has never been an exhibition of this nature; given there are more than 240 pieces of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation making their way through our government, now it is more important than ever to tell these stories.”

The exhibition features excerpts from oral histories recorded by The Outwords Archive (OUTWORDS). “OUTWORDS has recorded nearly 300 interviews in 38 states. We share our stories with students and teachers around the globe,” said Mason Funk, Executive Director of The Outwords Archive. “We are grateful and thrilled to partner with the renowned Santa Monica History Museum in this collaborative exhibition.”

Featured in the exhibition are revered members of the LGBTQ+ community:

L to R: Top, L. Frank, Terri de la Pena, Chuck Williams. Middle, Mia Yamamoto, Jewel Thais-Williams. Bottom: Marianne Diaz, Don Bachardy, Judy Abdo.



- **Jewel Thais-Williams, proprietor of the renowned club Jewel's Catch One.**
  - *Jewel Thais-Williams was born in Indiana and moved to Los Angeles to attend UCLA, where she revolutionized the city's nightlife and LGBTQ+ community space. Nicknamed 'The Catch,' it was the only Black and queer-friendly disco in Los Angeles and one of the first in the U.S.*
- **Chuck Williams, founder and namesake of the venerated Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, who sadly passed away on April 12.**
  - *In 2001 Chuck donated 2.5 million to fund the Williams Institute at UCLA Law School, the largest-ever donation for an LGBTQ+ academic center. The Williams Institute conducts rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. Chuck and his partner Stu Walter were together for over 50 years.*
- **Judy Abdo, former Santa Monica city councilperson and one of the nation's first out-lesbian mayors.**
  - *An educator, activist, and civic leader, Judy made history as Santa Monica's first openly lesbian mayor. During her term, she championed initiatives for environmental sustainability, rent control, early childhood education, and equal rights for people with HIV/AIDS.*
- **L. Frank, Tongva-Ajachmem artist, writer, activist, and tribal scholar.**
  - *Born in Santa Monica, L. Frank (who uses the Tongva-Aiachmem pronoun 'pó') moved to Palos Verdes during childhood and attended Immaculate Heart College in Hollywood. L. Frank always knew and accepted pó as Two-Spirit, a contemporary term with ancient roots that encompasses fluid gender identities and sexual orientation among Indigenous peoples. L. Frank co-founded Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival to ensure the continuation of indigenous languages.*
- **Don Bachardy, visual artist.**
  - *Known for his portraits of notable people, and his long-term partnership with Christopher Isherwood. The couple are considered icons in the LGBTQ+ community. Bachardy's work is featured in prestigious museums worldwide.*

- **Mia Yamamoto, Harvey Milk Legacy Award-winning lawyer, and transgender rights activist.**
  - *Born in the Poston concentration camp in Arizona, Yamamoto's early experiences shaped her understanding of racial injustice in the United States. She is a passionate advocate for the trans community and has received numerous accolades for her work in both the courtroom and the public sphere.*
- **Marianne Diaz, educator, activist, and civic leader.**
  - *Marianne Diaz has dedicated her career to breaking the cycle of violence in underserved communities. She founded CleanSlate, a program that provides low-cost tattoo removal, therapy, support, and conflict resolution practices for former gang members. Diaz has expanded her work to include empowerment programs that support LGBTQ+ youth in the Watts community.*
- **Terri de la Peña, celebrated Chicana author and descendant of one of Santa Monica's oldest families.**
  - *Terri's mother immigrated to Santa Monica from Mexico, and her father was a descendant of the Marquez family, one of the earliest families to settle in the area. Terri began writing her first novel in her late teens. She attended L.A. Trade Tech after high school to learn commercial art, then began working at UCLA, where she continued throughout her career.*

“We’re honored to showcase each individual’s unique journey in this exhibition, as well as the history of the progress and the community they forged,” said exhibition curator Anne Wallentine. “With these artists, activists, writers, and philanthropists, we’re excited to highlight the wonderful diversity of the LGBTQ+ community and the many ways people have created and lived their authentic lives.”

The exhibition will be open June 1 through December 17 at the Santa Monica History Museum, 1350 7th Street in Santa Monica. Public hours: Thursday, 2 pm-5 pm; Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 11 am-5 pm.

On June 24, there will be a community open house at the museum with free admission. All are welcome to experience this important exhibition.

**About SMHM** The Santa Monica History Museum's mission is to collect, preserve and share the history and culture of the Santa Monica Bay area. Founded in 1975, The Santa Monica History Museum makes accessible the diverse stories and experiences of the community through exhibitions, special events, oral histories, and via its celebrated collection of historical photographs.

**About OUTWORDS** The mission of The Outwords Archive (OUTWORDS) is to capture, preserve, and share the stories of LGBTQ+ elders, to build community and catalyze social change. OUTWORDS was founded on the belief that these unique narratives are essential to preserve as a priceless record of an unprecedented American social change movement, and as an invaluable source of education and inspiration for current and future generations of change-makers.

Please contact The Santa Monica History Museum for sponsorship opportunities to support this exhibition.

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